

HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

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{ TOPIC }

The Air of Eretz Yisrael Makes One Wise



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita* on current issues.

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The Air of Eretz Yisrael Makes One Wise

There are many benefits to living in Eretz Yisrael, many of which we know of, and many of which we don't know of. Although we may have heard of some of them, we don't understand exactly what they mean. The Gemara in Bava Basra¹ mentions that "the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise." How can this be? The following article will discuss how, exactly, one is affected by the air of Eretz Yisrael.

Reasons for Wisdom

The Sforno² mentions that since Eretz Yisrael was not included in the destruction of the *mabul*, the air in Eretz Yisrael makes one wise.

The Radak³ says that this is a natural occurrence of the land of Eretz Yisrael.

It is reported in the name of the Maharsha that Moshe Rabbeinu looked at Eretz Yisrael from afar,⁴ and because of that he imbued the Land with wisdom.⁵

1 158b.

2 *Bereishis* 11:31.

3 *Tehillim* 116:9. See *Me'am Loez, Avos*, page 229.

4 *Devarim* 42:39.

5 Brought in the *Daf al Daf* on *Bava Basra* 158b.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (גדה עב)

The Ha'emek Davar⁶ mentions that the *kedushah* of Eretz Yisrael is what makes one wise.

The Chida mentions that in Eretz Yisrael one's *tefillos* go straight to Hashem, and the same applies to Torah learning.⁷ The Mabit⁸ mentions that Eretz Yisrael is where Hashem is found more than any other place in the world, and therefore, this makes one wise.

Torah or All Wisdoms

Some mention that Eretz Yisrael has the ability to make one wise because its air is only for Torah and not secular subjects.⁹

Living or Visiting?

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if one needs to live in Eretz Yisrael in order for one to become wise or if a visit suffices.

According to the majority of *poskim*, even if one just visits, he becomes wise — although only slightly.¹⁰

Which Parts of Eretz Yisrael?

The opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*,¹¹ is that the Old City of Yerushalayim has the ability to make one wise, as compared to other places in Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael.

According to this, when looking for a yeshivah to learn in when in Eretz Yisrael, it may make sense to choose a

6 *Shemos* 34:1.

7 *Yosef Tehillos* on *Tehillim*, pages 223-224.

8 *Beis Elokim, Shaar Hatefillah* 5, page 51 (new print).

9 *Shu"t Eretz Yisrael (Tzion)*, pages 85-86. Some mention that this depends on whether the reason Eretz Yisrael makes one wise is due to the nature of the land. Then it would apply to other wisdoms as well, and not only to making one wise in Torah (refer to *Oraysa* 19, page 219).

10 *Ibid.*, page 87:64.

11 *Ibid.*, page 88.



yeshivah in Yerushalayim or the Old City. However, the custom is that this is not a criterion when it comes to choosing a place to learn.¹²

After the Destruction of the Beis Hamikdash

Some mention that after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the air of Eretz Yisrael no longer makes one wise.¹³

Bavli vs. Yerushalmi

Since the land of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise, if there is a dispute between the *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* shouldn't we hold like the *Talmud Yerushalmi*? Why is this not the case? Perhaps because the *Talmud Bavli* came later *we pasken* like the latter opinion.¹⁴

Learning Alone

The Gemara in *Taanis*¹⁵ says that one should not learn alone. This concept is brought in halachah as well.¹⁶ Often in yeshivas one can see people learning without a *chavrusa*. How is this possible if it is against halachah? Some say the halachah only applied when there were no *sefarim* or commentaries to help one understand the Gemara. However, since today there are many *sefarim* and commentaries to help one understand the Gemara, there is nothing wrong with learning alone.¹⁷ One who will learn better without a

12 Ibid., pages 89-90.

13 Refer to *Oraysa* 19, page 218.

14 *Shu"t Eretz Yisrael* (Tzion), page 90.

15 7a; see *Rashi*, "yechidi."

16 *Shulchan Aruch Harav, Talmud Torah* 4:10.

17 *Ginzei Chaim, mareches cheis* 61; *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 1:542. The Chazon Ish was asked why he learned alone, and he answered that when he learned with other *sefarim* it was not considered learning alone. Even if one learns by himself he is

איך ללמוד לבד? האמת של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ה')

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chavrusa is permitted to learn alone.¹⁸ In Eretz Yisrael one can learn alone according to all opinions because the air of Eretz Yisrael makes a person wise.¹⁹

It is reported that although Harav Elyashiv, *zt"l*, learned alone his entire life, he did not want others to follow him in this regard.²⁰

fulfilling the mitzvah of *talmud Torah*, but when one learns with a *chaburah kevod Shamayim* is increased (*Biur Halachah* 155, "v'yikva").

