



THE SABBATH TABLE: FOOD FOR BODY AND SPIRIT

Dear friends,

One of the joys of the Jewish tradition is that we never have to wait more than six days for a holiday. The weekly Sabbath is in fact the dominant holy day, celebrated 52 times a year, more than all the other holy days combined.

The Sabbath table provides good food, good company — and tangible bonds to our origins in ancient Israel. Anywhere in the world, the essential features of the Sabbath table are the same — not chicken soup, but *halla*, the special Sabbath bread; wine or grape juice; and lights, today usually wax candles.

These three objects represent a little drama on the table. The bread, wine, and lights (originally olive oil lamps) are direct links to the three main crops of ancient Israel — wheat, grapes, and olives. It is this trio of “grain, wine, and oil” that, throughout the Bible, represents the divine response to human needs:

“I will respond, declares the Lord. I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, and the earth shall respond with grain, with wine, and with oil” (Hosea 2:23-24).

God speaks to people through the seasonal rain vital for these three crops:

“If you heed the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the Lord your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late, and you shall gather in your grain and your wine and your oil” (Deuteronomy 11:13-14). These verses are part of the central *shma* prayer that is traditionally repeated twice daily and written in the mezuzah.

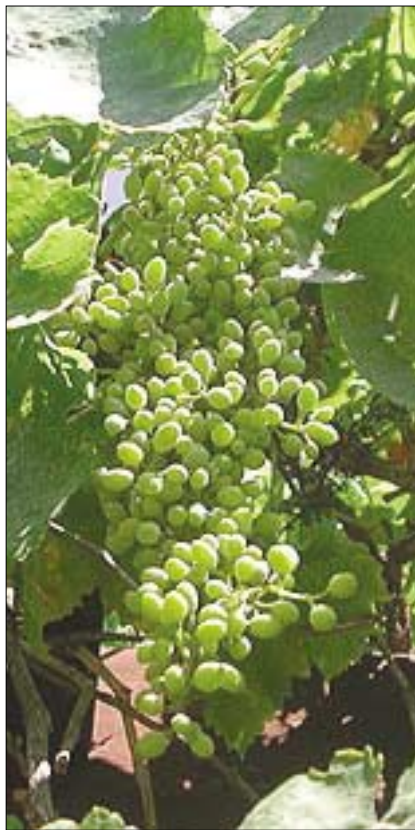
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Threads through time and through space: The Sabbath table links Jews everywhere to their origins in ancient Israel and to each other.

Grain

The two *halla* loaves represent the double portion of manna that the Israelites were given in the desert so that they wouldn't have to gather any on the Sabbath — and the wheat that was the queen of the crops in ancient Israel. People got 50 percent of their calories from wheat, mostly in the form of bread. *Lehem*, bread in Hebrew, is also the generic word for food. But wheat is highly dependent on the “rain in season, the early rain and the late.” The grain is sown in the fall, after the six dry summer months, at the time of the “early rain.” But if the “early rain” is late — as it often is — the grain will not germinate and will be carried off by birds and ants. Wheat also needs the “late rain” of March and April. Unlike a tree, wheat does not have long roots to reach water deep under the ground, and needs rain penetrating the surface in order to mature.



Wine

Wine was a staple in ancient Israel — an important component of the diet and a major source of calories, sugar, and iron. The drinking water available at the end of the summer was rainwater that had been sitting in a cistern for at least six months. Adding wine to the water improved the taste and lowered the bacteria content. Water mixed with wine was a standard drink.

Moreover, “wine gladdens the human heart” (Psalm 104:15). Every holiday, every celebration, includes blessing the fruit of the vine. The Bible mandates joyful celebration (Deuteronomy 16:14, 15), and wine is connected to this rejoicing.

Like wheat, grapes depend on timely winter rains. Without enough water during the winter, the growing parts of the vine shrivel. But the same rain that benefits the wheat in the spring can damage the grapes if their delicate white blossoms have already opened. And the heat that the grape blossoms need to open and be pollinated can parch the wheat.

Oil

In ancient Israel, olives were grown primarily for oil, which was the best fuel for lamps. The Hebrew word *ner* in the Bible refers to oil lamps. The wax candles that most people use on the Sabbath table came later.

