



TORAH VEHA'ARETZ

INSTITUTE

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Can We Say Birkat Ha'ilanot On Orlah Trees?

During Nissan, we say *birkat ha'ilanot* on the blossoming of fruit trees:

ברוך אתה ה' ... שלא חיסר בעולמו דבר, וברא בו בריות טובות ואילנות טובים להנות בהם בני אדם

“Blessed are you Hashem ... Who has made nothing lacking in His world, and created in it goodly creatures and goodly trees to give mankind pleasure.”

Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761–1837) in his commentary on *Shulchan Aruch* (OC §226) addressed this question in the title. When the tree is certainly *orlah*, it is forbidden to benefit whatsoever from the fruit that will eventually develop from the blossoms. If possibly *orlah*, he permits this. *Divrei Malkiel* (1847–1910) explains that although gentiles may benefit from *orlah* fruit, when person says a blessing on deriving benefit they include their own benefit and others’.

Yet if they themselves cannot enjoy the fruit, this is problematic. *Kaf HaChayim* forbids this accordingly (*Shulchan Aruch*, OC §226:11).

Rabbi Weidenfeld of Tshebin (1881–1965; *Dovev Meisharim* 3:5), however, permits this, since it is permitted to benefit from *orlah* blossoms (it is only forbidden to benefit from the fruit; *Shulchan Aruch* YD §294:2). Thus, we saying a blessing over the pleasure of seeing the blossoms—which is permitted. Alternatively, in the future (following the *orlah* years), people will benefit from the tree’s fruit. Responsa *Chelkat Yaakov* (1:56) adds that no prohibition was transgressed in cultivating the tree (as opposed to a tree grafted in a forbidden manner or used for idol worship). Additional *poskim* are also lenient on the matter (*Mishnat Yosef* 1:60).

Conclusion

Since there is a dispute among the *poskim*, *lechatchilah* we should say the blessing on non-*orlah* trees. *Bedi’avad*, the blessing should not be repeated. *Lechatchilah*, it seems that if there is a doubt about *orlah*, one may say the blessing. ■

See *Emunat Itecha* 16, p. 35, for the full article by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevy Amichay