

The Case of the Late Bloomer

By Rav Avraham Yeshaya Cohen

Q: I did not say *birkas ha'ilanos* in the month of Nisan. May I still say it in Iyar?

A: The Gemara (Brachos 43b) and the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 226) state that *birkas ha'ilanos* is recited upon seeing fruit trees blossoming during *Chodesh Nisan*. There is a dispute whether that timing is a necessary condition or simply the usual case.

Some *poskim*

rule that one should not say the bracha after Nisan in the usual way; rather, he

should omit *sheim u'malchus*. (This is especially true according to the *mekubalim*, who state that the bracha benefits souls that are present in fruit groves during Nisan.) The Kaf Hachaim (ibid. 1) reports that the *minhag* accords with these *poskim*.

However,

many *Acharonim* (including Chayei Adam 63:2 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:1) maintain that Nisan is mentioned in the Gemara only because it is the usual time that blooms appear in fruit trees, but one may still make the bracha

after the month has passed. The Mishnah Berurah

(ibid. 1) follows this opinion, and presumably this is the current *minhag* among Ashkenazim. (Perhaps the Kaf Hachaim was reporting the custom among Sefardim.)

The Chasam Sofer

(to Shulchan Aruch ibid.) says that in our Gemara's context, "Chodesh Nisan" does

not refer to the month of Nisan but to the first thirty days of *tekufas Nisan*, halachic spring. The first day of *tekufas Nisan* ranges from 27 Adar to 28 Nisan. In colder

Northern climes, trees do not necessarily blossom before the month of Nisan

passes. If one did not say *birkas ha'ilanos* in Nisan because the trees hadn't yet

blossomed, there is even more reason to permit reciting the bracha during at

least part of Iyar.

Apart from

calendrical considerations, once the fruit is fully grown, it is too late to say the bracha (M.B. ibid. 4). If the fruit has only begun to grow, and one did

not view it previously, there is a dispute whether he may still recite the bracha.

The Mishnah Berurah (ibid.) seems to rule that one may do so, but he should

certainly try to say the bracha before this stage is reached.