

# קרן המעשרות

**KEREN HAMAASROT**

**Simplifying the  
Performance of the  
Mitzvah of Maaser  
Sheini**



בית המדרש להלכה באגריקולטורה  
ב"מ אש

**A Publication of:**

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# KEREN HAMAASROT

Living in Eretz Yisrael gives us the privilege of fulfilling mitzvot that are not performed anywhere else in the world, many of them involving the foods that the Land grows. Included in these responsibilities are the mitzvot of separating *terumot* and *maasrot*.

Food that grew in Eretz Yisrael from which *terumot* and *maasrot* have not yet been separated is called *tevel* (טֶבֶל); **it may not yet be eaten**. We must separate *terumot* and *maasrot* whenever we eat or buy anything that grew in Eretz Yisrael — for example, its fruits, vegetables, grains or *kitniyot*, or something that contains ingredients that grew in Eretz Yisrael — when we don't know for certain that *terumot* and *maasrot* were already performed. *Terumot* and *maasrot* are also necessary before eating cooked or prepared foods, juices, preserved foods, and jams, that were made from Eretz Yisrael's crops.

Most of Eretz Yisrael's foods that we encounter are what is called טֶבֶל סָפֵק, possible *tevel*, which is food where it is unclear if *terumot* and *maasrot* have been properly separated by the people growing or selling it. And, some foods are טֶבֶל וַדָּאִי, definite *tevel*, where we know that *terumot* and *maasrot* definitely have not been separated. Examples of definite *tevel* are fruits or vegetables picked from one's yard or garden. The primary difference between definite *tevel* and possible *tevel* is that a *berachah* is recited before separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from definite *tevel*, and is not said when performing these mitzvot with possible *tevel*. [Many people are also careful to separate *terumot* and *maasrot* from foods with a reliable *hechsher* as if it was possible *tevel*, based on issues that may arise when *terumot* and *maasrot* are separated on an industrial scale.]

## ***Terumot* and *Maasrot* During the Beit Hamikdash Era**

During the Beit Hamikdash era the mitzvot of *terumot* and *maasrot* were done in a manner that is slightly different than what we are used to nowadays. Beyond the different *terumot* and *maasrot* being designated as such, these now special portions of food were used, in several different ways that the Torah describes. First a small part of approximately two percent of each kind of food was designated as *terumah gedolah*, which was given to the Kohen to eat while in a state of ritual purity. Ten percent of the remaining food was made *maaser rishon*, and was given to the Levi. The Levi, in turn, separated ten percent of the *maaser rishon* he received (which is around one percent of the total crop) to give to the Kohen as sanctified *terumat maaser*. Finally, another ten percent was separated from the rest of the food. This final portion varied depending on the year. Foods that grew during the first, second, fourth, and fifth years of the Shemittah cycle were declared sanctified *maaser sheini*, eaten while in a state of ritual purity within Yerushalayim's walls. [Alternatively, the *maaser sheini* produce was desanctified, by transferring its sanctify onto money which was then taken to Yerushalayim to buy food to be eaten under *maaser sheini* conditions.] And, when separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from foods that grew during the third and sixth years of the Shemittah cycle, this final ten percent was made *maaser ani*, given to the poor.

## ***Terumot* and *Maasrot* Nowadays**

The mitzvot of *terumot* and *maasrot* continue to be relevant in our times. However, many aspects of these mitzvot are not fulfilled in the full manner described in the Torah, for several reasons. Kohanim in our times are no longer ritually pure. This prevents them from being able to eat *terumah gedolah* or *terumat maaser*. These *terumot* are thus no longer given to the Kohen,

and, after being separated, these now-holy portions of food are instead respectfully discarded. The Kohanim's non-purity also impacts on the amount of food designated as *terumah gedolah*. The ideal amount of around two percent of the food is no longer made *terumah gedolah*, in order to avoid having to discard this substantial quantity of food. Instead, *terumah gedolah* is nowadays performed in its most basic way, which is by separating and sanctifying a minute part of the food. [The amount of one percent of the food separated for *terumat maaser* has not changed.]

The mitzvot of *maaser rishon* and *terumat maaser* are also performed somewhat differently than they were long ago. The Levi is generally no longer given *maaser rishon*, for Levi'im nowadays cannot conclusively prove their lineage with the level of halachic certainty necessary to demand these portions of food. [This halachah is based on the principle of *המוציא מתבירו עליו הראיה*, that a person seeking something of value from someone else must prove his claim in order to collect.] Instead, once it is clear that no Levi will come to collect this *maaser rishon* portion (which, in contrast to *terumat*, is not sanctified), it may be used by the owner of the food in any manner. [Some people nevertheless give the Levi *maaser rishon*, even nowadays.]

