



## A Guide to the Halachos of SHMITTAH at Home

### WHICH PRODUCE HAS *KEDUSHAS SHEVIIS*

- ❖ Fruits or vegetables that were picked during the sixth year, i.e., before *shmittah* began, have no *kedushah* whatsoever, and even if they are bought during the *shmittah* year, they may be consumed just as one would during any other year.
- ❖ Produce that was grown on land belonging to non-Jews is subject to a *machlokes*. In Yerushalayim the minhag was to not treat them as having *kedushas sheviis*, but many are *noheig* to treat them as having *kedushas sheviis*. In areas other than Yerushalayim, the minhag is to treat them as having *kedushas sheviis*.

### DEALING WITH *KEDUSHAS SHEVIIS* PRODUCE

- ❖ Produce with *kedushas sheviis* may only be eaten/used in the normal manner, e.g., something that is normally eaten cooked, may only be eaten cooked, even though it could also be eaten raw.
- ❖ Additionally, food with *kedushas sheviis* (including leftovers that one has no intention of eating, or peels of certain fruits) may not simply be thrown away as usual; this would constitute ruining them, which is forbidden.

#### *Ruining Fruits/Vegetables*

To destroy produce with *kedushas sheviis* or to use them abnormally is forbidden. ‘Ruining’ could include any of the following:

- ▶ Placing the produce in a place where it will become disgusting (e.g., a garbage can),
- ▶ Mixing it with something that will ruin its taste (e.g., medicine),
- ▶ Smearing or using any foods that have *kedushas sheviis* for medical purposes.
- ▶ If one sees a fruit/vegetable with *kedushas sheviis* on the floor, one need not pick it up
- ▶ One may peel fruit even though some of the actual fruit comes along with the peel and will be thrown away.
- ▶ One is not required to return a pot of soup (or any other food) into the fridge after using it to prevent it from spoiling, as there is no obligation to outright prevent *kedushas sheviis* food from spoiling. Rather one may simply leave it out until it is no longer fit for consumption, and then dispose of it normally.
- ▶ One may give fruits of *sheviis* to a child even though some of the food may be wasted. They should not, however, be given to a very young child that will play with them and thereby waste them. Care should be taken to give the child only that which he will eat, not extra which is likely to be wasted.
- ▶ Children (from the age of understanding) should be taught not to ruin/destroy food with *kedushas sheviis*.
- ▶ It is permitted to cut up half a fruit knowing that the other half will not be eaten and eventually get ruined.
- ▶ Fruits/vegetables with *kedushas sheviis* may be frozen, provided that this does not ruin them.
- ▶ *Challah* may be separated from dough that was kneaded with flour of *sheviis* even though it will be burned [or thrown away]. One who normally separates a *kezayis* may do so even in this case.

#### *Eating Fruits/Vegetables*

- Fruits and vegetables that have *kedushas sheviis* may only be eaten in the way they are normally eaten.
- A food that is eaten both cooked and raw, e.g., an onion, may be eaten any way one wishes.
- One may not eat a fruit or vegetable with *kedushas sheviis* before it has fully ripened.
- One may sun-dry fruits that have *kedushas sheviis* if these fruits are normally dried, e.g., dates, figs, apples, pineapple.
- When cutting fruit or vegetables with *kedushas sheviis*, one need not be concerned that juice goes to waste in the process of slicing.
- One may taste a food with *kedushas sheviis* even if one will be spitting it out immediately.

#### *Cooking Kedushas Sheviis Food*

- ▶ Any food that is normally cooked may be cooked. All methods of cooking are considered equal with regard to this. For example, any food that is normally cooked may be roasted or baked, and vice versa.

- ▶ One may add orange juice or grape juice that has *kedushas sheviis* into a cake or meat for flavour, if it is normally done. Similarly, one may put spices – even if they can be eaten by themselves – into a mixture of other food for taste. [The leftover cake that has this orange or grape juice in it may not be thrown away or wasted.]
- ▶ One may fry regular foods in *kedushas sheviis* oil. The leftover oil may not be thrown away normally, even if it is no longer fit for frying.
- ▶ One may not grease a pan with *shmittah* oil when the oil serves only as a non-sticking agent. If one intends for the oil to add taste as well, it is permissible.

### ***The Taste of Kedushas Sheviis Food***

- ▶ When one cooks using some fruit or vegetables with *kedushas sheviis*, the entire mixture acquire *kedushas sheviis*, if the fruit or vegetables impart taste to the mixture. However, water that was used to cook *kedushas sheviis* vegetables and is not normally used, such as water potatoes are cooked in, may be disposed of in the normal way.
- ▶ The brine in which olives or pickles with *kedushas sheviis* were stored may be thrown out normally.
- ▶ Bones that were cooked in a soup that had vegetables with *kedushas sheviis* in it (and which therefore absorbed the vegetables' flavour) may be thrown away normally unless it is common to suck the marrow.
- ▶ When one cooks fruit or vegetables with *kedushas sheviis* in a pot and subsequently uses that pot for non-*kedushas sheviis* food, the latter does not become *kedushas sheviis* (even if the pot was a *ben-yomo*, and even if onions were cooked). [Some *Poskim* are stringent and maintain that if the pot was a *ben yomo* that the food must be treated as *kedushas sheviis*.]

