

Parshat Eikev**Birkat Hamazon**

There is a quote in this week's Parsha, Eikev, that says:

“And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord your G-d for the good land which he has given you.”

- What does it mean to eat and be satisfied?
- What does it mean to bless G-d?
- What is the difference between *blessing* G-d and *thanking* G-d?
 - Possible answer: since this quote appears in Birkat Hamazon, the prayer we say to bless G-d for the meal we just ate, the concept of *blessing* G-d could be associated with the Birkat Hamazon. Meaning when it says we must “bless” G-d, it means we must say Birkat when we are done having food.
- We are commanded to “bless” G-d by saying Birkat Hamazon. Why do we only say Birkat Hamazon if we have bread? What is so special about bread?
 - Possible answer: this week's parsha mentions the manna that the Jews collected in the desert for food.

The Seven Species

Parshat Eikev lists the Seven Species or the Shivat Haminim that the Land of Israel is famous for.

- What are they?
 - Wheat, barley, grapes/vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates/honey
- After they get all 7, take out the cut up pieces and have them put the puzzle together of the order of the species
- What are some of the Brachot we say before and after we eat these items?
- Why don't we say Birkat Hamazon?

Read information on each of the species:

The Torah talks about these basic foods in many different parshas. The Mishnah says that only first fruits of the Seven Species could be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem for offerings. In Israel today, there are still many wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves. Figs, pomegranates and dates are common ingredients in foods of Israel.

1) Wheat and 2) barley

These two grains were harvested by the ancient Israelites. They are mentioned in the first list of the Seven Species in the Torah. They are used in many foods in Israel, and they are also significant to the harvest holidays of Sukkot and Shavuot.

- What is special about wheat and barley today?
 - Challah, Matzah, Hamotzi, Birkat Hamazon

3) Grapes

Grapes were used mainly for the production of wine but they were also eaten fresh and dried.

- What is special about grapes today?
 - Grape juice, wine (Kiddush)

4) Figs

Figs were grown throughout the land of Israel and fresh or dried figs were part of the daily diet. A common way of preparing dried figs was to chop them and press them into a cake.

5) Pomegranates

Pomegranates were usually eaten fresh, but occasionally they were used to make juice or wine, or sun-dried to use when the fresh fruit was out of season. They probably were not eaten so often by the Israelites, but they played an important role in those times because on the Kohen Gadol (the high priest)'s robe there were pomegranates drawn on it.

- When is the special time we eat pomegranates today?
 - Rosh Hashanah
- Why do we eat pomegranates on Rosh Hashanah?
 - It is one of the 7 species
 - There is a tradition that says there are 613 seeds just as there are 613 mitzvot
 - We wish that our good deeds in the coming year are as plentiful as the seeds of the pomegranate

6) Olives

The olive was one of the main three elements in Israeli cuisine. Olive oil was important because it was used in food and for cooking, and also for lighting, sacrifices, ointment, and anointment for priestly or royal office.

7) Dates

Dates were eaten fresh or dried, but were used mostly boiled into thick, long-lasting syrup called “date honey” (dvash temarim) to use as a sweetener. The honey in the Biblical reference of “a land flowing with milk and honey” is date honey.

- What do you think “a land flowing with milk and honey” is?
- When are dates used during the year?
 - Sukkot—date fruit comes from a palm tree, a lulav is a palm
- When are these Seven Species traditionally eaten?
 - Tu Bishvat, the new year for the trees
 - Sukkot, the festival of booths (because it was a harvest season)
 - Shavuot, the festival of the weeks (because it was a harvest season)

