

ONEG SHABBAS

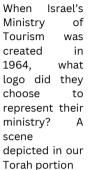


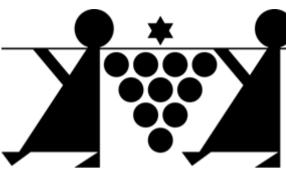
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The Bounty of Grapes

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related to drinking! The scene I am describing is that of the tourists bringing back a big bunch of grapes on a pole. And, as readers of this publication understand, these grapes are meant to signal the bountifulness of the land, as well as their ability to make a lot of wine, as well as good-tasting wine.

When Did They Visit?

It was no accident that these tourists found a big bunch of grapes, since, as our Torah portion describes it, these scouts visited during 'ימי בכורי ענבים the days of the first ripe grapes" (Num. 13:20).

As to when this was. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi) wrote that it was (רש"י על במדבר י״ג:כ׳, ד"ה בכורי ענבים):

The days when the grapes were יַמִים שֶׁהַעֲנַבִים מִתְבַּשְׁלִין ripening at its early stage of growth. בבכור

Thus, it was in the summer, perhaps late July-early August. To be in Israel at this time of year also means it is pretty warm for these tourists. A fuller description of this time of year is that of Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1470-1550) (popularly known as Sforno), who wrote (ספורנו על במדבר י״ג:כ׳, ד"ה והימים ימי בכורי ענבים):

> The fruit for which the land is famous had not even fully ripened as yet as it was still early in the season. Even so, what they would see would be enough to convince them of the excellence of the land.

ולא היו הפירות שנשתבחה בהם בשלמותם עדיין מכל מקום בטח משה רבינו שגודל הפירות וטעמם גם באותו הזמן יספיק להעיד על שבח הארץ וטובה

Bringing the Bounty

When these scouts come upon these grapes, they are seeking to accomplish the task set out to them by Moshe of 'ולקחתם מפרי האַרץ You shall take from amongst the fruits of the land" (Num. 13:20), which they clearly do (Num. 13:23):

They reached the wadi Eshcol, and ויבאו עד־נחל אשכל there they cut down a branch with a ויכרתו משם זמורה single cluster of grapes and they וָאֱשָׁכַּוֹל עֲנַבִים אֱחַׁד carried it on a pole with two, and וַיִשׂאָהוּ בַמּוֹט בַּשׁנַיִם some pomegranates and figs. וּמָן־הָרִמֹנֶים וּמִן־הַתִּאֵנִים

This would certainly seem to be a straightforward depiction as reflected in the logo for the Israel Ministry of Tourism, albeit without the pomegranates and figs. Yet, some rabbis perceived the bounty brought back by these scouts as somehow even more impressive.

Talmudic Expansion of Fruit

It is quite curious that despite it seeming quite simply that this massive cluster of grapes required a pole to be carried by two of the scouts, the rabbis discuss the possibilities that there may have been a multiplicity of poles and scouts, beginning with the second century sage, Rabbi Yehudah (Sotah 34a):

> Rabbi Yehudah says: "...Isn't it אמר רבי יהודה: understandable when it stated ממשמע שנאמר... "on a pole", do I not already know ״בַּמּוֹט״, אֵינִי יוֹדֵע that it was carried by two? What שׁבּשׁנים? מה is the verse to be understood as תלמוד לומר teaching upon 'with two'? With ״בַּשַׁנַיִם״ – בַּשַׁנֵי two poles." מוֹטוֹת.

It would seem that Rabbi Yehudah's close reading of the verse in our Torah portion yields that it should have been obvious that, if there was a pole used to carry this bunch of grapes, then there should be no need to describe it as having been carried by two of these scouts. In his reading, this mention of two is describing that there was not merely one pole, but a doubling of this pole used to transport these grapes. Ostensibly, that would require four of these scouts to carry these poles.

However, a rabbi in the subsequent century expanded Rabbi Yehudah's description even further, adding poles to this carrying set-up (Sotah 34a):

> Rabbi Yitzhak said: "Scales and אַמַר רַבִּי יִצְחַק: scales of scales. How so? Eight טורטני, וטורטני of the spies carried the cluster, ?דטוּרטני, הַא כִּיצַד one of them carried a שָׁמֹנָה נָשִׂאוּ אֱשִׁכֹּל, pomegranate, and one carried a אֶחֶד נַשָּׂא רִימּוֹן, וָאֶחֶד fig. Joshua and Caleb did not נַשַׂא תָּאֵינַה. יָהוֹשָׁעַ carry anything." וכלב לא נשאו כלום

While I am not sure from which language this loanword of טורטני derives (the closest I have found [so far] is that Middle Persian's tarâzu (if you know whence this word derives, please let me know)), Rabbi Yitzhak is describing a set-up where each of these poles is carried by four of these tourists: how does it work?

One description is provided by the Tosafistic authors, who quote Rabbi Hananel ben Hushiel (980-1055) (popularly known as Rabbeinu Ḥananel) in the following (תוספות על סוטה ל"ד א:, ד"ה טורטני וטורטני דטורטני: ד

> Rabbenu Hananel explained that turteni is reed of scales in Greek. How did they carry it? They brought two poles and a string with ropes and put the cluster on top of ropes and put האשכול על גבי חבלים poles in ropes at the end of the latticed columns and the cluster gave one pole from one end of the head and so on at the top of the other end two {continued on next page}

פירש ר"ח דטורטני בלשון יון קנה של מאזנים וכיצד נשאוהו הביאו שני עמודים וסירגום בחבלים ונתנו ונתנו מוטות בחבלים בקצה העמודים המסורגים והאשכול נתן מוט א' מן הקצה מזה הראש וכיוצא בה

