



## BIRKAT HA-ILANOT

We all grew up saying "April showers bring May flowers". This year, with the abundance of rain we are blessed to see an abundance of beautiful flowers all around us now.

It is a great time to go on a tiyul. Not only can one enjoy the colors of nature, but one can also do a mitzvah. This month of Nissan is when we can say the special blessing- Bracha when we see flowering fruit trees.

What is a Bracha? It comes from the root BET-REISH-CHAF - BERECH - knees. We bend before God. With our blessings we acknowledge that the world belongs to God. We ask permission to use it by saying "please", i.e. our beracha before we eat, and "thank you", our blessings after partaking( i.e BIRKAT HAMAZON).

It also comes from the root BREICHA - a pool of water. A blessing is like a flowing stream that flows continuously and always keeps refilling and replenishing itself. When we bless God, and when we bless others, it adds more blessings in the world. As hinted to in the letters in the word BET-REISH-CHAF. The numerical value of each is a multiple of 2 - 2, 20, 20 symbolising the doubling of the good when we bless. Saying a beracha opens a wellspring of blessing that flows from Hashem.

So this month of Nissan we have a special blessing to say - BIRKAT HAILANOT. This is one of the Birkot Hanehenin, blessings on pleasures, sights and sounds. It is a lovely blessing "...who has withheld nothing from His world, but has created in it beautiful creatures and trees for human beings to enjoy." Let this blessing help us focus our attention on all the good around us. It is a type of mindfulness where we bring to the foreground what's usually in the background of our awareness. As Rav Nachman says that the world is filled with the light of God, but to see it we must learn to open our eyes. BIRKAT HAILANOT helps us do that.

So what tree is blossoming now? According to the website of the Keren Kayemet, wildflowers.co.il the Juglans Regis, Common Walnut - EGOZ MELACH is and can be found in Israel near Meron, and Sataf. This recipe using ground Walnuts is one of my families favorite Pesach desserts that we actually serve all year round.

### WALNUT BRITTLE

Melt 300 g chocolate - Flatten out in pan (size of oven) & Freeze

Mix

2 eggs

1 c sugar

1 tbsp oil

150 g almonds

150 g walnuts (100 g = almost 1 cup)

Flatten mixture on top of chocolate.

Bake 20 minutes at 180C/ Cut straight away.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish my niece, Bracha Dresner, and her chatan Eliyahu Donna, and their families, mazel tov on their wedding. Her name, Bracha, was the inspiration for this week's column.

