



Learning/Discussion
The Spiritual Connection of the Seven Species of Israel

(Based on the article “Parshat Eikev: The Seven Fruits of Israel” by Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum [Click here](#) to see the original article on the Canfei Nesharim website.)

The Land of Israel is described as “A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey.” These seven species were the staple foods consumed by the Jewish people in the Land of Israel during biblical times. They contain special holiness, as reflected by the unique blessing recited after eating them, thanking G-d for the goodness of the land.

These seven species comprise a wealth of spiritual attributes, nutrients and medicinal properties. The Kabbalist, The Arizal connects the spiritual energies of each fruit to one of the seven lower *sefirot* (spiritual emanations) that we count during each week of the Omer. He relates wheat to *chesed* (kindness), barley to *gevura* (restraint), grapes to *teferet* (beauty), figs to *netzach* (endurance), and pomegranate to *hod* (majesty and glory).

Chesed (kindness)—to reach out and extend oneself toward others—corresponds to **wheat** because as our food staple, it is a nourishing food. According to rabbi and physician Maimonides, wheat strengthens the body and increases mothers’ milk—the ultimate nourishment and expression of *chesed*.

Gevura (restraint)—contraction, reduction, and setting boundaries—corresponds to **barley** because each barley seed is enclosed in a strong hull, its boundary. Barley’s contracting quality enables it to reduce liquid when added to soup. Also, according to a study by FDA, barley reduces cholesterol and risk of heart disease.

Tiferet (beauty) is related to **grapes** in that grapes grow in beautiful clusters. The way that *tiferet* is a balance between *chesed* and *gevura*, grapes both nourish the body and help the body with elimination. Grape-seed oil nourishes the skin; it also contains a very high content of antioxidants that help in eliminating free radicals (cancer-causing agents). Grapes also possess a diuretic quality (helping to pass liquid from the body), yet they contain a significant amount of vitamins A, B, C, and help to boost energy and blood flow.

Netzach (endurance)—longevity (living a long life)—correlates to figs because the fig tree has a very long ripening period of more than three months. Maimonides also taught that figs alleviate constipation which is one of the main tenets of longevity and health. Figs may benefit the elderly by strengthening the blood and giving more energy. Figs are very rich in minerals, especially potassium, iron and calcium, and they contain omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Figs also contain phytosterols, which help lower the total levels of cholesterol, and they may help prevent certain types of cancer.

Hod (majesty and glory) are represented in the **pomegranate** because it is a beautiful and majestic fruit and even has a crown. According to Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh *hod* corresponds to our immune system, and pomegranates do, in fact, boost our immune system. Pomegranate seed oil causes cancer cells to self destruct; the juice of the fruit is toxic to most breast cancer cells, yet has almost no effect on healthy cells. Pomegranate juice has also been proven to decrease heart disease by decreasing LDL (“bad cholesterol”) and increased HDL (“good cholesterol”).

Yesod (foundation) corresponds to **olives** in that olive oil is the foundation of most Mediterranean (i.e. Israeli) foods. Olive oil also provides many health benefits, serving as the foundation, or *yesod*, of life. Maimonides explains that olive oil cleanses the liver and loosens stools. Olive oil protects against heart disease by lowering blood pressure and it has strong anti-bacterial properties. It also contains several antioxidants to help fight cancer.

Malchut (kingdom) corresponds to **dates** because as a king holds the highest power in the land, directing all of his lower subjects, dates are connected with the important digestive system that directs the lower body to eliminate wastes. The Talmud teaches that dates heal intestinal illnesses.

The Torah mentions the seven species of Israel as central to Judaism. We elevate the physical (eating fruit) with the spiritual as we connect the seven species to the *sefirot* and make *brachot* before and after eating. Eating the seven species in a conscious way can promote our well-being, help us connect to the land of Israel, and deepen our relationship with Hashem. Each of the seven species contains deep lessons about G-d and our spiritual lives. Every time we eat them we have the opportunity to tune into their spiritual messages, eat consciously, and bring the world a step closer to its perfected state.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How are the seven species of Israel central to Jewish spirituality?
2. How does eating consciously elevate us spiritually?
3. How does eating the seven species promote health and well-being?
4. How does eating the seven species connect us to and strengthen our relationship with the land of Israel?
5. How does it deepen our relationship with Hashem?
6. What lessons can we learn from each of the seven species?
7. What environmental message can we learn from studying about the seven species?
8. How do we rely on the earth?
9. What can we do to protect this earth?