

ONEG SHABBAS

THE UNOFFICIAL PARASHAH SHEET FOR KIDDUSH CLUBS

פרשת בראשית - Volume 6, Issue 1 כ"ט תשרי תשפ"ז 9-10 October 2026

Oneg Shabbas explores drinking in the weekly Torah portion, along with timely essays on drinking in Jewish life.

What Did The Rabbis Say the Forbidden Fruit Was?

A common curiosity that arises reading this week's parashah is "What was the forbidden fruit that Adam and Eve ate?" This fruit is introduced to us as follows (Genesis 2:16-17):

And the The Lord, God commanded the Human, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."

וַיֹּצֵא ה' אֱלֹהִים עֵץ־הַיָּדָע לְאֹמֶר מִכָּל עֵץ הָגַן אָכַל תֹּאכְלֶה וּמִעֵץ הַדְּעִית לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְהָ מָוֶת תָּמוּת:

From these words, it is wildly unclear that there is any connection between this fruit and any connection with any tree beyond the Garden of Eden. However, we then read the following (Genesis 3:6-7):

When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְאֹמֶל וְכִי תִהְיֶה הָיָה לְעֵינֶיהָ וְנִחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהִשְׁכִּיל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם לְאִישָׁהּ וַתֹּאכַל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּה וַיֹּאכְלֶה וַתִּפְקְחֶנָּה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרֻמָּם הֵם וַיִּתְפְּרוּ עֲלֵהם תָּאֲנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חִגְרֹת:

While the tree of knowledge of good and evil existed in the Garden of Eden, there seems to be no continued existence of it beyond that place. However, that does not seem to stop inquiring minds to try to consider that the fruit of that tree exists in the world beyond the Garden of Eden. Indeed, throughout the ages, various people - not only Jews - sought to figure out which fruit it was.

Not An Apple

While we are commonly familiar with the idea (especially in artistic renderings) in the [Christian-dominated] West that the fruit was an apple, there seems to be no such textual basis for this assertion (for more on this, see the sidebar essay on page 2).



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Rabbis Who Thought that Adam & Eve Drank Wine

The idea that Adam and Eve drank wine in the Garden of Eden is not restricted to the possibility that grapes/wine were the fruit of the morality tree (see other essay), as we also read of another second century sage suggesting such consumption (*Sanhedrin* 59b):

Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema would say: "Adam, the first man, would dine in the Garden of Eden, and the ministering angels would roast meat for him and strain wine for him. The snake glanced at him and saw his glory, and was jealous of him."

היה ר' יהודה בן תימא אומר אדם הראשון מיסב בגן עדן והיו מלאכי השרת צולין לו בשר ומסננין לו יין הציץ בו נחש וראה בכבודו ונתקנא בו



What is fascinating with this text is not only that there is meat and wine available to Adam, but the ministering angels are providing such great service to Adam(!). Moreover, the question that arises regarding the possibility of Adam drinking is his sourcing of it. The ambiguity of Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema's statement is that it is unclear whether Adam made the wine and the ministering angels are only just now straining the wine for Adam, or whether the ministering angels have created the wine and are now even straining it for his enjoyment. While I am not familiar with other early rabbinic texts with angels furnishing wine for humans, this is certainly an intriguing drinking scene.

One thing that is striking is that we do not see that Adam is depicted as being either a vintner nor does he have any hand in the wine-production process. This may be an important note, since Noah seems to be depicted in next week's parashah as the first vintner or perhaps being an innovational winemaker. Having Adam not being involved in the production process allows Noah to still be the first human depicted as creating wine, yet allowing Adam to still enjoy wine.

One wonders from Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema if he shared this scene as if to say: how could the Garden of Eden be so enjoyable if he was not drinking wine? If he was wineless in the Garden of Eden, why would he enjoy it, or even want to remain there? This depiction seems to provide an answer: Adam was able to - despite not creating wine - enjoy wine during his Edenic existence.

