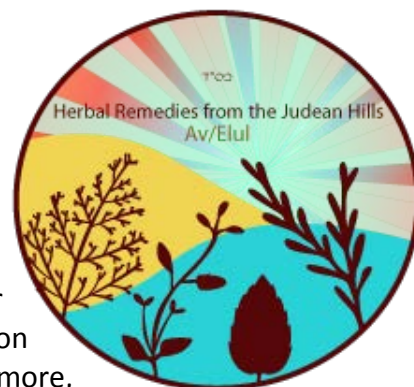


תפוח – Apple – Malus Pumila

The Holy Apple Orchard

The apple has rightfully merited to receive much recognition throughout the times till today. It has come to symbolize so much more than a crunchy fruit. Its image is significant in the corporal world, from iPhone to the Big Apple. The apple is also central in our holy Torah, from the Bible to our mystical tradition. We eat apples on Rosh Hashana, as a sign that we will merit entering Paradise. Furthermore, the apple, which is pleasing and enjoyable in every way, (taste, appearance and fragrance), is symbolic of our hopes that the New Year will bring joy and success in all areas of life (children, life and sustenance (Ben Ish Chai). The *Zohar* refers to the Garden of Eden as 'The Orchard of Holy Apples' – תפוחין קדישין / *Chakal Tapuchin Kadishin* (*Zohar* 3:271a). I have long been wondering about the reason for the common misunderstanding that the Tree of Knowledge was an apple tree. While the Talmud suggests a number of possible identities for the Tree of Knowledge – including etrog, fig, date, grape, and even wheat tree (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 40a), the forbidden fruit is never identified with the apple neither in the written or oral Torah. However, apple is loosely linked with the Tree of Life, as it is located in the center of the apple orchard (Chatam Sofer, *Vayikra* 26:3). Although I haven't found any explicit identification of the Tree of Life in any Torah source, at last the apple orchard is the way to the Tree of Life" (Rav Tzaddok, *P'ri Tzaddik, Parashat Mishpatim* 4). So perhaps 'apple' became the forbidden fruit due to a mix-up between the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. Another explanation for how the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil came to be an apple in most people's perception could be due to the translation of the Torah into Latin in the 4th century. Since in Latin both 'evil' and 'apple' is called '*malum*,' the misunderstanding easily arose.



The Apple is a Metaphor for Hashem

Just as the apple heals all, so does the Holy One heal all. Just as the apple has various colors (white, red, green) so does the Holy One have various supernal colors (white, red and green corresponding to the attributes of *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet* (*Zohar*, 3:74a). The apple tree represents Hashem, Who is distinguished from the false gods. Just as the apple tree blossoms in the spring – in the month of Nisan, and its fruit ripens 50 days later – in the month of Sivan, so was the sequence of Hashem's redeeming us from Egypt and His giving us the Torah. He redeemed us in Nissan, and gave us His Torah 50 days after (*Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 2).

תַּפְּחוֹחַ בְּעֵצִי הֵיעָר כֵּן דֹּדִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים בְּצֵלוֹ חֲמִדְתִּי וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי וּפְרִיּוֹ מְתוֹק לְחִכִּי: (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים פֶּרֶק ב פסוק ג)
 "As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons; in His shade I delighted and sat, and his fruit was sweet to my palate" (*Song of Songs* 2:3).

Just as an apple tree is more beloved than all the trees that do not bear fruit, the Holy One, blessed be He distinguishes Himself above all the gods. Just as most people do not chose to sit under the apple tree, since it has very little shade, so did all the nations flee from the Holy One, blessed be He, at the giving of the Torah. However, Israel chose to sit in the shade of the apple tree – in the shade of Hashem protected by His Torah (Rashi, *Song of Songs* 2:3).

Hashem, Who is the Soul of all the worlds, gives life to all, and rules everything. Yet, it is not always easy to notice the Divine supervision, concealed by the forces of nature. Hashem is

“among the sons” – amidst the forces of nature that He imbued with ruling powers to the extent that His Divine supervision and influence is concealed. This is similar to an apple tree among the trees of the forest that by their height and large branches, overshadow the much smaller apple tree (Malbim, *Ibid.*).

Finding Hashem in the Apple

One of my students showed me how to find Hashem in an apple the following way: We can find G-d's Four-Letter Name by cutting an apple along its horizontal axis. The letter י/yud – with its numeric value of 10 – is alluded to by the ten dots in the pulp surrounding the seeds. The letter ה/hei is indicated by the five seed spaces in the core of the apple. The shape of the letter ו/vav is drawn by the stem. The second ה/hei is alluded to by the five seeds.

