



Shemita

Another Reason to Come to Israel

There is a prohibition of harvesting produce during *Shemita*. However, it is permissible to eat the actual produce of the seventh year. Chazal taught us that it is permissible to pick the produce with a *shinui*. Some hold that a *shinui* is needed for the method of picking (ברטנורא שביעית פ"ח מ"ג, ועוד). For example, cutting with scissors instead of a pruning hook. However, the Rambam (שמיטה פ"ד ה"א) holds that one can pick the produce as normal, but only a small quantity. Why? It is prohibited to plant even one seed, so why would picking be allowed in a small quantity? The Chazon Ish explains that the prohibition of picking applies only when one is acting as the **owner of the land**. The earth is not ours. Therefore, it is permissible to pick and harvest a **household amount** of produce, as much as a person would buy for his family in the store (one should try to cut even this with scissors and not a pruning hook).

However, the Tosefta (שביעית ח', א) expounds that the *beit din* can appoint workers (or the field's owner) as its emissaries, who pick all of the produce on their behalf. How is that possible? Here too, we can understand that since the act is not done for an individual, there is no "ownership" of the land. The workers are picking on behalf of the *beit din*, who are acting on behalf of *Am Yisrael*, and therefore it is permissible (ראו חזון איש, שביעית י"ב, ג).

In my opinion, *otzar beit din* is the best solution for *Shemita*. Let's imagine a reality in which everyone keeps

Shemita. All the orchards and fields in Israel are *hefker*. The week begins. A family needs apples, dates and cherries. Where should they go? Their journey begins with a trip to the Golan. There they will find apples for the week. Afterwards, they travel to the Jordan Valley for dates, then to Gush Etzion for cherries. This trip will take a good number of hours, maybe even a whole day. It's clearly not realistic.



Today, we do not have *korbanot*, we cannot eat *maaser sheini* or *neta revai*. *Kedushat sheviit* is the closest thing we have to a *Beit HaMikdash* reality.

The only realistic solution is *otzar beit din*. The *beit din* picks the fruit for all of *Am Yisrael* and distributes it around the country. Additionally, the produce of *otzar beit din* is holy with *kedushat sheviit*!

Why is it so worthwhile to eat *kedushat sheviit*? There are those who hold there is a *mitzvah* to eat *Shemita* produce (רמב"ן). Even for those who do not hold that it is a *mitzvah*, they still agree there is *kedusha* in *Shemita* produce. Today, we do not have *korbanot*, we cannot eat *maaser sheini* or *neta revai*. *Kedushat sheviit* is the closest thing we have to a *Beit HaMikdash* reality. We have the opportunity to eat holy food from the Holy Land! Therefore, even if it creates certain difficulties, we should be so happy for this incredible *zechut* which we merit once every seven years.

And truthfully, it is not so difficult to keep a *Shemita* kitchen. Here are the main rules:

1. It's desirable to eat the fruit entirely, because of their *kedusha*.

2. Leftovers: One can place them in a bag and dispose of them in the garbage (or place all the leftovers in one bag, and at the end of the day tie it up and throw it in the garbage). The scrupulous place the leftovers in a special utensil (*kedushat sheviit* container) in a bag, and only after a number of days, when the leftovers begin to decay, they put them in the garbage. One need not remove *Shemita* vegetables from a mixture; one can place all of the leftovers in the *sheviit* container.
3. A dish which was cooked together with *Shemita* produce and absorbed its flavor takes on the status of *sheviit*, and one may not throw it out, but must place it in a bag before placing it in the garbage (in this case, even the scrupulous may do so).
4. One may cook things one normally cooks. The *poskim* were divided regarding squeezing *sheviit* fruits, but the Chazon Ish was lenient regarding fruits one normally squeezes. Therefore, one may mash fruits for children or adults. One who cooks normally in the kitchen should have no special difficulty, and can use *sheviit* produce as normal.

We are living in the times of *Geula*. How fortunate we are to eat the fruits of Israel in *kedusha*!

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Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

Returning to Gan Eden

There is only an obligation of *Shemita* in Israel. Why?

Let's start at the beginning. The original world was *Gan Eden*, where there was a direct connection between the earth's produce and man's recognition of G-d. In this world, G-d allowed man to enjoy every tree, prohibiting him from eating from just one tree – *Eitz HaDa'at*. This prohibition expressed the Garden's belonging to G-d – man must recognize that the Garden is not his, and therefore he must follow the Owner's rules. When he ate from the tree, man expressed his rebellion against the Garden's Owner, as if saying: "Everything belongs to me, and I can use anything as I wish." Because of this, several changes took place in the world. We will address two of them:

1. The ground was cursed because of man's sin. When we do not comprehend that the earth belongs to G-d, we cut it off from its source of blessing, the blessing of G-d. Thus, a curse befalls the ground, and it does not give forth its fruits without toil and hardship. G-d's earth does not answer to anyone who does not recognize it belongs to Him.
2. G-d expelled man from *Gan Eden* because he was no longer worthy of living there.

Gan Eden is the source of the direct connection between G-d, the earth, and man, in which the latter can enjoy the earth without toil, since G-d planted the Garden for him. All that is left for him to do is to pick the fruits. The exile from *Gan Eden* divorced the earth from its connection to G-d, so to speak. From here on, the earth is handed to man, who must now work very hard to make anything grow. The exile from *Gan Eden* is the result of the disconnection between working the ground and humanity's spiritual state.



However, there is one place which retains the special connection between earth and G-d – *Eretz Yisrael*. In Israel, the agricultural produce is dependent on the nation's spiritual level – without rain there is no produce, and the rain in Israel is dependent on our behavior and spiritual status. Therefore, the connection between *avodat Hashem* and *avodat haAdama* continues in Israel. In other words, Israel is a microcosm of *Gan Eden* in this world.

The *Shemita* year expresses Israel's uniqueness in an extraordinary way: for an entire year, we do not work the Land, and thus we return to our original state, as we were in *Gan Eden*. Yet how can we be sustained during this year if we do not work the Land?

"And should you ask, 'What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?' I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years" (Vayikra 25:20–21).

Existence during *Shemita* is *Gan Eden*-type existence: G-d commands His blessing, and the Land grows produce, from which man can benefit without effort. The produce which comes from G-d's blessing is not just a reward or gift, but a result of performing a *mitzvah*. The blessed produce is G-d's blessing sent to man as a result of his connection to G-d. By eating the blessed produce, man returns to his original state,

as he was in *Gan Eden*, when he enjoyed G-d's blessing directly. When *Am Yisrael* feel this special connection, keep Torah and *mitzvot*, and understand they are not the owners of the Land, expressing so through keeping *Shemita*, the Land acts as it is G-d's and gives forth its fruits.

But when *Am Yisrael* do not understand the meaning of the Land and do not keep *Shemita*, G-d's blessing is automatically cut off and so the Land does not act as G-d's, and does not give forth its fruits. When the Land does not function as G-d's and as Israel's source of blessing, the Land becomes desolate and results in exile. And as long as *Am Yisrael* do not return to it, it remains desolate.

Without *avodat Hashem*, there is no possibility of growing anything in Israel. Israel flourishes only in a reality when *Am Yisrael* are in their Land and feel the special ownership G-d displays over the Land. The expression of this is in keeping *Shemita*, through which G-d's existence expresses itself in its ultimate form and *Eretz Yisrael* is transformed into a reflection of *Gan Eden*.

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