



Tu B'Shevat Seder

Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

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How A Tree Represents The Design of Creation

As is well-known, *Tu B'Shevat* (the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of “Shevat”), is the *Rosh HaShanah* for trees.¹

It is written, “*For man is a tree of the field.*”² The commentators explain this verse simply that man is **reminiscent** of a tree. We are explaining it from the inner perspective that man is like a tree – like a “small world”.³ A person is an entire world of spirituality; the spiritual world is designed like an upside-down tree, with roots [coming from Above] and branches [which channel everything from the roots above downward to here].⁴

The Ramchal⁵ wrote an entire sefer, *Kelalos Hallan HaKodesh*, which explains the spiritual realms. The roots of how Hashem conducts Creation is through the use of *sheimos hakedoshim* (holy names) that Hashem uses. The two main holy names which Hashem uses are the *sheim havayah* (His actual name), and the *sheim adnus* (*Adon*, “Master”), which have the same numerical value in Hebrew as the Hebrew word for “tree” – *ilan*.

Understanding the Essence of Tu B'Shevat

Tu B'Shevat is not just simply a day to eat fruits. We have to understand the essence of this day, and when we gain that understanding, we will be able to eat fruits in the **proper way**.

The first thing we should all know is that eating on *Tu B'Shevat* is not just a physical act of eating fruit. The same is true when it comes to all other *mitzvos* and *minhagim* (customs) we do; they are not just a physical act – they are much more than that.

1 *Rosh HaShanah 2a*

2 *Devarim 20:19*

3 *Chovos HaLevovos, Shaar HaBechinah 4; and sefer Shaarei Kedusha, 2:3*

4 *Maharal*

5 *Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, 17th century Kabbalist, author of Mesillas Yesharim (Path of the Just), Derech Hashem (Way of G-d), Da'as Tevunos (Knowing Hashem's Plan) [Feldheim Publishers, 2015], Derech Eitz Chaim, and many esoteric works of Kaballah*

As we have begun to mention we can find the design of the entire Creation in a tree. Even more so, the entire fabric of Creation was affected by a tree; Adam sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as* (the Tree of Knowledge), and this has changed the orientation of Creation ever since. He was told not to eat of the fruits from the forbidden tree – by transgressing this commandment, everything was ruined.

It is the custom of the Jewish people to eat fruits on *Tu B'Shvat* and by eating fruits on this day we can rectify the sin of Adam, who ate forbidden fruit.

When a person makes a small mistake, he doesn't ruin his life since the mistake isn't such a tragedy. But sometimes a person makes a really big mistake, like accidentally touching an electrical wire, which can harm him for the rest of his life.

When Adam sinned, the entire fabric of Creation was ruined. His mistake to eat from the tree was a grave error, and it was much more than just a minor slipup. Since a tree represents the entire design of Creation (as we mentioned), eating from it affected the Creation in a deep way. Had Adam eaten from it in the proper way, it would have brought the world to its completion, but he didn't, and instead destruction came to the world.

The Motivation Behind Our Eating

The negative use of eating is when a person eats solely out of desire for food. [Obviously,] the positive use of eating is when someone eats with spiritual motives. For this reason, *sefer Shaarei Teshuvah*⁶ brings from the *Raavad*⁷ that a person shouldn't gratify his appetite totally when he eats, and instead he should leave over a bit, and he should do this precisely when he's feeling the strength of his appetite.

An easier *avodah* to implement is for one to pause a bit before starting to eat. When a person pauses to reflect

6 *Gates of Repentance, written by Rabbeinu Yonah, early 10th century scholar*

7 *Rabbi Avraham ben David, 10th century scholar and author of many classic Kabbalistic works*

a bit before eating, his act of eating will then stem from a more internal place in himself.⁸

When The Tree Tasted Like Its Fruit

We previously mentioned that the tree was formed by Hashem from two of His [divine] Names, but there is another component in a tree: the taste of the tree's bark. The Sages say that the bark,⁹ tasted the same as the fruit, before the sin. Whereas, after the sin, the tree no longer tasted like the fruit it produced.

A tree thus connotes two things – its bark, and its fruit. After the sin, only the fruit has a taste, but before the sin, in the original plan of Creation, Hashem desired that the bark should also have a taste. We need to understand: why is this so? What difference does it make to us if the bark had a taste or not? Even more so, we can ask: If trees would remain with their taste, then we would eat from them, and that would harm the development of the trees and thus harm the fruits as well. So why, in the original plan, did trees taste like their fruit?

The deep answer to this is that the Sages' statement was not just referring to a physical tree, but to a spiritual kind of tree and its fruit. The spiritual tree and its fruit is the meaning of the statement, "A person eats of their fruit [reward] in this world, yet its *keren* [essence] still remains in the next world."¹⁰

In other words, there are two kinds of trees with fruit. One kind is the physical, and the other kind is a spiritual one. Concerning the physical, had Adam never sinned by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree, the earth would have produced trees that tasted like their fruit. In addition, had he not sinned – had he eaten from the tree first, before eating the fruit - he would have entered immediately into the Next World.

Now that he sinned, not only did the trees no longer taste like their fruit in the physical sense, but now he

⁸ Later, the author brings that this was the practice of Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l, spiritual dean of Yeshivas Mir in mid-1900's).

⁹ Rashi, Bereishis 1:11

¹⁰ Tractate Peah 1:1

could no longer enjoy the spiritual tree – the essence of his reward, which he would have enjoyed had he gone to the Next World . Instead he can only enjoy reward in this world.

However, this is also a good thing, because if man would be able to access his future reward already on this world, then he would use it up by the time he gets to the Next World [and then he wouldn't have any reward left]. This reflects the statement, "From the wound itself comes the remedy."¹¹

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge

To understand this better, we need to understand the difference between the tree that was permitted to eat from – the *Eitz HaChaim*, the Tree of Life – and the Forbidden Tree of Knowledge, the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

The *Eitz HaChaim* consisted of only one element – *chaim*, life. The *Eitz HaDa'as* was called *Eitz haDa'as Tov v"Ra* ("Tree of Good and Evil Knowledge.") It contained two elements to it – good, and evil.

The *Eitz HaDa'as* is reminiscent of the fruit that comes from the tree. Just as a tree produces many fruits, so did the *Eitz HaDa'as* have a lot going on in it, because it contained more than one element. By contrast, the *Eitz HaChaim* is reminiscent of a tree and not of the fruit, for a tree only contains one trunk. The *Eitz HaChaim* only consisted of one element.

This shows us that oneness is represented by the actual trunk of the tree, and not in the fruits of the tree. The fruits of a tree can be many, representing **dis-unity**. The tree itself consists of one thing alone – its tree trunk. Its oneness represents the concept of **unity**.

Had Adam not sinned and had eaten instead from the *Eitz HaChaim*, he would have immediately entered the Next World. Now that he ate the fruit from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, although he sinned, he can still merit the Next World, because he did not eat up his actual reward; he only ate the "fruit", and not of the *keren*/trunk.

¹¹ Shemos Rabbah 23:3

Since Hashem knows everything that will happen, He already knew that Adam would choose to eat from the *Eitz HaDa'as*. (The fact that Hashem knows what someone will choose is the deep concept known as “*yediah kodmoh l'bechirah*”, “knowledge precedes free will”. A person has free will to choose between good and evil, but Hashem still knows beforehand what the person will choose.) Therefore, there was already a remedy built in beforehand, so that Adam wouldn't lose everything from the sin. The built-in remedy was that if even if Adam eats the forbidden fruit, he's only eating the fruit, and not of the actual tree; and because he did not partake of the actual tree trunk, the *keren*, he will not lose his *keren* – the essence of his reward - in the Next World.