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If you have any comments, compliments, or suggestions, feel free to reach out at Drew@JewishDrinking.com

{What Was The Fruit?, continued from page 1}

Not An Apple, So What Else?

So what textual clues do we have within our own tradition as to which fruit this may have been? Let's go to what the rabbis speculated. The classic text concerning rabbinic speculation as to this fruit's identity is one with not one, not two, but three opinions from second century sages (*Sanhedrin* 70a-b (parallel text at *Berakhot* 40a)):

It was taught: Rabbi Meir says: "The tree from which Adam the first man ate was a grapevine, since nothing else brings wailing upon a person, except for wine."	תניא רבי מאיר אומר אותו אילן שאכל אדם הראשון ממנו גפן היהשואין לך דבר שמביא יללה לאדם אלא יין
Rabbi Yehudah says: "It was wheat, since an infant knows not how to call 'Mommy' or 'Daddy' until the infant tastes grain."	רבי יהודה אומר חטה היה שאין התינוק יודע לקרוא אבא ואימא עד שיטעום טעם דגן
Rabbi Nehemiah says: "It was a fig, since the thing that they messed up with, they repaired it, as it is said, 'and they sewed a fig leaf' (Gen. 3.7)."	רבי נחמיה אומר תאנה היה שבדבר שקלקלו בו נתקנו שנאמר (בראשית ג, ו) ויתפרו עלה תאנה

What is fascinating about each of these second century rabbinic possibilities is that they each furnish a reason for the fruit they suggested.

Fig

However, only one of these offers a Biblical prooftext, when Rabbi Nehemiah suggested that the fruit they ate is directly connected with their remedy for their noticing their nakedness. I will admit to personally liking this suggestion, as the fig leaves not only appropriately covered them, but the text also directly tells us that such a plant was actually there, in addition to my personally appreciating the logic. Indeed Azzan Yadin-Israel writes, "Though the book of Genesis never identifies the fig as the forbidden fruit, a clear exegetical logic sustains the fig tradition: if Adam and Eve were standing by the fig tree when they sinned, this was likely the tree whose fruit they consumed" (*Temptation Transformed: The Story of How the Forbidden Fruit Became an Apple* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 8). But what about the other suggestions?



Wheat?

Rabbi Yehudah's suggestion of wheat is clearly peculiar, yet clever. No one considers wheat to be a fruit and who calls wheat a tree? Moreover, wheat is not something that one typically picks up and eats, yet one can still detect a sense of cleverness with his suggestion, despite it being highly unlikely.

Considering Rabbi Meir's Grapevine Assertion

Finally, it's fascinating to consider Rabbi Meir's suggestion concerning grapes/wine, especially for readers of this publication. His assertion that

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Apples?

Introduction

While we are commonly familiar with the idea (especially in artistic renderings) in the [Christian-dominated] West that the fruit was an apple, where does this idea originate? Indeed, much like the rabbis, early Christians did not consider this fruit to be an apple, so how did this come to be?

Azzan Yadin-Israel provides some deeply intriguing research and answers in his *Temptation Transformed: The Story of How the Forbidden Fruit Became an Apple* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), describing this change in the twelfth century, "as the apple quickly evolves from one option among several to the dominant forbidden fruit, displacing the grape, the pomegranate, and even the venerable fig" (p. 43).

