

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

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Holiness in Physical Pleasure

“For three years the fruit shall be Orla, and may not be eaten. In the fourth year, all of the fruit shall be holy, for praising God” (Vayikra 19:23-24).

The Talmud in B'rachot 35a quotes this verse as the source for reciting a blessing over food: “Holy, for praising God – this teaches that [fruit and other foods] require a blessing before and after eating.”

The key word, Rav Kook noted, is KODESH – holiness. Even when we eat, even as we partake of worldly pleasures, we should be able to uncover holiness.

Holiness from physical pleasure?!
How is that possible?

An Opportunity for Holiness

What is a b'racha? When we recite a blessing, we express our recognition that God is the ultimate Source of all pleasure. But there is a joy that is far greater than the sensory pleasures experienced when consuming food.

Eating is more than just nourishing our bodies. It is a chance to connect

with our Creator and deepen our feelings of gratitude and appreciation. We should feel an inner joy when we realize that every form of physical pleasure provides us with an opportunity to uplift our spirits and bring holiness into our lives.

A blessing over food is not just about giving thanks for the physical pleasure we are about to enjoy. Each blessing should make us aware of a far greater gift: that even material pleasures can be a source of holiness!

In this way, the piece of fruit that we eat becomes KODESH HILULIM – “holy, for praising God.”

Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 171