

# Ray's Figs Ray's Figs

## The Figs of Israel

[Daniel Yakir](#) is an Israeli fig enthusiast who also has fine photographic skills. One of his ambitions is to identify and photograph all of the figs grown in Israel. Last spring he travelled in the Jordan River Valley searching for brebas to sample and to photograph. Here is a composite of several e-mail he sent me with some photos of his trip. I have also added few photos of main crop figs grown in Israel as well...

*Yesterday we went to visit the fig plantations in the Jordan Valley. . .*



'Flowers are appearing on the earth,  
The season of glad songs has come,  
the cooing of the turtledove is heard in our land.  
The fig tree is forming its first figs  
and the blossoming vines give out their fragrance.  
Come then, my beloved,  
my lovely one, come.

*The Song of Songs 2:12,13*

*The purpose of the visit was to see the new crops of the early figs. Due to the hot, dry climate the figs of the Jordan Valley ripen early.*



Then the trees said to the fig tree,  
"You come and be our king!"

The fig tree replied,  
"Must I forgo my sweetness,  
forgo my excellent fruit,  
to go and sway over the trees?"

**Judges 9: 12, 13**



*Most of the figs were  
already picked but we had  
enough to eat and be  
impressed by the flavors.*



*Most of the crop is the  
**Nazarati** verity. The  
brebas are very big but  
the taste to my opinion is*



only fair. The *Nazarati* variety is probably *White Bosnian*.



Other brebas that we ate were *Mission*, *Bidan*, *Black Italian*, "*French*" (which is *Dauphine*) and *Khdari*. No 1 in taste & aroma was the *Khdari*, second were the *Mission* and *Bidan* together, then the others. *Bidan* is named after the Arab village by the same name in Samaria. It's a small fig with a fantastic reddish color, bears two crops fantastic and has a good flavor



Mission



Bidan



I don't have much experience with brebas, but my impression is that the summer figs are aromatic, sweeter and tastier. . . .[This matches my own experience.]

This is one of the photos Daniel sent me earlier. A church and figs in the adjoining garden. What could be more appropriate for

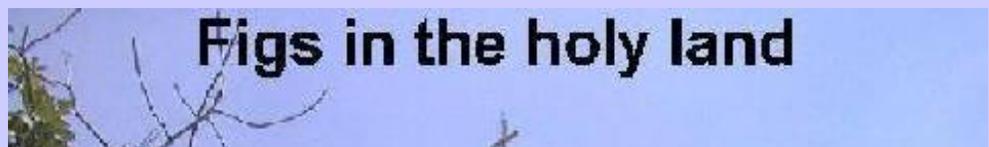


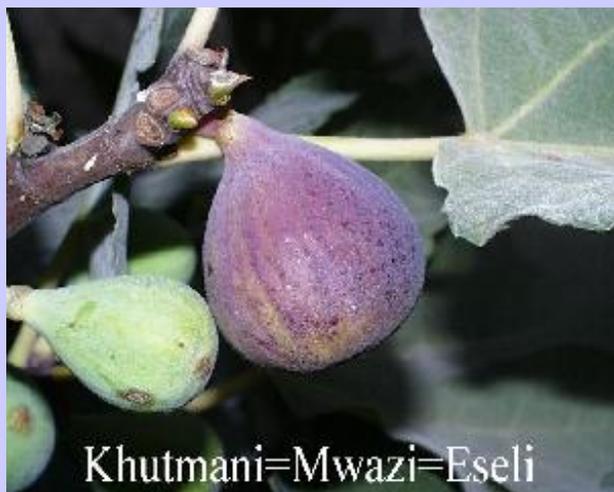
fig lovers in the Holy Land? Daniel added that the Hebrew name for this village *Gush Halav*. It is an old village. Although not mentioned in the Bible, it is mentioned in the Talmud which was composed in the 3rd century AD. Gush Halav was for many, many years the center of a fig-drying industry. The villagers dry the figs and compress them into a thick paste. Even today if you come to Gish-- even in the winter--buy fig paste. It's delicious.