Therefore, although he sinned, the outcome of the sin was lessened, in contrast to having eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, which was the real tree. Had he eaten the “real” tree – the *Eitz HaChaim* – then he would have forfeited his *keren* in the Next World, since he had just eaten from the *keren* and thereby used it up on this world. Of course, the original plan was that he should eat from the *Eitz HaChaim*, but because Hashem knew that Adam would eat from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, He reversed the outcomes, as we explained.¹²

What Kind of Fruit Was It?

In the *Gemara*¹³, various opinions are discussed concerning exactly what kind of fruit the *Eitz HaDa'as* was. One opinion is that it was a grape, because just as the wine produced from grapes can intoxicate a person and sadden the person, so did the sin bring sadness to the world. Another opinion was that it was a wheat kernel; another opinion was that it was a fig.

In either case, the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a fruit of the Seven Species which the Land of Israel is blessed with.¹⁴

¹² In the Hebrew sefer (*Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Chanukah: p100*) there is also an even deeper explanation of this matter, but we have not included it in the translation, as it is a bit esoteric to translate.

¹³ Sanhedrin 70a-70b.

¹⁴ The Seven Species are: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates/honey.

This requires thought: what is the connection between the Seven Species and the *Eitz HaDa'as*? The fact that the tree was one of the Seven Species requires contemplation; let us try to find out what the connection is.

The Ten Species of Eretz Yisrael

First, we must preface the discussion with the following. It is well-known that the Seven Species represent the seven nations who were conquered when we won the Land of Israel from their hands. However, there will be three nations in the future who will gain a share in the Land: the *Kinnites*, the *Kenizites*, and the *Kadmoneans*.¹⁵ Thus, there are another three species that the Land of Israel is blessed with that we do know about yet, and these three species will be revealed in the future. These three species are the roots of the seven species, with the seven species being the branches that stem from these three roots.¹⁶

The three species of the Land which we do not yet know about represent the *keren*, which, as we have begun to explain, is the part of the reward that stays intact in the Next World, which is where we enjoy it. These three species of the future represent the “tree” itself – the *keren*. In today's times, we only have the “branches” of the tree – the fruits of the reward, and not the actual reward itself.

These three hidden species of the Land are forbidden to eat, and for this reason, they are hidden, so that we shouldn't come to eat them; it is forbidden to eat the actual reward itself as we are on this current world.

In the Future, All Trees Will Bear Fruit

¹⁵ As stated in Bereishis 15:18-21

¹⁶ Note from the Hebrew sefer: This is similar to how the seven sefiros (Heavenly spheres) branch out from the three higher sefiros. [The seven lower sefiros are: *chessed, gevurah, tiferes, netzach, hod, yesod and malchus*. The three root, higher sefiros are: *Chochmah, Binah and Keser*].

4 · BILVAVI · TU B'SHEVAT SEDER

There is also a different approach how to explain this. The *Gemara*¹⁷ states that in the future, all barren trees in the Land of Israel will bear fruit. The depth of this matter is that in the future, when we will be allowed to eat the tree itself – the reward itself – this will make all barren trees into edible trees. In other words, the barren trees themselves will become like fruit.

This is because if we can't eat the tree itself, then surely we cannot eat a barren tree. But when we will be allowed to eat the tree itself, then even barren trees will be useful to eat.

If we go with this approach, perhaps we can say that the three species of the future, which are the roots of the other seven, are from barren trees. In the future, we will be allowed to eat these “barren trees” – the three root species. But in today's times, we cannot eat trees – in the physical sense and in the spiritual sense. We cannot eat a physical tree, because they have no taste, and they are unfit for consumption. But on a deeper level, this is because we have to protect our “tree” for the Next World, and that is when we will be allowed to eat our “tree”, our *keren* - our actual reward.

Awareness As We Eat the Seven Species

So in our current state, we cannot eat a tree itself, only its fruit. For this reason we are only able to eat of the Seven Species that we know about, because these represent the “fruit” of our reward, and we are allowed to partake of the fruit of our reward. But we are not yet able to enjoy our actual reward itself – our *keren* – and for this reason, we aren't able to eat of the other three hidden species in the Land.

[That is the outline of the concept, and now we will apply this practically in our life.]

The fact that we can only enjoy the “branches” these days, and not the root, represents the fact that we are missing the root of our very eating. Our eating is superficial, and when we eat, we simply destroy the food

¹⁷ *Kesubos 112b*

as we eat it, consuming it. We are missing a kind of eating in which we can be attached to Hashem from it. How do we see that eating can be a form of connecting to spirituality? We find that by Yosef, his wife was called the “bread” that he ate. However, although we are missing the root kind of eating, we can still attain it to some degree, on our own level. Let us explain.

Eating can be something completely spiritual, as we find in the statement, “*Go eat my bread*” – go eat the bread of Torah.”¹⁸ Or, eating can be a physical act of eating. Even when we simply eat in the physical sense, it can be a superficial kind of eating, or it can have an inner depth to it.

We need to eat because we need to give ourselves energy. This is the source of our eating, and this is the ideal kind of eating. The negative side of eating is when a person just eats without the intention of nourishing his health simply because he wishes to. Both of these options are the superficial layer of our eating: either to eat for our health (which is positive) or to eat out of indulgence (which is negative).

But there is an even more inner layer to our eating, and this is true even as we physically eat. We are able to eat in an inner way, and we can achieve this inner kind of eating, each person according to their own level.

Whenever we eat, there is a part we see, and a part we don't see. What we see is the fruit in front of us, but what we don't see is the root that it grew from. The root of the fruit tree plays a big role in the fruit – when we eat the seven species that grew in *Eretz Yisrael*, we have to be aware that it is coming from *Eretz Yisrael*.¹⁹ If we just eat the fruit and we never think about where it came from, then it doesn't make a difference if it came from either Israel or Turkey...

When we are aware of the root of eating as we eat, then we connect to the inner root of eating to some degree, on our own level. But if a person just eats the seven species without thinking where they come from,

¹⁸ *Bereishis Rabbah 70:5; see Raishis Chochmah, Shaar Anavah, 4*

¹⁹ *See Devarim 8:3*

and he just eats the fruit or species in front of him simply because he wants to eat, then he's only eating in a superficial manner.

He is separated from the root of eating; he is disconnected from the root. Although in the end he is still being nourished from the root whether he thinks about this or not, still, he will be missing the pure kind of nourishment he could be having, if he doesn't think about the root of what he's eating.

An In-Depth Analysis Of Wheat

We will now begin to explain the depth behind each of the seven species which Eretz Yisrael is blessed with. The seven species are written in the verse, “A land of wheat (*c'hittah*), barley (*se'orah*), grape (*gefen*), fig (*te'ainah*), pomegranate (*rimon*); a land of olive oil (*shemen zayis*) and honey (*devash*).”

Let us begin with the first species – wheat (*c'hittah*).

As we mentioned before, one of the Sages' opinions were that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was wheat. The other two opinions of the Sages are that it was either a fig or grape. There is a rule that whenever our Sages argue, “Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d.”²⁰ Therefore, each of the opinions in our Sages is correct, and they are rather just different views on understanding the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

We will try to explain each of these views – the view that it was wheat, the view that it was a grape, and the view that it was a fig.

If we go with the first view, that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was wheat, the following question arises: How could it be that wheat, which was one of the blessed Seven Species of *Eretz Yisrael*, should be a catalyst in the sin?

If we reflect, the Hebrew word for wheat, *c'hittah*, has the same letters as the word *cheit*, sin. Another word that it is related to is the Hebrew word *c'hituy*, which means “cleansed.” These two words, understandably, are

²⁰ *Gittin 7b*

opposite concepts. A sin is the opposite of being cleansed, as sin is called “soiled clothing.” *C'hittah* thus can allude to either *cheit*, or its opposite – *c'hituy*. (This is an example of how one concept can contain two opposites.²¹)

Let us reflect on the “*cheit*” aspect of *c'hittah*, which is the negative side to *c'hittah*. When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDa'as* – which was wheat, according to one opinion – he came to commit a *cheit* through eating the *c'hittah*/wheat. When a person doesn't fulfill another person's will, the other person feels that the other has done a *cheit* toward him; so a *cheit* is essentially whenever something is lacking.

