## Who Knows Seven? Part II — Learning from the *Shivat HaMinim*[[1]](#footnote-1)

Rabbi Avie Schreiber

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he *shivat haminim* — the seven species of produce indigenous to the Land of Israel — [[2]](#footnote-2)ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש[[3]](#footnote-3) — enhance our appreciation of the land. They are the fruits through which the Land of Israel is praised — פירות שנשתבחה בהן הארץ. Yet, we can gain additional insight from these fruits — not just about our land, but about our *chagim* as well.

In a striking manner, the seven fruits of the land correspond to the seven holidays we celebrate: the *shalosh regalim* — Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, the *yamim noraim* — Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and the rabbinic *chagim* — Chanukah and Purim. Let’s explain.

Pesach, which falls during the barley harvest, corresponds to שעורה — barley. Shavuot, which is in the season of the wheat harvest, corresponds to חיטה — wheat. Sukkot, during which the לולב is prominent, aligns with תמר — the date, as לולבים, referred to as כפות תמרים, grow from the date palm. Purim corresponds to גפן — the grape, as we know חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא, and Chanukah connects to the זית — the olive, which produces שמן זית — olive oil.

And now we come to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah aligns with the תאנה — the fig. Why? The first time in the Torah that the תאנה — the fig — is mentioned is in ספר בראשית.[[4]](#footnote-4) The *pasuk* says*:*

״ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם ויתפרו עלה תאנה ויעשו להם חגרת.״

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together **fig** leaves and made themselves loincloths.”

Various *midrashim* teach that אדם and חוה sinned on the same day they were created, and consequently their clothes were sewn on that day as well.[[5]](#footnote-5) We also know that Rosh Hashanahmarks the anniversary of creation — היום הרת עולם — which many interpret to mean the anniversary of the creation of Man.[[6]](#footnote-6) This means that the day we celebrate as Rosh Hashanah is also the day that the fig tree was first used.[[7]](#footnote-7)

And finally, Yom Kippur is connected to the רמון — the pomegranate. The first time in the Torah the word רמון appears is in reference to the *kohein gadol,* who is the central figure and focus of Yom Kippur. In the *perek* about the clothing of the *kohein gadol*, when describing the design on the hem of the מעיל — the robe, the Torah states:[[8]](#footnote-8)

״פעמן זהב ו**רמון** פעמן זהב ו**רמון** על שולי המעיל סביב.״

“A golden bell and a **pomegranate**, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around the hem of the robe.”

We have demonstrated that the *shivat haminim* bear a surprising correlation to the seven *chagim* that we celebrate. Here is the correlation in chart form:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| החג**:** | פסח | שבועות | סוכות | חנוכה | פורים | ראש השנה | יום כפור |
| הפרי**:** | שעורה | חטה | תמר | שמן | גפן | תאנה | רמון |

What can we learn from this connection? First, let’s examine the שבעת המינים — what lends them their unique and elevated status? Their significance has two aspects. First, they are referred to by *chazal* as “the fruits through which the Land of Israel is praised — פירות שנשתבחה בהן הארץ.” These fruits help the Land of Israel be loved and cherished. They enhance the beauty of the land, enhancing our appreciation for and connection to our land. This is reason enough for these fruits to achieve a higher status.[[9]](#footnote-9) But their significance has another aspect as well. These fruits are nourished by the holy land — they obtain a degree of *kedusha* because they have grown and flourished from the soil of ארץ ישראל.[[10]](#footnote-10)

And so the fruits of Israel both draw **from** the land and give **to** the land. They draw **from** the land in the sense that they absorb its holiness and achieve their stature from it, and they give **to** the land by causing people to praise Israel for its beauty and its bounty. Perhaps this is why the fruits are sometimes referred to as פרות הארץ (drawing from the land) and sometimes as פירות שנשתבחה בהן הארץ (giving to the land).[[11]](#footnote-11)

With this background, we can now begin to understand how the fruits of Israel can enhance our insight into the *chagim*. In looking at and experiencing the seven *chagim,* one could mistakenly conclude that they are not connected to the Land of Israel in a fundamental way. After all, their themes do not seem to be integrally linked to ארץ ישראל. One could have said that Pesach is simply a celebration of our freedom and becoming עם ישראל, Shavuot celebrates the gift of the Torah and how it informs our lives, and Sukkot celebrates the fact that Hashem is our protector at all times. These three themes can be seen as independent of ארץ ישראל. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur hold us responsible for our actions and afford us the opportunity to do *teshuva* and renew our lives. Again, themes not necessarily connected to the Land of Israel. On Chanukah, we rejoice in our religious strength and commitment, and on Purim we proclaim the influence of Hashem’s hidden hand in history. These are two more themes that are important anywhere we may live.

