

Ekev- Eretz Yisroel, Source for All Exotica

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Devarim 8:9, we are told that Eretz Yisroel is the land that has everything. The verse states that it is the land in which that we will want for nothing. The stones are iron and copper can be dug out of the hills. However, we do know that there are many exotic fruits and plant-derived products that come from other parts of the world. So how are we to understand this verse?

In truth when we follow Hashem's commandments in Eretz Yisroel, the land will provide for us everything that we could need or want including diversity of fruits and vegetables as well as other products that grow. Even within the seven species that Eretz Yisroel is praised for, there are potentially many varieties. There are red, white and durum wheats, to name a few. There are Black Mission figs and Kadota figs, among many others. While to the layman, the varieties of any given fruit or plant may seem minimal, in the culinary industry the differences are great and more often than not, a specific variety is called for in a specific recipe. So, even within Eretz Yisroel the variations possible from its native species are endless.

From Rashi's commentary on Koheles 2:5 we have additional insight on this topic. Shlomo Hamelech states that he planted gardens and orchards and all types of fruit trees. This should be no surprise as it was common in the ancient world for kings to have interesting items from all over the world including their own private gardens which would contain exotic plants from faraway places. Rashi, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, explains for us Shlomo Hamelech's method of obtaining these plants. Shlomo Hamelech understood all of the inner parts of the earth and which subterranean passageway would lead to each specific land. One example of this was that Shlomo Hamelech had peppers that were genuinely from Kush because of the inside passage from Eretz Yisroel to Kush. This was possible because Yerushalayim is the foundation of the world and the entire world is supported by this foundation. Perhaps this is another fulfillment of the promise that in Eretz Yisroel every spice and every exotic faraway item is obtainable. So the entire earth and its fruits come through Eretz Yisroel as we read in Tehillim 50:2 *Mitzion Michlal Yofi*, From Tzion, compendium of all beauty.