

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Tree Line

April 13, 2023

Q When may one recite *birkas ha'ilanos* on a flowering fruit tree?



A The Gemara (Brachos 34b) says, “One who goes out in the days of Nisan and sees flowering trees recites [*birkas ha'ilanos*].” Some *poskim* say the “days of Nisan” means the month of Nisan, and the *bracha* may only be made then (see Halachos Ketanos 2:28 and Eishel Avraham 226). The Chasam Sofer (glosses on O.C. 226) says it doesn’t mean the calendrical Nisan but *tekufas* Nisan, the onset of spring. Depending on the year, the *bracha* may be recited well into Iyar.

But most *poskim* say Nisan is mentioned only as a typical example, and the *bracha* may be recited any time flowering trees are seen; the Mishnah Brurah (226:1) rules this way.

According to mekubalim, the *bracha* is associated with the month of Nisan and should only be recited then (Birkei Yosef 226). Many make an effort to follow this.

The *bracha* may only be made once per season, preferably on the first sighting of an eligible tree (O.C. *ibid.*). If the *bracha* was not recited when the tree was seen, some *poskim* say it may no longer be recited (Machatzis Hashekel 226). But the Mishnah Brurah (*ibid.* 5) allows the *bracha* to be made later, as long as flowers are still present.

If one didn’t see a tree when it flowered but only when it started to bear fruit, the Mishnah Brurah (*ibid.* 4) rules that the *bracha* may still be made as long as the fruits are not completely ripe.

One who sees a flowering tree while driving past should make the *bracha* right away, *toch kedai dibur* (within 2-3 seconds). When this time elapses, the chance is lost (Piskei Teshuvos *ibid.* 3).

Birkas ha'ilanos may be recited on Shabbos, but some *sfarim* recommend not doing so for kabbalah-based reasons. If by passing on the opportunity one risks missing out on the *bracha* entirely, he should make it on Shabbos (Piskei Teshuvos *ibid.*).