

קורנית – Thyme – *Thymus Vulgaris*

Courage to Cleanse

Being a sixties' girl, the refrain of the famous Simon & Garfunkel song: "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme" often rings in my mind, when thinking about herbs.

Thyme is the final herb mentioned in the song; it symbolizes courage to stand up for true love. This concurs with the meaning of the name 'Thyme,' which derives from the Greek 'thymus' – 'courage.' In ancient

and mediaeval days, thyme was believed to be a great source of invigoration, inspiring courage. It was an emblem of bravery, and in the days of chivalry, it was the custom for ladies to embroider a bee hovering over a sprig of thyme on the scarves they presented to their knights. If you need courage to speak your truth, thyme tea could open up your communication centers. It resonates with the throat energy-center to help you speak and write with passion and purpose. If you're finding it difficult to express yourself, try thyme tea. Thyme's name also derives from the Greek thymos, 'to smoke' or 'fumigate.' Burning thyme or diffusing its essential oil so that its aroma permeates an area, has a cleansing effect for both protection against infectious diseases, and for spiritual purification. Rambam mentions wild thyme together with water mint and hyssop as cleansing herbs that may be cooked with honey (*Maimonides Medical Writings*, Vol. 5, p. 103).



Fighting Germs and Promoting Sound Sleep

Most people know thyme as a powerful bactericide with antiseptic properties which combat germs of colds, viruses and infections. Thyme is an active ingredient in natural alcohol-free hand sanitizers and in various commercially produced mouthwashes such as Listerine. Thyme is also one of the top herbs to alleviate athlete's foot and other fungal infections due to its anti-fungal properties. Moreover, if you have ever bought a natural cough syrup, thyme is one of the main ingredients due to its expectorant and antispasmodic properties. (See recipe below). Thyme is less known for its ability to promote balanced sleep and ward off nightmares. Conversely, Rambam turned to thyme for the treatment of lethargy (*Ibid.* p. 162). Since the sense of the month of Kislev is sleep (*Sefer Yetzirah* 5:9), at this time we work on balancing and rectifying our sleep, for which thyme may be helpful. You can make a small dream pillow to place on top of your regular pillow for peaceful sleep and dreams. Stuffing your dream pillow with thyme also is supposed to alleviate melancholia. For relaxation and insomnia, I would add chamomile flowers, lavender sprigs and essential oils of both thyme and lavender. You can also add other calming herbs such as hops, lemon balm (melissa), rosemary and bay-leaves.

A Native Plant in Israel for More than Two Millennia

The fact that thyme is mentioned in three different places in the Mishnah testifies that it has been a well-known herb used by Jews in Israel for more than two millennia. We also learn from the following Mishnah that thyme was among the plants that grew naturally wild in Israel while also being cultivated by Jews.

משנה מסכת מעשרות פרק ג:ט הַסִּיאָה וְהָאֲזֹב וְהַקּוֹרְנִית שֶׁבְּחֶצֶר, אִם הָיוּ נִשְׁמְרִים, חִיְבִים.
 "Savory, hyssop, and thyme in the courtyard, if they were cultivated are obligated in ma'aser"
 (*Mishnah, Ma'asarot* 3:9).

The Mishnah makes clear that only the thyme that is cultivated and tended to by a Jew – such as in his courtyard – needs to be tithed. Otherwise, as is the case with all native wild plants that we call ‘volunteer,’ they do not warrant tithing. Rambam verifies that thyme, which, was purposely sown to be used as food for people, needs tithing (Rambam, *Hilchot Terumah* 2:2). Indeed, I have in my garden both cultivated thyme with a mild lemony flavor, which I planted myself, and many native wild hardy thymes that planted themselves and have a fierce flavor. In my experience, the cultivated thyme is more suited for culinary purposes such as in stews, soups, and with fish, whereas, the medicinal properties of native thyme are much stronger. I once cured my sinusitis infection by inhaling the steam of native thyme. According to the instructions of nurse, Rivkah Horowitz, I picked several good bunches, simmered them in water in a medium size pot, and then wrapped a towel to confine the vapor as I inhaled. The next day the infection had cleared without any antibiotic.

Hands On:

Natural Thyme Cough Syrup will soothe yours and your children’s cough, as thyme calms down cough spasms. You can make it quickly with a few simple ingredients that most people have at hand.

Natural Thyme Cough Syrup (Great for young children)

A good handful of fresh thyme sprigs (or buy organic, dry leaves)

2 cups water

½ cup honey (if possible use raw honey)

½ chopped lemon

1. Place the lemon in a jar and cover with the honey. (The honey will macerate the lemons and draw out delicious liquids)
2. Place the thyme leaves into a saucepan and cover them with the water.
3. Bring the water to a gentle simmer until it is reduced to half, about one cup.
4. After the tea has cooled a bit, strain off the sprigs and leaves, add it into the jar and stir it well.
5. Store your homemade cough syrup in the refrigerator for about a month, shaking it occasionally.