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THE **RAHMANI FAMILY** EDITON

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פרשת שלח

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Fruit of The Land

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Part I. Seeing The Fruit

The Mission of The Spies

שְׁלַח לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן – Send forth men, and they should survey the Land of Canaan (Shelach 13:2). When our forefathers were approaching the borders of Eretz Canaan they were commanded by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to send out spies to search out the land in preparation for its eventual conquest and settlement. Even though Hashem had assured them that they would conquer the land, they were not permitted to sit around waiting for Hashem to destroy the nations of Canaan – they were expected to prepare weapons and shields and employ all the strategies of war; and included in those preparations was to send out spies.

Now, when spies are sent to search out a land there are many important points of information that they must discover. הַחֶזֶק הוּא.

הַרְפָּה – Some cities are stronger than others, הַמְעַט הוּא אִם רַב – Some areas are more populated than others. They needed to know which parts of the land were uninhabited; it would be easier to begin the conquest in those lonely places where cities were few and far between.

וּמָה הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּהִנָּה הַבְּמִחְנִים אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים – They had to find out where the walled cities were situated guarding the passages through the mountains; it would be difficult to bring a large nation of men, women and children through a fortified area – they might be ambushed. Better to enter the plains where people lived in small open towns.

Show and Tell

There's a lot of important information twelve spies can gather over forty days and they came back and reported everything. However, we make note of a very curious thing; along with their report they brought something else: וַיָּשִׁיבוּ אוֹתָם דָּבָר וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵדָה – They reported back to Moshe and Aharon and to the whole nation, וַיִּרְאוּם אֵת פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ – and they showed them the fruits of the land (Shelach 13:26). They didn't just tell the Am Yisroel about the fruit; they brought back samples. And they didn't do it on their own; they were following the command of Moshe Rabeinu: וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ – And you should take from the fruit of the land (ibid. 20)

Now, that's surprising because they could have satisfied themselves with a description of what they saw. And what a description it would have been! The land at that time was the most fertile and beautiful place in the world. One of the reasons that it took so long before Hakodosh Boruch Hu fulfilled His promise to give Eretz Canaan to the Am Yisroel was that the land was being prepared for them.

The Big Garden of Eden

For hundreds of years the land of Canaan was being improved by the Seven Nations – and they were doing an excellent job. They were expert agriculturists, and they were putting in all that they could to make the land more beautiful and fruitful.

And because of that the whole land became like one big garden. It was a *Gan Eden*! They terraced every hill and every mountainside – there wasn't a span of earth that was uncultivated. And the very best produce grew there. It was a remarkable thing what they made from that land. If we could take a look at the land as it was when the *Bnei Yisroel* entered, we would have been amazed at the remarkable fertility of that land. The land was *tovah ha'aretz me'od me'od* (ibid. 14:7).

A Land of Milk and Honey

That's what the *meraglim* told the nation when they returned from their mission: "It's a very good land that is *zavas chalav udevash* – it's flowing with milk and honey." And when it says *chalav u'devash*, we have to know it was literally so. The dates hanging on the trees were so fat with *devash* that they split open and the honey dripped down; everywhere you walked you were up to your ankles with honey. Not only that; the goats were healthy and strong and they produced so much milk that their udders couldn't contain their milk; they were dripping with milk. And so the fields were filled with date honey and goat milk – and it remained like that for many years. Rabba bar Bar Chana lived a long time after the *churban* and he described it: "I was once walking in the fields of *Eretz Yisroel* in a certain place where it was still *zavas chalav u'dvash*; I was wading in milk and honey up to my ankles."

Did you ever try milk and date honey? I'm telling you it's very good. The creamy sweet taste of the milk mixes with the fruity flavor of the date honey and the result is very pleasurable to the human palate – it's a delectable mixture. And so they used to bend over and scoop up a cupful of milk and date honey and eat it; they would make a nice *bracha* and keep on walking in the fields, scooping and eating, scooping and eating.

"The land was dripping with milk and honey; with all good things." That's how the *meraglim* described the land. But a description wasn't enough. *זֶבֶת הַלֵּב וְדִבְשׁ הוּא וְזֶה פְּרִיָּהּ* – It's flowing with milk and honey, *and these are its fruit*. Not only did they give a report about the land, but they also lugged a bunch of grapes along with them to show the people.