Hashem is the Apple Tree, Israel the Apples

The main revelation of G-dliness and the life-giving vitality from Heaven flows into the world through the Tree of Life, which represents Hashem and His Torah. Israel is commanded to grow in holiness, and follow Hashem. Thus, Hashem is called the apple tree, whereas the souls of Israel are His fruits. As written in the holy *Zohar* “His fruit is sweet to my pallet” – these are the souls of the *tzaddikim* they are all servants of Hashem... (*Zohar* 1:85b). Even the congregation of Israel are His fruits, as it states, “You are sons of Hashem Your G-d” (*Devarim* 14:1); (Rav Tzaddok, *Tub'Shevat* 2). When our Father, Ya'acov, entered Yitzchak's tent to receive his blessing, the scent of the Garden of Eden entered with him. Therefore Yitzchak remarked, “My son's fragrance is like the fragrance of the field which is blessed by Hashem” (*Bereishit* 27:27). He sensed the fragrance of the Garden of Eden, which entered with Ya'acov. The field blessed by Hashem is the field of the holy apples (Rashi, *Bereishit* 27:27). The Garden of Eden is called ‘The Field of Apples,’ for the souls of Israel are called apples. The scent of the Garden of Eden – the garden of the holy apples emanated from Ya'acov, our father, who rectified Adam. Likewise on Shabbat, when we receive an extra soul, then the Jewish people are called ‘Holy Apples.’ Shabbat itself is furthermore, a taste of the World-to-Come. If not for the sin of the Golden Calf, Israel's receiving the Torah, would have been the final rectification and return to the Garden. Therefore, at the revelation at Sinai, the congregation of Israel was compared to the apple (*P'ri Tzaddik, Parashat Tzav* 8).

Becoming Holy Apples by Accepting the Torah before Hearing It

The Talmud praises Israel for accepting the Torah with complete unquestioning *emunah* (faith).

מאי דכתיב, (שה"ש ב) "כְּתִפּוּחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר" וגו'. לָמָּה נִמְשְׁלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתִפּוּחִ? לומר לך, מָה תִפּוּחִ זֶה - פְּרִיו קוֹדֵם לְעָלְיוֹ, אִף יִשְׂרָאֵל הִקְדִּימוּ נִעְשָׂה לְנִשְׁמָה: (תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף פ"ח/א)

Why is it written “like an apple among the trees of the forest”? Why are Israel compared to the apple? Just as the blossoming of the apple tree precedes the formation of leaves, so did the Jewish people say נִעְשָׂה/na'aseh – agreed to perform the Torah's commandments even before וְנִשְׁמָה/v'nishma – hearing them (*Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 88a). Although in my experience the difference between the apple tree and the rest of the fruit trees is not so noticeable in this respect, the apple tree is often covered with flowers before many of the leaves appear. Similarly the apple produces fruiting spurs before the leaves show. “We will do” are the fruits – keeping the Torah and mitzvot. “We will hear” are the leaves – the aspect of awe, as in “Hear O Israel G-d is One...” When we put it to heart that the King, of kings stands before us and sees our deeds, then we receive awe. Even the unlearned who are compared to the leaves merit this (*P'ri Tzaddik, Parashat Shelach* 7).

Apples Dipped in Honey on Rosh Hashana

נַעֲשֶׂה/*na'aseh* – means to perform the good act by obediently following Hashem to keep the Torah and mitzvot, without feeling the taste (meaning) of the mitzvot. However, we still hope to achieve the level of וְנִשְׂמָע/*v'nishma* – the deeper understanding of the meaning of the Torah and mitzvot and everything in our lives. The apple alludes to נַעֲשֶׂה/*na'aseh* – the aspect of good, whereas dipping of the apple in honey alludes to וְנִשְׂמָע/*v'nishma* – the sweetness of the understanding of the reasons for the mitzvot which brings

שִׂמְחָה/*simcha* – joy to our hearts. When dipping the apple in honey on Rosh Hashana we pray:

יְהי רצון מלפניך ה' שם אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה:

“May it be the will of our Heavenly Father to renew for us a good and sweet year!”

The apple alludes to the שְׁנָה טוֹבָה/*shana tova* – good year – the good deeds, which we hope to be able to do in the new year. The honey alludes to the sweetness and understanding of the good deeds, which we pray to be able to experience in the following year; this is the meaning of וּמֵתוּקָה/*u'metukah* – sweet.

נַעֲשֶׂה/ <i>na'aseh</i>	וְנִשְׂמָע/ <i>v'nishma</i>
Doing	Understanding
Torah & Mitzvot – Fruits	Awe of Hashem – Leaves
שְׁנָה טוֹבָה/ <i>shana tova</i> – good year	וּמֵתוּקָה/ <i>u'metukah</i> – sweet
תַּפּוּחַ/ <i>tapuach</i> – Apple	דְּבַשׁ/ <i>d'vash</i> – Honey

The apple has only one seed core for the entire fruit. This symbolize that striving for individual perfection is not enough, we are all unified and connected and we pray for the new year that that will be able to play our part in the perfected community of Israel.

שְׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמֵתוּקָה – May you all be inscribed for a good and sweet year!