18 Refer to *Sefer Chassidim* 940, page 507; *Salmas Chaim* 344 (old), page 127, *Yagel Yaakov*, page 327.

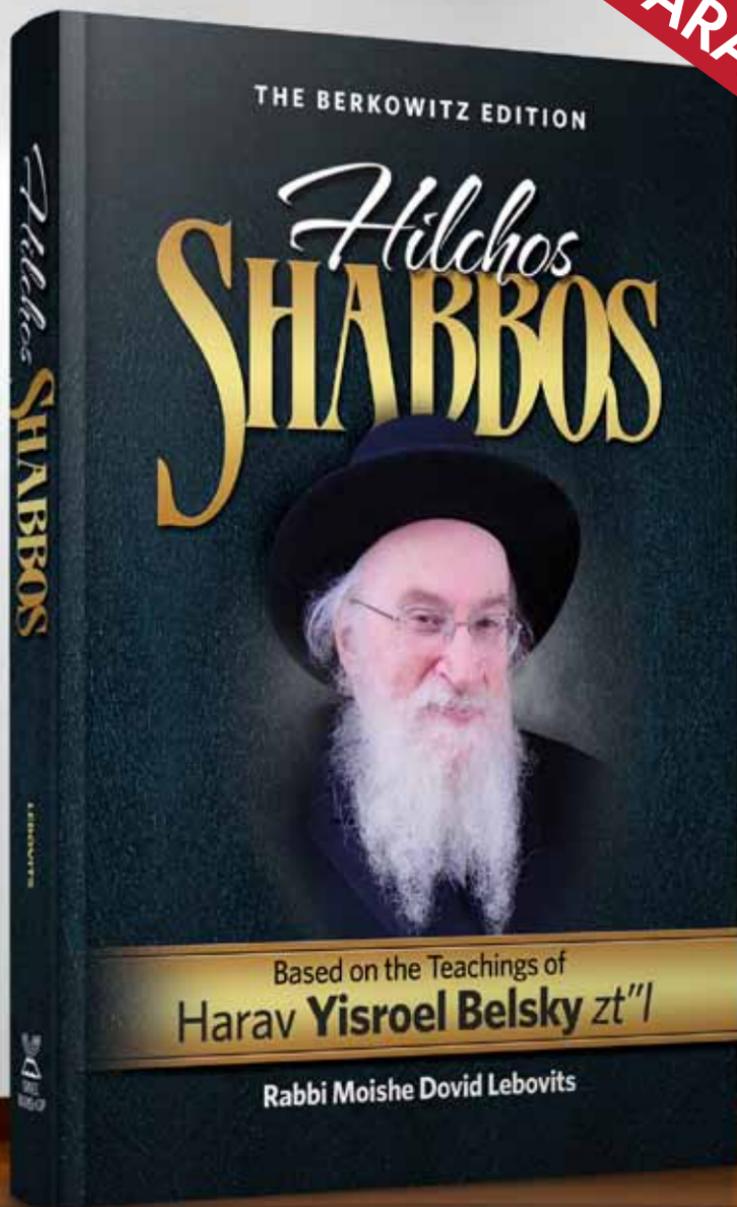
19 *Siddur Bais Yaakov* (*Yaavetz*), *bais sulam*, page 46; *Otzros Hachaim* (*Palagi*) 4:11. Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, says this is correct but it is still better to learn with a *chavrusa* (*Shu"t Eretz Yisrael* [Tzion], page 91).

20 *Shu"t Eretz Yisrael* (Tzion), page 91.

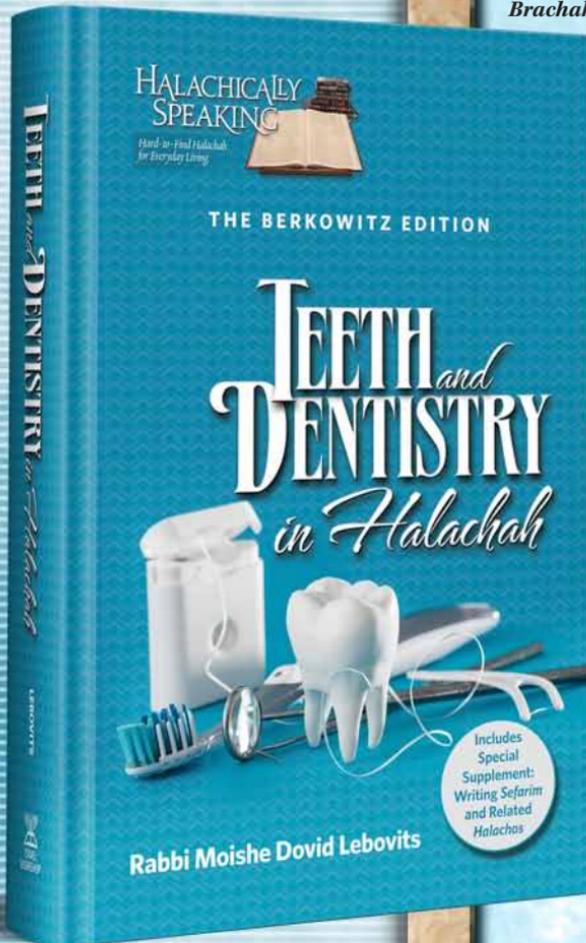
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