The connection between the *chagim* and the *shivat haminim* reminds us that this point of view is mistaken and superficial. We should see our *chagim* as deeply linked to the land. And this is in two ways. Just as the fruits of Israel connect to the Land of Israel in a dual way, *i.e.,* drawing *kedusha* **from** the land and giving praise **to** the land, the holidays do so as well.

First, the *chagim* draw from the Land of Israel in that the source of their holy status is ultimately the *kedusha* of ארץ ישראל. *Am yisrael* sanctifies the holidays via the *sanhedrin* — which sanctifies each new month and consequently, the holidays. But this process is only valid if עם ישראל is living in ארץ ישראל, as the רמב״ם writes:

**אילו הנחנו דרך משל שבני ארץ ישראל יעדרו מארץ ישראל, חלילה לקל** מעשות זאת כי הוא הבטיח שלא ימחה אותות האומה מכל וכל, ולא יהיה שם בית דין ולא יהיה בחוצה לארץ בית דין שנסמך בארץ, **הנה חשבוננו זה לא יועילנו כלום בשום פנים.**

Let us assume, for example, that there would be no Jewish inhabitants in *eretz yisrael* (G‑d forbid such a thing, since He has already promised that He will never completely wipe out or uproot the Jewish nation); that there would be no *beis din* there, nor a *beis din* outside *eretz yisrael* which had been ordained in *eretz yisrael*. In such a case, our calculations would be totally futile.[[12]](#footnote-12)

So the very existence of the *chagim* is dependent on the land. Just as the פירות הארץ draw *kedusha* from ארץ ישראל, the *chagim*, likewise, gain their elevated status from the land.

 The second way the *chagim* are connected to Israel is in the opposite direction. Besides **drawing from** the land, they also **give to** it. The *chagim* help deepen our appreciation of and relationship with the Land of Israel and teach us how to be worthy of living there. Let’s explain how this applies to each of the holidays.

Pesach, in addition to celebrating our freedom and formation as a nation, also celebrates the beginning of our journey to the ultimate destination — the promised land — to the ארץ זבת חלב ודבש. On Shavuot, we were informed how to live as a nation **in Israel,** and the Torah prepares us and makes us fit to live on the land. Sukkot is not only about Hashem’s protection; it also teaches us how to bring the desert experience with us into Israel — how to live in the land with the same *emunah* we possessed while living in the desert and how to remember that everything we produce from the land is by Hashem’s hand.[[13]](#footnote-13) Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are days that allow us to regain our worthiness to live in the land. We know that if we are laden with sin, the Land of Israel will “spit us out.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The fact that Yom Kippur revolves around the *avodah* of the *kohein gadol* in the *beit hamikdash* bears this out and highlights that Israel, with the *mikdash* at its center, is central to the holiday. On Chanukah, in addition to celebrating our religious commitment, we also celebrate regaining our sovereignty over the land,[[15]](#footnote-15) as well as the renewed stature of the *beis hamikdash* as the spiritual center of *eretz yisrael*. And a key lesson (or perhaps, **the** key lesson) that Purim imparts to us is our vulnerability when living outside the land of Israel — how dangerous and precarious it is to become too comfortable in a foreign land.

And so, the parallel between the שבעת המינים and the *chagim* leads us to understand that they bothinteract with Israel in a dual way: the land serves as the source of their *kedusha*, and in turn, the *kedusha* of the land is enhanced by them.

May we be *zoche* to observe the *chagim* in a way that intensifies our connection and our love for the Land of Israel.