Like the grapes, olives bloom in the spring. The delicate olive flowers are in the same vulnerable state as the grape blossoms, easily damaged by the winds and late rains of April.

In order to survive, the ancient Israelite needed all three — the grain *and* the wine *and* the oil. For the wheat *and* the grapes *and* the olives to all grow, a fine-tuned ecological balance was needed — a balance between rain and sun, heat and cold, that was — and is — beyond human control.

For this life-sustaining balance, the ancient Israelite farmer could only hope — and pray. Inevitably, the grain, the wine, and the oil became major players in his ritual life. The Temple rites rested on a permanent display of twelve loaves — the showbread — and the menorah that was lit with olive oil. A wine libation was poured over the altar. The grain offering was semolina from the inner kernel of the wheat mixed with olive oil.

In the course of history, the Temple was destroyed, and with it these powerful rituals that channeled and focused the plea for survival. The Jews scattered from Israel to every corner of the earth. But the grain, the wine, and the oil were not forgotten. The Sabbath table, no matter where in the world, holds a weekly reminder of the ancient Jewish origins in a narrow, rocky strip of East Mediterranean coast, of the ancient Israelite farmer's fervent plea for the ecological balance that meant survival, and of our own ultimate dependence on the earth.

For more on the Sabbath table and Israel's ecology, see Nogah Hareuveni, Nature in Our Biblical Heritage, Neot Kedumim, 1980, 1996.

Beth Uval



A word from Helen:

FRENKLEY SPEAKING

Dear friends,

Food for the soul on the Sabbath, food from the fields of ancient Israel to today's table, and mid-morning chocolate milk and fresh rolls for the day campers are some of the subjects of this late summer issue of Neot Kedumim News.

But there is another kind of sustenance that I must write about. The Mishna says "If there is no flour, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour" (Avot 3,17). We have been trying ever more desperately since the start of the intifada almost two years ago to maintain the essence of Neot Kedumim. We have been doing this with ever decreasing amounts of flour. But now the barrel is empty. There is no more money. And without money, Neot Kedumim cannot endure.

We have cut our expenditures to the bone – and beyond. We've laid off more

than 45% of our staff, and cut remaining salaries (modest to begin with, even by Israeli standards) by 18% to 60%. We have taken these extremely painful steps in order to try to survive to the end of 2002. The remaining staff is involved in everything possible, doing double duty, knowing they won't get overtime pay. Staff members qualified to do so have organized into a unit of the border police and have taken over security duties to enable Neot Kedumim to save on payment to outside security companies.

We know that the Israel government budget cuts in 2003 will be even more draconic than the emergency cuts made in the middle of 2002, reducing still further the already minimal allocations to Neot Kedumim. Foreign tourism, a vital source of Neot Kedumim's income in years past, is non-existent and there is little chance of any meaningful increase

in 2003. Each new terrorist bombing is followed by cancellations from Israeli groups of adults and children.

So I am turning to you, friends who value the importance of Neot Kedumim, to look deeply into your possibilities. Your generosity will determine whether Neot Kedumim can hold out for better days that will surely come.

Shalom and shana tova,

Helen Frenkley
Director



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Food in the Bible

“Exporting” Neot Kedumim

In response to the difficult security situation that has curtailed school trips, NK guides have developed ways of “exporting” Neot Kedumim to local schools. Carrying cartons of hyssop, olive oil, reed pens, and on one occasion live sheep, NK guides have brought the Neot Kedumim experience into the classroom.

The Bible doesn’t give any recipes, and rarely even names a specific prepared food. The best-known of those few dishes mentioned is probably the lentil stew that Jacob sold Esau in exchange for the birthright (Genesis 25). But what the stew contained besides lentils, we don’t know for sure. Various kinds of baked goods also appear: in addition to *lehem*, bread; the “cake baked on embers” provided for Elijah in the wilderness (I Kings 19:6), the “unleavened cakes” baked by the Israelites in the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:39), and barley cakes (Ezekiel 4:12, see below). (“Cake” in these texts indicates a round, flat bread.)