Finally, the conditions of *kedushah* necessary to eat *maaser sheini* produce in Yerushalayim are also no longer possible. To avoid making these foods unusable, ten percent of the food is therefore declared sanctified *maaser sheini* produce, and is then immediately redeemed on a coin reserved for this purpose. The now desanctified produce may now be eaten, and the coin is set aside, and is not used. [The ten percent set aside as *maaser ani* and given to the poor during *maaser ani* years remains relevant today, as it was many years ago.]

## ***Keren Hamaasrot: Simplifying the Performance of the Mitzvah of Maaser Sheini***

As discussed above, the sanctity of *maaser sheini* foods is immediately transferred to a coin set aside for this purpose, allowing the foods to be eaten. The now-holy coin may not be used for anything else, and must be destroyed before the end of the *maaser sheini* cycle, i.e. before Pesach of the fourth and seventh year of the *shemittah* cycle.

Creating a halachically valid *maaser sheini* coin can often be somewhat complicated. The coin's effectiveness depends on several variables, including its value, the type of *maaser sheini* food being desanctified, and whether this is the first time this coin is being used to receive the sanctity that *maaser sheini* creates.

The *maaser sheini* coin also involves other *halachos*. When separating *terumot* and *maasrot*, the *maaser sheini's* sanctity is transferred to a *perutah's* value within the coin. [A *perutah* is 1/40th of a gram of silver, and its exact value depends on the value of silver.] Over time, as the coin is used again and again to separate *terumot* and *maasrot* from other foods, the coin's value will eventually become "filled." Now it can no longer be used to desanctify *maaser sheini* foods, unless some of its *kedushah* is transferred to another coin, "freeing up space" on the first one. It is important to be aware of how many *perutot* are remaining in a coin before using it for *maaser sheini*.

To allow people to separate *terumot* and *maasrot* without these concerns, the Beit Midrash for Halachah in Agriculture over forty years ago established *Keren Hamaasrot: Simplifying the Performance of the Mitzvah of Maaser Sheini*, which is a convenient way to desanctify the *maaser sheini* portions of any foods that we may have. *Keren Hamaasrot* members need not designate a special *maaser sheini* coin, have to worry about remembering the amount of times it has

already been used, or appraise the value of their *maaser sheini* foods. They don't have to worry about keeping the coin separate from their other monies, or remember to destroy it at the end of the cycle. Instead, when separating *terumot* and *maasrot*, they simply say the enhanced *mehudar* declaration written for *Keren Hamaasrot* members, and in doing so transfer the *maaser sheini* sanctity from the foods to *Keren Hamaasrot's* coins.

The director of *Keren Hamaasrot* owns many coins, and gives permission to members to use them to desanctify the *maaser sheini* sanctity from their foods. *Keren Hamaasrot* has enough coins to allow each member family to transfer *maaser sheini* sanctity from their foods many times each day. At the end of each day, the director transfers the *kedushah* that accumulated within *Keren Hamaasrot's* coins to another, generally less valuable, coin. This allows members to continue using the original *maaser sheini* coins, to desanctify their *maaser sheini* foods.

## Keren Hamaasrot

- ✓ Includes coins that are a "perutah chamurah," allowing a person to transfer the *kedushah* from small amounts of fruits and vegetables and many kinds of prepared foods, whose *maaser sheini* portion (which is slightly less than 9% of the total value of the produce from which *terumot* and *maasrot* are being separated) is worth less than a *perutah's* value.
- ✓ May be used to desanctify *maaser sheini* from foods that are both possible *tevel*, as well as definite *tevel*.
- ✓ May also be used to desanctify the *kedushah* of *revai* fruits [which are fruits that grow in the fourth year of a tree's life] which are similar in *halachah* to *maaser sheini*.
- ✓ Includes tens of thousands of member families, including Torah scholars and community leaders, organizations, and *kashrut* agencies.
- ✓ Is managed by dedicated *Yarei Shamayim*, who consult *Gedolei Yisrael* with any question that may arise.

## IMPORTANT NOTE

Membership in Keren Hamaasrot allows someone to use the Foundation's coins to desanctify their maaser sheini foods. It does not replace the need of actually separating terumot and maasrot. Keren Hamaasrot members must separate terumot and maasrot before eating foods that grew in Eretz Yisrael, according to the procedures described below.

As discussed above, part of the foods must be designated *maaser rishon* whenever *terumot* and *maasrot* are separated. In the third and sixth years of the Shemittah cycle, a portion is made *maaser ani*, given to the poor, as well. *Keren Hamaasrot* membership normally does not include giving these parts to their recipients. Special arrangements, can be made, however, by being in touch with the *Keren Hamaasrot* offices.

