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The Rav Avigdor Miller Lecture Library

15th of Shevat
Fruit of the Tree

Tape #539

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Fruit of the Tree

Transcribed from Tape #539

Welcome everyone. We are about to begin *b'ezras Hashem* number 539.

THE ROSHEI YESHIVA "GO OUT TO EAT"

We begin tonight with a surprising story in *Mesichta Brachos* (44a). First let's hear what the *gemara* relates. Rabbah bar-bar Chana was a disciple of Rebbe Yochanan and he was in Eretz Yisroel learning together with his Rebbe. And he relates the following: כי הוה אזלינן בתריה דר' יוחנן - we used to go after Rebbe Yochanan, למיכל פירות גנוסר - to eat the fruits of Ginosar. Ginosar is an area around the lake Kinneres in the north of Eretz Yisroel, in the Galil district. And the fruits that grew there were famed for their excellence. The *peiros Ginosar* were well-known as delicacies that grew on trees.

So, "we used to go after Rebbe Yochanan to eat the fruits of Ginosar," means that it was a practice of Rebbe Yochanan to go from time to time to eat the fruits of Ginosar, and he would take his *talmidim* with him. Now that's a surprising thing; if a Rosh Yeshiva today would say "Let's go to the fruit store and pick up some fruits," he would lose his stock in the eyes of his disciples. Rebbe Yochanan however, had a practice; it could be it was every

chamishah asar b'shvat, I don't know when he did it. But, he used to go to eat fruits of Genosar and he took along his *talmidim*.

Now Rabbah bar-bar Chana continues his story: **כי הוינן בי מאה** – “When we were a hundred,” that means that sometimes as many as a hundred people would go with him on this outing, **מנקטינן ליה לכל חד וחד עשרה עשרה** – each one of us would gather ten *peiros*. **מנקטינן ליה כל חד וחד מאה מאה**, וכי הוינן בי עשרה – and when we were a smaller group, when only ten *talmidim* would go, each one used to gather a hundred *peiros*. This means they ate as much as they could. If they were a small group, they ate for all the rest that didn't come! That's a remarkable story. They didn't come to eat just what they needed. They came to eat and eat and eat. And we'll soon see that *they stuffed themselves*.

Now that's remarkable! Because we're talking here about the top sages of the *Am Yisroel* who spent their days and their nights only in Torah study. And here we see that they went out to eat fruits, and they ate all they could, even more than they could. And they weren't only little fruit like cherries or grapes: **וכל מאה** **מינייהו הוה מחזיק להו צנא בר תלתא סאוי** – a hundred fruits filled three *sa'ah*, that means three big bushels. So the fruits were of big size! **ואכיל להו** – Rebbe Yochanan used to eat, **ומשתבע**, – and he swore, a remarkable statement: **דלא טעים זיינא** – that he didn't taste a taste of food. It wasn't like eating solid food that fills you up. It was sweet and delicious, and they wanted to keep on eating. If we'll have time, we'll come back to that.

THEY ATE TONS AND TONS OF FRUIT

Now, Rebbe Abahu was a disciple of Rebbe Yochanan as well. And he used to join the outings to Ginosar. **אכיל** – he used to eat so much—now, I don't know if he went only with Rebbe Yochanan; probably he continued after his Rebbe passed away. He probably continued to go because he also lived in Galil. **אכיל**, he used to eat so much fruit **עד דהוה שריק ליה דודבא מאפותיה**, – until a fly used to slip off from his forehead. Now, a fly doesn't slip, you know. But his forehead was so slippery; it was so swollen with oils and juices from overeating the fruits that even a fly could hardly have a foothold on his forehead! It's an exaggeration, but it tells you how much he must have eaten.

Rav Ami and Rav Asi, they were also disciples of Rebbe Yochanan. **רַב אַמִּי וְרַב אַסִּי הָיוּ אֹכְלֵי עֵד דְּנִתּוּר מְזִיּהוּ**, used to eat, until their hair fell out. They ate so much that it caused metabolic disturbances and their hair fell out; they lost their hair. **רַבֵּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן לָקִישׁ הָיָה אֹכֵל עַד דְּמָרִיד**, that's Reish Lakish; he used to eat so many fruit, until he went wild. He was out of control. He went berserk! He ate so many *peiros* that he became drunk from eating. **אָמַר לְהוּ ר' יוֹחָנָן לְדַבְּרֵי נְשִׂיאָה וְהָיָה מְשֻׁדָּר לִיָּה ר'** – So Rebbe Yochanan had to send a message to the *nasi*, that was the Jewish ruler, and the *nasi* used to send a squad of soldiers after him, **וּמֵיִתִּי לִיָּה לְבֵיתָהּ**, and take Reish Lakish home. They had to arrest him and bring him home. Otherwise, they couldn't control him.

REBBE YOCHANAN'S GREATNESS

Now that's a remarkable story and it deserves our utmost attention. Rebbe Yochanan wasn't a man to waste a minute of his life. If anybody, he was the last man. Rebbe Yochanan's name is actually on every page of the *Talmud*. What Rebbe Yochanan said was more authoritative than what Rav and Shmuel together said (Tosafos Shabbos 145a). When Rebbe Yochanan passed away so they said a eulogy on him that “the sun set in midday” (Moed Kattan 25b). Now it wasn't midday. It was the end of “a very long day” because he was a very old man. And still it was considered as if the sun had set in midday because he illuminated the Jewish people. And the truth is that his sun never set. He still illuminates us today in many things, in countless statements, *halacha* statements and statements of Torah ideology everywhere. He was a remarkable personality. We know that he sold everything he had in order to be able to study Torah (Vayikra Rabbah 30). Everything! And he succeeded greatly.

Now this story about Rebbe Yochanan should be an illumination to us because he made it a point to take his disciples out to view the fruits, the fruits of trees. Now, there's something about the fruit of the tree that's unique in nature and it pays for us to consider this most outstanding phenomenon. In Eretz Yisroel the *mekubalim* gathered every *chamishah asar b'shvat* at night and

they ate fruits of the trees. Now, what was the purpose of eating them?

THE UNIQUENESS OF FRUIT

The fruits of the tree we must know are a demonstration of the hand of Hashem in the world. In nature they are unique because they are capable, first of all, *of being eaten without any preparation*. They are fully cooked on the tree. It's a remarkable thing. We're accustomed to that and therefore we pass over this demonstration of plan and purpose. We don't pay attention to this remarkable fact.

