

INTRODUCTION TO SHMITA

Introduction to Shmita

Every seventh year, fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes grown in Eretz Yisrael are subject to the laws of “shmita,” which entail letting the land rest.

Holiness of Shmita Produce

Fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, etc., grown in Eretz Yisrael holiness. This holiness determines how we may treat fruit during shmita, including how to eat it and how to dispose of it.

Which Produce Is Subject to Shmita Laws?

All fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes that grow in Eretz Yisrael are subject to shmita laws. However, since there is a rabbinic decree that we may not eat vegetables and grains (called “sfichin”) that grow in Eretz Yisrael during shmita year, we will mainly be discussing fruits.

NOTE Vegetables, grains, and legumes that are not raised in halachic Eretz Yisrael are never subject to shmita laws. So if a fruit or vegetable was grown outside the borders of Second Temple period Eretz Yisrael, you may eat that fruit or vegetable with no shmita concerns. Such areas may include much of the southern part of the State of Israel, including the Arava and southern Negev all the way to Eilat, land south of Gaza, etc. Some people include the Golan. Many people also include any land currently “owned” by Arabs.

Plants grown off the ground or inside a house are also not subject to shmita.

When Is Shmita?

The next shmita year will be observed beginning Rosh Hashana, September 2014.