



Curry Plant

Question: I bought a curry plant (see photo below). The plant is perennial, but very short. What is its status regarding *birkat hare'ach*, *kila'im*, and separating *terumot* and *maasrot*?



Photo: Roy Shasha

Answer: This plant is called the curry bush (*Helichrysum italicum*), which is different from the curry tree and thus is not the same as the curry herb. I believe in Hebrew it is referred to as *dam hamakabim ha'italki* (a.k.a. Italian strawflower); another variety of this plant is *Helichrysum sanguineum* (*dam hamakabim ha'adam*, a.k.a. Red Everlasting), which is the national symbol of Israel Memorial Day since 1955; stickers featuring the flower are given out at cemeteries and schools on this day every year.

The curry plant is a perennial shrub whose height reaches 40-60 cm. It is used for its aroma, while some use its leaves

as a herb (the leaves are removed after imparting flavor and before eating).

I wrote about blueberries several months ago that some believe they are vegetables despite their perennial nature, since their height is less than 3 *tefachim* (24/30 cm). However, the curry plant's height exceeds 3 *tefachim*. This means that it is certainly considered a tree, its blessing is *borei atzei besamim*, and the prohibitions of *kilei zera'im* and *kilei hakerem* do not apply to it.

With regard to *terumot* and *maasrot*: plants grown for their fragrance and not to eat are exempt from *terumot* and *maasrot*; generally curry is grown primarily for its aroma. Even if the plant was grown as an herb by someone, when the leaves themselves are not eaten, most authorities do not deem it necessary to separate *terumot* and *maasrot*—all the more so here, where this is not usually the case. Thus, there is no obligation to separate *terumot* and *maasrot* from this plant (Probably Rav Mordechai Eliyahu would hold that one should perform this separation without a blessing).

In conclusion: The curry plant is considered a tree, its *birkat hare'ach* is *borei atzei besamim*, and the prohibitions of *kilei zera'im* and *kilei hakerem* do not apply, and it is exempt from *terumot* and *maasrot* even for those using it as an herb. ■