How could it be that anything becomes fit to eat by itself? Chemical collections of carbon dioxide and water, starches, whatever it is – these are things that are caused by the processes of nature. And therefore, it ought to be necessary to mix them or at least to prepare them, cook them; something has to be done! But on the tree the fruit grows and it ripens, and it is ready to eat when you pick it! But not only is the fruit fit to eat but it's precisely suited to the human taste. There's a little bit of acid in it, not too much. A little bit of sugar, not too much. It's exactly the way humans relish it. It's tart and it's sweet!

FRUIT - A JUICE CONTAINER IN A WAXED WRAPPER

In addition it's full of liquid. There's so much liquid that an apple is almost a glass full of juice. Only that the juice is so cunningly imprisoned in tiny cells, that when you cut open a container of apple juice, so it will spill out all over the place. Whereas when you cut an apple in half, it doesn't spill; maybe a drop or two, but the juice doesn't pour out because it is cunningly contained in tiny cells, tiny little pockets. And the wall of the cells themselves are made of juice. So if you put the apple in a juicer it comes out almost like a liquid. And this liquid we have to know, is not just a sugary water - it's full of nourishment, full of vitamins.

And it's a remarkable phenomenon that the fruit is wrapped in a container, a wrapper that is actually waxed – a plastic waxed coating that's very thin; not too difficult for the teeth to bite through but still strong enough to maintain the fruit

for a long time, not only during the many months that it hangs on the tree, but also for a long time after it's picked off the tree. Unless the skin is breached, the apple will remain fresh on your table for days.

THE WONDER OF RIPENING FRUITS

I'll tell you a little more. Wonder of wonders, before the apple is fit to eat it is almost invisible. When it's not ripe yet, it's green and it hides among the green leaves in order that you should not notice it. Because if you did, you might pluck it off the tree and take a bite. And you'd be disappointed. It would be hard and acidic and it would give you a stomachache. But when the apple becomes ripe, or the orange or any other fruit, it turns into a brilliant hue; a glorious red, a beautiful yellow, depending on which fruit it is, which advertises its presence. It "turns on its lights" and now you see a red light shining among the green leaves of the apple tree or a yellow light shining among the green leaves of the citrus and orange trees.

Wonders of wonders! For months the apple or the orange was holding on tightly to the branch. Even if you shook the tree, as long as the apples were not ripe, the fruit would not come down. But lo and behold! When the fruit is ripe, it lets go *by itself* and it comes falling down. And then when you open it up and you eat the contents, you have to spit out the core or the seeds. And that's a coupon entitling you to another fruit. If it'll fall on the ground and it'll take root then next year there'll be a little tree growing where you spat out the seeds. Now this is only the beginning of the subject, some general headings, but we won't talk anymore about that; we'll leave it to you to do some work. Seeing is believing!

THE SAGES WERE TREASURE-HUNTING

Now, Rebbe Yochanan understood how great the benefit of this outing was that he made from time to time. So let's first understand, what was he seeking in the fields of Ginosar? And in Mishlei (2:4) it tells us what he was trying to find. It says like this: **אם תבקשנה ככסף** - "If you will seek it like a person seeks silver, **וכמטמונים תחפשינה** - and if you'll search for it like they search for hidden treasures, **השם אז תבין יראת**, - then you will understand the

fear of Hashem.” The fear of Hashem means *to be aware of Hashem*, to feel in your bones that you're standing in the presence of the Creator. Now that requires some work on your part. You have to seek it. You have to do something in order to create this feeling within you. It's absolutely possible and you can succeed, but you must take steps to acquire this excellence.

Now, Rebbe Yochanan was a person who sought *yiras Hashem*. And therefore he went out with his disciples to view the fruits of Ginosar, the most beautiful fruits in Eretz Yisroel, to be amazed at their color and to wonder at the numberless miracles that are apparent in these fruit. How they were cooked on the tree, ready to eat, and with a mere shake they come falling down when they're fully cooked. It's remarkable. And they're beautiful. And they beg you to eat them up. Like the navi said (Yeshaya 28:4), *בְּעוֹדוֹ בִּכְפוֹ יִבְלַעְנָה* - “As soon as they come into your hand you want to swallow them.” The fruits of the tree are tempting you and their color is made for that purpose, to tempt you to eat it. And that's what they studied on their Ginosar outings, all for the purpose of gaining Awareness of Hashem.

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

Now, if that's the purpose, they didn't do it half-heartedly then. *They went all out* to achieve that purpose. Because it's not enough to see the beauty of the *peiros*. You know, the proof of the pudding is not only looking at it; it's also in eating it. And so, they got busy tasting Hashem's samples. And while they were sitting and eating the *peiros* they were talking to each other and exclaiming, "Ah, how good it is, how delicious it is, how *geshmak* it is!" And they were singing the praises of the Creator who made such a marvelous manifestation of His kindness and of His wisdom.

Can you make an apple? Can DuPont make an apple? Will they ever be able to make an apple? Never! Never in a million years. It's a wonderful creation. It's full of wisdom and cunning and planning. There's so much science that is necessary to know and they'll never know enough to create even one of these fruits. And therefore the *chachomim* sat and exclaimed while they were eating. But they didn't stop there; they ate more and more. They

wanted to get as much awareness of the greatness of the Creator as they could. And so when ten people went, each one ate all they could find. They devoured all they could get. Of course they had permission. They paid money to the owner of the orchard. They didn't just barge in to somebody's place without asking. But they ate all they could get!

THE INTOXICATING FRUITS

And Reish Lakish was a very enthusiastic person. He was an athlete, you know. In the young days he was a bit of a gladiator and it was Rebbe Yochanan who converted him to become a ben Torah. And then he married Rebbe Yochanan's sister. And so Reish Lakish became one the top *roshei yeshiva* in Eretz Yisroel. And he was an enthusiastic person, full of energy and enthusiasm. And he launched into this program head-on. And when he embarked on this business of tasting, טעמו וראו כי טוב השם - "Taste and see that Hashem is good," he didn't do it like the others. He did it with so much energy that he lost control of himself.

