

## The *shemita* calendar – basic principles

The approximate dates for *kedushat shevi'it* and *sefichin* are intended for those buying groceries in the market who do not know their source. From the time a certain type of produce might have *kedushat shevi'it*, it should be handled as having *kedushat shevi'it* owing to doubt. From the beginning of the *sefichin* period, produce from an unknown source should not be purchased until the *sefichin* period is over (about issues of *orlah* in the market, see *Orlah for the Backyard*, Chapters 7 and 9). For produce with a known source, such as the home garden, check the *halachot* based on the situation at hand.

- *Bi'ur* times are relevant to anyone who purchases produce with *kedushat shevi'it*, and to those are stringent about handling produce grown by non-Jews in Israel or *heter mechirah* produce as having *kedushat shevi'it*.
- Declare ownerless fruits and vegetables and fruits obligated in *bi'ur*, based on the date specified in the table.
- If the date passed, declare the produce ownerless immediately when you first realize this is the case.
- Since ripening dates are linked to the solar calendar, most dates appear primarily as their Gregorian dates. Exceptions are the beginning of the *sefichin* prohibition for vegetables planted right before *Rosh Hashanah*. For such produce, we consider the period from planting to harvest for each particular vegetable planted before Rosh Hashanah. After this time passes (and we assume each crop was harvested), the *sefichin* prohibition begins for each crop.
- Also for fruits that begin their formation (*chanatah*) around *Rosh Hashanah* time (rare), the Gregorian date is not the defining date. Instead, the Gregorian date depends on when *Rosh Hashanah* occurs.
- For most vegetables, private individuals do not have them at home at the *bi'ur* time, since the *bi'ur* time follows the time *heter mechirah* vegetables are available (when *kedushat shevi'it* vegetables are no longer available).
- For *otzar beit din* produce purchased after the *bi'ur* time, there is no obligation of *bi'ur* since it was under the auspices of the *beit din* at the time.

## *Sefichin* in the marketplace

### The *sefichin* prohibition

- The *sefichin* prohibition applies to vegetables sown or planted during *shemita*, whether planted by people or sprouting on their own.
- The *sefichin* prohibition applies only to the *olei Bavel* territory and only to vegetables sown or planted annually (not to biannuals, perennials, or plants that grow for several years).
- Crops grown in hothouses, nethouses, or on detached platforms are not subject to the *sefichin* prohibition.
- The date the *sefichin* prohibition begins relates to the time it is possible for *sefichin* merchandise to reach the market, based on regular planting or sowing times.
- To this end, we consider crops growing in *olei Bavel* territory in the ground and outdoors.



- Since this is an estimate, and depends on many variables, the dates are beginning, middle, or end of the month, , while we round back to an earlier date just in case.

### End of the *sefichin* prohibition

- The end of the *sefichin* prohibition is defined as the first time crops grown during the eighth year in a permissible fashion can reach the marketplace.
- This time relates to produce grown in Israel only (including *olei Mitzrayim* territory) and not to imports.
- For vegetables that should arrive at the market around *Chanukah* time (*Kislev-Tevet*), the determining date is *Chanukah* (just as *Chazal* set the date for such vegetables).

## Kedushat shevi'it in the marketplace

### The beginning of *kedushat shevi'it*

- *Kedushat shevi'it* begins from the time it is possible for vegetables or fruit that have *kedushat shevi'it* to arrive in the marketplace.
- Since the dates are not exact and extra time is figured in just in case, *terumot* and *ma'aserot* should be separated owing to doubt for any produce which **might not** have *kedushat shevi'it*.
- For many vegetables, the date for the beginning of *kedushat shevi'it* is 3 *Tishrei*, since vegetables harvested from this date on have *kedushat shevi'it*. Despite this, some vegetables are harvested at later points in the year.

### The end of *kedushat shevi'it*

- The end of *kedushat shevi'it* is the time when new merchandise is expected to arrive on the market that does not have *kedushat shevi'it*, and it is no longer expected for merchandise with *kedushat shevi'it* to be available at the marketplace.
- Since this is an approximate date, separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* owing to doubt, without a blessing, for any merchandise that is not known **for certain** to have *kedushat shevi'it*.
- For vegetables, we only look at the end of the *sefichin*. Only for a small portion of vegetables, specifically those that can be stored for long periods of time (such as many root vegetables), is it possible for there to still be produce with *kedushat shevi'it* available in the marketplace.

## Bi'ur

- The *bi'ur* time is defined as the time the *bi'ur* obligation applies to a particular type of produce in one's house. At the date specified on the table, this type of produce should be declared ownerless, as described in chapter 25 of *The Consumer's Guide for Shemitah*.
- The *bi'ur* time is an estimate of when that crop is certainly no longer growing in the field. To this end, an extra amount of time is figured in just in case.
- The *bi'ur* time is the same for each particular type of crop (including varieties of the same crop), as stated by the Gemara: "that particular type of crop is no longer available for animals in the field." For example, bell peppers and paprika have the same *bi'ur* time, following this principle, accounting for the last one available.
- The table does not take into account produce that is not sold commercially, such as kumquats.



- Vegetables or fruits that are available in the field all year long are considered always available, so they are not subject to *bi'ur*.
- To this end, the fruit or vegetable needs to be available all year in the field in *olei Bavel* or *olei Mitzrayim* territory, or even in fields sold through *heter mechirah*. However, if during some of the year a particular crop is available in the field in the southern Arava (south of 30<sup>th</sup> parallel north), it is considered no longer available and is subject to *bi'ur*.
- For vegetables, the *bi'ur* time is the time when a particular vegetable is no longer available from a vegetable that grew from a plant **planted** before the end of *shemitah*.
- For fruits, *bi'ur* applies to the time fruit that began to develop after *shemitah* is no longer available on trees.
- For grains and legumes, *bi'ur* applies to crops that reached a third of their growth during the *shemitah* year.

## Principles governing the calendar

- The dates given are either the beginning, middle, or end of the month.
- The dates are rounded for stringency's sake: at the beginning of the *sefichin* prohibition and *kedushat shevi'it*, we use the closest earlier date, while at the end of *sefichin* and *kedushat shevi'it*, we follow the later date.
- To determine that a particular crop is not subject to *bi'ur* since it is available in the field, it must be available in the field all year in the *olei Bavel* area. Sede Boker is the southernmost border for this purpose.
- If a particular crop is not available for several months, it will be obligated in *bi'ur*.
- To end the concern of *sefichin* available in the marketplace, the first merchandise should arrive from the area north of 30<sup>th</sup> parallel North. Merchandise from imports or other areas are not considered for this purpose.
- The *sefichin* prohibition ends on *Chanukah* 5783.
- The *bi'ur* time takes into account extra time so that there is definitely no more of a particular type of produce available in the field, even if this adds a few days.
- Note that there are certain fruits that begin to develop around *Tishrei* and vegetables that are harvested for the last time around *Tishrei*. In these cases, the Hebrew date and not the Gregorian date is used.
- The *bi'ur* time is defined for each type of produce, based on the laws governing *kila'im* that define different types of species (according to the last fruit/vegetable of a particular species available in the field).
- If a particular type of crop is no longer available in refrigeration (specifically for types of produce that do not have long shelf-lives), there is no need to worry about *sefichin*, even if there is no new merchandise and imports are available.
- We begin to worry about *sefichin* when the first crops not grown in hothouses, the Arava, or the *olei Mitzrayim* areas (where the *sefichin* prohibition does not apply) arrive in the marketplace.