

Sacred Time: Soul Food – Shevat 4

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“The tzaddik eats to satisfy his soul.” (Mishlei 13:25)

“If a person finds that his food has no flavor to him, it is because he is disconnected from G-d.” (Sefer Hamiddot)

The sense and behavior associated with the month of Shevat is taste and eating. There is an obvious connection between the *mazal* or astrological sign of the month and eating, because the *dli*—literally, the “water pail”—is a vessel whose essential nature is its ability to receive. As we’ve already seen, its spiritual expression is seen best when a person makes him or herself into a vessel for receiving and then sharing the waters of Torah. But there are other ways for the

dli to receive, which also allow us to access G-dliness.

We've learned that the Hebrew letter associated with the month is the *tzaddik*, which is representative of—among other things—the *tzaddik* himself, i.e. the ideal righteous person who has fully realized his spiritual potential. One of the hallmarks of a *tzaddik* is his (or her) ability to sanctify the material experience and use it as a means of drawing closer to G-d. One of the most basic areas in which the *tzaddik* accomplishes this in the realm of eating. When we're at our plate, we're "up at the plate"—the experience of eating can either materialize us (literally, by adding to our physical substance, and spiritually, by binding us more tightly to our search for physical pleasure); or it can spiritualize us, by filling us with gratitude to G-d, awareness of our dependence on our Creator, and the deep delight that comes from seeing how G-d's goodness is expressed through material abundance.

"The *tzaddik* eats to satisfy his soul"—he eats for sake of bring joy and connection to his soul, not his body. And, as Rebbe Nachman makes clear, spiritualized eating doesn't mean that we don't taste our food; quite the contrary, we will taste it more, deeper, more delightfully, illuminated by the light of connection to G-d.