



## Introduction to *Messechet Shvi'it*

### 1 שביטת הקרקע – Resting the land

Biblically prohibited activities:

- זריעה – planting
- זמירה – pruning in a vineyard
- קצירה – reaping
- בצירה – gathering in a vineyard
- חרישה – ploughing

”תוספת שביעית” – The biblical prohibition extends one month prior to the *shmittah* year; a prohibition only affective during the times of the *Beit Ha'Mikdash* . The *Chachamim* extended this period further:

- back to *Shavuot* for fruit trees.
- back to *Pesach* for field produce.

### 2 קדושת פירות שביעית – Sanctity of fruit during the *shmittah* year

- Everything that grows in the field becomes (or one must make everything) ownerless.
- It is prohibited to sell this fruit during the *shmittah* year.
- One may not destroy or waste *shmittah* fruit rather one may eat it instead. (The *Ramban* believes that there is a positive *mitzvah* to eat *shmittah* fruit, while the *Ramban* maintains that the consumption is just permissible and not a *mitzvah*).  
NB: the *Chachamim* prohibited the consumption of *sphichim* (produce that grow as a result of being planted the previous year, eg, vegetables) out of a concern that people will plant this produce during the *shmittah* year and claim that they are *sphichim*. This is known as איסורי ספיחים.
- One can only eat *shmittah* fruit when they are still found in the field. After this point the remain *shmittah* fruit must be removed from the house and made ownerless, or according to the *Ramban*, destroyed. This is known as מצוות ביאור.

### 3 שמיטת כספים – Absolving of debts

After the end of the *shmittah* year it is prohibited to reclaim any debts.

[The above notes are adapted from *Kehati's* introduction to *Messechet Shvi'it*]