Nutritional Profile of Apples

סִמְכוּנִי בְּאַשִׁישׁוֹת רִפְדוּנִי בְּתַפּוּחִים כִּי חוֹלֵת אֶהְבֶּה אֹנִי: (שיר השירים פרק ב פסוק ה)

“Sustain me with carafes of wine, strengthen me with apples, for I am lovesick” (*Song of Songs* 2:5).

It has always been the custom to heal the sick with apples as Rashi explains COVER ME WITH APPLES for a good fragrance, in the manner of the sick, for I am sick for his love, for I thirst for Him here in my exile (Rashi). Ibn Ezra goes further to state directly that apples strengthen and invigorate the sick. Today the apple still symbolizes good health, as reflected in the old welsh proverb, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Apples are a high-antioxidant food and a very significant source of flavonoids. One medium apple contains about: 95 calories, 4 grams fiber; 19 grams sugar; 4 milligrams vitamin C (14 percent DV); 196 milligrams potassium (6 percent DV); 4 milligrams vitamin K (5 percent DV); 0.1 milligrams vitamin B6 (4 percent DV); 1 milligrams manganese (3 percent DV).

Health Benefits of Apples

In 2004, the USDA scientists investigated over 100 foods for antioxidant concentration per serving size. Two types of apples – Red Delicious and Granny Smith – ranked 12th and 13th respectively. Antioxidants are important disease-fighting compounds. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, apples are cool and sweet. They affect the liver and gallbladder meridians, stimulating

the liver into action, allowing it to release 'heat' (toxins, hormones, pathogens) to be bound into its fiber.

Lowers Cholesterol

The pectin fiber found in apples naturally lowers cholesterol. One 2003 study found that when rats were fed a diet high in apple pectin extract and freeze-dried apples, they experienced significantly lower levels of cholesterol absorption and triglycerides.

Prevent Gallstones

When there is too much cholesterol in the bile for it to remain liquid, it solidifies and become gallstones. A high fiber diet helps control weight and cholesterol levels and prevents gallstones. The malic acid in apples helps to dissolve cholesterol-packed gallstones, to be removed by the body via the stool.

Detoxify the Liver

The liver is responsible for clearing toxins from the body. Drinking lots of apple juice before cleansing the liver is recommended because the malic acid in apple juice softens gallstones to enable them to be flushed from the liver. The pectin found in apples has a unique ability to bind heavy metals and slowly remove them via the intestinal tract.

Benefit the Digestive System

Fiber found in apples can help alleviate both diarrhea and constipation. It can either pull water out of your colon to keep things moving along when being backed up, or absorb excess water from the stool to slow the bowels down.

Prevent Diabetes

The soluble fibre in apple is the key to blunting blood sugar swings. Moreover, certain flavonoids present in apples are known to improve insulin sensitivity, which is key to preventing both diabetes and long-term weight gain. Because apples are high in fiber, they're considered a fruit that's low on the glycemic index. Women who eat one apple a day are 28 per cent less likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Boost the Immune System

Red apples contain an antioxidant called quercetin. Quercetin can help boost and fortify the immune system, especially when suffering from stress.

Curb Cancer

Scientists from the American Association for Cancer Research agree that consumption of flavonol-rich apples helps reduce the risk of pancreatic cancer by up to 23 per cent. Researchers at Cornell University have identified protective phytochemicals in apple skin – triterpenoids – that have potent anti-growth activities against cancer cells in the liver, colon and breast. Due to their quercetin, apples may prevent prostate cancer. Since both cardiovascular disease and cancer are thought to be highly related to a condition called oxidative stress, the ability to fight off free radical damage and oxidation is what gives antioxidant rich apples their healing power.

Hands On

Apples are delicious to munch on as is without too many 'hands on.' However, unfortunately this is not the case with the apples growing in my garden which for various reason I rather not specify

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needs to be cut up before they can be served. I add them in carrot salad, make apple sauce and apple compote with apple, raisins and cinnamon simmered for about 15 minutes. Last week my students and I made this raw recipe below, which was surprisingly delicious.

Gluten Free Raw Apple Cobbler

8 Apples, peeled and chopped
 ¾ cup soft purple or red plums
 ¾ cup raisins, soaked and drained
 2 teaspoons cinnamon, divided
 ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 2 cups sunflower seeds or walnuts or a mixture
 1 cup medjool dates
 1/8 teaspoon sea salt

1. Place 2 apples, the plums, raisins, one teaspoon cinnamon and nutmeg in a food processor and process until smooth.
2. Toss remaining chopped apples with lemon juice in a large bowl. Pour apple raisin puree over apples and mix well. Spoon mixture into a medium-sized baking dish and set aside.
3. Pulse walnuts, dates, one teaspoon cinnamon and sea salt in a food processor until coarsely ground. Be careful not to over-mix. Sprinkle mixture over apples and press down lightly with your hands. Serve immediately or let sit for a few hours for the flavor to marinate.