Eating also reflects this idea. When a person eats, he eats because he is missing something, and he's trying to fill what he's missing. Sometimes this is because a person is simply hungry, and sometimes this is due to a negative reason – the person is indulging in his desires. Either way, eating is always about filling what a person is missing.

This can be the depth of Adam's sin. When he ate from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, he was eating because he felt like he was missing something, and he was trying to fill what he was lacking. That was really the depth of the sin.

Eating For The Sake of Heaven

The question is, though: How do we correct this attitude? What are we supposed to do? Is it ever possible for us to eat for loftier purposes, other than to fill what we are missing? Is there a different kind of attitude we can be having when we eat?

The answer is that there are two kinds of eating. There is a kind of eating which is called “eating from the

²¹ **Editor's Note:** This is the concept called “*dovor v'hipucho*” (a concept and its opposite). To learn more about this concept, listen to the Hebrew audio files of [Da Es Da'archa 007 and 008](#), in which the author explains how a person can get used to seeing opposites of every concept, and that this completes a person's understanding of any certain concept.

Eitz HaDa'as”, and there is a kind of eating called “eating from the *Eitz HaChaim*.”

Eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, as we said, is when a person eats because he's trying to fill a certain lacking. But there is another kind of eating which is totally different, in which a person isn't trying to complete what he lacks just as the Creator lacked nothing in spite of the fact that He created the world. It is obvious that although Hashem created the world, it wasn't because He lacked anything, *chas v'shalom*.

If a person eats simply because he needs to, or because he wants to enjoy food, then he is eating because he wants to complete what he lacks. This is called “eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*.” But if a person eats and he is aware that it is Hashem who is sustaining him – not the food – then he connects to Hashem through his eating; he feels nullified “in front of” Hashem as he eats.

This leads us to the following deep point. When a person is totally attached to Hashem, he doesn't have to eat. Moshe *Rabbeinu* didn't eat or drink for forty days as he sojourned in Heaven. In our current state, our soul is concealed from having the total connection with Hashem, since our body gets in the way. We thus have to eat.

If a person were to ignore this fact of life, then he is being delusional, since we are not on the level of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. It's suicidal for a person to attempt to ignore his body and only consider his soul. The *Gemara*²² says that we are not allowed to withhold anything that our body needs to survive, and if one does so, he is called a sinner. Because we are now after the sin of Adam, we must eat.

Yet, at the same time, we can still reveal from within ourselves a degree of inner eating. When we eat only in an external and superficial manner, such eating connotes that *cheit* is at the root of our eating, just as *c'hittah* is the first and head of all the Seven Species.

²² Nazir 19a

But in the original perception [which will return in the future], *c'hittah* is not at the head of the Seven Species, since there are really an additional three roots to the Seven Species, as we mentioned before.

C'hittah represents *cheit*, and thus it not the root of the Seven Species; the root of everything is called “*Ratzon*,” the “Will” of Hashem. The Seven Species we are familiar with represent the seven “branch” forces in our soul:

1. *chessed* (kindness/love),
2. *gevurah* (strength),²³
3. *rachamim* (compassion),²⁴
4. *netzach* (eternity),
5. *hod* (beauty),²⁵
6. *yesod* (foundation)²⁶ and
7. *malchus* (royalty).

There are three root forces of these seven powers in our soul, and the root of all the root forces is *Ratzon*, Hashem's Supreme Will. Thus, when we eat because it is the will of Hashem that we eat, then we are not eating to fill what we lack – rather, we are eating for a higher purpose.

Of course, no one should fool himself and believe that he is solely eating because it is the will of Hashem. This is not true, because when we eat, we are trying to fill our hunger. Anyone who tries to convince himself otherwise is delusional. We all eat because we are hungry. We need to try to awaken within ourselves at least some spark of this level, that there is a kind of eating that exists in which a person eats because it is Hashem's will.

There is a salient statement said in the name of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l: One kind of person makes a *beracha* (blessing) so he can eat, but another kind of person eats so that he can make the *beracha*.

²³ *Gevurah* is also sometimes referred to as *Yirah/restraint*, and it is also called *Din/Judgment*.

²⁴ *Rachamim/compassion* is also referred to as *Tiferes/Harmony*, and it is also referred to as *Emes/Truth*.

²⁵ *Hod* is also known as *hodayah/gratitude*, which is also known as *bittul/nullification*.

²⁶ *Yesod* is generally referring to *kedushah* (holiness).

The *Gemara* says that if a person eats without making a *beracha* beforehand, it is as if he stole. Yet, even if one makes a *beracha* before he eats, there is still more to be done. We aren't just eating so we can enjoy this world in the right way and not be liable for stealing. We are supposed to be eating, ideally, so that we can be able to make the *beracha*.

Revealing Hashem's Will Through Eating the Wheat

Now let us think about the positive use of the word *c'hittah*/wheat, which is *c'hituy*/cleansed.

Our *avodah* on *Tu B'Shevat* is to cleanse ourselves from sin – to accomplish a *c'hituy*/cleansing of our *cheit*/sins. In order to understand how we can do it, we'll illustrate as follows. Let's say we have a chain smoker who, one day, discovers that he develops cancer because he's a heavy smoker. It's clear that if he wants to be healed, the first thing he has to do is to quit smoking, so that he can prevent any further damage to his lungs. This is the beginning of cleansing his body. But this is just the superficial solution. The deeper solution is for the smoker to **give up his very will** to smoke. We aren't just trying to convince him to stop smoking; what we really want to do is that he shouldn't even have a desire for a cigarette. We can do this by getting him to desire taking responsibility for his life, and in turn, this will overpower his negative will to smoke and eliminate it.

The lesson from this parable is clear. All people, initially, eat in the familiar manner: eating because we want to fill what we are missing. When we go through life just eating in the usual, superficial manner that we are familiar with, then we will never touch the inner reason to eat, which is to eat in order to fulfill Hashem's will.

If we wish to begin cleansing ourselves from sin on *Tu B'Shevat*, we need to reveal within ourselves some spark of the inner reason to eat. It can then motivate us to eat all the time with purer motivations.

Therefore, if a person takes the *c'hittah*/wheat and uses it to recognize the Creator through it, he fulfills the

purpose of the *c'hittah*. If a person even eats just one kernel of wheat with this intention – aspiring to recognize the Creator through it – then he has begun to reveal a spark of correcting the first sin. If we eat the *c'hittah* with this intention, we reveal the inner kind of eating – “eating from the *Eitz HaChaim*.”

Understanding That Eating Is A Curse

When a person eats something and he's enjoying it, he should feel somewhat pained that he's enjoying it. The *Gemara*²⁷ says that as soon as Adam was cursed with having to eat from the earth, he cried terribly. He thought that the curse meant that he would have to eat out of the same bowl as animals do. In the end he wasn't cursed with this. He had still lost so much, compared to the previous level he was enjoying in *Gan Eden*. The angels roasted meat and strained wine for him in *Gan Eden*.²⁸

In the future, Torah scholars will once again enjoy these special wines that were prepared in *Gan Eden*.

Since we are after the sin, we were cursed with having to eat fruits and vegetables that come from the ground. In *Gan Eden* it wasn't like that, and in the future we will have the state of *Gan Eden* again. Right now, however, we have to eat things that come from the lowly earth.

Therefore, when we eat, we should be aware of this: the foods that exist today are a curse placed upon mankind. They resulted from the sin. In the future, we will return to the kind of eating that Adam would have had if he had eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*. What is that eating?

