

Vebbe Rebbe

Preferring the Fruits of Eretz Yisrael

Question: Do the fruit of Eretz Yisrael in our times have kedusha that would make it preferable to eat them over other foods?

Answer: Usually, discussion of kedusha of the Land's produce relates to land-based mitzvot. Without going into detail, we posit that most land-based mitzvot apply on a Rabbinic level rather than a Torah-level after the Beit HaMikdash's destruction. However, the parameters regarding your question may be different.

Actually, Eretz Yisrael's special qualities exist at all times, as we find in many statements of Chazal from the post-Temple period (see Ketubot 110-112). True, there were elements that were greater at the time of the Beit HaMikdash (see Sota 48a regarding the special taste of fruit) or will be greater when Mashiach comes (see Ketubot *ibid.*). The success of the fruit of the Land is also a harbinger of the advent of the era of Mashiach (Sanhedrin 98a). But even in destruction, Eretz Yisrael is wonderful, and one should feel a special love for everything connected to it (Ketubot 112a-b). Indeed, the great majority of poskim posit that the mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael applies now (see Ramban, Mitzvat Asei 4; Pitchei Teshuva, Even

HaEzer 75:6).

Does the Land's innate kedusha create a preference to eat its fruit? The gemara (Sota 14a) wonders why Moshe so strongly desired to enter the Land. It dismisses the possibility that he was interested in eating its fruit and says that he wanted to fulfill the mitzvot of the Land. Based on this approach, there are Rishonim (see Tur, Orach Chayim 208) who say that we should not say, as part of the b'racha acharona on fruit, "v'nochal mipiryah" (we shall eat of its fruit), as this is unimportant. While the poskim do not come to a consensus on the matter (see Sha'ar HaTziyun 208:51), all our texts include the phrase. Yet the Beit Yosef explains the phrase's relevance as follows. Since the b'racha is thanking Hashem for food, focus on food is appropriate. He seems to agree that overall it is not particularly important. On the other hand, the Bach (*ad loc.*) argues that while for Moshe eating the fruit was not important, for us, when things are proper, the fruit of Eretz Yisrael connects us to a world of spirituality.

There are other indications of the fruit's special status. The gemara (B'rachot 44a) says (as the Rashba *ad loc.* and Shulchan Aruch, OC 208:10 understand) that if one eats fruits that grew in Eretz Yisrael, his b'racha acharona includes "... v'al peiroteha" (on its fruit), instead of just say "v'al hapeirot" (on fruit). This stresses the significance of the fruit coming from

the Land.

The seven species of produce for which Eretz Yisrael is praised have a high priority regarding what fruit to eat right after one's b'racha (Shulchan Aruch, OC 211:4). Logically, produce that is actually from Eretz Yisrael should have prominence in this regard, as V'zot HaB'racha (p. 124) says in the name of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu. Others point out (see Mishpetei Uziel I, OC 24; Teshuvot V'hanhagot I:188) that there is not support for this outlook in classical sources. (One could explain that until recently, the fruit of bnei Eretz Yisrael was always from the Land and Jews living abroad did not have access to the fruit of Eretz Yisrael. Since few had a choice between them, the topic is not discussed.) In any case, we note that we do not find a preference to eat the seven species, just that, if we do, it has precedence for the b'racha. In other words, prominence does not necessarily mean one should go out of his way to eat it.

We put things together as follows. There is no halachic obligation or clear preference to eat the fruit of Eretz Yisrael. However, since one is supposed to love the Land and matters connected to it (see above), wanting to connect to Hashem and His Land by eating its fruit is displaying and likely fostering a healthy outlook, which gives it added value. (To the extent that eating such fruit helps Israeli Jewish farmers and thereby helps strengthen

our hold on the Land, this is valuable (see Gittin 8b).)

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