

English Abstract

Integrating the Principles of Geobotany Within the Framework of the Debates Found in the Jerusalem Talmud Regarding the Halachot of Shmita

Ari Landa

Geobotany is a broad botanical field which deals in ecological research, the heredity and geographical distribution of various plant species. A debate in the Jerusalem Talmud- the Talmud Yerushalmi which deals with the demarcation of growing regions in Israel within the framework of the Halachot of the Shmita year, appears to be a classic debate in the field of geobotany.

The Talmud characterizes the different regions of the land according to the plant life which grows there. The mountainous regions are characterized by the "Millin"- a tree, whose identity is disagreed upon by researchers. The suggestions which were given include the Boissier Oak, Jerusalem Pine as well as the European or Syrian Ash Tree. The valleys are characterized by Date Palm trees. The dominant plants in the area of the streams are the reeds which are identified as the Common Reed or the Giant Reed. The tree which is characteristic of the Shfela Plain is the Ficus Sycomorus. According to the Mishna this tree also delineates the border between the Upper and Lower Galilee, a fact that raises the possibility that the boundaries of the Shfela are extended into the lower areas of the Galilee and not only limited to the Coastal Plain. It is important to note that the goal of these ecological definitions was not limited to research matters but in order to give a Halachic response.