It is stated in the possuk, “*And you will cling to Hashem your living G-d, all of you, today.*”²⁹ If our eating is revealing a connection to the Creator, then it resembles the inner kind of eating which simply is eating from the *Eitz HaChaim*. But if we are only eating because we feel

²⁷ *Pesachim 118a*

²⁸ *Sanhedrin 59b*

²⁹ *Devarim 4:4*

like we are trying to fill what we feel we are lacking, then it resembles eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

An In-Depth Analysis On Barley

We could really spend an endless amount of time discussing each of the Seven Species, but there's not enough time.³⁰ The Torah is "wider than the earth and vaster than the sea", so each topic in Torah is really endless. We have no choice but to limit the time we spend studying each topic, and therefore, we have to leave the topic of wheat and begin to discuss the next of the species, barley.

Barley is called *se'orah* in Hebrew, which is related to the word *shiur*, amount. The *Gemara*³¹ says that each of the Seven Species listed in the Torah hints to show us various required amounts (*shiurim*). For example, a bone has to be the size of a barley grain in order to impart the status of impurity to one who touches it, and a piece of food has to be as large as fig in order to be liable for carrying it on Shabbos.

All of the Seven Species teach us about different amounts, but barely is the root teaching about all amounts, because barely/*se'orah* is from the word *shiur*/amount.

What is a *shiur*/amount? When we think of amount, we usually think it must mean a set amount. But we can also find a kind of *shiur* which means "no amount"! We find this in the statement, "There is no difference between *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* except for the size of a hair (*chut hasa'arah*).³² *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* are obviously not near each other but from the viewpoint of our soul, the difference between accessing *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* is extremely subtle; "like mountains suspended on a hair."³³ This is the kind of *shiur* which has no

³⁰ See *Viduy HaGadol of Rabbeinu Nissim, in the beginning of Tefillah Zakah (of Yom Kippur)*.

³¹ *Berachos 41a*

³² A statement of *Rebbi Bunim of P'shischa in the sefer Kol Mevaser, cheilek beis*.

³³ *Chagigah 10a*

amount to it: a "hair", a *sa'arah*, [which is from the word *se'orah*].

So on one hand, *shiur* can mean a "set amount." On the other hand, *shiur* can also refer to a subtle amount, such as a hair.

The first definition of *shiur* applies to our physical world. Every table, for example, has a certain size it has to be. But when it comes to spirituality, there is no *shiur*. The levels we can reach in spirituality are unlimited; they cannot be measured and planned. Each person has a different amount of spirituality and inwardness that he reaches.

Even the physical world can show us this concept. There is no one size for all houses; each person needs a differently sized house to accommodate his specific needs. We also find that each person has a different height and weight; there is no set amount for these things. The same is true for our inner world; it is different with each person.

If we try to give a set *shiur* for anything in the physical world, it can be accurate, but when a person tries giving a set *shiur* to what he can attain spiritually, he is often inaccurate. Why? Because there is no *shiur* to the possibility of one's spiritual attainments. You can't measure it and plan it out.

There is another implication to the word *se'orah*, which is *hashaarah*/wealth. A person can have wealth either physically – or spiritually. When it comes to physical riches, each person has a set amount of wealth to how much he will earn, yet people still have endless ambitions to make more money and become wealthier. The same power exists in us when it comes to the spiritual. We can have ambitions to constantly enrich our spiritual level, to constantly develop a richer inner life.

This is the *avodah* represented by the barley/*se'orah* – it hints to how we must enrich our inner world, and that we shouldn't place any limits/*shiur* on spiritual attainment. But *se'orah* also contains in it a negative side which counters this: it comes from the word *shiur*, which

means that a person is apt to place a set amount for how much he wants to achieve spiritually.

A person has to always seek to be growing spiritually. There should be no “*shiur*” to his spiritual attainments, in that he constantly has ambition for more growth, in that he always desires to enrich his inner world of the soul. But when a person decides how much he wants to grow, he places a limit on his spiritual growth, and he will go his whole life without any hope of growing further than these limited aspirations he has set for himself.

Thus, one should be ambitious when it comes to spiritual growth. He should understand that yesterday's achievement does not have to be today's goal; he can strive for more than yesterday. And what you wish to attain today doesn't have to be the same wish as tomorrow, because tomorrow, you should want to grow even more than how much you've grown today.

We Are Closer To The Light of Moshiach

We will now [skip to] discuss the sixth of the Seven Species, which is olive (*zayis*) [and it is related to our discussion on *se'orah*/barley].

It is well-known that the *shiur*/size for many foods is smaller than it was in the times of the *Gemara*. One of these examples is olives; in the *Gemara*'s times, a *kezayis*, the size of an olive, was bigger than the size of an olive today. The fact that *shiurin* of today are smaller than what they used to be is related to another fact that the fruits used to be bigger. We find that the Spies brought back fruits from the Land which were tremendous in size.³⁴ It is reminiscent of the fact that Adam's height was shortened after the sin.³⁵

Sizes have gotten smaller since the olden days, and so has the spiritual level of the generations. There is a concept of *yeridas hadoros* – the generations' spiritual level decreases as they go on. However, Rebbi Simcha

³⁴ Rashi, *Bamidbar* 13:23.

³⁵ *Chagigah* 12a

Bunim of P'shischa³⁶ stated a novel concept: that although the soul level in people has gone down since the previous generations, our **purity of heart** increases as the generations go on.

Reb Pinchos of Koritz told a parable to explain this concept. Once a person was traveling at night to a certain city, and he couldn't find his way in the dark. Usually when a person is nearing the city, the path is more lit up. When he's in between the path of one city to the next, the middle of the road is where it is darkest, because there is no light from either city to light it up. When he left the first city, there was light, and when he gets near to the second city, there will also be light, but when he's in middle of the path, it's dark.

The lesson from this is that on the first day of Creation, there was a light which Adam was able use to see from one end of the world to the other, but as time went on, our level decreased. However, because we are nearing Moshiach, we are closer to the light, and the closer we get to Moshiach's arrival, the stronger the light shines.³⁷

Thus, in today's generation, when we are at the end of the 6,000 year era of this world, the spiritual light of the future is at its zenith. However, not everyone is able to feel the light we are approaching. When someone doesn't feel the light, not only won't he proceed, but he will probably turn back, because the path is so dark....

A person, as he goes through this world, has two ways how he can choose to travel. Either he can strengthen himself and be like a ship, forging forward through the ocean; but if he doesn't have the strength to go forward,

³⁶ See *sefer Pri Tzaddik, parshas Vayechi*.

³⁷ Based on this concept, the author has devoted an entire sefer, *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Part 8*, which explains our avodah of “*ohr shel Moshiach*”, “*light of Moshiach*.” These concepts are further elaborated upon in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Part 9*, and they are also touched upon in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Volumes 6 and 7*. However, the author stresses that the nature of this avodah is on a higher level than most of the matters we hear about, and therefore, before attempting to draw ourselves close to the avodah of *ohr shel Moshiach*, we must be firmly rooted in in-depth Torah study and in the strict adherence to all of *halacha*.

he will resemble a raft floating in the ocean, which tosses and turns with the wind, sometimes getting forward, and sometimes getting thrown backwards...

When it comes to spirituality, no one ever stays in one place. The Vilna Gaon writes that we are either ascending – or falling – in our spiritual level.³⁸ We thus have to be very ambitious about spiritual growth. Just as a person can become money-hungry and never lose his constant ambition to become wealthier, so must we be very ambitious when it comes to spiritual improvement. The *shiur* for our spirituality must be that of constant growth.

The Avodah of Eating the Wheat and the Barley

Barley (*se'orah*) thus represents our *avodah* to become aware of our spiritual level and which direction we are going in. For example, when we eat the wheat, we need to be aware of our motives in the eating: are we seeking to eat out of Hashem's will that we eat, or are we simply eating because we are trying to fill what we lack...

If we discover that we are eating for the second motivation, than it shows that our level has changed – it has been lowered. But if we are eating for the higher motivation, then we are connected to Hashem even as we eat, and this shows that our spiritual level is rising.