### ***Squeezing/Mashing Fruits/Vegetables***

- ▶ According to many *Poskim*, only oranges, grapefruits and lemons may be squeezed. However, some *Poskim* allow any fruit that is normally squeezed to be squeezed, e.g., carrots, kiwi, pears, mango.
- ▶ It is permitted to add water to squeezed orange juice (or any other freshly squeezed juice) provided the orange taste is still well recognizable.
- ▶ The fruit should be squeezed well to avoid waste, and the remaining peel of the fruit may not be thrown away if a substantial amount of fruit still remains attached to it or if the peels can be fed to animals.
- ▶ Squeezing the juice into a fine sieve so the pulp gets separated from the liquid is forbidden.
- ▶ Any fruit that may not be squeezed should not be sucked with one's mouth to extract the juice.
- ▶ One may turn liquid of *kedushas sheviis* into a solid, e.g., fresh orange juice ice-pops.
- ▶ Foods that are normally mashed may be pulverised, e.g., potatoes, bananas, tomatoes, and avocado. Foods that are not normally mashed should not be mashed. Carrots and apples may be grated/shredded. Nuts may be ground for a cake. Onions and garlics may be crushed.
- ▶ If a certain vegetable or fruit is not normally mashed for adults, but is mashed for young children, it may be mashed only for the child (not for an adult).
- ▶ After using a utensil for squeezing/grating the fruit/vegetable with *kedushas sheviis*, it may be washed normally.

### ***Peeling Fruits/Vegetables***

- ▶ Anything that is normally peeled may be peeled, such as apples, carrots, cucumbers, and potatoes (even though some of them can be eaten with their peel on). The peel will retain its *kedushah* if such peels are commonly fed to animals.
- ▶ One should be careful not to peel them thicker than one would normally.
- ▶ Any fruit that is not normally peeled should not be peeled, e.g., tomatoes, plums, apricots etc. [Unless it is being done for children who cannot eat it with the peel.]
- ▶ When removing spoiled parts of the fruit/vegetable, they can be removed normally, even if doing so removes some of the good part at the same time. Nevertheless, since some edible food comes off with it, it should all be treated with *kedushas sheviis* and placed into the *shmittah* bin. Care should be taken not to remove too much good food along with the bad, inedible food.
- ▶ One may remove the outer most leaves of a lettuce (which are normally dirty or partially spoiled) even though there may be some edible spots on it. Nevertheless, the entire leaf should be placed into the *shmittah* bin.

## LEFTOVER FOOD/PEELS/PITS

### *The Shmittah Box*

- ▶ One should have in one's kitchen a dedicated '*shmittah* box' into which one may place all the leftover food and wait until the food begins to rot; at that point one may dispose of the leftovers normally, since at this stage it is no longer fit for human consumption and has lost its *kedushah*. Another reason to have a *shmittah* box is that it is disrespectful toward food that has *kedushah* to be thrown into a receptacle for dirty or mouldy items.
- ▶ The bag in the bin should be changed every day or every few days depending on the usage; or the new food should be placed into a bag before being put into the box so that it will not be destroyed by leftovers which have earlier been placed there and have already grown mouldy.
- ▶ In a situation where having a *shmittah* bin is difficult, one may simply place the food in a plastic bag, seal the top, and place it into the regular bin, allowing the food to rot by itself.
- ▶ Food may be removed from the *shmittah* box and discarded normally once it has spoiled to the point of being inedible.
- ▶ *Shmittah* food that is completely spoiled may be thrown away regularly.
- ▶ Similarly, a small amount of leftovers on one's plate that no one would ever eat may be thrown in the regular place.
- ▶ Normal food, i.e., non-*kedushas sheviis* leftovers, may be placed into the *shmittah* box containing food with *kedushas sheviis* provided they will not ruin the food already in the box.

### *Peels*

- ▶ Any peel that can still be eaten, either because it is sometimes eaten or because it has some food clinging to it, cannot be thrown away normally and must be placed in the *shmittah* bin until it rots beyond edibility.
- ▶ Any peel that is not fit for human (or animal) consumption may be thrown away normally.
- ▶ The outer peel of an onion or garlic may be discarded normally. Banana peels can be thrown away normally and many are lenient with orange peels [unless some food remains on them]. Peels of potatoes and avocado still connected to some amount of food must be placed in the *shmittah* box.
- ▶ The stem on the top of a fruit /vegetable does not have *kedushas sheviis*.