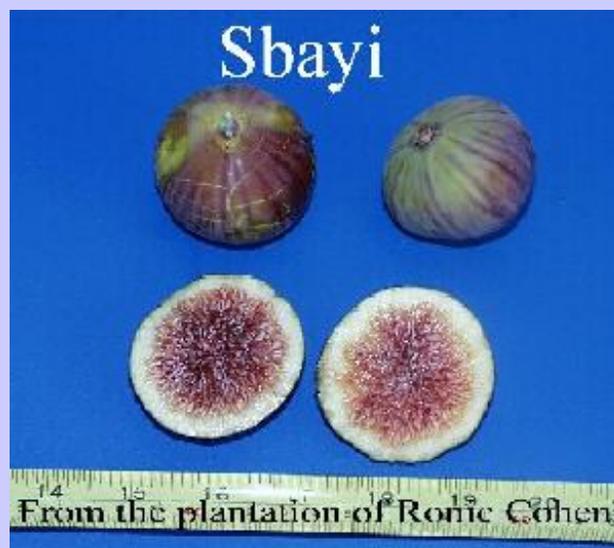
Figs are not a significant commercial crop in Israel, but even hobbyists and small growers apply rather advanced horticultural techniques and technologies. *The net*, says Daniel, *keeps insects out and allows the grower to avoid completely the need to use insecticides.*



Here is selection of what Daniel assures me are the best figs in Israel:

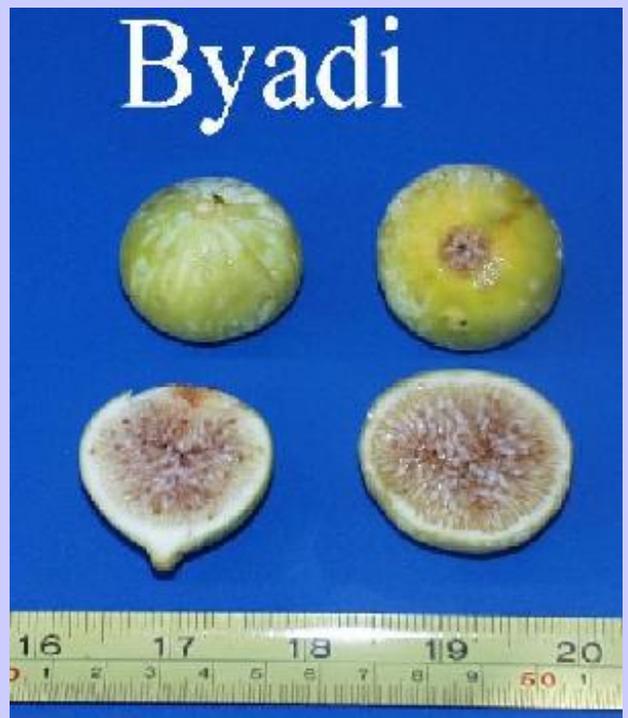


The **Khurtmani** (meaning the owner of the bow or nose), Daniel says, is considered by some to be the best fig grown in Israel. It is probably the fig we call Brunswick. The synonyms for it in Israel are **Mwazi** (the name given by the villagers of Judea) and **Esely** which means *honey*. It is a big tree. Moderately fruitful



The **Sbayi**, which means "spotted" in Arabic, is the second main crop fig in Israel. It was first described by Grasoovsky and Weitz in 1932. (The purple ribs are a distinguishing characteristic.) It is sweet and good for fresh consumption. Israeli experts consider it second only to Khurtmani in taste, aroma, and quality in Israel. It has never been imported into the United States

Grasoovsky and Weitz also described **Byadi** in their 1932 work, *Fig-growing in Palestine*. It is also known as **Falahi**. According Condit, **Byadi** trees tend to be small and not very productive. The villagers from the Galilee tell Daniel that the **Byadi** is very productive. Grasoovsky and Weitz say it is one of the most productive varieties in the region. The fruit is sweet and has small seeds and few of them. Mainly used for drying. Even today **Byadi** is grown extensively by the villagers in the Lower Galilee and during end of August and all of September you can buy **Byadi** figs in the roadside stands in small baskets. They are good for fresh use and really excellent for jam preparation. It is also good for drying and is the main variety around Gush Halav (Gish) where the farmers dry them to paste form. The **Byadi** main crop is plentiful, but it only gives a very few brebas .

