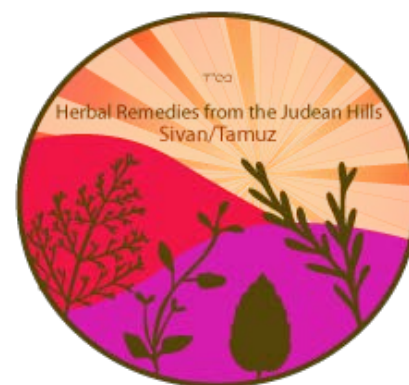


אגוז המלך – English Walnut – Juglins Regia

The Majestic Loner Tree

As reflected in its Hebrew name אגוז המלך – ‘nut of the king,’ the walnut tree is a king with its majestic trunk and firm towering branches, replete with perfectly round nuggets of treasured nutmeat. The Romans valued the tree immensely for its fruit as well as for providing furniture wood. The royal walnut tree is very much an ‘individualist’ that prefers to grow in isolation. It does not like to grow in clusters or near other fruit trees. The walnut tree produces a certain chemical that oozes out from its leaves and dissolves in rainwater. When the dissolved chemicals come in contact with the ground, they stop all types of undergrowth near the walnut tree, especially potatoes and tomatoes. Even the roots of the walnut tree produce chemicals that are toxic for certain plants, particularly for the apple tree. Perhaps this reflects the walnut’s spiritual toxin as its states, “Negative spirits (מזיקין/*mezikin*) dwell on the branches of the walnut tree” (*Sefer Chassidim* 753). Perhaps, this is due to its separatist spirit, that doesn’t allow other plants in its vicinity. According, to the Torah, impurity cleaves to desolate places, while the more people are gathered, the more holiness. Perhaps there is a correlation between walnut’s spiritual toxin and the following halachic advice: “A person should not get used to eating walnuts as they lead to forgetfulness” (*Kaf Hachaim* א'פלא'). I was a bit disconcerted when I read this, as I enjoy nuts of all kinds with dates and 100% raw chocolate as a filling dessert that gives me energy to write for hours. It is also surprising to read that walnuts affect the memory negatively, since [research shows that walnuts help develop over three dozen neurotransmitters in the brain](#). This correlates with the shape of the walnut, which looks exactly like the brain. Perhaps, walnuts could be both good for the brain and simultaneously bad for the memory depending on how and how much we consume them. We often see that the same Hebrew word can have opposite meanings, since from a circular perspective two extremes of the spectrum are adjacent. According to Arabic tradition, walnuts together with dates are good for physical strength and the prevention of heart disease. Still, in order to be on the safe side, now, when dementia is so common, I will try to curb my walnut consumption and eat more almonds, which Rambam enumerates as one of the three healthiest fruits (*Hilchot Deot* 4:11). I will not eliminate walnuts from my diet as the numerical value of the walnut אגוז/*egoz* –17 equals that of the Hebrew word טוב/*tov* – ‘good.’ Thus, there must be much goodness to be gleaned from the walnut.



Walnuts for the Head

The walnut exactly resembles the head. The outer green covering, represents the Pericranium, or outer skin of the skull. Therefore, those husks are exceeding good for wounds in the scalp. Tea from the green outer walnut husk is also useful for treating hair loss and baldness. The inner woody shell has the signature of the skull, and the little yellow skin or peel that covers the fruit, reflects the meninges and pia-mater, which are the thin membranes that envelope the brain. The fruit is a perfect image of the brain, and therefore it is very beneficial for the brain. If you crush the walnut fruits, mix them with wine, and place the paste upon the crown of the head, it comforts the brain and head greatly (William Cole, an exponent of the doctrine of signatures, year 1657, *Adam in Eden*). Indeed, the walnut resembles the brain with the left and right hemispheres of the cerebrum and the lower cerebellum. Even the wrinkles or folds on the nut are similar to those of the neo-cortex.

Israel is Compared to the Walnut

ספר שיר השירים פרק ו פסוק יא אֶל גִּנְתֵי אֶגְוִז יָרַדְתִּי לְרִאוֹת בְּאֲבֵי הַנְּחָל לְרִאוֹת הַפְּרָחַה הַגֶּפֶן הַנִּצּוֹ הַרְמָנִים:
 “I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates had flowered” (*Song of Songs* 6:11).

The walnut has many redeeming qualities: its protein-filled fruit, valuable wood and protective shell. No wonder the Jewish people are compared to a walnut.

