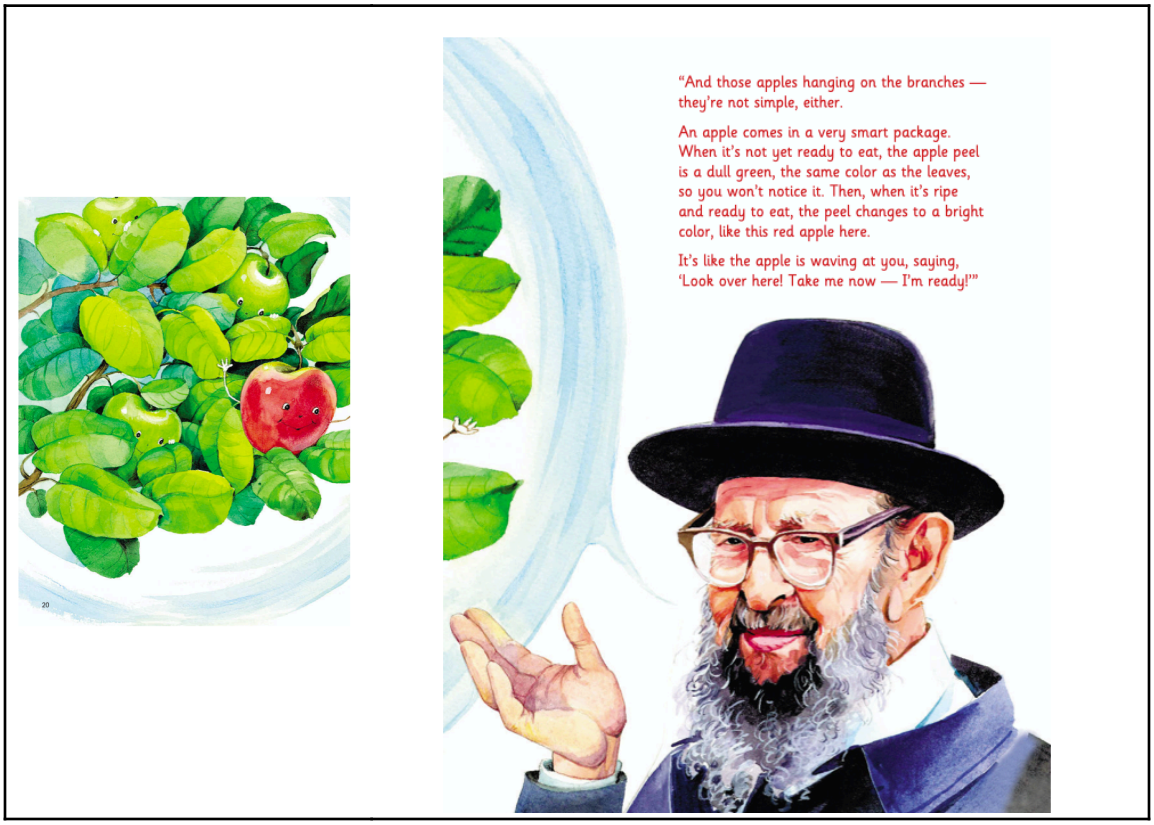
Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l on apples and plan and purpose

And those apples hanging on the branches they're not simple, either. An apple comes in a very smart package. When it's not yet ready to eat, the apple peel is a dull green, the same color as the leaves, so you won't notice it. Then, when it's ripe and ready to eat, the peel changes to a bright color, like this red apple here[1]*. It's like the apple is waving at you, saying, 'Look over here! Take me now - I'm ready!*



One night I slept in the country. And outside my window there was a wild cherry tree. Now, for months the wild cherries had been available only to birds. If you couldn't fly or you didn't want to climb the tree you couldn't get them. But that night, all night long, I could hear the pit-pat of falling cherries. Pit pat, they were falling on the lawn. Pit-pat, pit-pat, all night long they were falling. And I was thinking, "Why all of a sudden are they coming down? The cherry was holding on tightly all the spring months. What makes it come loose and come down?"