France

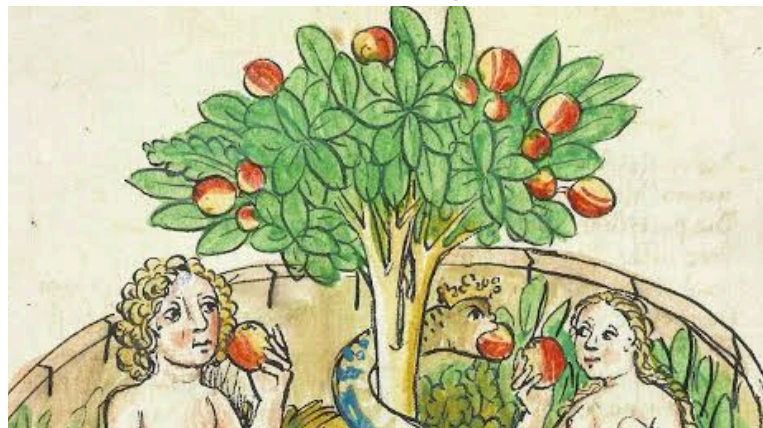
He then continues, describing this change originating in France (pp. 43-44):

The change occurs quite suddenly and across media. Red, round, apple-sized forbidden fruit appear on stained-glass windows of thirteenth-century cathedrals at Chartres, Amiens, Auxerre, and Le Mans (plate V), among others. Illuminated manuscripts overwhelmingly represent the forbidden fruit in this manner, some even displaying the white pulp of the bitten apple (plate VI). Stone carvings also adopt this new idiom, as we see in the reliefs at Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and St. Etienne in Auxerre. In the centuries that follow, the apple becomes ubiquitous: of some twenty-five fourteenth-century Fall of Man scenes, the vast majority are likely apples and, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the apple's dominance increases.

It seems this French origin is due to a linguistic similarity, as he notes (pp. 64-65):

pomum, "a fruit, specifically an orchard fruit," was the most common Latin word for the forbidden fruit. The old French *pom* is the direct etymological descendant of *pomum* and initially retained the Latin word's meaning, but, by a process known as "semantic narrowing," it gradually took on the narrower sense of "apple." Such shifts are a regular feature of linguistic change, but, in this case, there is likely a specific cause, namely, Old French's reluctance to adopt Latin *mālum*, "apple," because of its phonetic similarity to the taboo *malum*, "evil." The result was that *pom* "entered into a competition with the classic name for the apple, *malum* . . . and supplanted it." Of course, the semantic change was gradual and varied from region to region, and for a period, the word had both a broad and a narrow meaning: "fruit" and "apple."

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{Fruit, continued from page 2}

wailing comes upon the world because of grapes/wine is certainly intriguing.

While he ostensibly is pointing out the connecting to bringing wailing upon the world, as seen with Noah in chapter 9,



could Rabbi Meir also mean to say that wine is something that could help reveal knowledge? In this sense, could he mean that one's mind can open and operate more expansively while drinking wine? As such, Rabbi Meir would seem to be indicating that this wine would help uncover morality, reality, and other wisdom through its consumption. Indeed, think about times when you have gathered with others over drinks and consider how you have thought differently, leading to new insights.

Another possibility for Rabbi Meir is that he means that wine-drinking could be discovering and learning something totally new, even if that ultimately brings upon crying over a sad new reality. Indeed, this perspective would describe that new insights and ideas are not always pleasant. As such, consider the image of someone crying over drinks - whether they are crying while drinking as they consider something sad in their life, or perhaps simply drinking to drown their sorrows.



A third possibility could be that sometimes when knowledge is discovered, it's not always the most exciting and sometimes it can actually be quite hard to hear. While grapes/wine is not an expected fruit for this tree, it is nevertheless, an intriguing drinking consideration.

A fourth possibility, which Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105) (popularly known as Rashi) mentions concerns their punishment (רש"י על סנהדרין ע:), (ד"ה שאין לך דבר שמביא יללה על אדם אלא יין)

Therefore, it seems that because of him, death and crying came into the world.	הלכך מסתברא דעל ידו נקנסה מיתה ובכיה לעולם
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Rashi's take here has less to do with the intellectual and moral insights brought on by consumption and more to do with the physical aspects of their punishment for consuming the fruit of the morality tree causing death and its similarity with wailing over death being associated with wine. Nevertheless, it seems that Rashi is pointing out that the eating of this fruit caused them to receive death, as seen as a consequence of their eating of this fruit. {continued on page 4}

{Apple, continued from page 2}

England

The image of the apple for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil did not remain in France, as it travelled to England (p. 47):

By the middle of the thirteenth century, nearly a century after they first appear in France, apples begin to populate the English iconographic landscape. ... Initially, the apple is not as dominant in England as it is in France. ... Nonetheless, starting in the second half of the thirteenth century, the apple becomes the dominant forbidden fruit in English iconography.