Like the Rambam describes at the end of *Hilchos Teshuwa* (10:10). When a man really falls in love with Hakadosh Baruch Hu he forgets about everything else in this world and he's like a drunkard. He's intoxicated with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And Reish Lakish was staggering; he couldn't control himself. He was raving with love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu! He studied those *peiros* so deeply. There's so much to study! You can never get through with it. If all your life you'll eat apples, for a hundred and twenty years, you'll never exhaust the subject. You should always rave about the apples and the oranges. Put them on your table and gaze at them. Stare at their beauty. Let it enter your soul until you become more and more aware of the One who's handiwork this is.

THE FRUIT-STAND JIG

And therefore Reish Lakish went mad, he was out of control. Rebbe Yochanan was a man who was in full control. He had a strong grip of the steering wheel of his life; he controlled himself. Therefore he was the greatest man. Reish Lakish however, was a different personality. He allowed himself to lose control, when it came to loving Hakadosh Boruch Hu. He let loose of the steering wheel and went off the road a little bit. And

therefore they had to bring a band of soldiers to take him home, put him in bed and wait until he would sleep it off. It's an amazing story!

We're not talking about a couple of boys who went out someplace on Simchas Torah or Purim and got drunk. No, we're talking about *gedolei* Yisroel. The ones we look up to as leaders – they're our models. And that's the way they lived. And for us it's an example how we should react when we pass a fruit stand. Of course it's a public street; you can't act crazy out there. But if you would dance a jig in front of the fruit stand; "Hey, ya yey," you dance and look at the apples, look at the oranges, look at everything else, you wouldn't be exaggerating! It's not superfluous. If you'll stand and dance in front of a fruit stand all your life, it's not enough! There's so much to see there. And you'll never complete the job of singing to Hashem for all that is put before your eyes.

OPERATION GRAPEVINE - THE SPIES RETURN

Now, we have to understand that these great men provided us with an important key to a number of episodes of our great history. When our forefathers were about to enter Eretz Canaan they sent *meraglim*, spies. Now there are many important points of information that spies must discover. You must find out where the most populated places are - where it's easier to travel without fear of being ambushed; the more lonely places where there are no roads so they won't suspect you're coming and won't attack you. There are places where there are big walled cities guarding the passages through mountains making it difficult. There are other places where there are plains and people live in open towns. It's easier to conquer those places. There are all kinds of information for military strategy that spies have to gather and bring back.

But we make note of a curious thing; that among the things they brought back and reported was that *the fruits are of immense size*. And in order to convince the people that their report is true they lugged a bunch of grapes with them. But the bunch of grapes was so huge, וישארו במוט בשניים - they carried it on a pole with two people. That's the minimum *peirush*. Two people carried a

pole and on the pole was hanging one cluster of grapes. They were *that* heavy. That's the minimum *peirush*—that they needed two persons carrying a pole and in the middle of the pole was hanging a huge cluster of grapes. It was as big as a cow, and maybe bigger. Now, the gemara in Sotah (34a) says במוט בשניים - it means two poles. They carried במוט בשניים - with two poles. So, there were four people carrying that, not just two people. Another *man d'amar* claims it was two poles across two poles, so eight people were carrying that cluster of grapes. Whatever it was, it was something to look at! Now that was a remarkable thing, because they even gave a name of a place after that cluster of grapes. The Torah says that a certain place was given a name because of that cluster.

RABBI YOCHANAN; GREATER THAN AHARON HAKOHEN?!

Now what was so important about that, that the people in the *midbar* insisted on seeing the fruits? But now we begin to understand. If Rebbe Yochanan and Rebbe Abahu and Rav Ami and Rav Asi and also Reish Lakish, these sages of the great *mesivotos* in Eretz Yisroel, if they considered it important, and worthwhile to go out from the yeshiva which was כִּי הֵם חִיִּינוּ - the yeshiva was to them a source of life, every minute was precious to them, and yet they went out from the yeshiva to the place of the *peiros*, then it must have been something very valuable. It took time to look at the *peiros*, and to eat them. It wasn't a matter of a moment that each man ate a hundred *peiros*; it took a long time! So we understand that this pursuit of *yiras Hashem*, of being aware of Hashem, the method of studying His handiwork in the form of *peiros* is something that surely in the great days of Moshe our master, they surely understood. Nobody will tell me that Rebbe Yochanan was bigger than Aharon Hakohen or Miriam Haneviyah or Yehoshua or Kalev ben Yifuneh. You can be sure that all of these personalities understood at least as much as Rebbe Yochanan did.

And therefore, now we know the function of that cluster of grapes being brought back to the people waiting in the *midbar*. It was to show that if you'll come to this land you're going to have an opportunity to enjoy a lesson that's going to be the most

pleasurable way of learning about Hashem. For hundreds of years you'll be eating in Eretz Yisroel the luscious fruits and you'll be learning about the Creator from His handiwork. You'll learn למען השם - תלמד לירא את השם - you'll learn how to fear Hashem from eating. That's what that *possuk* is speaking about - becoming aware of Hashem by means of eating! It's the great function of our lives - to learn how to be aware of the Creator.

EAT YOUR WAY TO GREATNESS

Now, you can learn it in various ways. You can learn it by fasting too. You can learn about Hashem by fasting and meditating. You can learn about Hashem by learning Mesillas Yesharim. They could have learned *chumash* all their days. *Chumash* is an excellent way of getting fear of Hashem. But here is a more remarkable way; a more effective way. We'll soon see how effective it was. And therefore when the spies showed the fruits of Eretz Canaan to the people, that was an invitation, it was a lure, it was a reason why they should desire wholeheartedly to enter the land. Because, the career of "eating their way to greatness" was now presenting itself. Suppose you could sit down to eat and with every mouthful you could gain more Awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. What's better than that? And that's exactly what they did when they came to Eretz Yisroel. וואכלת ושבעת - "You'll eat and you'll be satiated." And what will be the result? וברכת את ה' - על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך - אלקיך - and you'll thank Hashem, for the good land that He gave you." And so, when they brought back that huge cluster of grapes, it was to let the people know what was waiting for them—a lifetime of enjoyable pursuit after *daas* Hashem!

אם תבקשנה כסף -Now, if you are seeking silver, many times you might have to say goodbye to your wife and children, buy yourself a team of mules and head out West. That's how it was in the olden days. And then you had to go into some wilderness and put up camp and live with hardships. It wasn't easy to start digging with your pickaxe in the hard earth. But everything is worthwhile because you might find something. You might strike silver or gold. אם תבקשנה - if you seek it like you seek

silver, that's how you'll achieve *yiras Hashem*. So that's the way you have to seek.