1. Granny Smith apples are a recent innovation from about 1860 in Australia by Mary Smith. A great granddaughter writes: "Granny [Mary] Smith is my great, great, great, great, grandmother, and her name was not Mary! Her name was Maria Ann Smith, nee Sherwood, (pronounced the same way as diva Mariah Carey), 1800-1870, married to Thomas Smith, 1797-1876. The orchard was located in Eastwood, now in the City of Ryde, Sydney." When ripe, this apple turns a different shade of green that makes it stand out and the great, great granddaughter says they turn a slight blush colour as they ripen. Whatever the colour, it is a marvellous package of wisdom and goodness fine-tuned for the human being who is the whole purpose of all of creation.

If you study a little bit of botany, you know that a fruit doesn't fall by accident. Because if so, why doesn't it fall by accident at the beginning of the season? It first has to become ripe – it has to become sweet. And then, at the same time, it has to acquire a pleasant color. And only then, certain cells start developing in the stem – where the stem is connected to the twig of the tree certain abscission cells develop. And it is these cells that cause the fruit to fall.

So the question is, why is it that when the fruit is still unripe it doesn't fall down? That's a question that we have to face – and don't try to dodge that question because it's question that is of the utmost consequence: Why does the fruit let go only when it's ripe? You're not talking here about a random hurricane that comes and blows down unripe, green fruits. Why does the fruit fall only when it's ripe? Every time!

And the answer is that we couldn't get up to it otherwise. The tree knows you don't have wings. The main eaters, the most important eaters of the fruit, don't have wings. And that's why the tree lets go when the food is ripe.

Now, pay attention to something else. Why is it that before the fruit is ripe, that it's always green? Unripe fruit are green. Whether the fruit eventually becomes bright yellow like a banana or an orange, or beautiful purple like grapes, or bright red like apples – whatever happens – but before it's ripe it's always green. Why is that?

There's only one answer. Because you have to understand – why isn't it another color? Why isn't it bright yellow when it's unripe? Why isn't it bright red when it's unripe? … You know why? Because green is the color of the leaves. The fruit is hiding among the leaves. When it's unripe the fruit is saying, "Don't look at me – I'm not old enough yet." And it doesn't fall down. It's holding on tight because it's not fit to eat yet. Even if you shake the tree, it wouldn't come down. Maybe one might fall – a sick fruit. But all the healthy fruit hold on tight.

It's only when the fruit becomes ripe, then it acquires an attractive color. Then it says, "Look at me." And so, when you look at the tree, you're look at a miracle! Who hung all those beautiful and luscious fruit on the tree? And they're packaged in such gay colors!

Now, if you never saw an apple tree before – I was a city boy and the first time I saw an apple tree full of of apples it was an apparition to me. A tree with apples on it?! I had never seen apples before except in a basket. Apples hanging on the tree! And they're all brightly colored! And you give the tree a little shake and they start tumbling down.

The question now is why is it that this series of adjustments took place? That the apple, all the fruits, when they're unripe, they're all green. Do you think that happens by accident? Do you think it's a coincidence that green is also the color of the leaves? It happens by accident that the fruits can hide among the leaves? And why is it that when a fruit is ripe – and only then – does it

acquire a conspicuous color. By accident, apples become red? By accident bananas become very yellow? By accident, grapes become red or purple? And why is it that when they're ripe, they're ready to come down?

And you want some more? Why is it that when you're finished eating the apple, you come to the inside there's an area that's hard to eat, and you're discouraged from eating it? That's the ovary – it's where the seeds are. Because the ovary has in it plastic pieces in order to protect the seeds. If you try to swallow it, it's sticks in your throat; it sticks in your gums. It's inedible. You can't eat that plastic. So why is it that when you walk sometimes in the morning and last night there were gangs roaming the street – boys and girls eating apples – you see apple cores scattered everywhere? And had it not been a paved street, but an earthen field, it would have taken root eventually. What is it that makes people spare the seeds and spit it out for next year's planting?

