

Shayla: Why did God prohibit mixing seeds?

Leviticus 19:19 HCSB "You are to keep My statutes. You must not crossbreed two different kinds of your livestock, sow your fields with two kinds of seed, or put on a garment made of two kinds of material.

See also:

Deuteronomy 22:9 HCSB Do not plant your vineyard with two types of seed; otherwise, the entire harvest, both the crop you plant and the produce of the vineyard, will be defiled.

Midrash:

Many people mock these laws, derisively pointing to them as examples of the outdated, ludicrous laws the Bible tries to impose upon us. Some well-meaning believers try to defend them by one of three ways:

- They were created specifically for the Jewish people in Canaan in order to further separate them from the Goyim; rather like circumcision and the tzit tzit.
- They were created as some type of lesson on the joys of simplicity and purity.
- There is some kind of deep, hidden, esoteric spiritual meaning that we simply can't discern.

While I agree that some laws were specifically designed for the people of Israel (see Mahleh); and that we are enjoined to appreciate quiet, hard-working lives¹ and to be content with what the Lord has provided us²; and that the Bible is deep and multilayered, I also know that Hashem never asks us to do something that is not healthy for us in the long run.

Let's look at what's going on here by applying these laws to vegetables. When you purchase seeds you can choose from either modern hybrids or heirloom varieties. The hybrids were created by crossing two selected varieties, sometimes resulting in some type of advantage. Let's focus on tomatoes shall we? Perhaps the hybrid is bigger. Perhaps it has a deeper shade of red. Perhaps it produces more fruit per bush. Perhaps it resists a specific disease or is more drought resistant.

Heirloom vegetables are old-time varieties, open-pollinated instead of artificially hybridized, and saved and handed down through multiple generations of families. Why would one choose an heirloom tomato over a hybrid? Isn't new automatically better? Not really.

Better Taste. For one thing, heirloom vegetables generally taste better. The standard tomato you buy down at the grocery store has been bred to be picked green and gas-ripened because that's helpful to the shippers. That means that hybrids encourage the modern propensity to have food shipped from hundreds if not thousands of miles away.

Less logistical vulnerability. Besides not tasting good, it makes us vulnerable to terrorist attack. Ask any good general about the disadvantage of extremely long logistical lines! Eating heirloom vegetables ensures that we eat food that is produced locally; food that we can not only ensure has not been poisoned by our enemies, but has also not been poisoned by poor management or greedy corporations trying to get the most bang for their buck!

More consistent performance. Many heirloom vegetables have been saved over many generations, sometimes for centuries, because they have proven themselves to be the best performers in a wide variety of conditions. Back in biblical days, they didn't have trains, planes, and trucks to cart their produce thousands of miles. Every farmer sold directly to the market. Ship-ability was thus not as much a factor as flavor. The vegetables didn't need to be tough. They needed to be tender, juicy, and delicious! Who was going to survive the market forces if the guy in the next stall had better tasting tomatoes than you?

¹ 1 Timothy 2:2

² 1 Timothy 6:8

Better nutrition. Modern commercial practices have consistently pushed for higher and higher yields. This higher yield comes at a hidden cost. In many cases, newer vegetables are significantly less nutritious.³

Less dependence on a few high-tech businesses.

You can save the seeds. Heirloom vegetables are open-pollinated. This means you can save your own seed and use them to replant from year to year. Heirloom vegetables will produce plants that are true to type. Saving hybrid seeds is pretty useless because the results will be mixed, ranging from poor to disastrous.

Reduced cost. By saving the seeds, the farmers' cost in that regards drops down to zero.

You can improve the vegetables. The prohibition was not against improving the crops or cattle through selective breeding. The prohibition is against crossing the species. By saving the seeds of heirloom vegetables over the years, the farmer can choose what has worked best, gradually selecting seeds from the plants that performed the best in their local soil and climate. They could keep track of which ones resisted local pests and diseases best. By working hard and intelligently selecting, they could create their own locally adapted variety.

Independence. Each of these last three points means that our people would not become dependent on the Goyim for their access to hybridized vegetables.

Encourages small, local farmers over monoculture agribusiness. What works commercially and what works on a small scale is vastly different. Remember how Yahweh told the people to spread out over the whole earth and man chose instead to stay in one localized place and build a tower? God was trying to get them spread out so that one disease or other disaster wouldn't wipe out all of humanity in one shot. Remember that God refers to Himself as humanity's "husbandman."⁴ That's a fancy word for "gardener" or "farmer". Our "Husbandman" prefers thousands of small, diverse gardens and heirloom seeds that will present various strengths no matter what challenge comes along. Consider the variety of life that exists in a forest before man comes along. After humans are done strip-mining or clear cutting, if they replant at all, they plant two or three varieties, leaving the region vulnerable to disease.

Continuous harvest. Because heirloom varieties are not as "uniform" as hybrids they don't ripen all at once. Monoculture agribusinesses want to have everything ripen simultaneously so they can harvest it all at once with huge machines or crews of people. If your principle goal is making money that makes sense. However, if your principle goal is to ensure the continuation of your people, you want food coming in at various times, especially in a day when they didn't have refrigeration to store vast amounts of food.

³ For more information on this issue go [here](#).

⁴ Isaiah 5:1-2; Jeremiah 12:10; John 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:9; James 5:7