YOU NEED TO TRAIN FOR THIS CAREER

הוי גולה למקום תורה - it's necessary to leave your home many times, to go away and suffer privation. פת במלח תאכל - eat bread with salt. מים במשורה תשתה - there's not even much water to drink. ועל הארץ תישן - and sleep on the earth. If you do that for the purpose of coming closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, אשריך וטוב לך - you're fortunate. It's good for you! It's good in this world and it's good in the next world.

But now we're being promised an even more successful method, and one that is much more pleasurable. "Eating your way" to recognizing the greatness of Hashem. Now today of course, I understand it's difficult for us to imagine such a career. Because, after eating two apples we're going to be overfed, we'll be stuffed, and therefore we won't see any benefit. Even the first apple was practically a waste of effort. You have to be trained. You have to be prepared for this career. The very first time you begin to eat fruits requires a big preface. You have to learn *chumash* first - you'll soon see it's in the *chumash*. The Torah tells you how to prepare yourself for a career of fruit eating. You have to learn *how* to eat fruits!

"EAT, MY CHILD!"

If you're properly prepared, then when you sit down it'll be very hard to part with that apple. You'll look at it and you'll see the blush of the kindness of Hashem, to see the טוב חסדך - how beautiful is the redness on the cheeks of a peach; how beautiful is the pinkness on the cheeks of a pear when it starts to turn red. It's heartwarming. It sometimes causes you to weep in emotion. You see how Hakadosh Baruch Hu is extending His hand in kindness and He's saying, "My child, take an apple, take a pear and enjoy it!" That's what He's actually saying. And the more beautiful it is the more we understand that this is what is taking place. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is inviting us, He's tempting us. Did you ever see a mother trying to get a little child to eat? She puts toys near his platter and sometimes a candy too. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us the food in such a manner that He's tempting us.

Therefore if we recognize the kindness of Hashem, the טוב חסדך – the beauty of His kindliness, then eating fruit becomes a career for us.

Now, we have to understand that that's exactly what Rebbe Yochanan was doing. Otherwise, the entire story is meaningless, worse than meaningless. That the great sages of the yeshiva went out to eat fruits and they stuffed themselves?! Yes, they stuffed themselves with *yiras Hashem*! That was their desire. And they succeeded. That wasn't the only method. You can't become great in the ways of Hashem by eating fruits all the time. They learned *gemara* all the time. They served Hakadosh Baruch Hu all their lives. But from time to time they utilized this method also. You need to make use of all the methods that are available. And they didn't neglect anything.

THE SILLY ROSH KOLLEL

Suppose today the Rosh Yeshiva will tell the Kollel people, "Today we're going out to eat fruits to recognize the Borei." The Kollel would empty out and they'll never see him again! He's not the man for them. He's silly. Who needs to eat fruit? *Yiras Hashem*?! If you want to take off time from learning for *yiras Hashem*, so you learn Chovos Halevovos, you learn Mesillas Yesharim. But to eat fruits? What kind of a business is that? This man is a *megusham*, he's a materialist! He wants to teach us to have pleasures in this world.

Like I was once speaking about this. So a *frum chasidische bachur* with a long *kapota*, rushed over to me, and he said, "What do you mean? Do you mean to say we should eat fruits to enjoy them? There should be any other intention outside of serving Haborei Yisborach?" he said to me. He didn't understand. I was trying to tell him you must eat fruits to serve Ha'borei Yisbarach. You eat an apple order to understand התבוננו חסדי השם – study the kindliness of Hashem. And then, when you eat an orange, so you're soaking up some more of התבוננו חסדי השם. And once you understand the purpose of fruit, so you'll sit down to the fruits and you're not going to waste time. You mean to say that this bochur never ate a fruit? I'm sure even this tzadik ate fruit sometimes. But he didn't know what it was all about.

YIRAS HASHEM IS LIKE SEWING A SUIT

So when you sit down to eat that one fruit, utilize the opportunity and see what you can gain from the experience. And you'll enjoy it even more because you'll recognize that understanding the kindness of Hashem, how tasty it is, how beautiful it is, will make you even more aware of the Borei. And therefore we follow the example of our great teachers in Eretz Yisroel and we understand that this is a career that we're expected to emulate.

Now, when it says in the Torah **את השם אלקיך תירא** - "You should fear Hashem your G-d," what does that mean? It doesn't merely mean you should have the emotion of fear. **את השם אלקיך תירא** means you that should *seek ways and means* of gaining *yiras Hashem*. That's what it really means. **את השם אלקיך תירא** means "Go someplace where there is a teacher who will teach you *yiras Hashem*." It means, "Read the seforim from which you'll learn *yiras Hashem*." That's what it means. To just sit and say **הנני מוכן ומזומן** - now I'm getting ready to fear Hashem, it's something, but you won't accomplish much. Because it's like anything else, you have to *learn how* to do it. Can you say I'm getting ready to sew a suit for myself? Here is a nice piece of cloth and here is a sewing machine, I'm now ready to sit down and make a suit. It'll be a pretty sorry accomplishment. It'll be a shame to wear it. You have to be an expert to make a suit.

WHY WAS YERUSHALAYIM BUILT?

Now, gaining *yiras Hashem* is more difficult than making a suit. I don't want to discourage you because every little bit helps. Even if you'll sit down and try to learn it by yourself it also pays; you'll gain something. But when it says **את השם אלקיך תירא** - you should fear Hashem, it means: you should *learn* to fear Hashem, you have to learn how to do it.

Where do you find such an expression? In the Torah it tells us that they separated *ma'aser sheini* on the first and second year of *shemita* and on the fourth and fifth year as well. *Ma'aser sheini*, a second *ma'aser*, was a tenth of all his produce. And this he was forbidden to eat at home. He was obligated to transport it to Yerushalayim and there he had to remain until he ate it all.

Now what's the reason that he has to bring it to Yerushalayim to eat it there? It wasn't an offering. He didn't bring it into the Beis Hamikdash. As soon as he entered the walls of Yerushalayim, far away from the Mikdash, he were able to eat the fruits. So what was the purpose of it? And the Torah tells us right away למען תלמד ליראה את השם אלקיך - "In order that you should learn how to fear Hashem" (Devarim 14:23). You hear that? You have to learn how to fear Hashem. Where do you learn fear of Hashem? Yerushalayim, that's the city, it was built for that purpose. You know Yerushalayim was built for that purpose? Dovid Hamelech didn't build a city and then later decide to make it a city of Hashem. No, it's a big mistake to think that. He built it from the beginning for that purpose, as a city of *yiras Hashem*, awareness of Hashem.