The Great Grapes

And they weren't like our grapes that you bring home in a shopping bag – no, these were enormous; each one was the size of a grapefruit. One cluster of grapes was so huge that **וַיִּשְׁאָרוּ בַמִּזוֹט בְּשֵׁנַיִם** – they carried it on a pole with two people; to bring it back the cluster they had to tie it to a pole. That's the minimum *peirush* – that two people carried a pole and on the pole was hanging a cluster of grapes. They were *that* heavy. It was as big as a cow, maybe bigger.

The truth is that it might have been even *more* than that. The *gemara* in Sotah (34a) says they carried the cluster, **בַּמִּזוֹט בְּשֵׁנַיִם**, with two poles; not two *people* but two *poles*. So, there were four people, each pair carrying a pole and the cluster was hanging down between both poles. And another *man d'amar* there claims it was two poles across two poles – two poles from north to south and another two supporting poles from east to west. It means eight people were needed to carry one cluster of grapes. One *eshkol anavim* from Eretz Yisroel was so big that it took eight grown men to carry it.

Valley of The Cluster

Whatever it was, even according to the simple *pshat* that it was one cluster carried on a pole, it was something to look at! It was so remarkable that they even gave a name to that place after that cluster of grapes. *Nachal Eshkol!* The Valley of the Cluster.

Now, the question for us is what's this big hullabaloo about fruit. To come back with battle strategies, I understand. But to gather such heavy fruit and to carry them on poles for miles and miles to the *machaneh* Yisroel? It's not gold after all; it's just grapes. What was so important about the fruit that the nation had to see it with their own eyes?

Back to the Beginning

Now, in order to answer this question we're going to have to go back to the very beginning of time where we find the first time that fruit are mentioned in the Torah. "And the earth brought forth vegetation; herbage yielding seed after its kind and fruit trees that make fruit according to its kind with seeds in it (Bereishis 1:11).

Now, it's remarkable how little mention is made in this *possuk* to the grains – wheat, barley, rice and the other cereals that are the mainstay of Mankind. Barley! The wonders of barley—barley is used all over the world! Or rice! Rice feeds millions in Asia. But not one word. The Torah could have told us about the wonders of potatoes. Do you know that the potato is a wonderful vegetable? It's like a bun; it's a big mass of starch collected in one place—a ball of starch that fills you up; it's remarkable. When they brought potatoes to Europe for the first time, people were amazed. Some fruit have starch too but here is a whole bowl of starch. It's amazing! And it was immediately seized upon by some nations in Europe and it became their staple. Poland and Ireland adopted the potato as their national food and the masses lived off potatoes.

Potatoes are a miracle. Did you ever see a big potato cooked or boiled? It's enough for a full meal; it's filling. Maybe you want a little bit of fish with it, a little bit of something else? OK; but it's the potato that fills you up!

Why Ignore The Potatoes?

And yet, the Torah lumps all of those miracles – the potatoes and the barley and the rice and the maize and the cabbage and countless other beneficial produce – together in the word *desheh*. They are all lumped together in a brief notice: “Let the earth bring forth grass and herbs yielding seed.” The food that has fed the world since the beginning of time is given scant attention; just a few words.

And it's the “fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind” – although but a very minor part of human sustenance – that is given especial attention. Not just in that verse; it's repeated again and again. Look in the Chumash there and you'll see that the Torah mentions fruit several times while other things that we would think are more important are not mentioned at all.

And that's because more than anything else – more than potatoes and rice and barley; more than all of that – fruit is the most remarkable demonstration of Hashem's kindness and wisdom. When you see an apple on the tree, when you see a grape on the vine—it's a masterpiece, a beautiful thing. A fruit hanging on a tree is a jewel. It's more precious than a jewel. A jewel is a dead thing, a lifeless thing.

It can't teach you anything. But the grape and the apple and the peach and the cherry and all the other fruit teach us more than anything else about the *niflaos* of the *chesed Hashem*, all about the beauty that Hashem put into this world. Fruits are a great opportunity to gain Awareness of Hashem and that's why the Torah emphasizes the fruit of the trees more than anything else.

Gan Eden Was A Fruit Orchard

And that's why when Adam and Chava were put into this world they were put into a Gan of Fruit Trees. And when Hakodosh Boruch Hu describes that glorious garden in the Torah, the one thing we're told about is that it was full of fruit trees. Trees are the outstanding features of that garden; that's what's emphasized.

