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PURCHASE ISRAELI PRODUCE

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Halacha requires the tithing (separation of *teruma* and *ma'aser*) of produce grown in Israel, and untithed produce may not be consumed. In the State of Israel, various Kashrus organizations arrange for this tithing to occur. However, until recently there were no arrangements made for the tithing of produce that was exported to the United States.

A few months ago, the OU initiated discussions with Agrexco, the primary exporter of Israeli produce, to establish a system of separating *teruma* and *ma'aser* for the American marketplace. The Arab terrorists have attempted to weaken Israel by destroying its economy. The European market, Israel's main trade partner, is not as reliable as it was in the past, and thus opening the American market to Israeli products is especially crucial. It is of the utmost importance that the Jews of the Diaspora support the Israeli economy and purchase Israeli grown produce whenever available. It was recognized that some people might be hesitant to purchase these products because they are unfamiliar with the laws and procedures of tithing. It was agreed that over the course of the next few months, the OU would work with Agrexco to establish a system to tithe all exported produce.

In spite of these efforts, the OU has been unsuccessful in arranging for the tithing of Israeli peppers which are now on market. There are 30 warehouses where peppers are stored, and the logistics of coordinating a system of separation in these multiple locations proved too difficult for Agrexco. It is hoped that once Agrexco tests the market with respect to other produce, they will consent to a program for peppers as well.

Since mid-December, Israeli grown tomatoes imported by Agrexco have been arriving in the United States. The OU has arranged for the tithing (separation of *teruma* and *ma'aser*) of Tomatoes on the Vine (not cherry tomatoes). Each tomato bear a sticker with the Carmel logo Carmel is the brand name of Agrexco. Arrangements were not made to cover other importers).

Given the importance of supporting the Israeli economy, we encourage the public to purchase peppers and tithe the product at home. There is some concern about how this should be done, for the following reason. Some peppers may be grown

in areas where tithing is not required. Such produce does not require, nor can such produce be designated as the tithed portion for Israeli fruits and vegetables. The question arises, can one purchase a number of peppers in a supermarket and designate a portion of one pepper as *teruma* and *ma'aser* for the entire batch, when the possibility exists that the designated pepper may come from an area where tithing is not required, while the remaining peppers may require tithing? This is a matter of halachik dispute. Some Rabbis require that each pepper be tithed separately. On the other hand, Harov Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, z"tl, and others, are of the opinion that the possibility of a mixture in the same batch is unlikely, and therefore one can tithe the entire batch without a separation from each individual pepper. In any event, when tithing peppers, one should not recite a *brocha*, since the possibility exists that the produce was grown outside of Israel. The following is a brief outline of the method to be followed when tithing produce:

1. Place all of the produce in front of you.
2. Remove slightly more than 1% of the produce. For example, if there are 100 peppers, separate one whole pepper and a small part of a second pepper.
3. A coin, which is valid currency in the country in which the redemption is performed, is designated for redemption. At the time of this writing, one American penny is sufficient. (Note: in the unusual event that the produce is worth less than 17 cents, there are special requirements for the redemption coin, known as *perutah chamurah*, which are beyond the scope of this article).
4. *Teruma* and *ma'aser* may not be separated on Shabbos and *Yom Tov*.
5. It should be noted that while reciting the formula below (#6), neither the produce nor the separated portion should be moved, since the formula refer to designated locations.
6. The following text is recited:
 - The amount in the northernmost part of the separated portion, which is greater than 1% of the total amount of the produce, shall be *Terumah Gedolah*.
 - The remaining part of the separated portion, plus an additional 9% on the northernmost side of the produce shall be *Ma'aser Rishon*.
The part of the separated portion that was previously designated *Ma'aser Rishon* shall be *Terumas Ma'aser*.
 - 10% of the remaining produce in the southern side shall be either *Ma'aser Sheni* or *Ma'aser Oni*, in accordance with the year of the *shmittah* cycle during which the produce was grown.
If the 10% on the southern side is *Ma'aser Sheni*, it should be

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redeemed by transferring its *kedushah*, calculated at its value plus 25% to the coin.

- If the produce is *Nea Revai*, it should be redeemed by transferring its *Kedusha*, calculated at its value plus 25%, to the coin.

Alternatively, if one has difficulty with the full text or it is not available, this simplified text may be

"All separations of *Terumah* and *Ma'aser* and redemptions of *Ma'aser Sheni* and *Neta Revai* shall be effected in accordance with the text of the *Chazon Ish*."

7. The separated produce (the part which was more than 1%), and the designated coin are wrapped and discarded.