



Kedushat Shevi'it

The handling of holy *shemita* produce is a critical element in the observance of the mitzvah of *shemita*. Over fifteen different laws of *shemita* produce are derived from the verses regarding *shemita* in *Sefer Vayikra*. This includes who is permitted to eat these fruits and vegetables, where they can be eaten, as well as the use of *shemita* produce in non-food related activities. Now that summer is approaching, almost all produce will be somewhat affected by the laws of *shemita*.

When does produce acquire *kedushat shevi'it*?

The timing of *shemita* sanctity for produce depends on the type of crop. For example, vegetables are holy the moment they are picked in the seventh year, while grapes or wheat must reach a third of their growth during the seventh year in order to qualify for the laws of *shemita*. Other fruits have different markers of growth, which determine their status.

The timing of the *shemita* year and the growth of the crop are often not synchronized. Therefore, certain produce will remain *kedushat shevi'it* well into the eighth year. Rav Yechiel Michel Tikochinski

(*Sefer Hashemita* p.12), based on the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Shevi'it* 6:2) , explains that the laws of *kedushat shevi'it* apply and remain after the seventh year as long as the fruit is still edible. This applies whether it has remained on the tree or has been cooked in a dish. Rav Tikochinski also cites the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (ibid) that fruits and vegetables from the sixth year do not have *kedushat shevi'it* even if they grew throughout the seventh year. Therefore, citrus fruits such as oranges, which are found on a tree during the *shemita* winter, do not have *kedushat shevi'it* Rav Tikochinski's insight is accepted by all the *poskim* (see *Kedushat Ha'aretz* 20:12).

The consumer must be aware that *shemita* produce can be in the markets as late as the spring of the eighth year. Fruits kept in cold storage, such as apples, as well as dried fruits, can reach the markets at any time in the future. Even the mitzvah of forfeiting fruit can apply in the eighth year. For example, fruit that has holy *shemita* status but only becomes edible after *shemita* ends is required to be forfeited (*hefker*), even though that will only occur after *shemita*.

In summary:

- Produce that attained *kedushat shevi'it* (each crop according to its timetable) retains that status even in the eighth year and even if it is still on the tree

The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of Kashrut in Israel. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, a Rabbinic Field Representative for the OU is the Center's director.



- *Kedushat shevi'it* produce can be found in the markets well after shemitah finishes.
- If one has a garden with *shemitah* fruit that has not ripened until *shemitah* has finished, he must still relinquish ownership of the produce. ■

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