

Naase V' Nishmah- The Jewish People and Apples

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

The Klal Yisroel is praised for accepting the Torah with the words, “*naase venishmah, we will do and we will hear.*” We, as a community, committed ourselves to the entire before even knowing what it entailed. We understood that the Torah that Hashem was giving us could only be for our good. We became like angels and received special crowns for acting accordingly. The Gemara in Shabbos 88A takes this idea and explains why Am Yisroel is compared to apples in Shir Hashirim 8: 5 where it is stated, ‘under the apple tree I awoke you.’ Chazal explain that it was under the apple tree that many of our children came into the world. They were not able to be born openly and with the happiness that is usual at such a time as to not catch the attention of the Mitzriyim. The Gemara states that it was specifically apple trees that overshadowed the birth of the babies because apples are unique in that the fruit comes out before the leaves. Similarly, Am Yisroel accepted to do everything Hashem commanded even before knowing what it was.

The Chiddushai Harim of Ger, Z'l, develops this idea of the comparison of Am Yisroel to apples a little bit further. We know that Am Yisroel lost the crowns they received at Har Sinai when they made the golden calf. However, the crowns are given back to every Jew on Shabbos. In Kabbalistic literature the Friday night meal is referred to as the meal of *Chakal tapuchin kasddishin*, the field of holy apples as we in the askeenu seudasa before each meal. While the full meaning is very esoteric, it can be understood that at each of the Shabbos meals, the Schechina manifests itself differently. At the first meal of Shabbos which is on Friday night, we focus on this aspect of connecting to Hashem in that we are always ready to do his mitzvos, even before we know what they are. The Chiddushai Harim, also explained that since Am Yisroel is compared to apples it means they can and should have enthusiasm for mitzvos even at a very young age when they are not yet mature enough for a more thorough understanding. They can and should be taught to feel ‘*Asreinu mah Tov chelkainu*, how happy and good is our lot that we were born to serve Hashem.’