

Optimally one should recite the blessing on two trees, since this increases one's enjoyment from the trees. Indeed, *Halachot Ketanot*<sup>10</sup> understands from the Rambam's terminology that this blessing was instituted specifically for a place where many trees are in blossom. However, in extenuating circumstances, it is possible to recite the blessing on a single tree. This is the ruling of Rabbi Chaim Na'eh in *Badei HaShulchan*.<sup>11</sup>

According to Ya'avetz in *Mor Uketzi'ah*,<sup>12</sup> it is also possible to recite *birkat ha'ilanot* on non-fruit trees that are in bloom. The *Mishnah Berurah*<sup>13</sup> does not accept this ruling. However, in my humble opinion, for city dwellers who do not grow fruit trees and prefer to purchase higher quality fruit at the grocery store, their enjoyment from non-fruit trees is even greater than from fruit trees. This is particularly true during the early summer, beginning in Nissan, thanks to their plentiful shade. In extenuating circumstances, we can rely on this opinion.

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10. Halachot Ketanot II §28.

11. Ketzot HaShulchan §66, Badei HaShulchan §18.

12. Mor UKetziah 225 s.v. katuv.

13. Mishnah Berurah §226:2.

(according to our custom—where we recite the blessing only when eating new fruit<sup>6</sup>). For this reason, we may safely conclude that the loquat tree at this time is still in bloom, and we may recite *birkat ha'ilanot* on the tree.

However, if we take a closer look at the terminology employed by the Rambam, we will arrive at a different conclusion. Why does he mention both blossoms and buds (*perachim* and *nitzanim*)? Aren't these the same? Not so. *Nitzanim*<sup>7</sup>, are actually a later stage than blossoms. This arises from the following biblical verses:

1. *Bereshit* (40:10): "ובגפן שלשה שריגים והיא כפורחת עלתה ניצה הבשילו אשכלתיה ענבים." "And on the vine were three branches, and it, as it blossomed, sprouted buds, its clusters ripened [and] became grapes."<sup>8</sup> Here three stages are mentioned: *perichah*, *hanatzah*, and *havshalah* (ripening).  
Rashi explains: After the flower (*perach*) the bud (*netz*) grew forth and became unripe fruit, *aspanir* in the vernacular. Targum translates *porachat* as: "And as it blossomed, it brought forth *lavlavin* (shoots)." *Netz* is a larger (i.e. later) stage than *perach*, as it is written in *Yeshayahu* (18:5): "[When the blossom (*perach*) is past] and the bud (*netz*)." And it is also written (*Bamidbar* 17:23): "And it flowered," and afterwards, "and buds (*vayatzetz tzitz*) grew forth."
2. *Yeshayahu* (18:5): "כי לפני קציר כתם פרח ובסר גמל יהיה ניצה" "For before the harvest, when the blossom (*perach*) is past, and the bud (*netz*) becomes a ripening grape ..." Rashi explains: "When the blossom is past": i.e., when its blossom is past and the grain is close to becoming ripe in its ears and before the buds of its vine become ripening grapes, ripened to the extent of being *bosseser*; i.e., when the grapes become as big as a white bean. This is called *bosseser* and also *giru'a*.
3. *Shir HaShirim* 7:13: "נשכימה לכרמים נראה אם פרחה הגפן פתח הסמדר הנצו הרמונים" "Let us go early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has flowered, if its blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates are in bloom (*henetzu*)" Rashi: When they are ripe and the flower around them falls off; *henetzu* means "its flower falls off."

All of the sources above indicate that *nitzanim* are not flowers, rather unripe fruit. That is, according to Rambam, it would be possible to recite the blessing both on flowers and on fruit, but only on unripe fruit in early Spring.<sup>9</sup>

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6. Shulchan Aruch §225:2.

7. In modern Hebrew these are referred to as buds—SR.

8. Ariel trans. The JPS and Kaplan translations render it differently: "On the vine were three branches. As soon as its buds formed its blossoms bloomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes." Kaplan Trans.; other standard English translations are similar, rendering *pericha*, generally understood as blossoming, as budding, and *alta nitza* as blooming. Here we will use the translation of bud as *netz*, for clarity's sake, keeping in mind that in context, the meaning can be understood differently. --SR

9. See Prof. Zohar Amar, "Definition of *livluv* vis-à-vis the blessing for the trees," *Techumin* 38 (5778), p. 470–477.

We decided to translate the full responsum by Rabbi Yaakov Ariel on the topic of *birkat ha'ilanot*, the blessing for the trees, during the Corona period. The question arises from the Corona-related restrictions. This unique situation affords us an opportunity to delve into the details of the blessing for the trees (making the blessing on a tree with unripe fruit, only one tree, and on non-fruit trees). For this reason, we translated the responsum in full.

### Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel / *Birkat Ha'ilanot* during the Corona period

#### Question:

This *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* it was forbidden to go out for any more than 100 m radius from home and there is only one loquat tree in the area. Is it possible to say *birkat ha'ilanot* on the tree? It seems that we should say the blessing on at least two trees, and they should be blossoming. The loquat tree has no blossoms; the fruit is nearly ripe.

#### Answer:

The Gemara states (*Berachot* 43b): "Rav Yehuda said: One who goes out during Nissan and sees trees that are in bloom [*melavlevi*], recites: 'Blessed ... Who has withheld nothing from His world, and has created in it beautiful creatures and trees for human beings to enjoy.'"

What is the definition of "in bloom"? The sprouting of leaves, flowers, or fruit?

During the month of Nissan there is mainly blossoming. Fruit generally has not yet developed, with the exception of almond trees, which blossom during Shevat; these already have green almonds hanging from them. Rambam (*Hilchot Berachot* 10:13) implies that one should recite the blessing only on flowers and not on fruit: "One who goes out to the fields or gardens during the days of Nissan and sees tree **blossoming** and **buds**." The Tur<sup>1</sup> writes that we do not recite the blessing on fruit; This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch.<sup>2</sup> however, the Mordechai<sup>3</sup> maintains that we may also recite the blessing on fruit. The Gra<sup>4</sup>, however, rules like the Mordechi. The Peri Maggidim<sup>5</sup> infers from the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, who wrote: "if one was late and did not recite the blessing until after **the fruits grew** one should no longer recite the blessing," that one should only refrain from reciting the blessing on ripe fruit. This is because once fruit ripen, a different blessing is called for: *shehechyanu*. In early Nissan, loquats are still unripe and unfit for consumption. For this reason, we do not recite a *shehechyanu* on them

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1. *Tur*, OC §226
  2. Shulchan Aruch, OC §226:1.
  3. Mordechai, *Berachot* §148.
  4. Bi'ur HaGra on Shulchan Aruch, *ibid.*, s.v. *ve'im icher*.
  5. Eshel Avraham on Shulchan Aruch, *ibid.*, s.v. *ve'im*.

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This volume of *Emunat Itecha* is dedicated entirely to the halachic questions discussed during the Corona period by various rabbis. For this reason, the English section is somewhat shorter this time.