## ***Keren Hamaasrot* members separate *terumot* and *maasrot* in the following manner:**

Although the separated parts are not actually used in the manners described by the Torah, they must still be set aside, by designating different parts of the food as special in the different ways discussed above (*terumah gedolah*, *maaser rishon*, and so on). This is done by saying the *Nusach Hahafrashah* text (Declaration of Separating *Terumot* and *Maasrot*). This text may be obtained from the *Keren Hamaasrot* offices.

1. Slightly more than 1% of each type of food is taken and placed to the side.

I am arranging the foods in order that I may separate *terumot* and *maasrot*, before reciting the actual *Nusach Hahafrashah* (*Hafrashah* Declaration) that will make the *terumot* and *maasrot* go into effect 2.



When separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from definite *tevel*, a *berachah* is said. Its text is "ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו — Blessed are You, Hashem... Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to separate *terumot* and *maasrot*." No *berachah* is said when separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from possible *tevel*.

3. The *Nusach Hahafrashah* text is said.

I fulfill the mitzvah of "separating" *terumah gedolah* by saying:

The extra bit beyond the "1%" of these foods (on the northernmost side) is *terumah gedolah*.



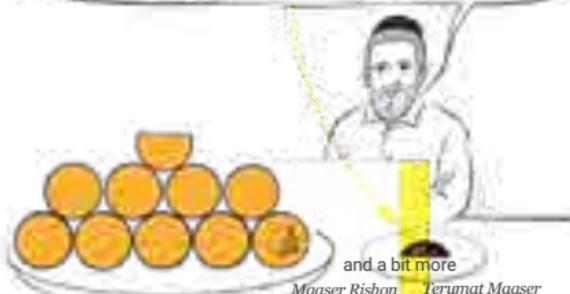
I fulfill the mitzvah of separating *maaser rishon* by saying:

The "1%" that is here, and nine parts like it on the northern side of the rest of the food, is made *maaser rishon*



I fulfill the mitzvah of separating *terumat maaser* by saying:

That "1%," which I made *maaser rishon*, I am making *terumat maaser*.



I fulfill the mitzvah of separating *maaser sheini* or *maaser ani* by saying:

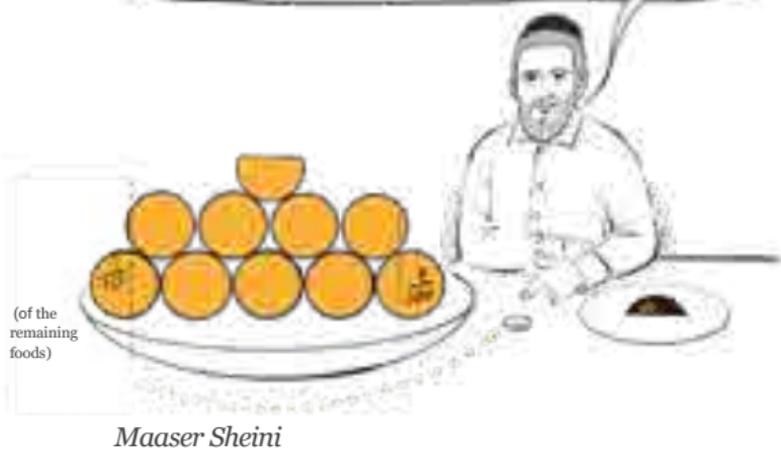
The *maaser sheini* is on the southernmost side of the foods, and if *maaser ani* is necessary, the *maaser ani* should be in the south.



4. When separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from definite *tevel* from which *maaser sheini* is separated, a second *berachah* is also said, whose text is "ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו — Blessed are You, Hashem... Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the redemption of *maaser sheini*." No *berachah* is said when separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from possible *tevel*.

I desanctify the *maaser sheini* by saying:

The *maaser sheini* is desanctified ... onto a *perutah's* worth of the coin...



5. When referring to the coin being used to desanctify the *maaser sheini* foods while reciting the *Nusach Hahafrashah* text, *Keren Hamaasrot* members say:

המעשר שני שיש כאן זה מחלל על פרוטה במטבע המיוחדת בקרן לחילול מעשר שני.

The *maaser sheini* in these foods are henceforth desanctified upon a *perutah's* worth in the coins set aside in *Keren Hamaasrot*.

6. The part of the food that was placed to the side is now sanctified *terumah* and *terumat maaser*. It may not be eaten, and is instead respectfully wrapped, and discarded.

7. When separating *terumot* and *maasrot* from definite *tevel*, the *maaser ani* portion or its value is given to the poor. Some give *maaser rishon* to a Levi, as well.

The foods may now be eaten.

**Note: Membership in *Keren Hamaasrot* does not substitute for actually separating *terumot* and *maasrot* in the manner described above.**

Someone who is not yet a member of *Keren Hamaasrot* must designate a coin for *maaser sheini* before separating *terumot* and *maasrot*, and should use the text found in *siddurim*.