Now, I'm certain that the garden had wheat. I'm certain that there was rice growing there as well. It had all kinds of useful vegetables. I'm sure it had garlic and onions too. How could you live without garlic and onions? It's important in life. And yet none of those are mentioned. But one thing is mentioned and conspicuously reiterated – *the fruit of the trees*.

Now, we were children when we learned this story for the first time and we still think in the terms that children think about; but we're adults now and we should therefore make an attempt to reconsider that story. There's something of immense significance here – Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave to Adam and Chava a garden of nothing but fruit trees. If this is how the history of the world began, it means that's how it was intended to be. Of all the gifts in the world that Hashem could have given to the first man, He chose to give him the gift of a fruit orchard.

A Gift For Tzadikim

Now, to us this seems very puzzling. Because suppose you wanted to give a very great gift to the *tzaddik hador*, to a great *rosh yeshivah* or somebody like that. Would you think to give him a garden of delights with all types of fruit trees? You wouldn't do that. You might give him a library of beautiful *sefarim*. Ah! That would be a garden of delights for him. As he walks in he sees shelves and shelves of beautifully bound *sefarim*; *shasim*, *mefarshim* on *Tanach*, all the *rishonim*, all the *achronim*. That's the greatest delight for him.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger, *zichrono levrachah*, let's say. How would you honor him? Would you give him an orchard with fruit trees? He's not interested. If you made for him a library, ah, that would be his greatest happiness. He picks a *sefer* off the shelf – for him that's the most delicious fruit – and he opens up the fruit, the *sefer*, and takes a look inside. "Ooh, this *chiddush!* I always was thinking about that. *Baruch shekivanti.*" That would be the biggest *simchah* for him. That's a real garden of delights. That's what we would have said.

Delight of Yeshiva Bochorim

Not only Rabbi Akiva Eiger. Even *yeshiva bochorim* find their greatest delight in *seforim*. You know when the *Ketzos Hachoshen* came out, everybody went wild over it. It's a *sefer* full of beautiful ideas – there are so many *chiddushim* in *Ketzos Hachoshen* – and it captured the imagination of many people. Some people studied the whole *Ketzos Hachoshen*. I knew in Slabodka an old *bachur* who knew the whole *Ketzos Hachoshen* by heart

In *Telzer Yeshivah* they used to walk outside the town sometimes and talk in learning; *bein hasedarim* and Friday afternoons, they used to walk in the fields and talk Torah. There was a saying that the fields of the farmers around the town of Telz had the fragrance of *Ketzos*. It smelled like *Ketzos* on all sides; a beautiful fragrance, the fragrance of *Ketzos Hachoshen*. That's how much they loved the *Ketzos Hachoshen*.

Not only the *Ketzos*; whenever a new *sefer* came out – the *Avnei Miluim*, *Shev Shmaatsa* – everybody was captivated by these *sefarim*. It was like a garden of new fruits that were discovered and people studied that and enjoyed them to no end. It was a tremendous *simchah* to learn these *sefarim*. I remember seventy years ago I used to see two *yeshiva bachurim* sitting and learning every day at lunchtime one of these *sefarim* and they were enjoying it to no end. Of course, you have to gain that taste – it's an acquired taste – but they had the *cheshek* to do it, and they really enjoyed it. Once you understand what genuine delight is, you can't let go.

The Man With Giant Intellect

Now Adam Harishon you have to know was capable of much more than learning the *Ketzos Hachoshen*. When he was created, he

was a shining creature. Not only was the *yetzir kapav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu* a beautiful person with a very beautiful personality but he was shining with intellect *misof haolam ad sofo*. It means he had tremendous intellectual abilities. He was an *iluy*; he had a tremendously genius mind and he would have enjoyed the *seforim* much more than Rabbi Akiva Eiger *zichrono levrachah*. Of course, it wouldn't be anything new to him. He would open up the *sefer* and say, "That's very good. I'm so happy to see that my *eineklach* are understanding something correctly." Sometimes incorrectly. It would be interesting for him to see that.

And this enormous mind, this enormous personality was given a gift of what? A garden of fruit trees! That's a remarkable thing. It doesn't make sense to us. What's the purpose of giving him an orchard? Fruit trees?! Is that the way for an *ish hama'alah*, a person of the greatest intellect, to be made happy and successful in this world?