What we do have in the Bible are names of plants and animals that were used for food — for example, the lists of permitted and “unclean” animals in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 (locusts, crickets, and “all varieties of grasshopper,” for example, are permitted), and the lists of foods brought to King Solomon’s table: “Solomon’s daily provisions consisted of 30 *kor* [1,743 gallons] of semolina, and 60 *kor* of

NK senior guide Tova Dikstein has developed a “Cooking with the Bible” project for the LENI (Women’s League for Israel) Vocational School in Netanya. Every month, NK staff members conducted a workshop for students studying cooking and baking as part of their hotel management program. Featured each time was a discussion of a

[ordinary] flour, 10 fattened oxen, 20 pasture-fed oxen, and 100 sheep and goats, besides deer and fallow deer, and fattened geese” (I Kings 5:2 - 3). In the desert, the Israelites longed for the Egyptian “fish...cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic” (Numbers 11:5). But even these lists can raise rather than answer questions, because the names of plants and animals have changed over the centuries. For example, the *barburim avusim* brought to King Solomon’s table, usually translated as “fattened geese” or “fatted fowl,” is actually unclear. *Barbur* is the modern Hebrew word for swan, and we can’t identify with certainty the bird that appeared on the royal menu.

One way of shedding light on the foods eaten in biblical times and the ways they were prepared is by looking at other sources. The Mishna and Talmud, in discussions of purity and impurity and of the Sabbath and festival laws, sometimes mention in passing names of prepared foods. For example, the Babylonian Talmud, in a discussion of which items may be sent to another

biblical food, such as grains, vegetables, spices, or sweets, and then hands-on preparation under the direction of NK chef Nadav Granot, who, together with NK guides, has developed recipes based on ancient texts. “It’s tremendously moving to realize you’ve cooked a dish our ancestors ate thousands of years ago,” says Nadav.

person on a holiday, mentions as one of the permitted items “wheat to make *ludiot*.” Adin Steinsaltz’s commentary defines *ludiot* as “a dish made of cooked wheat kernels, without grinding them first, which are then mixed with walnuts and pomegranates, and eaten as dessert at the end of the meal.” (Maybe wheat for this purpose was permitted as grinding was forbidden on the holiday.)

For more detailed recipes, we turn to the Romans. “Fortunately,” says Tova Dikstein, “the Romans loved to eat, and have left us lots of culinary information.” We even have an actual cookbook, *De Re Coquinaria* (On Cookery) by Apicius, a Roman who probably lived in the first century and, according to legend, loved food so much that he poisoned himself for fear of dying of hunger. Since Israel in talmudic times was under Roman rule, comparing Apicius’s recipes with the bits of information given in the Talmud can help us reconstruct the foods of this period. Tova and Nadav worked out the *ludiot* recipe below with the help of Apicius.

“For Shavuot [when dairy foods are traditional], we decided to reconstruct cheese-making methods,” says Tova. “The Mishna and Talmud mention making cheese with the sap of fruit trees, such as figs. We found support for this when we spoke to a shepherd who sold us our sheep and goats. He told us his grandfather used to stir the milk with the branch of a fig tree. This method is in fact used by nomadic shepherds to this day.” While other groups may have used animal enzymes to make cheese, using fig sap conforms to the Jewish prohibition on mixing meat and milk.

The Flavor of the Past

“Food was life and life revolved around food,” says Tova, who is working on a doctoral thesis on the foods of ancient Israel. “The language of the Bible is often difficult, and the texts sometimes seem remote from modern life. But by learning about the foods of the Bible, by tasting the foods they ate and smelling the cooking aromas they smelled, we can recapture some of the culture, the lifestyle, the very flavor of the past.”

In ancient Israel, people ate two meals a day, says Tova — a light meal in the late morning, and the main meal in the early evening, just before sunset. The first meal included bread dipped in olive oil or wine vinegar, with perhaps

roasted grain, olives, or figs. In the book of Ruth, Boaz invites Ruth to “eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar...and he passed her some roasted grain” (2:14). The evening meal, in addition to bread, contained soup or a stew of vegetables or legumes (“Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew”, Genesis 25:34), served in a common pot into which everyone dipped their bread.

Bread, the main food, was sometimes enriched by the addition of flour from legumes (forming a complete protein). Such a “recipe” appears in Ezekiel: “Take wheat and barley and beans and lentils and millet and emmer [a kind of wheat], and put them in one vessel, and make bread from them” (4:9).

