

~ONION (29)

[Hebrew, *ba-tsal*']

- A strong-tasting bulbous biennial having slender tubelike leaves. The **onion**, *Allium cepa*, was one of the items of diet for which the mixed crowd and the Israelites yearned in the wilderness after being liberated from Egypt.
- And the mixed crowd that was in the midst of them expressed selfish longing, and the sons of Israel too began to weep again and say; Who will give us meat to eat? (**Numbers 11:4**)
- How we remember the fish that we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers and the watermelons and the leeks and the **onions** and the garlic! (**Numbers 11:5**)
- In that land of Israel's captivity, **onions** were extensively cultivated. The Greek historian **Herodotus [II, 125]** even tells of an inscription that listed **onions** among the foods provided for the laborers on a certain Egyptian pyramid.
- In Egypt, **onions**, usually tied together in a bundle, were offered to the deities, although the priests were not permitted to eat them. The **onions** of Egypt have been described as **soft**, and therefore more easily digestible than other varieties, as well as **sweet tasting** rather than sharp, or acrid.