And the answer is a resounding yes! *Gan Eden* was intended to teach us how to be successful at our most important function in this world! **וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְפָּנָיו** – *Elokim made this world for what? He did it for one purpose; so that people should be aware of Him* (Koheles 3:14). That's the great success of our lives – Awareness of Hashem. And in the beginning of creation Mankind was placed into *Gan Eden* because that is what Hashem chose to be the best opportunity for such a career – a garden of fruit is *the* place to become great in recognizing the Creator. This was the most effective opportunity for Adam to achieve greatness in his purpose in life.

Part II. Understanding The Fruit

Seeing Is Believing

Now, to us that may seem somewhat unusual. We would think it's *gashmiyus*, it's materialism – how could a Garden of Delight be a place, *the* place, for service of Hashem?

But to a man like Adam, a man with a great mind like he had, a fruit garden was a ladder going up to Hashem. The *chesed Hashem*

that was demonstrated in *Gan Eden* was to Adam and Chava an opportunity for endless greatness. They walked together in *Gan Eden* and they studied the trees and the fruit because they knew that the purpose of the fruit was to teach wisdom: נְחַמְדָּהָ עֵץ לְהַשְׁבִּיל – the fruit of the tree was desirable to give wisdom (Bereishis 3:6). Every time they saw another kind of a fruit, they became excited. They studied it and spoke about it in detail and they exclaimed, “Ay yah yay! The wonders of Hashem!” I’m sure that when Adam looked at an apple he saw a thousand times more *chiddushim* than we see in the *Ketzos Hachoshen*.

Eating Is Believing

Not by only looking at it. I’m sure they tasted them too. When Adam took down a fruit and ate it he became even wiser. That’s a secret that I’m sorry not everybody will appreciate. Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted Adam to eat *peiros* and to exclaim, “I love You Hashem.” That was the purpose of it all! The beauty and the sweetness of the fruits combined for the purpose of giving Adam and Chava the oppressed to achieve the summit, the acme of Awareness of Hashem. They were fulfilling the purpose of creation – they were becoming more and more aware of Hashem by means of fruit!

Adam and Chava studied the *chessed* of the *Borei* and they sang *shirah*; they sang songs to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You know today when we make a *bracha* on an apple we’re merely echoing in a very small way what Adam and Chava did in *Gan Eden*. Because when Adam and Chava thanked Hashem for fruit, it wasn’t a blessing – it was a beautiful chorus of gratitude to Hashem.

Cooking Fruit

And there’s so much to sing about. Once a person learns how to eat fruit, once he can make a *leining* in the *sugya* of *peiros*, there’s no end to the greatness of Hashem that he’ll see. Because of all the exhibitions that Hashem is showing us in this world we must know that the fruits of the tree are one of the greatest of all demonstrations of the kindness and wisdom of Hashem.

The fruit of the tree is unique in nature and it pays for us to consider this most outstanding phenomenon. They are capable, first of all, of *being eaten without any preparation*. A remarkable thing!

They are fully cooked on the tree. We're accustomed to that and therefore we pass over this demonstration of Hashem's purposeful planning. We don't pay attention to this remarkable fact. Look what it says there. וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה – *The woman saw*, כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֵאֲכָל – *that this fruit is good to eat*; it means it's ready to eat without any preparation. We wouldn't have noticed, but Chava took note of that.

How could it be that anything becomes fit to eat by itself? Chemical collections of carbon dioxide and water, starches, whatever it is—these are things that are caused by the processes of nature. And therefore, it ought to be necessary to mix them or at least to prepare them, cook them; *something* has to be done! But on the tree the fruit grows and it ripens, and it is ready to eat when you pick it! And not only is the fruit fit to eat but it's precisely suited to the human taste. There's a little bit of acid in it, not too much. A little bit of sugar, not too much. It's exactly the way humans relish it. It's tart and it's sweet!

Hide and Seek

I'll tell you a little more. Wonder of wonders, before the apple is fit to eat it is almost invisible. When it's not ripe yet, it's green and it hides among the green leaves in order that you should not notice it. Because if you did, you might pluck it off the tree and take a bite. And you'd be disappointed. It would be hard and acidic and it would give you a stomachache. But when the apple becomes ripe, or the orange or any other fruit, it turns into a brilliant hue; a glorious red, a beautiful yellow, depending on which fruit it is, which advertises its presence. It "turns on its lights" and now you see a red light shining among the green leaves of the apple tree or a yellow light shining among the green leaves of the citrus and orange trees.

Wonders of wonders! For months the apple or the orange was holding on tightly to the branch. Even if you shook the tree, as long as the apples were not ripe, the fruit would not come down. But lo and behold! When the fruit is ripe, it lets go *by itself* and it comes falling down.