It's like eating a box of cereal and when you get down to the bottom of the box, there's a coupon there entitling you to another free box. That's why you spit out the seeds – and that's what you do, you spit out the seeds – you always spit out the seeds. If you don't spit out the seeds, they'll spit themselves out. Try and eat a piece of watermelon, and the seeds shoot out in all directions. They're made slippery for that purpose.

Now the question is: Why is it that you have seeds in the apples? Why is it that there are seeds in every living thing? And what a seed? That's also a question – a little question. A seed has within it 100,000 details, all the blueprints for a new apple tree. It's the chromosomes of the seed, telling it how to make another apple tree; how to produce leaves, and how to produce sap and bark and flowers – all kinds of flowers – and how to produce more apples. More apples with more seeds inside them. All of these plans are in the blueprint of the seed! So the question is: How is that possible? And therefore if you look at a red apple it's enough proof for you. It's enough proof for anybody. Nobody can dispute this proof that there's a Creator with an intelligence that is far beyond the ability of all the scientists put together to even begin to fathom.

Blessings

The beginning of the 6th chapter of the tractate of the Talmud *Brochos* (Blessings):

מַתְנִי׳ כֵּיצַד מְבָרְכִין עַל הַפֵּירוֹת? עַל פֵּירוֹת הָאִילָן הוּא אוֹמֵר: ״בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ״, חוּץ מִן הַיַּיִן, שֶׁעַל הַיַּיִן הוּא אוֹמֵר: ״בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן״. וְעַל פֵּירוֹת הָאָרֶץ הוּא אוֹמֵר: ״בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה״, חוּץ מִן הַפַּת, שֶׁעַל הַפַּת הוּא אוֹמֵר: ״הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ״. וְעַל הַיֶּרָקוֹת הוּא אוֹמֵר: ״בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה״. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: ״בּוֹרֵא מִינֵי דְשָׁאִים״.

> MISHNA: This mishna discusses the blessings recited over various foods. How does one recite a blessing over fruits? Over different fruits that grow on a tree one recites: Who creates fruit of the tree, with the exception of wine. Although wine is produced from fruit of the tree, due to its

> significance, its blessing differs from other fruits of the tree. Over wine one recites: Who creates fruit of the vine. Over fruits that grow from the earth, one recites: Who creates fruit of the ground, with the exception of bread. Bread, too, is significant and its blessing differs from other fruits of the ground, as over bread one recites: Who brings forth bread from the earth. Over herbs and leafy vegetables one recites: Who creates fruit of the ground. Rabbi Yehuda says that there is room to distinguish between fruits that grow from the earth, herbs, and leafy vegetables. Although they are all fruit of the ground, since they have different qualities, the blessing on the latter is: Who creates various kinds of herbs.

So, from our youth, a Jew learns to make these daily blessings on the various kinds of foods, with fruit trees having the highest status (much higher than say meat). The garden of Eden was an orchard! The Jewish child thus learns to discriminate and reflect on each different type of fruit and vegetable, and with this meditation express gratitude to God for this wonderful and life sustaining package of wisdom and kindliness.

It hurts to see a human being just start eating without this focus, as if he is like an animal, thus denying his potential for greatness

Yahrtzeit

Rav Miller's Yahrtzeit is twenty-seventh of Nissan. He often spoke about plan and purpose and indicated how we could develop gratitude for all the good Hashem does for us every minute of the day. For example, we might set aside ten minutes each day to learn *Mussar* such as *Chovos Halvavo*s (Duties of the Mind). We might spend one minute each day thinking about a different *bracha* in Shemoneh Esrei, before we start this daily prayer. We might thank Hashem for a different body part every day. We might mention the beneficence and transcendence of Hashem to others at home at least once a day; it benefits us and them to develop the attribute of gratitude, which is the basis of awe and love of God (also part of *Shema Yisroel*).