Spreading into the Printing Era

As the image of the apple continued to spread throughout Europe, finally the era of the printing press arrived, helping to further spread it, as Yadin-Israel notes (p. 78):

In the early sixteenth century, the world's major publishing houses were located in northern Europe, in Leipzig, Augsburg, Basel, Cologne, Nuremberg, Strasbourg, and Paris. In Italy, printing "reach[ed] a genuinely industrial scale only in the city of Venice." Many of the early books produced in these centers were Bibles that included illustrative prints, of which a "disproportionately large number . . . [were] devoted to the Fall from Grace in Genesis 3:6." Leading northern artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, Albrecht Altdorfer, Hans Baldung, and Lucas Cranach were active in this field—all champions of the apple tradition. Martin Luther, who was theologically committed to biblical illustrations, included them in his Bibles from the outset. Early editions did not have a dedicated Fall of Man scene, but at least from the 1550 edition there was—an apple-tradition woodcut by Hans Brosamer (fig. 4.1). By this point, the apple tradition had been severed from its linguistic roots, and the revolutionary new medium of print disseminated forbidden apples to the farthest reaches of Europe and beyond.

Conclusion

The apple's place in the story of Eden, then, seems to owe less to biblical certainty than to the way language and images travel. A shift in the meaning of a French word helped make the apple a compelling artistic choice; its spread through England and, later, printed Bibles made that choice increasingly familiar. In time, an interpretation became an image so ubiquitous that it could seem to have been there all along, although the apple does not seem to be a Jewish consideration of this fruit.

L'chaim

{Wine in the Garden of Eden, continued from page 1}

We see that the idea that Adam had access to wine continues into the third century, as well (*Sanhedrin* 70a):

Rav H̄isda said, "Rav Ukva said", - and some say that Mar Ukva said: "Rabbi Zakkai said: 'The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Noah: "Noah, shouldn't you have learned from Adam the first man, whose banishment from the Garden of Eden was caused only by wine?"'"

אמר רב חסדא אמר רב עוקבא ואמר רבי מר עוקבא אמר רבי זכאי אמר לו הקב"ה לנח נח לא היה לך ללמד מאדם הראשון של גרם לו אלא יין

In reading this statement, we are left unclear as to how Adam accessed this wine, unless he viewed it similarly as Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema. Nevertheless, it seems clear that this rabbinic consideration that the wine was the cause would certainly seem to follow Rabbi Meir's assertion that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was a grapevine, albeit in the form of wine (see essay in the other column). There are two ways of considering this midrash regarding Adam: either as simply acknowledging that a grapevine was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that it brought crying to the world, or perhaps more straightforwardly calling out wine as the beverage that not only got

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Parallel Text

For the sake of completeness, I should also mention that there is a later parallel text in Genesis Rabbah 15:7:

