



# Kedushat Shevi'it Produce

This article examines the status of ownership of produce with *kedushat shevi'it*. According to Torah law (see *Rambam, Shemita Veyovel* 4:24), Jews must forfeit any possession of *shemita* produce (fruit, vegetables, legumes etc.) growing on their property. Based on this mitzvah, it would seem unusual for a consumer to find *kedushat shevi'it* at the supermarket or sold over the internet. However, based on numerous reasons *kedushat shevi'it* can be found almost anywhere in Israel mostly under the auspices of *Otzar Beit Din*.

## Otzar Beit Din

In the times of the *Mishnah* our Sages made a decree that the Rabbinic courts in all cities would create a *Shevi'it* storage system, called *Otzar Beit Din*. The *Tosefta* (*Shevi'it* 8:1) an early Talmudic Source describes how the *Beit Din* (Rabbinic court) would appoint officers to collect forfeited

produce, give a certain amount to the original owners and then store the remaining produce. The purpose was to store the food for the poor or for others who wanted to collect for consumption.

The development and legitimacy of *Otzar Beit Din* has been disputed for centuries. Certain later authorities claimed that it was a temporary decree which was not accepted by early authorities (see *Hatorah Veha'aretz* 3, p.180). Others claim that it was widely accepted and remains an ideal form of providing the public with *kedushat shevi'it* produce (see *Responsa Mishnat Yosef* 3:40). The modern day *Otzar Beit Din* is disputed even during the current *shemita* year. Rav Mordechai Gross *Shlit"a*, one of the OU *Poskim* supports the *Otzar*

*Beit Din* solution and allows the distribution of such produce. It should be noted that *Otzar Beit Din* is a complex system which requires trained and experienced Rabbis and orga-



nizations to preform it properly. As such, the OU recommends only consuming *Otzar Beit Din* which has been reviewed and approved by *Rabbanim* of the highest caliber.



*Otzar Beit Din* products can be found at special distribution depots in predominantly religious cities. Such produce may also be found in large super market chains and is sold over the internet by various suppliers. *Otzar Beit Din* produce should have proper certification. When purchasing at a supermarket, the label or box should have the words *Otzar Beit Din* (אוצר בית דין) or *Kedushat Shevi'it* (קדושת שביעית).

During the current *shemita* year, *Otzar Beit Din* produce is almost only available in raw form such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Israeli processed products **do not** contain ingredients from fruit or vegetable sources that are *Otzar Beit Din*. The only possible exception is wine that was mistakenly imported.

When having guests or giving produce as a gift, it is important to mention that the produce is *Otzar Beit Din* and has *kedushat shevi'it*. This is in order to make sure the laws of handling *shemita* produce are kept.

### **Kedushat Shevi'it outside of Israel**

According to most *poskim*, exporting fruit and vegetables with *kedushat shevi'it* is prohibited (see *Aruch Hashulchan Ha'atid* 24:25). However, certain circumstances

exist where *Otzar Beit Din* might be found in international markets.

*Kedushat shevi'it* fruit may be found in the form of imported wines (kosher wine, sometimes a mix of vintages) and imported citrus fruit (only from mid-winter).

It should be noted that when seeing *kedushat shevi'it* produce overseas, there is no reason to avoid purchasing it (see *Chazon Ish Shevi'it* 10:6). Such produce is permissible for consumption as long as the laws of *kedushat shevi'it* are adhered to.

### **In Summary:**

- *Otzar Beit Din* produce has *Kedushat Shevi'it* and can be found in supermarkets.
- The OU approves *Otzar Beit Din* when the process and distribution is done properly.
- Only raw products and certain wines are classified as *Otzar Beit Din* during the current *Shemita*.
- One should inform recipients upon giving produce with *Kedushat Shevi'it*.
- *Otzar Beit Din* produce might be accidentally imported overseas. Regardless, the produce or product may be consumed. ■

### **TRANSFER YOUR OLD FILM/VIDEO'S**

(All formats) In Quality to Digital

Preserve Family History from Fading

**Michael 052.286.8626**

Photography with feeling

**Facebook.com/L'Dorot Photography**



### **Kashrut Questions in Israel?**

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at

050-200-4432