



Preparations Before *Shemita*

A well-known Rabbinic saying states that “one who prepares prior to Shabbat will eat on Shabbat” (*Avodah Zara* 3:a). Our Sages meant to relay that in order to enjoy and maximize the experience of Shabbat, one must exert effort to prepare prior to Shabbat. A similar idea can be applied to *shemita*. By performing the necessary preparations prior to *shemita*, one can better maximize the observance of the *shemita* year.

Private gardens

There are certain preparations that must be carried out prior to *shemita* (see *Chazon Ish* 21:17). Tree branches that require trimming must be trimmed prior to *Rosh Hashanah* (*Kedushat Ha'aretz* 19:15). Planting grass also must be done prior to *Rosh Hashanah*. Even though fertilization is permitted under certain circumstances, if possible one should fertilize prior to *shemita*. In certain instances it is preferable to use a granulated fertilizer called CRF (control released fertilizer) which releases nutrients gradually into the soil. In such a fashion, one might not need to fertilize at

all during the year of *shemita* (see *Katif Shevi'it* p.190). Watering plants, flowers, and trees is permitted within certain guidelines during *shemita* (*Moed Katan* 2:b). It is recommended to increase the interval between waterings for plants and trees during *shemita* (see *Chut Shani* 1:31 and *Katif Shevi'it* 10:7)). The irrigation and watering systems (such as automatic sprinklers) should be set up prior to *shemita*.

Jointly-owned gardens

In many apartment complexes in Israel, buildings have gardens with trees, flowers, plants and even grass. The *vaad bayit* (building committee) should review with a rav and instruct the gardener what forms of gardening are allowed. In a situation where non-observant residents insist on performing prohibited labor on *shemita* (such as planting new plants) observant residents should attempt to dissuade them from doing so (*Kedushat Ha'aretz* 23:27). This may be done by explaining the halachic sensitivity of desecrating *shemita* and the fact that it is halachically prohibited to fund such activities.

In the case that persuasion is ineffective, authorities debate what should be done in terms of contributing one's payment for gardening that transgresses the laws of *shemita*. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Kovetz Teshuvot* 232) requires that people



relinquish ownership of their part in the garden for the entire year of *shemita*, absolving the religious owner of responsibility for the transgression in working the garden. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Shulchan Shlomo* p.65) and Rav Ben-Tzion Abba-Shaul (*Ohr Litzion* 1:16) maintain that there is no need to relinquish ownership of the land. The dispute is whether the obligation to keep *shemita* is on the individual and the land or just on the individual. In other words, if the obligation to keep *shemita* is also meant to guarantee that one's land isn't worked, then one must relinquish ownership of the garden. However, if the obligation not to work the land is only on the individual and one is not required to prevent the land from being worked in all circumstances, then the lenient opinion seems correct (see *Ma'adnei Eretz* 13:15).

Rav Auerbach and Rav Abba-Shaul both mention that even though relinquishing ownership is not required, one should surely request that his monthly *vaad bayit* payment should not be spent on the garden, but rather used for electricity, water, gas or other utilities. In a case where there is a specific payment for the garden from all apartment owners, one should consult with a rav.

Tosefet Shevi'it

A biblical mitzvah was observed in

Talmudic times to add on to the *shemita* year at the end of the sixth year (Such as, to begin observance in certain areas of *shemita* from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* of the sixth year). Following the destruction of the Second Temple, *Rabban Gamliel* ruled that there is no longer a mitzvah of *tosefet shemita* (adding on to *shemita*) as the obligation is only in effect when the *Beit Hamikdash* is standing (see *Rambam Shemita Veyovel* 3:1-3). However, certain authorities still maintain that one should add a minimal amount to the observance of *shemita* (*Derech Emuna* 3:11). Those *poskim* recommend that just before *Rosh Hashanah* begins, everyone should accept upon themselves the prohibitions of working the land. This custom should be done shortly prior to candle lighting. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at
050-200-4432

For sale!
An Orchard Of Fruit Trees
Private land in Tabu,
58 dunams near
Rosh Pina
for only NIS 3,000,000.
The cheapest price in Israel

**FOR DETAILS - HAARETZ HERITAGE
COMPANY - 053-3456067**