

We are working on Shemittah!



The cRc recently launched a new monthly newsletter to address issues of Shemittah. To sign up to get it by email, please contact office@crcweb.org

Visiting Eretz Yisroel During Shemittah

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Visiting *Eretz Yisroel* affords us an opportunity to perform certain mitzvos that are not available to us in *chutz la'aretz*. As relates to food, this includes separation of *terumah* and *ma'aser*, an added sensitivity to issues of *arlah*, and the need to give *terumah* and *ma'aser* to a *kohen*. This year, 5782, is *shemittah* and that adds a few more mitzvos to the above list. This article will briefly highlight shemittah-related mitzvos which are most relevant to tourists. We will Y"Hashem print articles each month during *shemittah* to provide more details.



Produce of the *shemittah* year has "*kedushas shevi'is*" which means that it cannot be wasted (this includes leftovers), used in an atypical manner, purchased like other items, or taken out of *Eretz Yisroel*. Furthermore, there is a Rabbinic prohibition called "*sefichin*" which says that vegetables harvested during *shemittah* are completely forbidden. In addition, farmers are severely restricted in how they can work their fields. With all of these *halachos*, how do people have anything to eat?

A simple option is that raw materials can be saved

from before *shemittah* or imported from *chutz la'aretz*. Others will source ingredients from non-Jewish farmers or specially designed greenhouses that potentially have the *halachic* status of not "growing in the ground of *Eretz Yisroel*." Many farmers participate in the *heter mechirah*, whereby the farms are sold to non-Jews (much like *mechiras chametz*), and then consider that to be a "non-Jewish farm." Lastly, if fruit grows in farms which *shemittah* is observed in the traditional manner, those fruits might be distributed using a communal mechanism known as "*Otzar Beis Din*."

With all of those choices, each consumer must pose the following questions to his Rabbi:

1. If produce comes from non-Jewish farmers in *Eretz Yisroel* (a.k.a. יבול נכרי), must I treat it with *kedushas shevi'is*? Most communities in *Eretz Yisroel* are lenient on this manner, but those who follow *Chazon Ish* are *machmir*. [All agree that the prohibition of *sefichin* does not apply.]
2. Should I rely on the *heter mechirah*? If I rely on the *heter mechirah*, should I treat the produce with *kedushas shevi'is* (see #1 above)? There is much controversy regarding the efficacy of the *heter mechirah*. Mainstream American *hashgachos* and *Mehadrin* Israeli certifications do not rely upon *heter mechirah*, but the Rabbanut (Israeli Chief Rabbinate) does.
3. Is greenhouse produce considered to have grown "in *Eretz Yisroel*"? Does it depend on which method was used? What about items grown in the Northern Arava? Should that be treated as within the *halachic* borders of *Eretz Yisroel*?
4. If I have *shemittah* produce, what are the guidelines for treating it with *kedushas shevi'is*?

With all of these issues to bear in mind, some might find it simpler to ask the Rabbi for specific *hechsherim* that they can rely on and then only use items certified by those *hashgachos*.

Separate from the above issues that relate to food, tourists must also be cognizant of the restrictions on plowing, planting, pruning, watering or otherwise cultivating items growing in *Eretz Yisroel*. These *halachos* are not limited to farmers and potentially apply to anyone who moves a flowerpot from one place to another, pulls branches off a tree, or spills a beverage onto the grass. These are all areas where one should seek direction from a Rabbi before travelling.

In this context, it may be worthwhile for visitors to arrange to visit a farm which observes *shemittah*. On a simple level, the visit will be educational as to what farmers may or may not do during the *shemittah* year. But on a deeper level, it is inspiring to observe firsthand the farmers' display of *emunah* (trust in Hashem). They take a Sabbatical for the sole reason that it is a *mitzvah* and do so confident that Hashem will reward their decisions. This is a message that can resonate with us even when we return to our daily lives in *chutz la'aretz*.

May we be *zocheh* to the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the time when we will all live in *Eretz Yisroel* observing these *mitzvos* on a regular basis.

A more detailed and comprehensive treatment on the subject of *shemittah* is available in the recently released book by Rabbi Cohen, available at www.kashrushalacha.com.

Archives of previous shiurim can be found at https://www.crcweb.org/kashrus_shiurim.php or on the *Kashrus Halacha* podcast.