LAND OF THE PERFUMED STREETS

And there you had *chachomim*, teachers, and you had thousands of people in the streets sitting down and listening to sages teaching them about the ways of Hashem. Wherever you walked in Yerushalayim in the olden days, you saw prophets walking in the streets. And people followed them trying to get a word out of them. Sometimes the prophet would stop and turn to the people and tell them some good advice, some counsel. Yerushalayim was a place where you didn't waste your time. The streets of Yerushalayim were perfumed with knowledge of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

And therefore if you had to remain there until you finished eating all of your *peiros*, you were a changed man when you went home. You went home with no fruit, but you brought home with you *knowledge of Hashem*. And there was enough to give to your wife and children to last for a long time. You told your family stories that you heard of the *tzadikim*. You told them *perushim* that you learned. Your own attitudes were changed because you remained in Yerushalayim for the days that you had to be there in order to consume your fruits. And you gave over those attitudes to your family. So, when we study that *possuk*, את השם אלקיך תירא, - it means you should seek *yiras Hashem*. You have to make it a career of yours. Because really, everything we do in life could be

devoted to the gaining of *yiras Hashem*, if we would seek it properly.

Now, we want to know how great really is this quality. What does it mean to have Awareness of Hashem? Is that really such a big achievement for a man? It's a good thing, you'll say. Certainly nobody will deprecate the value of a *Yarei Elokim*, but you want to understand what it really means.

AVRAHAM AVINU PROVES HIMSELF

You recall when Avraham Avinu was told to sacrifice his son Yitzchak as an offering to Hashem—his only son, the one for whom he had been waiting so many years. Finally Hakadosh Baruch Hu had given him this one son from his wife Sarah. And that son was a promise of the Jewish nation for the future. And he was a beautiful son. He had all good qualities. The father knew that from him would come forth a holy nation. And suddenly, like a thunderbolt from the sky, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "Go slaughter your son to Me."

Now, everybody knows that heroic epic, that great story how Avraham took his son to the slaughter; and his son knew. The son said, "What is the lamb that you're going to offer up as an offering to Hashem?" And Avraham said, *אלקים יראה לו את השה* - *לעולה בני* - and Yitzchak got the idea that *b'nee* means me! He immediately caught on; *b'nee*, "my son" means me. *וילכו שניהם* - "And they continued on together." As soon as he heard the word *b'nee* he should have disappeared, he should have evaporated. If a man know he's going to be slaughtered, he won't hang around long.

YITZCHOK SHOULD HAVE DISAPPEARED

The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3, 49) says why is it that they make a *bris milah* on a child at day eight? Why not like Mohammedans who wait until his *bar mitzvah* - he's thirteen, so he knows it's a *mitzvah*, and he lets himself be circumcised willingly. That's the way to do it! So why do we do it at such an early age? And the Rambam answers that if we would wait, then the *bar-mitzvah* bochur won't be around anymore! The child will run away and hide if he knows you want to make a *bris* on him.

So we do it when he's eight days old, before he can run away. You hear that? You hear what the Rambam says in Moreh Nevuchim? Never heard of that before? That's why the bris is at eight days and not at age thirteen so that the boy shouldn't be able to run away. The Rambam says that in Moreh Nevuchim. There's a lot of sense there.

Now, the Mohammedans, sometimes they're pious enough to let themselves be circumcised. They're afraid that if the father will catch him, he'll not only cut off the foreskin, he'll cut off his head too! So, he lets himself be circumcised. But sometimes he runs away from home and never comes back again! But among Jews we don't take the chance; we don't wait. And yet, here was Yitzchak, he was told: אלקים יראה לו את השעה לעולה בני. He saw what was happening. He was aware and he didn't run. וילכו שניהם - יחדיו - he went willingly!

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO YIRAS HASHEM

Now after it was all over Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: עתה אתה יודעת כי ירא אלקים אתה - *now I know that you fear Hashem.* Now I know. Before He didn't know?! It's a remarkable thing! You mean to say that all those years - Avraham was 100 years old when Yitzchak was born, and he had been tried and tested in many ways. He had been willing to sacrifice his life for Hashem, but no, not yet; Hashem didn't know about Avraham's *yiras shamayim* yet. It wasn't proven yet up until עתה ידעתי - "*Now I know.*" And now Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, בי נשבעתי, "I swear to you I'm going to be with Yitzchak and his seed forever. Because you are a *Yarei Elokim*, you fear Me," Now Hashem said, "Forever and ever I'll be with you." And that's why we always appeal to Hashem especially on the days of Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah. We appeal to Hashem for the sake of the *akeidah*. Because that's when Hashem swore to our people that we would be His until the end of time, because of the fear of Hashem that Avraham Avinu had.

So now we begin to understand that this quality goes up to the skies. There's no limit in degrees, and therefore no matter how much we'll try, there's always space for more progress in *yiras Hashem*. Avraham tried and he succeeded during his long lifetime. And still it wasn't as much as he attained later at the time of the

akeidah. And therefore everyone should feel that it's a career *all the days of his life* to strive for more and more fear of Hashem.

THE PURPOSE OF THE WORLD

However, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't leave this merely to us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu built certain stratagems to assist us in this pursuit of *yiras* Hashem. There's a *possuk* in Koheles והאלקים עשה שיראו מלפניו - Elokim made that they should fear Him. Now that *possuk* has two meanings, and both are true, so pay attention now.

The first meaning is this: Elokim made everything. He makes everything. What was the purpose of creating the world? Ah, we have to listen now! We're learning a key to all of reality. What's the existence of this world for? אלקים עשה - "He made it, שיראו מלפניו - so that mankind should learn to fear of Hashem." That's the purpose of creation; that's our success in the world. Now fear doesn't really mean to be *afraid*, it means to be *aware* of Hashem. To learn to believe in Hashem implicitly דע לפני מי אתה עומד, to feel like you're standing in His presence—that's your success in this world.