Rabbi Meir said: "It was wheat, for when a person lacks understanding, people say of him: 'He has not eaten wheat bread all his life'."	מה היה אותו האילן שאכל ממנו אדם וחוה, רבי מאיר אומר חטים היו, כך לא הנה בר נש דעה אינון אמרין לא אכל ההוא אינשא פתא דחטי מן יומיו.
...	...
Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai said: "It was grapes, as it is written: 'Their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters bitter to them' (Deuteronomy 32:32-33) - those very clusters brought bitterness to the world."	רבי יהודה בר אלעאי אמר, ענבים היו, שנאמר (דברים לב, לב לג): ענבנו ענבי רשע אשכלת מררת למו, אותן האשכולות הביאו מרורות לעולם.
Rabbi Abba of Akko said: "It was an etrog (citron), as it is written: 'And the woman saw that the tree was good...' (Genesis 3:6) - She said: 'Go and see: which is the tree whose wood is eaten just like its fruit?' You will find none but the etrog."	רבי אבא דעכו אמר אתרוג היה, הדא הוא דכתיב (בראשית ג, ו): ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ וגו', אמרת צא וראה איזהו אילן שעצו נאכל כפריו, ואין אתה מוצא אלא אתרוג.
Rabbi Yose said: "It was figs; you learn this from the context itself.,,"	רבי יוסי אומר תאנים היו, דבר למד מענינו.



In addition to the addition of the etrog to this list of possibilities, we also read of the switching of different second century rabbis with these possibilities. Rabbi Abba of Akko's suggestion of the etrog is certainly a very curious one, as Yadin-Israel notes (ibid., 10): "The vine and grape are anchored in familiar scriptural arguments, and the citron, too, is buttressed by a biblical proof-text, though it is not clear why it is particularly suited to the verse."

Perhaps the most significant difference for our purposes is the proof-text for the grapes being the potential fruit being that from the book of Deuteronomy, which speaks more to their being fruit than their actual vinification.

Conclusion

While this week's Torah portion does not mention the specific fruit of the tree of knowledge between good and bad, our sages were certainly curious to try to specify what it was. In so doing, their debate about the identity of the fruit of knowledge reflects less a search for botanical precision than a deep exploration of human nature and moral awakening. Each proposed fruit - fig, grape, wheat, or etrog - embodies a different aspect of the human encounter with awareness: shame, sorrow, intellect, or beauty. One thing to consider as we enjoy our wine, especially on Shabbat, is to consider how much wisdom it opens us up to in our life experiences - may we grow in wisdom and enjoyment

L'chaim 

Medal-Winning Bourbons

With the first-ever kosher-certified spirits competition having taken place this summer, consumers in the market for bourbons may be curious about medal-winning whiskies at the inaugural Kosher Spirits Awards (in alphabetical order):



SILVER

- Bardstown Bourbon Company Bourbon Whiskey
- Bardstown Bourbon Company High Wheat Bourbon Whiskey
- BourbonRabbi 115 Bourbon
- Rabbit Hole Distillery Raceking Five Grain Double Chocolate Malt Bourbon



BRONZE

- KOVAL Distillery Single Barrel Bourbon
- New Riff Distilling Kosher Single Barrel Bourbon
- Rabbit Hole Distillery Heigold High Rye Double Malt Bourbon
- Thresh & Winnow Straight Bourbon Finished in Brandy Casks
- Weldon Mills Distillery Reserve Straight Bourbon Whiskey
- Weldon Mills Select Straight Bourbon Whiskey



{Wine in the Garden of Eden, continued from page 1}

Adam banished from the Garden of Eden, but also caused something shameful to happen to Noah. This latter reading seems to consider wine as bringing challenging situations to bear, framing wine-drinking in a negative light.



Considering Adam & Eve's Wine-Consumption

While we do not read that Adam and Eve ever drank wine or were even exposed to it in the Torah, I wonder if these rabbis found it absolutely impossible that they did not drink wine. Perhaps it was simply inconceivable that humanity could go without wine. Why would humanity have - spoiler alert - waited for Noah to create wine in next week's Torah portion? How could humans have winelessly lived for centuries? I find this surprise in their minds to be the most fascinating aspect of this rabbinic consideration of Adam and Eve's consumption in the Garden of Eden: the rabbis can not fathom humanity to live without wine. Perhaps this is the biggest takeaway of this entire consideration of this matter: humanity was not meant to live without wine.

L'chaim 