Fruit Machines

And then when you open it up and you eat the contents, you have to spit out the core or the seeds. And that's a coupon entitling

you to another fruit. If it will fall on the ground and take root then next year there'll be a little tree growing where you spat out the seeds. It's a *neis* of remarkable proportions!

Here is something that's creating food without any kind of apparent machinery. There is machinery, only it's so minute, so microscopic, that you don't realize what's doing. There's a marvelous machinery concealed in the cells. And nobody made it except the Creator.

Can you make an apple? Can DuPont make an apple? Will they ever be able to make an apple? Never! Never in a million years. It's a wonderful creation full of wisdom and cunning and planning. There's so much science that is necessary to know and they'll never know enough to create even one of these fruits; they'll never be able to replicate that machinery no matter how much they try.

Chinese Apples Are Still Apples

Here's a perfect machine that reproduces exactly according to the prototype. You'll never find an apple tree that grows peaches. Not in a million years. Nobody ever reported it. Isn't that a remarkable thing? There are apple trees all over the world and not once did a peach grow from an apple tree. Here the evolutionists are trying to tell us that by sudden mutation new species spring up; and yet there are millions of apple trees and not once has a report come from South America, or China, or Alaska that an apple tree produced something other than apples. A remarkable thing. And not only that but *li'minah* – the same kind of apples. If it's a Cortland then it's growing Cortland apples. Red Delicious trees make Red Delicious apples. It's a remarkable thing.

Now don't think it's a simple matter. Only because you're accustomed to it when you're a child and you never thought about it subsequently so your mind is stultified. It's a great pity; we've ignored it for so long that we've become habituated to it and we lose the ability to appreciate it. And so it's *kidai* for us to study again the fact that when you plant an apple seed the machinery in that seed doesn't produce potatoes.

Taste and Color

And not only does the machinery produce fruits but it produces the great miracle of taste. Now, why don't you try making taste? Taste is very complicated. Even expert chemists who try to make artificial taste find it very difficult. Try to make taste from nothing but a little bit of water and soil. You won't get very far. And here the tree takes nothing but a little soil, air, sunshine and water and it turns it into various tastes.

And colors too! The beautiful colors of the fruits are a miracle; red and pink and yellow and purple—a marvelous pallet of various tints and hues are created just by that little seed that has in it all the machinery and the know-how to produce these colors and tastes.

When we see a red apple, we're not excited. Why is the apple red? It's a miracle that it's red. A red apple?! We should sing to Hashem. Look at this! Redness! Where does redness come from? The earth is not red. The apple seed is not red. Do you know how many miracles, how many *nisim* had to take place before the red color was created? And so beautifully shaped? You look at that apple and could almost faint with excitement and happiness at that beautiful gift. Who would think of eating it up? *Chas veshalom*. It's so beautiful; it's a pity you have to finally eat it.

Fruit Juice

In addition it's full of liquid. There's so much liquid that an apple is almost a glass full of juice. Only that the juice is cunningly imprisoned in tiny cells. Try to cut open a container of apple juice; it will spill out all over the place. Whereas when you cut an apple in half, it doesn't spill; maybe a drop or two, but the juice doesn't pour out because it is cunningly contained in tiny cells, tiny little pockets. And the walls of the cells themselves are made of juice. So if you put the apple in a juicer it comes out almost like a liquid. And this liquid we have to know, is not just a sugary water - it's full of nourishment, full of vitamins.

And it's a remarkable phenomenon that the fruit is wrapped in a container, a wrapper that is actually waxed—a plastic waxed coating that's very thin; not too difficult for the teeth to bite through but still strong enough to maintain the fruit for a long time - not only during

the many months that it hangs on the tree, but also for a long time after it's picked off the tree. Unless the skin is breached, the apple will remain fresh on your table for days. It's a food wrapped in a protective covering and when the time comes to eat the food you eat the wrapper along with it!

Now, I know we don't think that way – it's because we're a long distance away from Adam Harishon. Adam didn't munch apples like a cow munching grass. He looked at them before he ate them and he took the time to think. And the more he looked, he became greater and greater every minute. He was soaring up higher and higher closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And then he took a bite. *Ooh wah!* What a delight! Adam understood that this world was made to be a place of delight and enjoyment – enjoyment that brings to Awareness of Hashem.