So what will it help if you're a big *lamdan*, and you learned everything, if you're a *talmid chochom sh'ein bo da'as* - a *talmid chochom* who has no awareness. The *gemara* says that a *talmid chochom* who has no true knowledge, *neveilah tovah hei'menu*, a dead animal is better than him. A *talmid chacham* who learns, you mean to say it's possible he shouldn't have *de'ah*?! And he calls a *talmid chochom* who doesn't have *de'ah* worse than an animal. The *talmid chochom* gets upset when he hears that. "You're calling me an animal?" "No, I didn't call you an animal. I said that even a dead animal, an animal carcass, is better than you are." A *talmid chochom* who never learned to be aware of Hashem, to feel Hashem, it might very well be that a dead animal is better than he is. An animal at least accomplishes his purpose in this world. It plays, it pulls wagons. And now that it's dead you can take its hide and you can make pocketbooks out of it. You can make straps out of it. You accomplish something. But you, a *talmid chochom* without *da'as*, what do you accomplish? You're a waste of protoplasm. All the air that you breathed, it's a pity that you

wasted that air. And therefore without *yirah*, without *de'ah*, life is a waste. **אלקים עשה** - Hashem made the world, **שיראו מלפניו**, so that people should learn to be aware of Him.

THE LESSON OF THE WORLD

However, there's another *peirush* that fits in with the first *peirush*. **אלקים עשה** - *Elokim* made the world in such a way, **שיראו מלפניו** - that men should learn to be aware of Him. The world is created in such a fashion *that the world itself helps us* to gain awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. If we'll look at the world, we'll see that it supplies us with information; it's full of information teaches us about the *Borei*. So **אלקים עשה** - *Elokim* made things in such a way, **שיראו לפניו** - that people should learn to fear of Hashem.

Now let's get an example of this from the beginning of the *chumash*. At the beginning the Torah describes how Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world. **ויאמר אלקים** - On the third day of creation Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded, **תדשא הארץ** - "Let the earth give forth among other things, **עץ פרי** - fruit trees. A remarkable thing! Fruit trees are specified. It could have specified wheat; wheat is a staple, right? Barley, it doesn't mention that either—that's all included in *deshah*, grass. That's a general name for all the grasses and grains. But when it comes to fruits the Torah doesn't speak vaguely. Fruit trees! And it even tells something about these fruit trees: **עושה פרי למיניה** - it produces fruit according to its own kind.

WHY DOESN'T THE APPLE TREE PRODUCE PEACHES?

Here's a perfect machine that reproduces exactly according to the prototype. You'll never find an apple tree that grows peaches. Not in a million years. Nobody ever reported it. Isn't that a remarkable thing? There are apple trees all over the world and not once did a peach grow from an apple tree. Here the evolutionists are trying to tell us that by sudden mutation new species spring up; and yet there are millions of apple trees and not once has a report come from South America, or China, or Alaska that an apple tree produced something other than apples. A remarkable thing. And not only that but **למיניה** - the same kind of

apples. If it's Cortland the tree it's Cortland apples. Red Delicious trees make Red Delicious apples. It's a remarkable thing.

Now don't think it's a simple matter. Only because you're accustomed to it when you're a child and you never thought about it subsequently so your mind is stultified. It's a great pity. The *Chovos Halevovos* says when you grow up you have to *relearn* all the things that you saw as a child because you lost the ability to understand it because you were habituated. So study again the fact that when you plant an apple tree it doesn't grow potatoes. It's a *neis*!

THE WONDERFUL FLAVOR OF MUD

Here is something that's creating food without any kind of apparent machinery. There is machinery, only it's so minute, it's microscopic. It's concealed in the cells. There is machinery and it's marvelous! And nobody made it except the Creator. And the machinery is able to produce not fruits but the machinery can produce the *the great miracle of taste*.

Now, why don't you try making taste? Taste is very difficult. Even expert chemists who try to make artificial taste find it very difficult. Try to make taste from nothing but a little bit of water and soil. You won't get very far. And here the tree takes nothing but a little soil, air, sunshine and water and it turns it into various tastes. And colors too! The beautiful colors of the fruits are a miracle; red and pink and yellow and purple—a marvelous pallet of various tints and hues are created just by that little seed that has in it all the machinery and the know-how to produce these colors and tastes.

THE WONDERFUL SEEDS

And so the first thing the Torah tell us about fruits is עושה פרי למינה - it produces fruits of the same kind exactly. But the Torah is not satisfied with that. The Torah wants you to continue learning from the fruit. אשר זרעו בו - the seed is inside of it. You hear that? You might think that in case you want some more apple trees, you might have to cut a branch and plant it. But the Torah says here *the seed is inside the fruit itself*! And so when a Canadian apple is produced and it's transported all over the United States

and people are eating it everywhere here. And, all over the country they're spitting out seeds, so that tree is being transplanted by Hashem's wonderful plan of **אשר זרעו בו** – the seed is inside of it. How did the seed get inside of the apple? Did you ever think about that?

Now, that's what the Torah tells us to emphasize this wonderful phenomenon. I'm going to repeat. The Torah could have told us about the wonders of potatoes. Do you know that potato is a wonderful vegetable? It's like a bun, it's a big mass of starch collected in one place—a ball of starch. Potatoes are filling. It's a remarkable discovery. When they brought potatoes to Europe for the first time people were amazed. There is starch in various fruit but here is a whole bowl of starch. A big bowl of starch. It's amazing! And it was immediately seized upon by some nations in Europe and it became their main item food. Poland and Ireland adopted the potato as their national food. The masses lived off potatoes. Potatoes are a miracle. Did you ever see a big potato cooked or boiled? It's enough for a full meal; it's filling. Maybe you want a little bit of fish with it, a little bit of something else? OK. But it's the potato that fills you up!

If the Torah wanted to talk about the wonders of barley—barley is used all over the world! Rice! Rice feeds millions in Asia. But not one word. The Torah lumps it together *desheh*, grass, herbs. It's not important. They certainly are important, very important. But, *there's something more important*. More important is **עץ פרי למינו עושה פרי למינו אשר זרעו בו**. That's more important because it's easier to learn *yiras Hashem* from the fruits than from grains and vegetables. You know why? Because, rice and wheat you have to process. You have to cook at least. You have to grind it into flour. And so people forget the hand of the Creator and they start thinking it's the work of human beings. You have to plow, and you have to plant, then you have to reap and then you have to thresh and winnow, then you have to sift, and grind and bake—it's a very big job. And you start thinking *you're the one* who produced the bread. It's not easy to say **ברוך אתה השם המוציא לחם מן הארץ**. Still you have to say that Hashem is the one, but it's not so easy

GRAPES ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN JEWELS

But when you see an apple on the tree, when you see a grape on the tree—it's a masterpiece, a beautiful thing. It's a jewel, a grape hanging on a tree; it's a jewel. It's more precious than a jewel. A jewel is a dead thing, a lifeless thing. It can't teach you anything. This grape teaches the wonders, the *niflaos* of the chesed Hashem, the beauty that Hashem put into it. And it teaches you to understand and to gain *yiras* Hashem. And that's why the Torah emphasizes the fruit of the trees more than anything else.