Bread-making would take at least four hours, as the roughly ground wheat or barley granules had to be pounded into flour, and the dough raised by the lengthy method now known as “sourdough”: a small portion of dough reserved from a previous batch absorbs the yeasts in the air and thus brings yeast into the new dough.

The Mishna (Halla 2, 2) mentions bread dough made with “fruit water,” i.e., fruit juice instead of water. The small amount of sugar in the juice, interacting with the flour and water, gives a bit of leavening and adds tenderness and a subtle sweetness to the pita.

“Sustain me with ashishot, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love” (Song of Songs 2:5).

The word *ashishot*, from the Hebrew root meaning “strengthen, support,” has mystified Bible commentators and translators through the ages.

After dedicating the ark in Jerusalem, King David distributed to all the people “a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan, and an *ashisha*” (II Samuel 6:19). Hosea (3:1) mentions “those who turn to other gods and love *ashishei anavim*,” cakes of grapes or raisins. Some suggest that *ashishot* are raisin cakes which the Canaanites saw as an aphrodisiac and used in fertility rituals.

The mysterious *ashishot* appear in an entirely different context in the Mishna, in the tractate dealing with *nedarim* (vows): “one [who vows to abstain from] lentils is also forbidden *ashishim*” (6, 10). According to the commentator Rashi, *ashishim* are cakes made from lentil flour. A further clarification appears in the Jerusalem Talmud (Nedarim, chapter 6, page 40a): “R. Yosa went to R. Yosei and brought him lentils that were roasted, ground, mixed with honey, and fried. He said to him, ‘these are the *ashishim* mentioned by the sages.’”

Based on R. Yosa’s suggestion, Tova and Nadav have worked out, by trial and error (R. Yosa didn’t specify amounts

or method and several attempts fell apart in the frying pan), a recipe for *ashishim*. We can’t prove that these are the *ashishot* the woman in the Song

of Songs asked for — but they are delicious, nourishing, and recommended for anyone faint with love or otherwise in need of sustaining.

Ashishim - Lentil Croquettes from the Jerusalem Talmud

Ingredients

- 200 grams (1 cup) red lentils
- 100 grams (1/2 cup) sesame seeds
- 3 T. flour
- 2 eggs
- 2 - 3 T. honey
- 2 - 3 T. water
- 4 T. olive oil

Preparation

- 1) Toast the lentils, then the sesame seeds, for a few minutes in a dry wok or frying pan.
- 2) Grind the lentils in a food processor or spice or coffee grinder.
- 3) Mix the ground lentils with the flour and sesame seeds.
- 4) Beat the eggs and add to the mixture, mixing well.
- 5) Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Make small, flat cakes from the lentil mixture and fry till browned on both sides. Drain on absorbent paper.
- 6) Heat the honey or thin it with a little water.
- 7) Pour the honey over the hot croquettes, and wait a few minutes for the honey to be absorbed.



Field cooking at Neot Kedumim.

Fig-Branch Cheese



Ingredients

- 1 liter milk
- 1 freshly cut, washed fig branch
- cheesecloth or clean cloth diaper for straining

Preparation

- 1) Pour the milk into a pot and add 5 drops of the white sap from the cut end of the fig branch.
- 2) Heat the milk to the boiling point while stirring with the fig branch.
- 3) Let the curdled milk cool and strain through the cloth.
- 4) Season to taste with salt, garlic, or herbs.

Fruit-Juice Pita

Ingredients

- 1 kilo flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- grape juice as needed

Preparation

- 1) Mix flour and salt.
- 2) Add olive oil and enough grape juice to form a moist but not sticky dough.
- 3) Knead until dough is smooth and elastic.
- 3) Divide the dough into fist-sized pieces.
- 4) Knead each piece and stretch it into a thin, flat circle.
- 5) Place a wok upside down over a flame and heat.
- 6) Bake each pita on the wok for a few minutes on each side, until browned.