Part III. Enjoying The Fruit

The Field Trip Of Tzadikim

Our great people understood that. In *Mesichta Brachos* (44a) the *gemara* tells us about an outing that the *chachmei haTorah* used to take from time to time to the orchards of Ginosar. Ginosar is an area in the north of Eretz Yisroel, around the area of the lake Kinneres and the fruits that grew there were famed for their excellence; they were considered delicacies that grew on trees and it says there that Rabbi Yochanan had a custom to go out with his *talmidim* to the orchards of Ginosar for the purpose of sampling the fruits that grew in that district. I don't know when he did it; it could be it was on *chamishah asar b'shvat*; maybe on Purim or *chol hamoed*; maybe more often, I can't tell you. But from time to time he would go out with his *talmidim* with him and they would spend a good part of the day eating fruit.

Now, we understand right away that Rabbi Yochanan and his *talmidim* didn't go on trips. His students weren't boys who needed a *chol hamoed* outing; they were *zekeinim*, elderly *chachamim*, who spent their days in the study of Torah; they wouldn't think of such things. They would be the last people to waste time; their minds

were constantly occupied with all the big questions of the *gemara*; their minds were churning always with very many Talmudic problems besides for all the *sisrei Torah* they studied.

And yet these great men had the practice of leaving the *yeshiva* to eat the fruits of Ginosar. And they didn't come to eat just what they needed and then go home — they went all out! They spent time, a lot of time, in the orchards of Ginosar and they ate and ate and ate. And we'll see that they went to extremes. We'll soon see that *they stuffed themselves* with the *peiros*.

Slippery Foreheads and Baldness

Rebbe Abahu, a disciple of Rebbe Yochanan, joined the outings with his rebbi. And about Rebbe Abahu it says that he used to eat so many fruit that a fly would slip off from his forehead. Now, a fly doesn't slip you know; it walks upside down on a ceiling and doesn't fall. But Rabbi Abahu's forehead was so swollen with oils and juices from overeating the fruits that even a fly could hardly keep a foothold on his forehead!

It's an exaggeration but it tells you how much he must have eaten. Rav Ammi and Rav Assi were also disciples of Rebbe Yochanan — they were from the *Gedolei Yisroel* — and the *Gemara* tells us that they used to eat *ad d'natur mazyahu* — until their hair fell out. They ate so much that it caused a metabolic disturbance in their bodies and their hair fell out; they lost their hair.

It's remarkable! These were the top sages of the *Am Yisroel* who spent their days and their nights only in Torah study; and yet here we see that they went out to eat fruits — and they ate all they could.

Kollel Trips

Now, to us that's a very surprising thing. Imagine if today a *Rosh Kollel* would say "Let's leave the *kollel* today and go to the fruit store and buy some delicious fruits. And we'll sit on Ocean Parkway and eat them all day." His stock would immediately fall in the eyes of his disciples. He would be out of a job! We couldn't even imagine such a thing! *Ovdei Hashem* are expected to spend their time in the service of Hashem and that's all!

And so we understand that that's exactly what Rebbe Yochanan and his *talmidim* were doing. They were eating to gain a greater Awareness of Hashem, a greater love for Hashem. Otherwise, the entire story is meaningless – worse than meaningless. The great sages of the *yeshiva* should go out to eat fruits and stuff themselves?! Yes, they stuffed themselves with Awareness of Hashem!

Now, if that's the purpose, they didn't do it half-heartedly then. *They went all out to achieve that purpose!* Because it's not enough to see the beauty of the *peiros*. You know, the proof of the pudding is not only looking at it; it's also in eating it. And so, they got busy tasting Hashem's samples. And while they were sitting and eating the *peiros* they were talking to each other and exclaiming, "Ah, how good it is, how delicious it is, how *geshmak* it is!"

Reish Lakish Goes All Out

Now, if you'll look in the *Gemara* there you'll see that nobody went more all out than Reish Lakish. Reish Lakish was an enthusiastic person, full of energy, and so, he launched into this program head-on. And when he embarked on this business of tasting, **טַעְמוּ וְרָאוּ כִּי טוֹב ה' ה' טוֹב** – “Taste and see that Hashem is good”, he didn't do it like the others. He did it with so much energy that he lost control of himself. He used to eat so many fruit, *ad d'marid*, until he went wild. He was out of control and he went berserk! He became so drunk from eating that Rebbe Yochanan had to send a message to the *nasi* – that was the Jewish ruler – and the *nasi* had to send a squad of Jewish soldiers after him to carry him home. They had to arrest him and bring him home. Otherwise, they couldn't control him.