The Mishnah³⁹ lists several *mitzvos* which have no *shiur*/set amount. One of these is the *mitzvah* of Torah learning; Hashem and the Torah are one⁴⁰, and therefore, Torah learning is limitless.

If a person raises his spiritual level, this reflects the lesson of *se'orah*/barley, which is synonymous with *shiur*/amount. But when a person merits to become attached to the Creator, he reaches a level higher than *shiur* – he realizes that he can be above the concept of *shiur* and be unlimited in his spiritual attainments.

³⁸ Even Shelaimah, 4:9

³⁹ Peah 1:1

⁴⁰ Zohar, parshas Achrei Mos, 73a

To summarize the *avodah* we have learned thus far: *c'hittah*/wheat represents our *avodah* of sanctifying the motivations in our eating, and this can rectify the sin of Adam, who ate from wheat (according to one opinion of the Sages, as we mentioned). After we achieve this goal, we can progress to the *avodah* of the next species, *se'orah*/barley – which is that we must become aware of the spiritual direction we are in. *C'hittah* is an inner kind of work. *Tzaddikim* (the righteous) would fight their physical desire for the food – in three different methods.

One method is the method of the *Raavad*⁴¹, which is to leave over some food from the plate. An alternative method the *Raavad* gives is to pause a bit before eating. There is a third method as well, and it was practiced by Rav Yechezkel Levenstein⁴², which is to decide before eating on how much you will eat; this prevents a person from eating more than he has to, and in this way, a person eats only to maintain his health, and not out of indulgence.

An In-Depth Analysis On Grapes

We mentioned before the opinion in our Sages that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a grapevine. Let us now contemplate the *avodah* which grapes (*gefen*) symbolize.

There is a well-known statement of the Sages: “When wine enters, secrets come out.”⁴³ Wine [which comes from grapes] has a special power enabling it to reveal something outward.

If we reflect, we can discover that there are two ways how reveal something outward. One way is to simply release it outward. To illustrate, a person takes out all his money from the bank, and he is apt to spend it all irresponsibly, until he is left with no money in his account. It would have been better had he never seen the money; if he wouldn't have laid eyes on his savings, his

⁴¹ Rabbi Avraham ben David, early 10th century scholar and author of many Kabbalistic works

⁴² Mashgiach (dean) of Yeshivas Mir in mid 1900s, known for his powerful talks on the topic of *emunah* (Faith); his talks have been compiled in the seven-volume Hebrew series, *Ohr Yechezkel*.

⁴³ Erwin 65a

heart would never have desired to spend it. Once he sees the money, his heart burns with the desire to spend it on what he wants, and so he uses up all his money.

Another way to reveal something outward is to bring out something's potential, without using it up. For example, when a person blows upon a fiery coal, the fire gets bigger; the fire had been there all along, in small embers, and now it has grown into its full strength. This is a different kind of release than in the first example above, because here, the fire isn't being used up; it still remains even after it has been released, because there are always small embers hidden in the coals. But in the first example we gave, releasing the money essentially will mean that the money is being used up.

The same two possibilities can apply to our own soul. There are matters which we can reveal from our soul, and they will still remain intact even after they have been let outward. There are also matters which, if we release them from our soul, they will be gone, and we will be left with nothing. The first kind of releasing is beneficial, and these are matters which are permitted for us to release from our soul. But the second kind of releasing is prohibited, because it will leave us empty afterwards.

Now that we have outlined the concept, we can know the following matter: who we are supposed to try to influence, and who we shouldn't. How do we influence others to grow spiritually? The Dubna Maggid gave a parable to answer this: If we want to fill up an empty cup, there are two ways how we can do it. Either we can fill up a cup until it overflows onto another cup, or we can simply pour from the first cup into the second cup. If we use the first method, the first cup remains full and doesn't lose any of its liquid; this is the sensible way. If we use the second method, we use up some of the liquid in the first cup as we pour its contents into the second cup, and although the second cup has been filled, the first cup has lost some of its content.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ **Editor's Note:** To clarify, the meaning of the parable is that if a person will be negatively affected by the person he is trying to improve, then he should not be involved with trying to influence others, because even if he helps others improve, he will be harmed in the process and lose

Who Can Get Drunk on Purim?

"When wine enters, secrets come out".⁴⁵ There are two kinds of secrets. There is a kind of secret that one should not ever reveal to others, and there is the kind of the secret that we are supposed to reveal through the wine we drink [on Purim].

If a person has an idea that will make him profit him a lot in business, and, while intoxicated, he tells his friend about it, then his friend might go and use his idea to profit for himself. That's one kind of secret that a person shouldn't tell another.

But there is another kind of secret which should not be told to others. There are people who, deep down, are seething at some people they know, and they keep all their negative emotions inside of them during the year. When they get intoxicated, and they encounter their friends whom they're upset at, how do they act?

If a person's Torah learning has been internalized into his being, he will be able to silence his negative emotions toward others, because he will be able to succeed in using the wine to destroy all the internal barriers he erected during the year towards others. This is ideal way to utilize the *mitzvah* of getting drunk on Purim, and this is the intended way to go about the *mitzvah*.

But if someone's Torah learning hasn't been internalized into his inner being he will let out all his rage and fury at others that he's upset at when he gets drunk. He will let all those people know about all the grievances he really has against them. Such a person is actually **not** allowed to get drunk on Purim. He is not doing a *mitzvah*, and to the contrary, he's making a fool out of himself. His intoxication does not foster any sense of brotherliness and friendship with others. Of him, it

some of his own spirituality. But if he is the kind of person who will not be negatively affected by the person he is trying to help, then he can help the other, because then he is just letting his spiritual level "overflow" into the other, so he's not losing some of his own spirituality, but he's merely "donating" his extra amount of spirituality to the other.

⁴⁵ Erwin 65a

cannot be said “*And to the Jews there was orah, simcha, sasson and yakar*”.

If a person’s Torah’s learning has become a part of his inner self, then when he gets intoxicated and his mind is relaxed, words of Torah will spring forth from him, and he fulfills the *mitzvah* of Purim. The secrets that come out of his mouth are essentially secrets that still remain with him even after he releases them, and thus he is permitted to reveal those secrets.

But when a person’s Torah learning isn’t infused into his being, than when he reveals his secrets to others, those secrets don’t remain inside him, because he revealed them only in order to release these feelings outwards. These secrets were not supposed to be revealed. Only a secret that can remain inside the person even after they have been revealed – such as in the case of one who has internalized his Torah learning – can come out of one’s mouth on Purim.

What We Are Thinking As We Eat

After having understood this, let us now return to what we mentioned in the beginning, that the tree used to taste like its fruit. When the tree tasted like the fruit, did it lose out on its own taste in giving it to the fruit, or did it transfer its taste to the fruit, leaving itself tasteless? The first possibility is reminiscent of the ideal way to release something outward, while the second possibility represents the detrimental kind of releasing that we discussed. The second possibility was really what took place when Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDa’as* [as we will explain].

Bearing this in mind, let us now explore the view of the opinion in our Sages that the *Eitz HaDa’as* was a grapevine. According to this approach, that it was a grape, the depth of the sin was as follows.

When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDa’as*, it was a negative use of “when wine enters, secrets come out.” He ate of the fruit and revealed his inner depths outward in doing so, but whatever he released outward did not remain inside him afterwards. Had his inner secrets

remained inside even after he had released it, his act wouldn’t have become a sin; to the contrary – had he done that, he would have achieved unity between his external and internal layers, and the goal of Creation would have been reached. But he failed the test, and instead he caused disparity between his inner and external layer. His inner secrets came out, but they did not remain inside him afterwards – they were released outwards. This is the depth of why he was banished from *Gan Eden*. Since he had released his inner secrets outward without being able to maintain them internally, he was punished in retribution, and he was expelled from being inside *Gan Eden* to having to leave it.

