



Preparing The Garden For Shemithah, #1:

From now on, we will learn Hilchot Shemithah regularly.

The main Shemithah-related issues we will focus on, in the coming year:

Preparing private gardens for Shemithah, growing at home and the use of detached platforms (*matza minutak*), eating plants that are grown in the garden according to Halacha, consumerism during Shemithah – what fruits and vegetables should we buy this year?, also: How does an Otzar beit Din work? – and additional Shemithah-related issues.

Melachot *D'oreita* in Shemithah

The Torah expressly forbids four *melachot* during Shemithah (Vayikra 25: 4-5): “You shall not **sow** your field or **prune** your vineyard. You shall not **reap** the aftergrowth of your harvest or **gather** the grapes of your untrimmed vines.”

In Shemot 34:21 the Torah says, “You shall cease from labor even at **plowing** time and harvest time.” Some of the Tannaim

believe that this is a reference to Shemithah.

All types of sowing (*zeri'ah*), planting trees (*netiah*), and planting plants (*shtila*) are forbidden: trees, vegetables, and flowers. Even watering plants immediately after they have been planted, in order to cause them to sprout – is forbidden (as part of the *din* of planting).

Pruning or trimming (*zemirah*) is the action of shortening the branches of grapevines, to allow new fruit branches to emerge. Most opinions hold that pruning is *d'oreita* for all trees, not only the grapevine.

Harvesting (*ketzirah* and *betzirah*) are permitted for individuals and families, but are forbidden for commercial purposes.

Plowing (*charishah*) is the work of improving or reclaiming the soil.

It is forbidden to carry out these *melachot* on Jewish land in Eretz Yisrael. Even a non-Jew cannot perform them for a Jew; for example, the non-Jewish gardener cannot perform the *melachot* for the Jew. Some of the farmers sell their fields to the non-Jew; we call this “*heter mechira*” and will be discussed more thoroughly in the future. In any event, there is no justification for selling private gardens to non-Jews. Therefore, these five *melachot*

are always forbidden in our gardens, even if we live in an apartment building. We are also not permitted to perform the *melacha* through “*grama*” (indirectly).

Currently, we have no Beit Mikdash; thus today the mitzvot of Shemitah are *d'rabbanan*.

What about other *melachot* that are not expressly mentioned in the Torah? More about that next week.

Do you have a practical, real-life question regarding Shemitah? E-mails may be sent to: h.moshe@toraland.org.il

We are now in the last stages of proofreading our book in English on Hilchot Shemitah. Of course, we'll let you know when it's ready! ■

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