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poles were found at the top. The posts are latticed with ropes and the cluster is supported by ropes, and for each pole of those poles two poles are less, of which a pole is at the head of this and a pole at ומוט בראש זה נמצאו ארבע the head of that. Four poles were found at the heads of the הנתונים בראשי העמודים וכל two poles that were placed at the heads of the columns, and each pole and pole of these four poles were holding them, etc. That is rods and rods on

בראש מקצה האחר נמצאו שתי מוטות בראש העמודים המסורגים בחבלים והאשכול נתוו בחבלים ועל כל מוט מאלו המוטות שתי מוטות פחותין מהן מוט בראש זה מונוות רראשי שני מונוות מוט ומוט מאלו ד' מוטות היו טוענים אותן שני אנשים נמצאו שמנה סובליו את האשכול וזה פירוש טורטני וכו' כלומר מוטות ומוטות על מוטות

Another description is provided by Rashi, who describes it as follows (רש"י על סוטה ל״ד א:י׳, ד"ה אמר רבי יצחק טורטני וטורטני דטורטני):

> A pole carrying and a pole carrying underneath, that the lower ones are assisting the upper ones, with each of these on a side having two poles. How so? Two poles would go this way, with four carrying them, while the other two poles would be carried by another four men, they are diagonally below the two upper ones, one rod for one head and one rod for the other head and going diagonally.

משאוי ומשאוי תחת משאוי שהתחתונים מסייעין את העליונים ובכל אחד היו שני מוטות כיצד שני מוטות הולכין זה אצל זה וארבעה נושאיו אותם ושני מוטות אחרים וארבעה בני אדם נושאין אותם והם באלכסון מתחת שנים העליונים מוט אחד לראש האחד ומוט אחד לראש השני והולכין באלכסון

While I have provided these descriptions, I am struggling to picture exactly the set-up on them (so, if you have a good way of describing them or, even better, depicting them visually, I would greatly appreciate it). However, what is clear is that these early medieval rabbis sought to further describe the physical structuring of this carrying apparatus needed to both carry and support this massive cluster of grapes.

While many post-Talmudic rabbis mentioned these expansive enumerations of the poles needed to carry this cluster and the men involved, including Rashi (רש"י על במדבר י״ג:כ״ג, ד"ה וישאהו במוט בשנים), not all did.

Rabbinic Commentators Sticking with Two Carrying

Despite the above-mentioned views amongst Talmudic rabbis, as well as Medieval commentators, there were still subsequent rabbinic commentators that describe how the scouts carried back this cluster of grapes as being simply two, including Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (1288-1344) (popularly known as Ralbag), who wrote (רלב"ג ביאור המלות על (התורה, במדבר י״ג:כ״ג, ד"ה וישאוהו במוט בשנים:

Behold - according to the plain הנה לפי הפשט יראה ששנים נשאו reading of the verse, it would seem המוט שהיה בו that two of them carried the pole upon which the cluster of grapes אשכול האחד מן was - one from the head of one and הראש האחד והאחר מן הראש השני או one at the head of the other, or ירצה בזה שהמוט perhaps it would have described היה בשנים מוטות that the pole was on two poles and והיו נושאי' אותו ד' they carried four poles. But the first explanation seems more והביאור הראשון נראה יותר לפי appropriate according to the plain reading of the text.

However, our sages, of blessed memory, chose the side of sailing and tall tales that they were scales והגוזמא שהיו טורטני and scales on scales.

ואולם לרבותי' ז"ל על צד ההפלגה וטורטני דטורטני

Indeed, this pushing back on this notion of all of these poles and men needed to carry this one bunch of grapes certainly seems quite fantastical and not particularly realistic. Indeed, perhaps the Talmudic rabbis were simply pointing out how big these grape bunches could have been, yet, that doesn't reflect the reality as described in the our Torah portion, according to Ralbag.

Another subsequent rabbi who thought that, according to the Biblical text, it seems as if it were simply just two men carrying it, as Rabbi Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784-1855) wrote (ביאור יש"ר על התורה, במדבר וי״ג:כ״ג. ד"ה בשנים):

> According to its straightforward לפי פשוטו בשני reading, it was carried by two. אנעיח

Compromise?

Does one have to describe the carrying as done by only eight or two men? Apparently not, as Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (1816-1893) (popularly known as the Netziv) cleverly wrote (נצי"ב במדבר י"ג:כ"ג, ד"ה וישאהו במוט בשנים):

> According to how it's written, כמשמעו, המה there were two who carried it השנים נשאוהו עד until all of the men were אשר נתקבצו כל gathered. From there, they האנשים, ומשם carried the bunch of grapes until נשאו את האשכול the wilderness of Paran. And then עד מדבר פארן, ואז eight of the men carried it, as it is נשאו שמונה in the Talmud (Sotah 34a). And אנשים, כדאיתא had the scriptural verse not בסוטה (לד.א). ואי stated "two", I would have "לא כתיב "בשנים considered that the explanation הוה אמינא דפירוש of "and they carried it on a pole" – "וישאוהו במוט" as describing each of them כל אחד מהם נשא מקצת הדרך, carrying it a little bit of the way. From here, scripture describes משום הכי פירש that the pole rested on the הכתוב דשניהם shoulder(s) of two of them הניחו המוט על together.

Conclusion

Ultimately, no matter how these scouts carried this bunch of grapes, they certainly found it to be a surprisingly bountiful bunch and were clearly very excited about this bounty of grapes. While grapes are certainly edible, grapes were and are treasured for their wine-making possibilities. This is certainly an exciting possibility to enter into our land to know that it will have such a wondrous capacity for massive amounts of wine. Certainly, it is a fitting land for the children of Israel.





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הפשט

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