The Sages say that “Jealousy, desire and honor take a person out of the world.”⁴⁶ The desire to eat is one of the main physical desires of man. When a person indulges in food, it’s as if he left the world, because when he indulges, he has exited his inner self. Thus, the view of the Sages that the *Eitz HaDa’as* was a grapevine is essentially saying that Adam’s sin was that his eating caused him to exit his inner self.

We should emphasize, though, that we have no comprehension of Adam’s greatness, and therefore we cannot judge him. Rather, we are studying this narrative so that we can take out from it lessons that apply to us, on our own level.

Here is the lesson we can take out from this. When a person is eating – for example, let’s say he’s eating a grape – where are his thoughts? If he’s immersed in the grape he’s eating, he is basically in the grape, for all purposes! [The grape might bring him to all the detriment that wine can cause.] This is because the Baal Shem Tov said that a person is found where his thoughts are.⁴⁷ If he’s thinking totally about the grape, he is basically exiting himself and turning himself into a grape!

If we reflect about his deeper, the act of eating essentially causes one to exit himself and bring in

⁴⁶ *Avos* 4:21

⁴⁷ *Sefer Keser Shem Tov (HaShalem)*, p.309-310, gloss 147; based on *Zohar parshas Noach*, 69b.

something else into his insides. The person, in his indulgence for the food, leaves himself. This is the detriment caused by indulging in food. [Soon, we will say what the true way to eat it is].

Compare this to a person who wants to tell his friend a secret. Does he go over to his friend in the street and tell him a deep secret? No, he does not; he speaks to the person privately, in a house. He will reveal his innermost secrets only in utmost privacy. This is the ideal way to reveal a secret – the secret is revealed outward, but at the same time, he has brought the listener into his house; [in other words] he has released something outward, but he has brought something ‘inside’ him as well.

Now let us return to a person indulging in food. When a person is eating and he’s thinking totally about the food, what he has essentially done is that he has brought the food from the outside into his inside. He has left his inner self in doing so, and he instead enters into the food!

The Proper Way To Eat

In the ideal way to eat, a person takes the food and brings it toward him, as opposed to leaning toward the food in order to eat it. This reflects the well-known concept that the act of eating uplifts the food from the level of plant or animal to the level of man, and this sanctifies the food.⁴⁸

For this reason, *tzaddikim* would conduct their eating in a manner in which they didn’t lean their heads toward their plate, and instead they brought the food towards their mouth. [Unfortunately, there are people who devour their food mindlessly, totally immersed in their food, and they lower their worth in doing so].

Adam cried as soon as he found about the curse, because he thought that now he would have to eat out of the same trough together with animals. Adam cried about when a person eats mindlessly! It’s a shame if a

⁴⁸ *Sefer Shaarei Leshem, cheilek beis, 2:1:2; this concept is brought in many other sefarim hakedoshim as well.*

person lowers himself toward the food; he is supposed to uplift the food, instead of lowering himself to the food. When a person mindlessly indulges in food, it is like the negative use of “when wine enters, secrets come out.” The person leaves himself as he eats, and he lowers his self-worth to the food, when he could have sanctified the food instead.

Being Drunk: The Revelation of One’s True Essence

We have already mentioned that when a person becomes intoxicated from wine, either one of two things will happen. Either he will fall into its trap and lower his self-worth, or he will connect to a higher source. In order to understand how this works, let’s explain the depth behind the view of our Sages that the *Eitz HaDa’as* was a grapevine.

Originally, in *Gan Eden*, there was the *Eitz HaChaim* and the *Eitz HaDa’as*. The *Eitz HaChaim* was meant to provide vitality (*chiyus*), while the *Eitz HaDa’as* served to provide knowledge (*da’as*). However, on a deeper note, our own heart can provide us with both of these abilities (that is, if it is truly coming from our heart).

There are two kinds of knowledge. There is information we acquire from outside ourselves, like when we learn a *sefer* or when we hear something from our teachers. But there is another kind of information which we learn from ourselves; it’s a knowledge coming from within. The knowledge that comes from within ourselves will be much clearer and accurate to the extent that we have worked hard to purify our heart.

In *Shemoneh Esrei*, in the fourth blessing (*Attah Chonen*), we ask Hashem for *da’as*. We are basically asking Hashem for life, because just as Hashem can bestow *da’as* upon us, so is He the source of our life. When someone draws his vitality from the Creator, not only will he have true vitality, but he will have the true source of knowledge as well. The vitality of the Creator, so to speak, can reside in a person, as it is written, “*And He blew into his nostrils a breath of life*”.⁴⁹ This means that

⁴⁹ *Bereishis 2:7*

Hashem blew of His own essence into a person, to provide him with life-sustaining energy.⁵⁰ Our whole life is being sustained entirely by the life-giving energy that Hashem provides us with.

We need to nurture all our *da'as*/knowledge from an inner source of vitality – from the vitality of the Creator. “For the source of life is with You, in Your light there appears light; for Hashem gives wisdom from His mouth, knowledge and understanding.”⁵¹ The source of all our *da'as* can only come from Hashem.

When a person becomes intoxicated, his *da'as* leaves him. This is the exact definition of being drunk – when a person's *da'as* exits. What happens to a person when his *da'as* has temporarily left him? If he is connected to the Source of all vitality – the Creator – then he is uplifted to that Higher Source. But if he is only connected to a lower source, he will descend to the abysses of that lower source.

There is a story told about the Apter Rov ז"ל, that once he had to travel through a path that was known to be treacherous for its ice and snow. He traversed the path safely, without even falling or tripping once. The students asked him: “Teach us what miracle you performed.” He answered, “When a person is attached to Heaven with a string, there is Someone above controlling the strings so that the person won't fall. If someone is attached by a string to the earth, then he will be pulled lower toward the earth, which will make him fall. I am attached with a string to Heaven, and that is why I don't fall.”

In the same vein, when a person is intoxicated and his *da'as* has left him, if he is connected to his Higher Source, then He will be prevented from having a fall. He has connected himself to the Source of all life. This is the intended kind of intoxication that Chazal wanted us to achieve, and it is holy. If a person can remain connected to his Higher Source even as his *da'as* leaves him, such a person is eligible to fulfill the *mitzvah* of drinking on

⁵⁰ Sefer Tanya, chapter 2
⁵¹ Tehillim 36:10

Purim. But if, *chas v'shalom*, a person isn't connected to his Higher Source, then as soon as his *da'as* leaves him, he will have a great fall and lower himself.

Thus, the only thing that can protect a person throughout his life from falling from his level is *da'as*. When a person is connected to Hashem, his inner essence will never leave him, even as his innermost depths are being released outward. The true “I” of a person that is deep within a person is really connected to its Heavenly source.

Understanding the Sin of Adam

We can now understand the view of our Sages that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a grapevine. Had Adam been connected to the *Eitz HaChaim* before partaking of the *Eitz HaDa'as*, he indeed would have lived forever had he then eaten from the *Eitz HaDa'as*. Had he first been connected to the Source of all life to begin with, eating of the *Eitz HaDa'as* would not have been detrimental; it would have instead been a holy usage of “Wine enters, secrets come out.”

But he didn't eat first from the *Eitz HaChaim*, and instead he decided to eat first from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, which, according to the view of the Sages we are discussing, was a grapevine. A grapevine, which can produce wine, represents the fact that wine can make a person lose his *da'as*; and since he was not connected yet to his Heavenly source, the grape/wine caused him to fall abysmally. As soon as he ate from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, he viewed his *da'as* as the main thing, and because he lost his *da'as* [due to the grapes/wine], he didn't have what to hold onto. He fell into the evil kind of “Wine enters, secrets come out.” He left himself, and he didn't remain with his inner essence.

There were thus two aspects to the sin: 1) He tried pursuing *da'as*, when he wasn't yet connected to the Source of *da'as*; 2) He fell from his own *da'as* into the evil that is present in *da'as*.