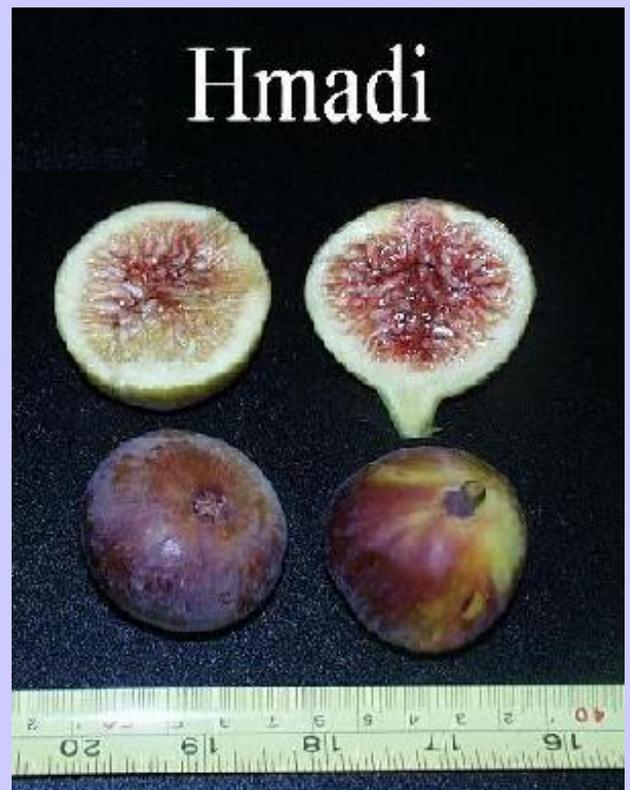


**Hdari**, also transliterated as **Khdari**, comes from the Arabic word for green, *khadar*. **Hdari** is very popular in all the regions of Israel. The fig is medium to large and the tree is big (very big if irrigated). Two crops. Brebas are large (to 2 1/2 ounces or 65 grams) and very tasty. The summer figs are a little smaller (to 1 3/4 ounces or 50 grams) and even tastier. Described by Grasowski and Weitz as excellent variety for fresh eating. Condit says it is a Smyrna-type fig and needs caprification to bear fruit. However, many areas where it is grown in Israel do not have caprifigs, so he is probably wrong. Worth importing for trial.





**Shtawi** (*Stav* means *autumn* in Hebrew) is a very late fig grown in Samaria (modern West Bank) and the Galilee. Also described by GrasoVsky and Weitz. One advantage to this fig is the almost-closed eye which might make it suitable for humid areas like the American South. They did not, however, describe its quality and productivity.



**Hmadi** (probably from the Hebrew word *hamuts* which means *acid*) was also described by GrasoVsky and Weitz. It is a small fig with a sub-acid flavor "very much relished by the fellaheen [RG--an Arabic term for peasants]." *Around the town of Taibe the farmers grow, even today, the Hmadi figs. It seems that they specialized in this variety and during summer, they produce relatively large nice looking green figs decorated with strong red lines. The taste is good and refreshing. So if you wish to eat some Hmadi figs, during season, all you have to do is to drive north on Road 444. When you approach Taibe look carefully to your right and you will see a few booths that sell figs. Don't hesitate! Buy at least 1 kilogram of those fine reddish Hmadi figs. Who knows? You might even return home with a few left in your bag.*

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