



One Aspect of Kedushat HaAretz

The Sifrei Zuta, in its first gloss to Sefer Bamidbar (5:2), discusses the *mitzvah* to send the *temei'im* outside the *Mishkan* and the areas surrounding it, by level of sanctity. The *mishnayot* in Masechet Keilim (1:6-10) similarly list these 10 levels in ascending order of *kedusha*, starting with *Eretz Yisrael* and concluding with the *Kodesh HaKodashim*.

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of discussing the first level of *kedusha* listed in the Mishnah – that of *Eretz Yisrael*: “*Eretz Yisrael* is holier than all other lands. And what constitutes its holiness? That we bring from it the [barley used for the] *omer*-offering, the [first fruits offered as] *bikkurim*, and the [wheat used for the] *shtei halechem* [two loaves on Shavuot], which we do not bring from all other lands.”

It seems strange that of all the *dinim* that make *Eretz Yisrael* unique – the *מצוות התלויות בארץ*, agricultural *mitzvot* dependent upon the Land (*teruma*, *ma'aser*, *shmita*, *yovel*, *leket*, *shichecha*, *pe'ah*, *challah*) – these three obscure *dinim* are the ones specifically chosen to express the uniqueness of *Eretz Yisrael*. Furthermore, although one of the Mishnah's examples of *Eretz Yisrael's kedusha* is that the fruits of *bikkurim* may only come from the produce of *Eretz Yisrael*, certain versions of the text of the Sifrei Zuta neglect to mention this third example. What accounts for this apparent discrepancy, whether to list the *din* of *bikkurim* amongst the *dinim* that demonstrate *Eretz Yisrael's* distinctiveness?

Rav Soloveitchik explained that the Sifrei Zuta and Mishnah are not

merely outlining the special *kedusha* of *Eretz Yisrael* per se. Of course, there exists a concept of *kedushat Eretz Yisrael*, which gives rise to the long list of *מצוות התלויות בארץ*. In this context, however, *Chazal* express the notion that there are 10 levels of *kedushat haMikdash*. The core of *kedushat Beit HaMikdash*, its most intense degree, is found in the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. The *kedusha* then spills over to the other areas in descending levels, until it fills the boundaries of *Eretz Yisrael* itself, which possesses the tenth level of *kedushat haMikdash*. *Chazal* seek to prove that *Eretz Yisrael*, apart from its own *kedushat haAretz*, is endowed with a lower level of *kedushat haMikdash*. This cannot be demonstrated from the group of *מצוות התלויות בארץ*, for they are dependent solely upon *kedushat haAretz*. The two *dinim* that can demonstrate a *kedusha* in the form of *kedushat haMikdash* are those regarding the *omer* and the *shtei halechem*. These *dinim* indicate that there is a requirement for the barley for the *omer* and the wheat for the *shtei halechem* to have grown within the “*Beit HaMikdash*.” The *Beit HaMikdash* proper, of course, is not used for agricultural purposes; this requirement is fulfilled by using items grown in *Eretz Yisrael*, which contains, on some level, an element of *kedushat Beit HaMikdash*.

Another *din* that reflects the *kedushat haMikdash* aspect of *Eretz Yisrael* is that *ma'aser beheima* (animal tithes) and *bechor beheima tehora* (firstborn kosher animals) are not offered as *korbanot* if they come from outside *Eretz Yisrael* (according to Rabbi Akiva, *Bechorot* 53a, *Temurah* 21b).

Similarly, the *Mechilta* (Petichta, Parashat Bo; see Kli Chemdah, Parashat Chukat, siman 4) holds that the allowance, during certain periods in history, to offer a *korban* on a *bama* (*mizbeach* outside of the *Beit HaMikdash*) was likewise only applicable in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The Mishnah added a third *din* to demonstrate that *Eretz Yisrael* contains an element of *kedushat haMikdash* – that only the fruits of *Eretz Yisrael* are obligated in *bikkurim*. The Mishnah must hold that *bikkurim* is not one of the *מצוות התלויות בארץ*, but rather part of the *avodah* of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the fruits must therefore grow on land that possesses *kedushat Beit HaMikdash*. This is the point of dispute between the Mishnah and some versions of the Sifrei Zuta, which do not include the *din* of *bikkurim* along with the *omer* and *shtei halechem*. The latter maintain that *bikkurim* is one of the *מצוות התלויות בארץ*. Therefore, while it is true that the fruits of *bikkurim* may only come from produce grown in *Eretz Yisrael*, this *din* does not prove anything regarding the *kedushat haMikdash* aspect of *Eretz Yisrael*. This aspect of the *kedusha* of *Eretz Yisrael* can only be proven through the *dinim* regarding the *omer* and the *shtei halechem*.¹

¹ See Nefesh HaRav, pp. 77–78; *Eretz HaTzvi*, p. 97.

Adapted from “Rav Schachter on the Parsha.”

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