1. In Ohel Avraham, volume 18, in an article entitled, “Who Knows Seven?”, I discussed the connection between the *chagim* and the ז׳ משקין that are מכשירין לקבל טומאה. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. דברים ח:ח [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. דבש on this list is understood by *chazal* as referring to דבש תמרים — the honey/sweet juice that flows from the dates of a date tree. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. בראשית ג:ז [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. סנהדרין לח עמוד ב

א"ר יוחנן בר חנינא: שתים עשרה שעות הוי היום: שעה ראשונה הוצבר עפרו. שניה, נעשה גולם. שלישית, נמתחו אבריו. רביעית, נזרקה בו נשמה. חמישית, עמד על רגליו. ששית, קרא שמות. שביעית, נזדווגה לו חוה. שמינית, עלו למטה שנים וירדו ארבעה. תשיעית, נצטווה שלא לאכול מן האילן. עשירית, סרח**. אחת עשרה, נידון.** שתים עשרה, נטרד והלך לו, שנאמר: (תהלים מט, יג) אדם ביקר בל ילין. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. פסיקתא דרב כהנא כג:א

תני ר' אליעזר: בעשרים וחמישה באלול נברא העולם. ואתיא דרב כהדא דתני ר' אליעזר... נמצאת אומר בראש השנה נברא אדם הראשון. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In fact, there is an opinion in *chazal* that the *etz ha’chaim* that *adam* and *chava* ate from was in fact a תאנה - a fig tree.

מה היה אותו אילן שאכל ממנו אדם וחוה? ...ר' יוסי אומר **תאנים היה**. תאנים, שאכל מפרותיה פתחה דלתיה וקבלתו, הה"ד ויתפרו עלה תאנה (ב"ר פט"ו ח). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. שמות כח:לד [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The ט״ז in או"ח סימן רח, סעיף א writes:

**שמתוך חשיבתן שנשתבחו בהן ארץ ישראל,** קבעו להם ברכה בפני עצמה לאחריה. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. As the ב”ח writes in או"ח סימן רח:

קדושת ארץ הנשפע בה מקדושת הארץ העליונה, **היא נשפעת גם בפירותיה שיונקים מקדושת השכינה השוכנת בקרב הארץ**.

And a few sentences later he adds:

**כי באכילת פירותיה אנו ניזונים מקדושת השכינה** ומטהרתה ונשבע מטובתה. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. These two aspects of the *shivat haminim* can be discerned in the following question that was posed to *Rav Neventzal:* If you have two fruits of the *shivat haminim* that you are about to eat — one of them was grown in Israel and one was not — is there an order of preference in making the *bracha*. Rav Neventzal writes (although for a different reason) that *shivat haminim* grown in Israel take precedence over those that were not. Perhaps this is also because *shivat haminim* grown in Israel have both of the elements that give them an elevated status, whereas, *shivat haminim* not grown in Israel only have one element — these species of fruit are a source of praise for *eretz yisrael*, but they lack the second element — they do not draw *kedusha* from *eretz yisrael* because their source of nourishment is elsewhere..

 מו"ר הגר"א נבנצל שליט"א ב'יצחק יקרא' (או"ח סי' ריא סעי' א) כותב תשובה לשאלה האם יש להקדים פירות ארץ ישראל לפירות שבעת המינים מחוץ לארץ ...לכן הוא מסיק שיש להקדים את פירות הארץ לפירות משבעת המינים שגדלו בחו"ל... [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The more complete text of the רמב״ם in ספר המצוות, עשה קנג:

ואני אוסיף לך באור. **אילו הנחנו דרך משל שבני ארץ ישראל יעדרו מארץ ישראל, חלילה לקל** מעשות זאת כי הוא הבטיח שלא ימחה אותות האומה מכל וכל, ולא יהיה שם בית דין ולא יהיה בחוצה לארץ בית דין שנסמך בארץ, **הנה חשבוננו זה לא יועילנו כלום בשום פנים**, לפי שאין לנו לחשב חדשים ולעבר שנים בחוצה לארץ אלא בתנאים הנזכרים, כמו שביארנו כי מציון תצא תורה. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See רשב״ם in ויקרא כג:מג — Why do I command you to do this?… **Do not say in your hearts, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.** Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth” (דברים 8:17-18). Therefore, the people leave houses filled with good at the harvest season **and they dwell in sukkot as a reminder that they had no property in the desert** or homes to inhabit. This is why God designated Sukkot at the harvest season, so that a person’s heart should not grow haughty because of houses filled with everything good, lest they say: “Our hands made all of this wealth for us.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ויקרא יח:כח - ״ולא תקיא הארץ אתכם בטמאכם אותה כאשר קאה את הגוי אשר לפניכם״ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. משנה תורה להרמב״ם, מגילה וחנוכה ג:א

...וגברו בני חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים **וחזרה מלכות לישראל יתר על מאתים שנים** עד החורבן השני. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)