The Seven Species Must Come From Israel

Thus, eating of the Seven Species from the Land of Israel can **only** be effective if the species were grown in Israel. When we eat of the Seven Species that Israel is blessed with, we are able to connect through them to their Source, the Creator – and therefore, even if we were to lose our *da'as*, we still remain connected to our Source. But if a person eats of these Seven Species and they didn't grow in Israel, then such species do not connect him to Hashem; if his *da'as* leaves him when he's intoxicated, he will fall to degrading behavior. It resembles eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as* – the partaking of food without being connected to our Higher Source.

An In-Depth Analysis On Figs

Let us now proceed further and discuss the next of the Seven Species: figs (*te'ainah*).

There are many Jews today who have accustomed themselves not to eat figs, due to the common presence of worms in this fruit. There is more depth behind this matter.

As we mentioned before, the other view in our Sages was that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a fig tree. This Sage came to the conclusion that it was a fig, since we know that Adam used fig leaves to cover himself after the sin. “From the wound itself comes the recovery”, so if the sin was caused by figs, the way to recover from the sin was with a fig; since we already know that Adam used figs afterwards to cover himself, it must be that the sin was caused with a fig.

The depth behind this matter is as follows. Before the sin, man lived a completely internal kind of existence, and he had no connection to superficiality of the external. There was thus no need for clothing, because there was no concept yet of external appearance. Once Adam ate from the tree – which was a grapevine, as we mentioned – “Wine enters, secrets come out”, and he left his internal kind of existence and instead entered into an external and superficial kind of existence.

After he ate from the tree, he felt the need for clothing, because now that he identified with externalities

so his external appearance needed to deal with. This reflects the view of the Sages that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a fig tree. The sin caused the need for Adam to sew fig leaves and cover himself.

The simple understanding is that if the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a fig tree, it must be that Adam made the fig leaves to repair his sin, which involved a fig. However, a deeper explanation is that the very fact that he ate from the *Eitz HaDa'as* already put himself in the direction of having to cover himself with the fig leaf. Before the sin, man was completely internal, and he did not care for any externalities; there was thus no need for clothing, which gives importance to one's external appearance. When he sewed the fig leaves, he was leaving his internal kind of existence and instead entering into superficiality.

Therefore, the opinion in the Sages that the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a fig tree is stressing a different aspect of the sin: that Adam became superficial, and as a result, he now needed clothing – the fig leaves, which were sewn from the *Eitz HaDa'as* itself...

One Lamb, Surrounded By Seventy Wolves

Before the sin, Adam possessed spiritual kinds of clothing, called *kosnos ohr*. One of the Sages, Rebbi Meir, had a Sefer Torah in which the word “*ohr*” was spelled with the Hebrew letter “*aleph*” (א), while the Sefer Torah we currently use spells it with the letter *ayin* (ע).⁵²

Why was the Sefer Torah of Rebbi Meir spelled like this? In order to understand this, let us reflect on the following.

Before, we mentioned that in a tree, there are two aspects – the actual tree trunk, and its fruits. The actual tree represents our reward in the future, because just as the tree trunk is called *keren*, so is our future reward called *keren*. Our actual reward is currently hidden from

⁵² *Bereishis Rabbah* 20:12

us. The fruits of a tree represent disparity, because fruits can be spread out.

The letter *aleph*, which has the numerical value of one, represents unity. Hashem is called the “*aleph*” (ruler) of the world⁵³, because He is One. The Jewish people are also called “one” nation, in contrast to any of the other seventy nations, who are not called “one”.

When the Jewish people fall from their level of *aleph*/oneness, they fall into seventy/disparity. They will then be surrounded by the seventy nations of the world, who are deemed seventy dangerous “wolves” surrounding one lamb – the Jewish people.

Wine in Hebrew is *yayin*, which has the numerical value of 70; when “wine enters and secrets come out” in a negative way, the Jewish people fall from “one” and are surrounded by “seventy.”

Thus, before the sin, which was before any secret motivations of man had been released, Adam had spiritual clothing, *kosnos ohr*, and it was then spelled with the letter aleph; because at that point, Adam was still connected in oneness with Hashem. After the sin, his *kosnos ohr* was now spelled with the letter *ayin*, and not *aleph*, because now disparity in the world was created, and now there would be disparity between the Jewish people and the other seventy nations. Before the sin, Adam’s soul contained every soul – the souls of the Jewish people, as well as the souls of all the other nations, in one unit. Jewish souls and non-Jewish souls were all unified. The separation of the souls only began with the sin; once there was a sin, the souls of the Jews and the souls of the non-Jews were apart from each other.⁵⁴

Ever since the sin, we are “one lamb, amidst seventy wolves.” We are one nation, surrounded by seventy nations. However, we also have an aspect of “seventy” as well. For example, on Sukkos we brought “seventy” sacrifices in the Temple, and there were also “seventy” souls that descended with Yaakov *Avinu* to Egypt.

⁵³ Rashi to Mishlei 16:28

⁵⁴ **Editor’s Note:** In the potential sense, the disparity existed even before the sin; but after the sin, the concept of disparity was outwardly revealed.

The seventy descendants of Yaakov *Avinu* counter the seventy nations, and this “seventy” came into Creation after the sin. This is reflected by how the Torah spells the word *kosnos ohr* with the letter *ayin* (70) after the sin; these *kosnos ohr*, made after the sin, were sewn from fig leaves.

This is the deep reason why figs are often infested with worms!

In today’s reality, we are basically at war with the other nations. We are fighting evil. With all this, however, there is an inner layer to reality taking place at the same time: we are “one lamb, amongst seventy wolves.” Those are the two aspects going on at once, in the current reality – we have an aspect of “seventy” in us, yet we also have the aspect of “one” in us.

We are currently amongst the seventy “wolves” of the world, and we have an aspect of “seventy” in us that can counter this. Our aspect of “seventy” is represented by wine (in Hebrew, *yayin*), which has the same numerical value seventy.⁵⁵

In the future, however, Hashem will return us back to the original state of our oneness, “*aleph*”. As it is written, “*The King has brought me to His chambers; we will rejoice and be happy in You.*”⁵⁶ Right now, we are amongst the seventy nations, and we must reveal our oneness to the degree that we can. Thus, the true meaning of “*When wine enters, secrets come out*” is that we have to reveal our oneness amidst the current situation of “seventy”.

As we are currently in exile, our *avodah* is paradoxical. On one hand, we have in us an aspect of “seventy” which can counter the seventy nations of the world, as we explained; and the other hand, we are also “one” amidst seventy. The depth behind the paradox is that we are supposed to reveal oneness precisely in a situation where there is disparity.

⁵⁵ The Hebrew word for wine is *yayin* יַיִן, which contains the letters *yud* ך, *yud* ך and *nun* ך. *Yud* is the numerical value of 10 and *nun* has the numerical value of 50. So, therefore, the gematria of *yayin* יַיִן is 70. 10+10+50=70.

⁵⁶ Shir HaShirim 1:4

The fact that we are surrounded by seventy nations and that we continue to survive is not just a miracle – it is because our goal is to reveal our oneness amidst the seventy nations so that we can return to our original state of before the sin. Therefore, our *avodah* is to return to the true kind of eating – and if we do so, we reveal oneness amidst the seventy.

An In-Depth Analysis on Olive Oil

We have explained at length thus far that grapes represent wine, which reveals our innermost secrets. Olive oil bears some resemblance to wine, because just as wine causes our secrets to be noticed [to rise to the top], so does olive oil always float to the top in a cup of water.

The olive represents how we must always seek to ascend in spirituality. This repairs the sin of Adam, who descended from his level as a result from the sin.

Oil is what is used to anoint the kings and High Priests of the Jewish people.⁵⁷ *Moshiach* will also be anointed with olive oil. A person's status is raised when their head is anointed with oil.