Now, we'll see even more. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu made that glorious garden, Gan Eden, one thing about this garden we know is that *it was full of fruit trees*. That's what's emphasized. Now I'm certain that the garden had wheat. I'm certain that the garden had rice. It had all kinds of useful vegetables. I'm sure it had garlic. How could you live without garlic and onions? It's important in life. And yet none of those are mentioned. But one thing is mentioned and conspicuously reiterated—*the fruit of the trees*.

ADAM AND CHAVA STUDY THE TREES

Now, we were children when we learned *chumash* here. And we still think in the terms that children think about. But we should be adults now and reconsider. What is this all about? And look what it says here. *ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל* – that this fruit is good to eat, *וכי תאוה הוא לעינים*, and that it's a desire for the eyes. That describes fruit. Fruit is good to eat right away without cooking and without processing. It's good to eat, that's number one. A remarkable thing! So she studied that. Adam and Chava walked together in Gan Eden and they studied that. And they exclaimed, “*Ay yah yay!* The wonders of Hashem!” Trees are one of the outstanding features of that garden.

Now all this was for a purpose. Because the garden was the place, the opportunity where Adam was given a career of becoming great in recognizing his Creator. Adam at that time didn't have any labor. Everything grew on trees. He didn't have to plow the wheat. Wheat was there but he didn't have to bother with it. Everything grew on trees. More luscious fruits than we have ever were in Gan Eden. And therefore *האלוקים עשה*, Hashem

made it, שׂייראז מלפניו, so that as a result of his environment, Adam was able to learn and become aware of Hashem. And if he had not committed his mistake he would have continued forever and ever making greater and greater progress in recognizing the *Borei* by means of these luscious fruits. Because there's no end to the greatness you can attain in such a place.

If Rebbe Yochanan was able, with his *talmidim* to go all out in the study of Hashem by sampling the fruits, then surely Adam the first man, the *y'tzir kapav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, he surely was capable of utilizing this glorious opportunity.

ADAM HARISHON IS LOCKED UP IN THE FRUIT STORE

Now, I imagine that a person hearing this would say, "What?! You think that if you let me loose in a fruit store - let's say they closed the doors at night and I'll be in a fruit store all night. You mean to say I won't be bored? I'll eat a few fruits, but I'll be bored." Some want to go to the movies instead. And if he's a better person, he wants to go back to the yeshiva instead. But to stay in the fruit store?! To come to awareness of Hashem in the fruit store?!

We have to realize, Adam *lived* in a fruit store, only it was a more glorious one. And he made use of it properly. Only, that this became his mistake. Adam knew that *the purpose of the fruit was to teach wisdom*. ונחמד העץ להשביל - the fruit was desirable to give wisdom. And therefore when he was told that there's one tree you shouldn't touch, you shouldn't take the fruit, that whetted his appetite. He thought that maybe all the wisdom that he could gain in looking at the fruit trees and eating of their fruits, maybe it's not as much wisdom as he could get from this forbidden tree. There must be something there even better. And therefore his *yetzer* was so disturbed. He had no *yetzer hara* at all yet; he had no wrong inclinations. He had one inclination; he was full of yearning to learn more and more about Hashem. And he thought that maybe by means of this forbidden fruit he'll be able to have a key to unlock more mysteries, more secrets of Hashem. And that tempted him, and that was his downfall.

THE MAN IS SEDUCED BY YIRAS SHAMAYIM

Nothing else could tempt Adam and cause him to make such a mistake. He wouldn't eat what was forbidden. Adam wouldn't pass by on a street and see a non-kosher store or a store that was of doubtful kashrus with a sign *hechsher* from some rabbi he didn't know, and be tempted to go in. He wouldn't wander in and eat from a place that's of doubtful *kashrus*. Forget about that. Adam wouldn't be tempted by food.

He was tempted by wisdom, by *da'as Hashem*, by *yirah*. תחילת חכמה יראת השם, the *possuk* says (Mishlei 9:10). The beginning of all wisdom is Awareness of Hashem. What does that mean? The beginning of wisdom is *yiras Hashem* means, no matter what you'll be in this world. You're a chemist, you're a physicist, you're a biologist, you're a physician, all of it will mislead you. Any science will mislead you if you don't start off with the right premise. You must begin with the premise that *everything is made purposefully*. If you know for instance that this machine that's in front of you was not made by a lunatic - probably it wasn't - so if you find something in the machine you don't understand, you'll start thinking, what is it for?

CAN THERE BE VESTIGIAL ORGANS?

Here's a man, let's say a black man in Bedford Stuyvesant, an untutored uneducated man; but he learned how to tinker around with automobile motors. So he pulls up the hood and he looks inside and he sees a bolt that he thinks is superfluous. He'll never say that it's superfluous. This he knows; that the people in Detroit are not crazy. Putting in a superfluous bolt is out of the question. Even he understands that. So what will he do? He'll try to force his mind to understand - what is it there for?

Therefore, when we look at that fruit or anything in this world of nature we have to first realize that תחילת חכמה יראת השם - the beginning of all wisdom is fear of Hashem. If you're aware of Hashem then you know nothing is superfluous. And therefore everything has to be studied deeply. Not like these crazy people who teach their students in the schools that certain things, certain organs in mankind are vestigial; that the appendix is a left over from some previous state of existence. It's just an accident that

was left over. And therefore the first chance you get, cut it out. They don't realize that the appendix is a lymphocyte organ. It helps to produce lymphocytes. Many other organs have that same function. And these lymphocytes travel through the bloodstream and even cut across tissues in order to destroy invaders, bacteria that invade the body. It's very important for the maintenance of our health. However, more and more will be discovered as time goes on.

