



## PORTION FROM

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## THE PORTION

# Yosef, Nekoth, Tzeri, And Lot

Yosef's life began well, his father loved him more than the brothers since he was "the child of his old age" (37:3). Yaakov made a special coat just for him. But the coat, Yosef's tale telling about his brothers to their father, and Yosef's dreams that he shared with everyone made the brothers hate him so much that they couldn't even speak to him. When his father sends Yosef to check on his brothers grazing the sheep, they take action against him.

They stripped him of his precious coat, threw him into the pit and eventually he was sold to a caravan going to Egypt. The verse tells us that the camels were carrying "Nekoth, Tzeri, and Lot. Rav Arye Kaplan translates these as "gum, balsam and resin" (37:25). Although Rashi says that *Nekoth* is a generic word for spices, Rav Kaplan brings other commentators who say it's actually from the carob family. He says Tzeri is a gum extracted from the sap of the tree that was used for incense and perfume. He also writes that the plant called *Lot* is described by the Septuagint as being from the pistachio family while others say it is a species mentioned in the Mishna and identified as chestnut.

Rashi asks why did the Torah even tell us what the camels were carrying? What can

we learn from these words? He answers his own question by saying that it is to teach us about the reward for *Zadikim* (the righteous). The products listed above were unusual for such a caravan which would usually have carried the foul smelling naphtha and tar. In this instance, instead, it was laden with pleasantly aromatic produce so Yosef, the *zadik*, wouldn't have the unnecessary suffering of the awful odors. These same plants could also have had an added benefit for Yosef. They possibly acted as medicinal herbs or aroma therapy for his body and soul from the violent episode with his brothers and from being in a pit with snakes and scorpions. This is just one of many episodes where we can see the Hand of God in Yosef's life.

We also notice that these same plants were among those that Yaakov sent along with his sons when they traveled to Egypt for the second time to buy wheat during the famine (43:11). This is when Yosef reveals himself to them. This is no coincidence. God's hand was pulling the strings – and maybe these spices brought by the brothers were in some way part of their teshuva process for the evil things they did to Yosef. Some even say that the use of *Tzeri* as one of the spices in the *ketoret* in the Beit Hamikdash is to remember and atone for the unbrotherly actions of Yosef's brothers. The brothers' actions have haunted us throughout the generations. We are all waiting and praying for the day of full atonement for the brothers' behaviors toward Yosef and

brotherly love for our nation.



## RECIPE

This week's quick, easy and pretty dessert includes ingredients to remind us of the cargo the camels carried along with Yosef on the way to Egypt. We mentioned above the Nekoth, *Tzeri*, and *Lot* who some think were chestnuts, pistachios or carobs. This recipe covers the chestnuts with chocolate (use your favorite kind), but you can also use carob instead if you wish.

## CHESTNUTS COVERED WITH CHOCOLATE AND PISTACHIO

30 gm. chocolate

Bag Roasted chestnuts

12gm. pistachio nuts – shelled and finely chopped

Melt the chocolate (keep it dry, away from water or condensation so it won't get grainy or lumpy and be careful not to burn it). I like to pour boiled water in a medium sized glass bowl and place a smaller dry glass bowl inside. Place the chocolate in the dry glass bowl and mix it infrequently till it's all melted. An easy and not messy way to chop the nuts is by placing them in a sealed plastic bag and crushing them with a rolling pin or other heavy utensil. Scatter the crushed pistachio on a plate. Line a flat pan with baking paper. Dip the rounded side of each chestnut in the melted chocolate; dip the chocolate covered side in the nuts and place on the prepared pan nut-side up. Refrigerate about 5 minutes till hardened. Serve. ■

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