You know the Rambam describes such a thing at the end of *Hilchos Teshuva* (10:10). He says that when a man really falls in love with Hakodosh Boruch Hu he forgets about everything else in this world and he's like a drunkard. He's intoxicated with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Reish Lakish was staggering; he couldn't control himself. He was raving with love of Hakodosh Boruch Hu! He studied those *peiros* so deeply and he went mad; he was out of control. Rebbe Yochanan was a man who was in full control. He had a strong grip of the steering wheel of his life; he was the greatest man. Reish Lakish however, was a different personality. He allowed himself to lose control, when it came to loving Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He let loose of

the steering wheel and went off the road a little bit. And therefore they had to bring a band of soldiers to take him home, put him in bed and wait until he would sleep it off. It's an amazing story!

We're not talking about a couple of boys who went someplace on Simchas Torah or Purim and got drunk. No, we're talking about *Gedolei Yisroel*. The ones we look up to as leaders, our models. They lived to gain Awareness of Hashem – and they succeeded! Of course, that wasn't the only method. You can't become great in the ways of Hashem by eating fruits all the time. They learned *gemara* all the time; they served Hakodosh Boruch Hu all their lives. But from time to time they utilized this method also. You need to make use of all the methods that are available and these great people didn't neglect anything.

Fruit Eating 101

Now today of course, I understand it's difficult for us to imagine such a career. Because, after eating two apples we're going to be overfed, we'll be stuffed, and therefore we won't see any benefit. Even the first apple was practically a waste of effort. You have to be trained. You have to be prepared for this career. The very first time you begin to eat fruits requires a big preface. You have to prepare yourself for a career of fruit eating – you have to learn *how* to eat fruits!

That was the career chosen by Hashem for Adam Harishon, and that's why he lived in a fruit store! All around him was nothing but fruit! Now, I imagine that a person hearing this would say, "What?! You want to lock me into a fruit store – let's say they closed the doors at night and I'd be in a fruit store all night? I might eat a few fruits, but I'd be bored." Some people would want to go to the movies instead. And if he's a better person, he wants to go back to the *yeshiva* instead. But to stay in the fruit store?! To come to Awareness of Hashem in the fruit store?! But that's what our great men did! They surrounded themselves with fruit. Only that they made use of it properly.

And we have to study the reactions of Rebbe Ami and Rebbe Assi, we have to study the reaction of Reish Lakish and use that as an example of how we should react when we pass a fruit stand. Of

course it's a public street; you can't act crazy out there. But if you would dance a jig in front of the fruit stand; "Hey, ya yey;" if you would look at the apples and oranges and everything else and dance, you wouldn't be exaggerating! It's not out of place. If you'll stand and dance in front of a fruit stand all your life, it's not enough! There's so much to see there. And you'll never complete the job of singing to Hashem for all that is put before your eyes.

Crying Over Fruit

Now the truth is we could do it today if we would summon forth our intellectual abilities. Eating fruit and achieving Awareness of Hashem is a form of *shleimus*, of perfection, that is available to everybody even today – all it requires is a certain amount of acclimation and practice.

There's so much to think about when you're eating a fruit; so much Awareness of Hashem to acquire. Of course, you could rejoice in *Ketzos Hachoshen* and *Avnei Miluim* and *Shev Shmaatsa* too. Nothing wrong with that. But fruit are the easy way to loving Hashem. Put them on your table and gaze at them. Stare at their beauty. Let it enter your soul until you become more and more aware of the One whose handiwork this is. I know it's very far from our thoughts. But today, even today, with our poor little minds, if you sit for a minute and look at an apple, at an orange, at a pear, you'll make something from yourself. And you'll become happy too! Sometimes you see a little blush on the side of the pear, a little pink on the side of the pear. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to make you happy with the color. The *peiros* are made for the purpose to make people happy.

If you're properly prepared, then when you sit down it'll be very hard to part with the apple. You'll look at it and you'll see the blush of the kindness of Hashem; you'll see the *tiferes chasdecha* – how beautiful is the redness on the cheeks of a peach; how beautiful is the pinkness on the cheeks of a pear when it starts to turn red. It's heartwarming. It sometimes causes you to weep in emotion. You see how Hakadosh Boruch Hu is extending His hand in kindness and He's saying, "My child, take an apple; take a pear or a peach and enjoy it!" That's what He's actually saying.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is inviting us; He's tempting us. Did you ever see a mother trying to get a little child to eat? She puts toys near his plate and sometimes a candy too. Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives us the food in such a manner – He's tempting us. And if we recognize the kindness of Hashem, the *tiferes chasdecha* – the beauty of His kindness – then we can walk in the footsteps of these great men and eating fruit becomes a career for us too.

