



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Eikev 5762

Our Parsha lists the "שבעת המינים", the seven species of Eretz Yisrael. "ארץ חיטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורימון, ארץ זית שמן ודבש", (A land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates. A land of olive oil, and (date) honey.)

In Maseches Brachos, R. Yosef, (and some say R. Yitzchak) teaches us that when one is about to eat fruits of the seven species, the order of precedence for making the brocha, depends on the order of the species in the in the Torah. A fruit that is closer to the word ארץ, takes precedence over one that is further away.

The רימון is the furthest of all from the word ארץ. In Maseches Brachos,(גז.) Chazal explain the expression from Shir Hashirm, כפלח הרימון, (Your temple resembles a segment of pomegranate), as comparing ריקנית, the empty ones among you, to a pomegranate. "Even the empty ones among you are as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate is full of seeds". In Maseches Megilla (ו.), Rava says that the city of Teveria, is also called ריקנית, because even the ריקנית, the "empty ones" of Teveria are as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate.

Chazal want us to notice that even though the pomegranate is the last of the shivas haminim, it represents Jews who are full of mitzvos.

When we compare these sources, a variety of questions arise. The Turei Even, in his commentary on Maseches Megilla, asks why Rava applies the drasha exclusively to the residents of Teveria, as opposed to the drasha in Maseches Brachos which compares all ריקנית to the pomegranate. We



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also need to understand how Chazal describe these Jews as ריקנין, while stating emphatically that they are actually full of mitzvos. If they are full, they aren't empty, and if they are empty, they aren't full!

Chazal certainly weren't exaggerating when they described even "empty Jews" as "full of mitzvos". The description is accurate. However, Chazal want to draw our attention to the unfortunate phenomenon that our communities often recognize the "fullness" of these Jews. Elitists may look down even on someone who is full of mitzvos, simply because he is not a full time Torah student. When belittled by those around him, even a person who is full of mitzvos will begin to feel that he is empty. As he develops a negative self-image, the mitzvos that he used to perform joyfully, now seem worthless. Over time, he may begin to see himself not only as empty, but as a rasha. In his resulting state of despair, he may actually abandon the performance of mitzvos, and descend to a life of emptiness.

The Gemara explains the name of the city Teveria as טובה ראייתה. In Teveria, even those who were less learned remained full of mitzvos because everyone looked at them with an ayin tova, and admired them.

We now understand that the ריקנין, referred to by Chazal, weren't truly empty. They were as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate. The "learners" would call them ריקנין, causing them to feel that they have nothing to contribute to Hashem's world, leading to an almost inevitable descent to emptiness. On the other hand, someone whose community values each mitzva he performs, aspires to learn and achieve more and more. That esteem can inspire him to grow, and even to become a talmid chochom.

Everyone must perform a cheshbon hanefesh (introspection). One who is fortunate enough to be a talmid chochom, must be very careful not to look down on less learned Jews who are full of mitzvos. Instead, talmidei chachomim should publicly demonstrate their love and admiration for those Jews. Fine, Torah observant Jews who do not have the opportunity to learn full time, must ignore those who may look down on



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them. They must remember that, in Hashem's eyes, their life of mitzvos and maasim tovim, is precious and beloved.

We must learn from the city of Teveria, that the ability to view other Jews as the Torah would want us to, depends on "טובה ראייתה", the attribute of ayin tova (viewing people positively). One of the rewards described in our Parsha is "והסיר ה' ממך כל חולי" (Hashem will remove all illness from you) (ז,"ט"ו).

In Maseches Bava Metzia,(ק"ז:), Rav says "זו עין", (this refers to ayin hora). Rav's comment results from his opinion that ninety nine percent of deaths result from ayin hora (viewing people negatively), as opposed to entirely natural causes.

In Rav's eyes, ayin hora is far more serious than any other illness. While ayin hora also impacts physical health, it is primarily an affliction of the spirit. Ayin hora can transform a Jew who is as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate, to a Jew bereft of spirituality.

Chazal teach us, מידה טובה מרובה, the magnitude of any positive mida or action far exceeds that of negativity. Ayin tova can elevate a Jew from a state of emptiness to a life full of Torah and Mitzvos.

Eretz Yisroel is praised as being the land of the רימון, the pomegranate. This fruit, the last of the seven species, reminds us to remember and see those Jews whom others may rank "last", as Jews full of Torah and Mitzvos. May Hashem help us all emulate the pomegranate, filling ourselves with Torah and Mitzvos, and bringing up דורות ישרים ונאמנים. ולבנין עדי עד. אכי"ר



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