The *Gemara* says that eating olives [on a regular basis] causes one to forget his Torah learning.⁵⁸ However, the *Gemara* says that if one eats the oil from the olive, it will help his learning. This is perplexing! The olive makes a person forget his learning, yet its oil does the opposite?! The depth of the matter is because the olive is a food, and food does not connect a person to his Heavenly source. Oil, however, can connect a person to his Heavenly source, since oil is used to anoint someone to raise them to a higher status. Thus, olive oil helps us fix our eating.

Oil has several uses. It can be eaten; it can be used to anoint; or it can provide light. In the *Beis HaMikdash*, pure olive oil was required for the Menorah. But when it came to the *Mincha* offering, the oil did not have to be pure; the *Gemara* says that this is a decree of the Torah,

⁵⁷ Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* 1:7

⁵⁸ *Horayos* 13b

as the logic dictates the opposite: we would think that oil used for eating (the *mincha* offering) is better to use than oil used to light with.⁵⁹

This shows us that the olive contains two contradictory aspects. The olive by itself wouldn't be able to bring us to spiritual perfection, because since the olive is eaten, it is a food, and food always has some drawback to it. Although the olive is one of the Seven Species, and it represents a way of higher eating, still, it cannot bring a person to ascend spiritually. Only its oil can accomplish spiritual ascension, and we can see this from how olive oil always floats to the top of the water.

For this reason, the Torah does not just call it *zayis* "olive", but rather *zayis shemen*, olive oil. The olive itself causes one to forget his learning if he eats it. Although the olive is one of the Seven Species, its main benefit lies in its oil.

On a deeper note, oil represents the hidden light contained in everything. The possibility to grow in spirituality is only when a person searches for the hidden light in something – "*In Your light, light can be seen.*"

When a person only focuses on the materialistic aspect of something, he falls from his level. A person has to look for the spirituality contained in food – the "word of Hashem" that exists everywhere, even in food – for the G-dly spark is contained in everything.⁶⁰

An In-Depth Analysis of Dates/Honey

Now we will briefly discuss the depth behind dates, which the Torah calls "honey" (*devash*).

It is written, "*Honey and milk under your tongue.*"⁶¹ This hints to us that honey is meant to go under our tongue – in other words, honey represents something which is supposed to remain inside of us, something which we should not release outward. It is the opposite

⁵⁹ *Menachos* 6:1

⁶⁰ A statement of the *Baal Shem Tov*.

⁶¹ *Shir HaShirim* 4:11

of the concept of wine, which is meant to bring out our innermost secrets into the open.

Before, we explained that it is not always a good thing when we reveal our insides outward. This is when we reveal something which doesn't remain inside us as a result of releasing it. If it is something that can still remain inside even after we reveal it, it is the kind of secret which wine serves to reveal.

But on a deeper note, there is an opposite concept to this, which is that we have to also realize that are supposed to internalize matters, and we do not have to seek to reveal them outward.

In other words, the Seven Species teach us to internalize their lessons. We take them in from the outside, where they enter our mouths – and we are supposed to let their lessons stay inside us, internalized.

The point behind this is that we are meant to reveal spirituality in matters that appear to be superficial. We have a power to take external matters and reveal an inner layer to them – in other words, when we internalize a matter, we reveal the inner layer of a matter.

This is based upon what we mentioned in the beginning: Creation resembles a tree. When we look at a tree, it appears as if we see of what the tree has revealed, because we see its fruit. But the inner perspective is that even when we see fruits growing on a tree, we aren't seeing the actual fruit yet – for they are still considered part of the tree, for all purposes.⁶² When the fruits are still on the tree and they haven't been picked yet, they are considered to be part of the tree.

What we can understand from this is that even when something is revealed outwards, the purpose is not only to reveal. There is a more inner purpose, and that is to internalize matters which we take in from our outside. This is the inner depth to “When wine enters, secrets come out.” It is that even when we reveal our secrets, the point is not simply to reveal them outward, but to internalize all of our understandings. This concept – to

⁶² See *Makkos 12a*

bring in matters from the outside, so we can internalize them – is represented by honey, which goes “*under your tongue.*”

The Pomegranate

The next of the Seven Species we will discuss is the *rimon* (pomegranate).

A pomegranate has a crown to it⁶³, and a crown means *Keser*. A pomegranate has 613 seeds in it, parallel to the 613 *mitzvos*.⁶⁴ Above the 613 seeds in the pomegranate is its crown – in other words, above all the 613 *mitzvos* is the point called *Keser*.

The word *keser* in Hebrew has the numerical value of 620, while the number of *mitzvos* are 613. There is a difference of 7 which hints that the Seven Species are what connects our 613 *mitzvos* to the point above the *mitzvos* which is *Keser*.⁶⁵

The *Kohen Gadol*⁶⁶ was anointed with olive oil. The oil was placed on his forehead, yet the forehead is not the highest place of the head. Higher than the forehead is the actual top of the head, where a crown can be placed. Thus, *Keser* “Crown” – which is represented by the pomegranate – is at a higher level than the olive oil. In this way, a Jewish king⁶⁷ is at a higher spiritual level than the *Kohen Gadol*, because the king wears the “crown” – he is at the level of *Keser*.

Keser is also identified in the *sefarim hakedoshim* as *ayin*, which means “nothingness”.⁶⁸ When we negate our ego, we nullify our existence to Hashem - we feel like “nothing.” This brings us to the very high point known as *Keser*.

⁶³ Tractate *Uktzin 2:3*

⁶⁴ Malbim to *Shir HaShirim 4:13*

⁶⁵ *Hagahos Beer Yitzchok, 5, in sefer Mayim Adirim.*

⁶⁶ *High Priest of the Temple*

⁶⁷ Editor's Note: *Understandably, this was only true with the righteous kings of Israel such as Shaul, Dovid, Shlomo and Chizkiyahu, and not the wicked kings of Israel.*

⁶⁸ *Eitz Chaim, 342:1.*

The lesson we can take out of this is that when we eat, we are supposed to feel totally nullified to the Creator. When we nullify our ego before Hashem, we are going above our comprehension in doing so by tapping into our state of nothingness, *ayin*.⁶⁹

A person who doesn't merit to nullify himself through his eating – what happens? He merely digests the food and excretes it, and the food he ate turns to waste, exiting outward. The eating could have exited and ascended upwards to Heaven, but instead of doing that, the food merely exits downward and turns into human waste.

When the Jewish people merited the miracle of *Manna* in the desert, there was no bad *manna* left over from it; all of it was fit for consumption.⁷⁰ This represents the fact that “Torah is not given except to those who eat the manna”⁷¹; in other words, eating of the manna is the holy kind of eating, and holy eating merits a person to truly receive the Torah.

The word *manna* has the same numerical value in Hebrew as the word *ilan* (tree). This alludes that the true kind of eating is like the eating of the *manna* – a kind of eating in which there is nothing bad leftover.

When the people ate *manna*, it did not come from a desire to fill what they lacked, but as a way to connect to Hashem.

The eating of the *manna* represented a level in which a person only ascends in spirituality, and he never falls from his level.

We, of course, are not on the level of eating in a way that reflects how the Jews in the desert ate *manna*. We do have our falls in spirituality. But we are able to reach a spark of this great level, in which we eat so that we can ascend in our connection with Hashem, and that we aspire to reach a level in which we never fall.

May we be granted by Hashem, through the eating of the Seven Species on *Tu B'Shevat*, as well as through all the other times we eat – that we should reach some spark of true eating. And when we merit even a tiny spark of that truth, it will light up all the darkness, and it will reveal light in its place. May we merit this, speedily, in our days, *Amen*.

⁶⁹ The concept of *ayin* is further elaborated upon by the author in [sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh Part 6, Chapters 3-7](#) (with English translations of this available at the Bilvavi website), as well as in *Bilvavi Volumes 7, 8, and 9*.

⁷⁰ *Yoma 75b*

⁷¹ *Midrash Tanchuma, Beshalach: 20*.