



MITZVOT HATLUYOT BAARETZ

NETA REVAI AND ORLAH

# PATIENCE...

## YOU'LL GET THERE

“When you shall come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years they shall be forbidden to you, they shall not be eaten” (Vayikra 19:23).

The Gemara explains that this *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of *orlah*, refutes those who require instant gratification in their seeking of worldly pleasures. Here, the Torah is commanding man to wait three years before eating the fruits, and if one wishes to eat them in the fourth year, they must either be redeemed or brought to Yerushalayim to be eaten (*neta revai*).

Through this *mitzvah*, the Torah is teaching us to restrain our desires. Even through natural means, when one desires fruits, they are not available for immediate consumption. The tree must first take root, which at times takes as much as 14 days. The early development is performed under the ground, invisible to us. When the plant begins to appear it is new and still weak until finally there is a tree that is capable of producing fruits. After all the time that has elapsed from when the seeds were planted until the fruits are ripe, the Torah tells us to wait an additional three years before partaking of the fruits of the tree. There are even limitations on the way the fruits may be consumed in the fourth year. In the

fourth year, the fruit must either be taken to Yerushalayim to be eaten, or redeemed, with the money received to be taken to Yerushalayim.

The Torah is teaching us the quality of patience. The Torah promises us a reward for being patient and observing this *mitzvah*: “And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, so that it will increase its crop for you” (ibid. 25) – there will be a surplus.

The Gemara tells a story of an old man who was planting a carob tree. Choni HaMe’agel asked him how long it would take for the tree to produce fruits. “70 years,” the man answered. When Choni asked him whether he would live for 70 years, the man answered that when he came into this world there were carob trees. In other words, just as his ancestors planted carob trees so that he may benefit from them, so too he is now planting them for his descendants. Later, the Gemara relates how Choni saw a man picking carobs off the tree. The man told him he was the grandson of the man who had planted the tree. We see from here that one does not see the fruits of one’s labor immediately; one is required to wait.

We can compare the development of a tree to the development of a person. A person is born a small baby. It takes years of time and effort though for him to grow into a *talmid chacham*.

Some have a custom of not cutting a child’s hair until he is three years old (and often on Lag BaOmer). The custom is derived from the *mitzvah* of *orlah*, waiting for three years to eat the fruits of the tree, as described above. When the child reaches the age of three, we begin to teach him the letters of the *alef-bet*. He slowly learns how to read with vowels, and begins to read the *siddur* and the *chumash*. At this point of course, we do not yet anticipate he will become the *Gadol HaDor*, the Torah giant of his generation. Seeing the fruits of our toil – and his – takes time.

Similarly, the Land of Israel. G-d’s gift to us can only continue to exist through the merit of learning Torah. We received the Land of Israel so there should be a Land for worshipping G-d, learning Torah, and performing *mitzvot*. And with G-d’s help, may the entire Jewish nation be able to live in its Land and eat the delicious fruits that grow here, both physical and spiritual.

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