



Educational Resource Center

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WE ARE THE SEVEN SPECIES - A CHORAL READING

FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING: THE SEVEN VARIETIES MENTIONED IN DEUTERONOMY 8:8 REPRESENT THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL. THEY ARE BOTH STAPLE CROPS AND SOURCES OF LUXURY. THEIR QUALITIES ARE VARIED, BUT ALL ARE IMPORTANT.

GOAL:

To present a short program about the seven species - שבעת המינים

AGES:

8 - 10

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Clear photographs of each of the seven species, as well as descriptions from either an encyclopedia or other reference source.
- Materials to make simple costumes (fabric, paper, sequins, beads, etc.)
- Copies of the words for everyone

DIRECTIONS:

1. Divide the class into seven groups (one for each of the seven varieties).
2. Each group examines the pictures and the description provided of its item and designs and executes costumes for each member of the group. They do not have to be identical, but each should represent some aspect of the variety it symbolizes.
3. Groups practice reciting their section in unison.
4. Wearing their costumes, the groups present the recitations at an assembly for Shavuot.

Wheat:

I am the wheat, *hitah*, a basic food in the time of the Bible. Later on, and even today, I have become the preferred grain of the western world and the main ingredient in many foods we need and love - foods like bread, cereal and pasta. I represent the food all people need in order to exist. My fields show the fertility of Eretz Yisrael.

Barley:

I am the grain called barley, *se'orah*. In Biblical times, I was *the* most basic food of the people - simple, not fancy like foods made from wheat. A coin minted 2000 years ago had three stalks of barley as its symbol, and the Bible says that King David's soldiers and King Solomon's workers all ate barley. According to a verse in the book of *Vayikra* the value of a field was based on how many of my seeds could be planted in it. Like wheat, we represent the basic nourishment all people need to survive.

Vine:

We are the vines, *gefen*, and the grapes that grow on them. Our grapes are eaten fresh or dried as raisins and are used to make juices, jellies and jams. Even our leaves are cooked and eaten. You hear our name, *יָנַק*, every time the *bracha* over wine is recited. In the Bible, I have a special role. We are the good life, a life of peace, contentment and prosperity.

Fig:

I am the fig tree, *t'eynah*. My roots go back to the first stories in the Bible, the stories of Adam and Eve. Our pear-shaped fruit is eaten both fresh and dried, in jam or in cookies. In the Bible, we are used with the vine

to describe the time when all will live in peace. Today, we grow in the hilly and rocky regions of Israel in the most difficult places, because we don't need much to survive. We will still be there along with the vines when the world becomes a perfect place.

Pomegranate:

We are the pomegranate trees, the *rimonim*. Our fruit is considered by many to be the most beautiful of all fruits; red, and shiny, and with many seeds. The fruit may be eaten raw or used to make juice, syrup and wine. It is an old custom to eat our fruit on Rosh Hashanah in hopes for a year as full of *mitzvot* as a pomegranate is full of seeds. Some say we have 613 seeds, one for each of the *mitzvot*. We came to symbolize the Torah. And our name, *Rimonim*, is also used for the decorations we put on top of the wooden Torah rollers.

Olive Oil:

We are the olives who grow on trees that can live for over one thousand years. In time our unusual trunks become twisted and hollow. Our wood is extremely strong and has a beautiful design used to make many things. In the Bible, you can read about me at the end of Noah when the dove flew back to the ark with our leaf in its beak. It was the start of a peaceful time for the world. Later, Moses is told that the *menorot*, the candleholders in the sanctuary, were to be lit only with our oil.

Today the state of Israel uses two of our branches, one on each side of a menorah, on its official state seal. Zahal, the Israel's Defense Forces,

shows a sword with our branches on its emblem. Both chose us because we stand for peace.

Date Palm:

We are the date palms. Although in the verse in the Torah we are called honey - דבש - we are *not* the honey made by bees, but something quite different. Our fruit is so very sweet that in Biblical times a sweet syrup, described as honey, was made from them. We grow the best in hot climates. We are tall and our leaves are always green. Every part of us is used for a special purpose and nothing is wasted. Our fruits (dates) are used for food, our long leaves are the *lulavim* used on *Sukkot*, the fiber from our bark is used for weaving and making rope, and our trunk is used for wood.

The Rabbis said that we are a lot like the Jewish people in this way - just as every part of us is useful, every person has something special to contribute to the Jewish community. The Rabbis also say that the reward of a *tzaddik* - a righteous person - will be that he will flourish like the date palm. We represent righteousness.

All together:

As each of us is important in our own right, taken together our power is multiplied. We are the foods of Israel - both simple and royal, and in us you can see the beauty of the entire land. When you taste our fruits, remember the land of Israel, *Eretz Yisrael*, and remember to thank God for all that we stand for.

NOTE TO TEACHER: You may want to include a song about Israel here - if you need suggestions, contact us at the BJE for ideas.