



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778
 Parashat Achrei Mot-Kedoshim / פרשת אחרי מות־קדשים

Praising Hashem in Yerushalayim

The Torah commands that a fruit tree must undergo a four-year process in order that its fruits be unsanctified and able to be eaten freely. For the first three years of a tree's life its fruits are considered *arlah* and entirely prohibited to be eaten. In the fourth year, the fruits, referred to as *neta reva'i* must be transported to Yerushalayim and eaten there.

It is interesting to note that the Torah itself does not explicate this law regarding the fruits of the fourth year. Rather, we read: "And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Hashem."¹ Rashi explains that the word "holy" is used in reference to both *neta reva'i* and *ma'aser sheni* and from this connection we derive that just as the Torah teaches that the latter must be eaten in Yerushalayim, so too the former. Thus, when the Torah says "holy, a praise to the Lord," the Oral tradition teaches us that this means that the fruits must be transported to Yerushalayim.

Generally, when the Oral tradition interprets a verse in a manner that seems to not be in line with its literal meaning the commentators labor to bridge the gap. In this case, what is the connection between the Torah's formulation that the fruits are "holy, a praise to the Lord" and Yerushalayim?

Perhaps, the solution to this puzzle is that holiness and praising Hashem naturally take place in Yerushalayim, the home of Hashem. While holiness and to praising Hashem do exist outside of Yerushalayim, the sanctified city is the most natural location for holiness and gratitude to Hashem. Therefore, when the Torah describes the fruits of the fourth year with these qualities, it is most natural to normatively translate them as requiring us to bring the fruits to Yerushalayim.

Perhaps the fact that Yerushalayim is the most natural location to praise Hashem is the rationale behind a different perplexing law. In Parshat Eikev, the Torah requires a person who eats to satisfaction to bless God afterwards: "And you shall eat, be satiated and bless Hashem your God for

¹ Vayikra 19:24. Translation adapted from Chabad.org.



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the good land that He gave you.”² The Gemara in Berakhot derives from the phrase “good land”³ that in addition to thanking God for the food and for the Land of Israel that are mentioned in the verse, we also must thank Hashem for Yerushalayim. In what way is Yerushalayim connected to Grace After Meals?

Based on the above idea one can suggest that really the ideal place to thank and praise Hashem is Yerushalayim. When the farmer wants to thank Hashem for his new fruits, he does so in Yerushalayim. When he wants to thank Hashem for his firstborn animals, he does so in Yerushalayim. So, too, whenever we eat and want to thank Hashem, it should ideally be done in Hashem’s home – his holy city. Therefore, even as the Torah allows for people to eat and offer “a praise to the Hashem” wherever they might be, it is proper to mention Yerushalayim in the expression of gratitude, as that is the ideal location for such offerings of praise.

² Devarim 8:10.

³ Berachot 48b.