Our Leaders Lead The Way

Now, if Rebbe Yochanan and Rebbe Abahu and Rav Ami and Rav Asi and also Reish Lakish, if these sages of the great *mesivtos* in Eretz Yisroel learned the lesson of *Gan Eden* and they considered it important and worthwhile to go out from the *yeshiva* which was to them a source of life – every minute in the *yeshiva* was precious to them – and yet they went out from the *yeshiva* to the place of the *peiros*, then it must have been something very valuable. If they took the time – not only time; they dedicated their minds to becoming excited over *peiros Ginosar*, so we understand that this pursuit of becoming more and more aware of Hashem by means of *peiros* is something that surely in the great days of Moshe our master, they surely understood. Nobody will tell me that Rebbe Yochanan was bigger than Aharon Hakohen or Miriam Haneviah or Yehoshua or Kalev ben Yifuneh. You can be sure that all of these personalities understood at least as much as Rebbe Yochanan did.

And that's why when Moshe sent forth the spies he told them that besides gathering the information needed to plan the entrance of the nation into Eretz Canaan, they should also gather fruit to show the people *why* they were entering the land. The large and enticing fruit hanging from the poles was intended as an invitation, a lure; it was the reason why they should desire wholeheartedly to enter the land. When they brought back that huge cluster of grapes, it was to let the people know what was waiting for them—a lifetime of enjoyable pursuit after *daas* Hashem! That was the purpose of entering the land – to enjoy the fruits of the land and become thereby more and more aware of Hashem. And that's exactly what they did when they came to Eretz Yisroel. *V'ochalto v'sovata* – *You'll eat and you'll be satiated*. And what will be the result? *Uveirachta es Hashem*

Elokecha – and you'll thank Hashem, al ha'aretz hatovah asher nasan lach – for the good land that He gave you.

And that is the great lesson of V'zeh piryah – And these are its fruit (ibid. 13:27). Those beautiful and delicious fruit that the *meraglim* brought back with them to show the *Am Yisroel* were intended to teach them that they would be entering the land of Canaan for the same reason Adam and Chava entered into *Gan Eden*; and it's the same reason we enter into this world – because the career of “eating our way to greatness” is what Hashem wants from us in the *Gan Eden* of this world.

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Now, when you light the *neiros*, you're starting out in the celebration of that tremendous principle. That's how the great day of celebrating Hashem's creation begins. And therefore, you're lighting up the minds of the family. It brings an *ohr*, a light, into the minds of your family. This idea that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the *yesod* of all the *havayah*, that the whole creation is nothing but His will, that is the most important of all the things that must illuminate our minds.

And so if you do that, if you light the candles because you want to illuminate the minds of your children, so you're going to have children that light up the world with their character. Hashem says, “That's the light! If you spread light, I'll give you light.” That's why it's so important.

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Q:

There's a Gemara (Shabbos 23b) that says that if someone is careful with lighting candles so he'll have children that are *talmidei chachamim*. What does that mean? What's the connection?

A:

It's talking there about the *neiros Shabbos*. It's telling us that if you're careful with lighting the *neiros Shabbos*, you'll be rewarded by having children who are *talmidei chachomim*.

The candles that you light for Shabbos, you know, are in honor of Shabbos. And Shabbos is the *yesod hayesodos* – it's the foundation of all foundations. *Briyas ha'olam yeish mei'ayin* – the creation by Hashem of this world out of nothing is the most important principle. **בדבר השם שמים נעשו וברוח פיו כל צבאם** – *By means of the command of Hashem, that's how everything came into existence.* That's what Shabbos comes to tell us – that from absolutely nothing, **הוא אמר ויהי** – “Hashem said, and it came into being” (Tehillim 33:9). Hashem willed space into existence; and then He willed that the space should be filled with heavenly bodies; and that there should be one planet that should have an atmosphere, and a hydrosphere, that means water; that it should have a lithosphere, soil; and that it should have all living things. He willed that everything should come into existence including Man. And never again will there be a creation of something from nothing. It's a stunning idea, that something can come from nothing, and that's what Shabbos is; it's **זכר למעשה בראשית** – the day for thinking about that.

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