“Why are the Children of Israel compared to a walnut? The walnut looks like a woody shell, with its inside hidden, but when you crack it open, you find it filled with compartments of food. Likewise, the Children of Israel are modest and humble in their deeds and their learning is not recognized. They do not glorify themselves to declare their own praise. Nevertheless, when you investigate, you will find them filled with wisdom” (Rashi, *Song of Songs* 6:11).

The fruit-picking season can be exhausting for me, as a single picker of 30 fruit trees; for it is necessary to pick the fruits before they fall to the ground and become filled with ants. At the end of the summer, I can finally breathe in relief for having rescued most of the fruits, shared, consumed and conserved them in the freezer, fridge and pantry, whole or puréed, pickled, or dried; in fruit leather, jams and ice cream. When the walnuts ripen in the late fall, I can relax, because falling to the ground does not cause them damage.

“Just as a nut, although it falls in the mud, the inside will not become gross; likewise, although the Jewish people were exiled among the nations and beaten up incessantly, their deeds did not become gross” (ibid.).

The walnut is also a metaphor for the interconnectedness of the Jewish people:

“Why is Israel compared to a nut? Just as with walnuts, if you remove one from the pile, all of them roll down one after the other, likewise Israel, if one becomes defective, everyone is affected, as it states, “Shall one person sin and you will be angry at the entire congregation?” (*Bamidbar* 16:22); (Rabbeinu Bachaya, *Vayikra* 26:37).

Entering the Secret Walnut Garden

תלמוד בבלי מסכת חגיגה דף יד/ב תנו רבנן ארבעה נכנסו בפרדס ואלו הן בן עזאי ובן זומא אחר ורבי עקיבא אמר להם רבי עקיבא כשאתם מגיעין אצל אבני שיש טהור אל תאמרו מים מים משום שנאמר דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד עיני בן עזאי הציץ ומת עליו הכתוב אומר יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו בן זומא הציץ ונפגע ועליו הכתוב אומר דבש מצאת אכול דייר פן תשבוענו והקאתו אחר קיצץ בנטיעות רבי עקיבא יצא בשלום:

Four entered the Orchard (*Pardes*). They were Ben Azai, Ben Zoma, Acher [literally, ‘the other,’ referring to Elisha ben Abuya], and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva warned them, “When you enter near the stone of pure marble, do not say ‘water, water,’ since [there is actually no water there at all, and] it is written, ‘He who speaks falsehood will not be established before My eyes’” (*Tehillim* 101:7). Ben Azzai gazed and died. Regarding him it is written, “Precious in G-d’s eyes is the death of His pious ones” (*Tehillim* 116:15). Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken [with insanity; he went out of his mind]. Regarding him it is written, “You have found honey, eat moderately lest you bloat yourself and vomit it” (*Mishlei* 25:16). Acher gazed and cut the plantings [i.e. he became a heretic]. Rabbi Akiva went out in peace (*Babylonian Talmud, Gittin* 14b).

Not only is the walnut a metaphor for the Jewish people, it moreover represents delving into the mystical depths of the Torah. Why is the Torah Scholar compared to a walnut? Like the four that went into the orchard, three went into the shell and only the fourth went into holiness (Rav Yitzchak Isaac Chaver, *Beurei Agadot, Afikei Yam, on Babylonian Talmud, Moed* 15b). One of my

Herbal Remedies from the Judean Hills - Months of Sivan/Tamuz

students, Amber, matched each of the three who went into the shells of the walnut based on their closeness to the truth of the inner fruit. Acher, who became a heretic, was furthest away from the truth as the meaning of his name, Acher – ‘the other’ similar to אַחֵר אַחֵר/sitra achra – the other [impure] side. Therefore, he is considered as going into the outermost husk, which is furthest away from the fruit. Ben Zoma, who was blinded by the light of the truth and went crazy, is next furthest from the truth. Therefore, he is considered as going into the second outermost husk, as a person out of his mind is furthest away from the truth after the heretic, who is directly opposed to the truth. Ben Azzai saw the light and was so awestruck by it that his soul became absorbed within it. His body was not a vessel perfected enough to hold this immense light so he expired. Because his soul did perceive the truth, he is considered as going into the innermost thin husk that adheres to the nut itself. However, since he could not remain in this world he was not on the level of Rabbi Akiva who is compared to the actual fruit. To summarize, the four that went into the orchard correspond to the four parts of the nut as follows:

Acher gazed [at the outer soft husk of the walnut] and became a heretic.