Once upon a time people who taught in the schools said there were a hundred and fifty vestigial organs. A hundred and fifty things were superfluous with no need for them in the body. They're accidents left over when man was changing form a monkey to a human being or from a rat to a human being! In the process, certain organs were left behind that remained there that should have been evolved out. But after a while they began to sober up and they discovered the importance of every one of man's organs and any other animal's organs. There still are some crazy theories about one or two things left in animals but eventually they'll discover there's no such thing. In nature everything is perfect. Everything is made exactly, precisely for its purpose.

And so, when Adam was given the opportunity in *Gan Eden* to eat the fruits of the trees and to gain the knowledge of Hashem from the fruit, this we have to understand is the great lesson of how we're supposed to try to live our lives as best as we can.

THE GEMARA'S QUEER QUESTION

Now, the *gemara* says in *mesichta Yuma* (75a) that the *mann* that fell in the *midbar* is described in the Torah. The *mann* that fell in the *midbar* every day is described in the Torah as white; it was a white color. And the *gemara* asks there, why was the *mann* white? Now, it seems to us a superfluous question. Why not? Why *shouldn't* it be white? What's wrong with white? So the *gemara* goes on to say it was white שמלבין חטאותיהם של ישראל - it whitened their sins. Why is that? Because they didn't have a supply on hand to last for a week or a month. It fell every day. So every morning they were worried, would the *mann* come down

today? And therefore they raised their eyes to heaven every day and they asked for *parnasah*. They asked Hashem to help them with food. And when the *mann* came down, they thanked Hashem and that's how their sins became whitened. When a person believes in Hashem, and he fears Hashem and he has to ask Him for help, that causes a person to be relieved of his sins. So it was מלבין חטאותיהם של ישראל, it whitened the sins of the Am Yisroel.

Now the question is, what's the whole question in the first place? Why did the *gemara* ask why was it white? Why shouldn't it be white? What's wrong with white? And the answer is nothing is white. When it comes to food nothing is white. It's a remarkable thing. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives food, He gives it a color. Why should it be white? Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes things attractive. There are no white oranges, no white grapes, no white apples. Everything has a color *in order to attract people to eat it*. So why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu not bestow a color? It should be pink! Imagine it was pink *mann*, it would be a pleasure to eat. Why shouldn't the *mann* be pink? That was a *kasha*. To us it wouldn't even be *kasha*. But to people who learn Torah sincerely it's a very big *kasha*. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving food, let it be appetizing with a color too. Why was it white?

So the *gemara* gives an answer. It was on purpose in order to teach them certain things. But, we won't bother now with the *terutz*. But the *kasha* is what interests us. And so we see that nothing is supposed to be white in this world because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is interested in making things attractive and alluring and therefore it becomes a big *kasha*, why was the *mann* white?

KAYIN FALLS IN LOVE

The *gemara* tells us the allure of the things that grow is so powerful that some people fell upon the spell. I'll explain that. We saw Reish Lakish. When he studied the fruits and he was busy eating them he became delirious with excitement. So they had to take him home with soldiers. There were people before him who became delirious as well. One was Kayin. Kayin was an עובר אדמה – he tilled the ground. Kayin raised fruits. That's why he brought fruits to offer to Hashem. We have to understand Kayin. Kayin was a great man and he fell in love with the fruits. He became so

enamored of them that he fell under their spell. And the *Midrash Tanchuma* tells us that as a result he fell into an error. He became so embroiled, so immersed in the business of fruits that he began loving them *for themselves*. He lost sight of the ultimate purpose of the fruits. Now I don't mean to say that Kayin was negligent in utilizing this phenomenon. I'm sure he studied the fruits; but after a while he became so interested in raising them that to some extent he began to lose sight of the fear of Hashem.

It's like somebody who wants to emulate Reb Yochanan and Reish Lakish and he goes out, let's say every day to an orchard instead of the yeshiva and every day he's busy eating fruits. After a while this man becomes poisoned, he becomes ignorant. Because you can't always fill your mind with studying nature. You must spend most of the time on studying the Torah. But with the Torah and nature together you can succeed. But Kayin after a while neglected the study of *da'as Hashem* and he got lost with the fruits. It's a true story. The *Tanchuma* says that was the fault with Kayin. He fell in love with tilling the soil.

NOACH AND UZIYAHU OVERDO IT

And the *Tanchuma* goes on and says the second person who made this great error was Noach. ויחל נח איש האדמה - Noach was for twelve months in the *teiva* during the flood. When he came out he fell in love with the soil and he began to plant. And he planted a *kerem*, a vineyard. Now we understand that when Noach planted a vineyard *he was studying the grapes*. Noach was a great forefather of the human race and you can be sure that when he saw the purple grapes or other colors he went into an ecstasy. He saw the hand of Hashem and he utilized it. But he wanted to do what Reb Yochanan did, to sample it too, and to taste it too. טעמו וראו כי טוב השם - He wanted to taste Hashem's *chesed* as well. And so Noach squeezed out a grape and he drank the juice and after a while he fell asleep. And then the trouble happened. It was because Noach followed the system of loving this phenomenon of the fruits and therefore he fell under their spell.

And the third personality mentioned in the *midrash* was Uziyahu the king. Also he fell under the spell of cultivating fruits and therefore he neglected the study of the Torah and something

happened. It once fell into his mind the thought that he should be the one who enters into the Beis Hamikdash to be *maktir* the *ketores*. That was a very big error because he wasn't a *kohen*. How come he made such an error? If a person learns all the time he wouldn't make such an error. The answer is he had neglected his learning because he was too much immersed in the pursuit of the fruits. So we see it could be overdone if it's not properly utilized.

THE GREAT PURSUIT OF THE OLDEN DAYS

However, we do learn from this that it was a very great pursuit in the days of old and people understood that *a way to come close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu is to see His handiwork in the fruits of the trees*. And therefore the *mekubalim* who used to gather on *chamishah asar b'shovat* in Tzfas and used to taste the fruit of the trees were merely emulating the great men of the days of old. Because that was a day that was set aside for this especial study of recognizing the handiwork of Hashem. Because **אלקים עשה** - everything that Hashem made, **שייראו מלפניו** - was made with the purpose that mankind should fear Him, should become aware of Him.

And therefore when you see a fruit on the tree or a fruit on the table or a fruit on the stands of the fruit stores let us not let the opportunity go lost. Think about it; be amazed at it! Let its beauty into your heart and think of the kindness of Hashem who gave these delicious bon bons such alluring color for the purpose of bestowing kindness on mankind. And the greatest kindness is the opportunity to realize and to ascertain the hand of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the world and in nature.

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