

SEVEN FRUITS OF THE SOUL

"G-d is bringing you to a good land ... A land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates; a land of oil-yielding olives and [date] honey" (Deuteronomy 8:8)

The Torah is a code. Or rather, the Torah is *also* a code: it very much means what it says, but also enfolds many levels of metaphor and allusion beneath its surface meaning.

So when the Torah talks about about a promised land that is distinguished by seven special fruits, it is also speaking about the human soul and its seven special qualities that drive it and enrich it. According on the symbolism in the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidism, the "seven kinds" with which the Land of Israel is blessed--wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates--represent the qualities of *transcendence, vitality, joy, awareness, action, struggle and tranquility.*

- 1) **Transcendence** ("wheat"): This is one of the great mysteries of the human condition: Why are we never content to simply be? We're always seeking the "more": to discover a new world, to rise above ourselves, to take it ("it" being whatever we happen to be involved in right now) to "the next level." Not satisfied to know where we are, we want to know where we came from and where we are going. Not satisfied with the self-defined, self-oriented reality of our "natural" existence, we strive for a self-obliterating union with G-d...
- 2) **Vitality** ("barley"): Our transcendent self has a twin--our vital, animal self. And while the animal self comes with no mean load of negative baggage (selfishness, greed, lust, vanity, cruelty...), selfhood has its positive points as well: a willpower, passion and energy that the more "spiritual" self could never muster. The trick, of course, is to channel it to the right places...
- 3) **Joy** ("grapes"): A happy person is an open book. Everything gushes forth; his personality flows free, without restraint and inhibition. Joy is the battering ram that breaks down barriers and constraints, whether they are internal or external, imagined or real...
- 4) **Awareness** ("fig"): Knowledge is more than power: it is the ability to involve oneself fully in one's life and actions. A deed done in ignorance is a stab in the dark; a deed born out of knowledge is focused and effective. A deed done in ignorance is disjointed, alien--the deed of a stranger even to the one who does it; a deed born out of knowledge is an integral deed--an extension of, and enhancement to, the totality of the doer...
- 5) **Action** ("pomegranate"): And yet, there are times when the imperative is simply: *Do!* The ability to act because action is required, even if knowledge and understanding are lacking, even if it is "out of character" for us, is an all-important--and redeeming--feature of the human soul.

- 6) **Struggle** ("olive"): There is another great mystery of the human state: the fact that we are at our most innovative and resourceful when faced by limits and constrictions. It may be as benign as the deadline for an office project or as momentous as a national crisis--we're at our best when we're pressed, and our most sublime juices are squeezed out of us in response to challenging, even oppressive, conditions. This is the sixth soul-quality, represented by the "olive"--the power to translate challenge and adversary into a potent force for transformation and achievement...
- 7) **Tranquility** ("date"): Like everything else, struggle has a flip-side: the blessings of tranquility. Even deeper than its "olive" lies the "date" of the soul: its core of tranquil perfection which nothing--neither the turmoils of the spirit, the vicissitudes of society, nor the upheavals of history--can disturb or even touch. And this well of harmony doesn't just sit there in the inner recesses of our soul--we have the power to bore down into ourselves, to access it and tap it, to create for ourselves a space of immutable truth and perfect peace amidst the storms that batter our lives.

BY YANKI TAUBER