Ludiot -

Wheat Dessert from the Babylonian Talmud

Ingredients

- 1 cup wheat kernels
- 1 T. date honey
- handful pomegranate seeds
- handful walnuts

Preparation

- 1) Soak the wheat for several hours or overnight.
- 2) Cook the wheat until soft, at least one hour, adding the date honey toward the end of the cooking.
- 3) Drain the wheat, cool.
- 4) Soak the broken walnuts in lightly salted water for a minute or two. Drain.
- 5) Toast the walnuts in an oven or dry frying pan. Cool.
- 6) Add the walnuts and pomegranate seeds to the wheat.

Kali -

Roasted Wheat Kernels from the Book of Ruth

"[Ruth] sat beside the reapers, and [Boaz] handed her kali, and she ate her fill..." (Ruth 2:14)

Ingredients

- wheat kernels
- salt to taste
- water

Preparation

- Pour the wheat kernels and salt into a wok or frying pan and stir over medium heat till the kernels brown. Sprinkle with a little water while stirring to keep the kernels from hardening.



NK chefs Nadav (l.) & Alon (r.) cook up the past with a LENI School student.

Summer Weddings

Summer at Neot Kedumim means weddings. This letter speaks for itself.

Angels of Neot Kedumim,

We sat in the hotel yesterday, with a few close friends who came to share the post-wedding excitement with us.

Someone said: "From now on, whenever I hear the name 'Neot Kedumim,' I'll think of nature, calm, serenity – enchantment."

Someone else said: "For me, Neot Kedumim is that romantic wedding trail, the bench that suddenly appears along the path, the tremendous power of nature."

Another friend said: "No, no, Neot Kedumim is that wooden *huppa* [wedding canopy] beside the pond, it's the view of the Judean Hills at twilight, the vistas and spaciousness that capture your heart."

"For us," we both said together, "Neot Kedumim, besides being the place where we got married, is special people."

It's Nili [Vaknin], whose main concern isn't business, but mutual trust and the success of the event.

It's Dori [Reichman], who, if he had to bring the moon for the success of the wedding, would, with a loving smile, put in the request on the walkie-talkie to please build the necessary ladder.

And last but not least, the entire staff, including those who work behind the scenes, without whom our guests would not have experienced something they will remember for a long time.

Dori, Nili, everyone – you, plus that

amazing forest and the magic of nature, create an equation whose result is a fantastic, unique wedding.


Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Revital and Yuval

30 May 2002

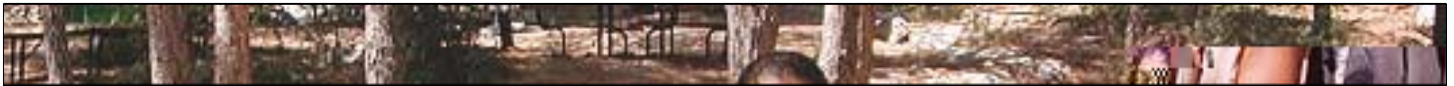


Ofira's Garden

On May 24, 2002, the "Winter Garden" was dedicated as "Ofira's Garden," in memory of Ofira Navon, wife of Yitzhak Navon, fifth president of the State of Israel and chairman of Neot Kedumim. Donated by the family of Elie and Ana Schalit of Caesarea, "Ofira's Garden" has already served as a setting for hundreds of events – bar and bat mitzva celebrations, weddings, birthdays, Tu B'Shvat seders, meals for tour groups. The inspiring and aesthetic setting, with myrtle and hyssop, figs and tamarisks growing from rocks in the walls and floor, always brings gasps of delight and "Oh, how beautiful!" – perfect for Ofira Navon. 



l. to r.: Elie Schalit, Yitzhak Navon, Ana Schalit, Na'ama Navon, Erez Navon.



NK's annual day camp, under the direction of Hagit Federlein, took the children on "A Journey Through Time and Around the World," all, of course, on the paths, fields, and orchards of Neot Kedumim. The children followed animal tracks, trod grapes in an ancient winepress, made paper, and "met" the Queen of Sheba, King Solomon, and Queen Esther – among many other adventures.

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Last admission two hours before closing.

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Founder and Board Chair - Nogah Hareuveni

Director - Helen Frenkley

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The world's only biblical landscape reserve, Neot Kedumim is dedicated to exploring and demonstrating the ties between the biblical tradition and Israel's nature and agriculture, as expressed in prayers, holidays, and symbols.