Ben Zoma gazed [at the hard peel of the walnut] and went out of his mind.

Ben Azzai gazed [at the inner thin peel adhering to the nut] and died.

Only Rabbi Akiva went into the holiness of the nut and returned in peace.

Medicinal Properties of Walnut Leaves

Every part of the walnut tree has medicinal properties, including the outer husk and inner bark. The bark and leaves have alterative, laxative, astringent, anti-inflammatory and detergent properties. The leaves have a very strong, aromatic characteristic smell. For internal use, herbal products made from walnut leaves are always best, as they are not only more effective, but also do not have any side effects. You can make compresses and tea for internal use with walnut leaves.

Treat skin ailments: The leaves of the walnut tree have been used medicinally for thousands of years particularly for treating skin disorders. Infusions prepared from the walnut leaves can be applied externally for skin diseases like eczema, acne, herpes, scrofulous diseases or to heal wounds and scratches.

Expel toxins & parasitic worms: The leaves and the outer skin or ‘pericap’ of the fruit and the brown cover or ‘testa’ of the seed contains so much bitterness that no insects will touch walnut leaves. Thus, walnut leaves became unanimously known as a vermifuge. The husks and leaves, macerated in warm water impart an intense bitterness, which will destroy all worms. You can pour the liquid on lawns and grass walks without injuring the grass itself. During the 17th century, Nicholas Culpepper made a special paste combining walnut leaf extract, honey, onion and salt to draw out poison from deadly snake and spider bites.

Expel ringworm, microorganisms & bacteria: Walnut leaf has bactericidal action as well as insect repellent properties (Meyer-Buchtela, 1999; Roth, 1993). It possesses two anti-bacterial substances – walnut essential oil and juglone – that expel contagious micro-organisms and calm intestinal infections. In addition, the large concentration of vitamin C found in walnut leaves also enables them to tackle infectious diseases. The astringent tannins in walnut leaves cross-link with skin cells, enabling them to be resistant to allergies and diseases caused by micro-organisms.

Heal the Eyes: Walnut leaf tea is beneficial for eye irritations and conjunctivitis. It is also used in homeopathy to cure liver ailments and intestinal problems.

Laxative: During the 20th century, herbalists described the walnut leaf as one of the mildest and most effective laxatives available anywhere.

Stout, Massive Walnut Tree

Walnut trees can grow to become 60 feet tall – more than 20 meters! In some parts of France, walnut trees became 300 years old! In the southern parts of England, the trees grow vigorously and bear abundantly, when not injured by late frosts in the spring. Both male and female flowers appear on the tree in early spring before the leaves. A completely matured walnut tree can yield approximately 185 kg of nuts, but the average yield per tree is reported to be around 37 kg. My walnut tree hasn't yielded close to this amount yet, but 5-10 kg of worm-free walnuts is not nothing!

Hands On

The best time to pick walnut leaves is in the early summer, in the month of Sivan (June) when they provide the best effect. Walnut tea may be prepared by boiling walnut leaves in water. This tea is used in baths, bandages as well as skin washes and compresses to cleanse the skin and get rid of infections.

Drying Walnut Leaves

Dry the leaves outdoors during warm, sunny weather, in half-shade, as leaves dried in the shade retain their color better than those dried in the sun and do not become as brittle. Spread the leaves in a single layer, preferably not touching. Turn the leaves occasionally during the drying process. All dried leaves should be packed away at once, in airtight, wooden or tin boxes in a dry place, otherwise they re-absorb moisture from the air. (I dry all plants simply by hanging them upside down on my porch).

Walnut Leaf Tea

4 tsp dried leaves
1 cup water

1. Chop the walnut leaves.
2. Place them in a small pot and cover them with the water.
3. Simmer from 5-15 minutes depending on how strong you want the tea.
4. Drink 1 cup walnut tea a day in mouthful doses spread out throughout the day.

Bath Additive

Tannins found in walnut leaves cross-link with the proteins found in the cells coating the sweat glands. They prevent excessive sweat secretion, by cleansing the sweat pores and shrinking the sweat glands. Therefore, a footbath with walnut leaf tea is great for reducing perspiration. It also prevents and treats athlete's foot as the steam distilled volatile oil fraction has demonstrated antifungal action (Nahrstedt et al., 1981). Walnut leaf footbath may treat even serious fungal infections.

1. Boil 4 cups dried leaves in 6 cups water for 45 minutes.
2. Add liquid to bath water.
3. For a footbath, reduce the amounts proportionately.
4. Soak body or feet.