



Ask The Rabbi...

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This edition contains:

1. Are locusts *really* Kosher?!

Kelly McGrew writes:

Dear Rabbi,

Someone recently told me that they heard that there are only a few species of locusts which are Kosher, but that there are several species which live in Eretz Yisrael. While I don't plan on travelling to Israel to eat locusts, nor do I anticipate trying to import Kosher edible locusts, I did tell this person that I would try to find out the answer. Then I found out about your list. Esoteric, trivial bit of information that it is, can you help? Which locusts are Kosher and which aren't?

Thank you,

Dear Kelly,

I can't promise that this is going to be appetizing, but here it is. The Torah in Parshat Shmini says:

"Every flying insect that uses four legs for walking shall be avoided by you. The only flying insects with four walking legs that you may eat are those which have knees extending above their feet, [using these longer legs] to hop on the ground. Among these you may only eat members of the red locust family, the yellow locust family, the spotted gray locust family and the white locust family. All other flying insects with four feet [for walking] must be avoided by you."

The four types of locusts stated in the Torah are known according to Yemenite tradition to be the following: The "red locust" ["Arbeh" in Hebrew] is called "Grad" in Arabic. The yellow locust ["Sa'lam" in Hebrew] is "Rashona" in Arabic. The spotted gray locust ["Chargol" in Hebrew] is "Chartziyya" in Arabic. The white locust ["Chagav" in Hebrew] is called "Gandav" in Arabic. According to Yemenite tradition as recorded in the work *Arichat Hashulchan*, the locust called "Al j'rad" is Kosher, and has three Kosher sub-species all known by that name.

The Halachah regarding locusts is that one is allowed to eat a specific type of locust only if there is a "continuous tradition" that affirms that it is Kosher. It is not enough that the locust seems to conform to the criteria mentioned in the Torah. This does not mean that one must possess a 'personal tradition' in order to eat locusts. If one travels to a place where the people do have a tradition, the new arrival would also be allowed to eat them. Interestingly, the author of the *Arichat Hashulchan* points out that locusts were never really considered a 'delicacy' -- rather they were generally food for the impoverished.

Someone may be wondering: "How does one actually eat locusts?" Not only do locusts not require ritual slaughter. However, the Midrash in Shemot Rabba hints that the preferred way to eat locusts was to pickle them:

"Once the locusts came, the Egyptians rejoiced and said 'Let us gather them and fill our barrels with them.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu said 'Wicked people, with the plague that I have brought against you, are you going to rejoice?!' Immediately G-d brought upon them a western wind...and none were left. What does it mean that none were left? Even those that were pickled with salt and sitting in their pots and barrels were blown away...."

Sources:

- The Living Torah - Vayikra 11:20-23, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Moznaim Publication Corporation.
- Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan - The living Torah, p. 320, footnotes.
- Rabbi Shlomo Korach - Arichat Hashulchan, vol. 3, pp. 136-141.
- Midrash Rabba - Shemot 13:7.