### *Pits/Seeds*

- ▶ If the pits/seeds are **not** fit for human consumption, they may be discarded in the regular fashion. However, if some of the fruit remains stuck to the pit – if it is a small amount and one has no intention of eating that fruit, the pit may still be discarded normally. However, if there is a lot of fruit attached to the pit, the whole pit should be thrown in the *shmittah* bin.
- ▶ If the pits/seeds **are** fit for human or animal consumption, but no one ever eats them or gives them to animals, many *Poskim* are lenient and permit throwing them away normally. Others, however, require that they be placed in the *shmittah* bin.
- ▶ Pits from apricots, apples, avocados, and citrus fruits such as lemon, orange, or grapefruit do not have *kedushas sheviis* and may be discarded normally.
- ▶ Pits from olives, peaches, and plums may have *kedushas sheviis*, depending upon how much fruit remains attached to them.
- ▶ Pits from melon, cantaloupe, or watermelon do have *kedushas sheviis*.

### *Washing Dishes*

- ▶ If the remnants on the dishes are insignificant such that they would usually not be gathered and saved, the dishes may be washed normally without regard for the remnants. If, however, they are significant enough such that one might gather and save them, they should be treated with *kedusha* and placed in the *shmittah* bin before the dishes are washed.

### *Other Usages*

- ▶ Any food with *kedushas sheviis* that is still fit for human consumption should not be fed to animals. Once it is no longer fit for people, it may be given to animals.

- ▶ Fruits/vegetables with *kedushas sheviis* may not be formed into shapes or sculptures for decoration if they will not be eaten this way and are merely decorative.
- ▶ One may not use a lemon with *kedushas sheviis* to remove stains from clothing.

### *Shmittah on Shabbos*

- ▶ One may use *shmittah* oil for Shabbos candles.
- ▶ One may not separate the non-*kedushas sheviis* food from the food that is *kedushas sheviis* on Shabbos before placing it into the *shmittah* bin.
- ▶ When pouring the liquid from soup or salad down the sink, and one has a sink-strainer that prevents all the solid foods from going down the sink so they can be placed into the *shmittah* bin, the strainer may be used on Shabbos.
- ▶ It is permitted to make *havdalah* with *kedushas sheviis* wine/grape juice. However, one should place a plate under the *becher* to catch whatever spills and pour it back into the cup or it should be drunk. Also, the candle may not be extinguished in the wine, and wine may not be dabbed into one's pockets and upon the eyes.

## BORROWING FOOD FROM NEIGHBORS

- ▶ If one borrowed fruit/vegetables from a neighbour, one may pay them back with *kedushas sheviis* produce if the food that was originally borrowed was also of *kedushas sheviis*. Nevertheless, the most preferable option when borrowing or repaying is to specify that the object being transferred is merely a gift. Thus, when one returns what one borrowed, it is not a debt being re-paid, but a present being given.
- ▶ A small amount borrowed may be returned in any case, since neighbours would not be *makpid* to claim it back.

## DEALING WITH FLOWERS/PLANTS

### FLOWERS

- ▶ Flowers that are primarily valued for their beauty and emit no fragrance do not have *kedushas sheviis* and may be thrown away normally. Some *Poskim* say that they even if such flowers do emit a fragrance, they do not have *kedushas sheviis* unless they were grown for their fragrance.
- ▶ In all cases, flowers may be smelled [except if they are *sefichim* according to some opinions].
- ▶ Flowers/plants may not be bought from anyone; they may only be bought from a store that keeps the halachos of *shmittah* such that we can be assured they were not planted, tended to, or harvested in a forbidden way.
- ▶ If one did buy or received flowers from a questionable source, one may still use them normally.
- ▶ *Shmittah* flowers may always be placed into a vase of water, even if this will cause the flower to open up.

### PLANTS

- ▶ Watering one's field during *shmittah* is forbidden. However, one may water ones garden and plants if by not doing so will cause them to die. They should be watered the minimal amount.
- ▶ There is a *machlokes* if indirect watering is also forbidden e.g., ones 'sponga' hole leads to an area of growing plants such that when one does 'sponga' the water will fall onto a growing area of land. Most *Poskim* are lenient since it is clear that one's intention is not to water the plants; some are stringent unless there is cleaning fluid or bleach in the water that is harmful to the plants. Included in this question is whether or not one may hang one's wet laundry in a place that allows it to drip onto plants/grass, or switch on the air conditioning if the water hose hangs over growing plants.
- ▶ One who has a live plant on an open balcony should consult a Rav before moving it during the *shmittah* year, as certain movements may allow it to receive nourishment from the earth [even if one is on a high floor] and this is tantamount to planting. Some are stringent with changing the position of a potted plant indoors as well.

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*All halachos above were checked over by Rav Yitzchok Berkowitz Shlita*

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