



from the desk of

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As a result of blossoming agricultural advances and innovative marketing strategies, Israeli food exports to foreign markets in all sectors continue to grow and flourish. Periodically, we are blessed with opportunity to obtain fruits or vegetables from the land of Israel imbued with special sanctity derived directly from the holy soil of our homeland. In deference to this holiness, produce from Israel has special obligations that apply; namely, Halakha dictates that we separate *terumah* (lit. separations) and *maaser* (lit. tenth or tithe) before consuming Israeli produce. Prior to the required separations, the food is called *tevel*, and may not be eaten, just as one may not eat any non-kosher food. These laws of *terumah* and *maaser* apply even when the food is eaten in the Diaspora, and are equally binding on families of *Kohanim*, *Leviim* and *Yisraelim*.

Many people mistakenly believe that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel separates *terumah* and *maaser* from all produce exported to America. This is regrettably not the case. **At the same time, this allows us the special opportunity to experience and partake in the *mitzvah* of separating *terumah* and *maaser* on our own.**

Additionally, **it is often believed that separating *terumah* and *maaser* is too complicated for a layperson and that Jewish consumers should decline to purchase Israeli produce. In truth, the actual procedure is fairly simple**, providing no need to withhold revenue and support from the Israeli economy.

These instructions will explain the process for both separating and handling the different tithes. It should be noted that this procedure is only effective if the value of the produce is at least 25 cents (\$0.25), should be done separately for each type of produce (ie. peppers, avocados or oranges individually) and will require the use – and eventual discarding – of a coin worth at least 5 cents (\$0.05).

In practice, the separation of *terumah* and *maaser* is performed as follows:

1. Place all the produce in front of you.
2. Remove slightly more than 1% of the produce. For example, if there are 100 oranges, one whole orange and a small part of a second orange are separated.
3. A coin worth at least 5 cents which is valid currency in the country in which the redemption is performed (aka a nickel) should be designated for redemption and placed by the produce.

4. No blessing is recited because of the possibility (though remote) that *terumah* and *maaser* were separated in Israel.
5. Without moving the produce or the separated portion, recite the following formula:
 - 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 *Maaser Rishon*.
 - The part of the separated portion that was previously designated *Maaser Rishon* shall be *Terumat Maaser*.
 - 10% of the remaining produce in the southern side shall be either *Maaser Sheni* or *Maaser Oni*, in accordance with the year of the *shemittah* cycle during which the produce was grown. (During the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years of every *shemittah* cycle, corresponding to 5776, 5777, 5779, and 5780, respectively in the current *shemittah* cycle, *Maaser Sheini* is designated while during the 3rd and 6th year of the cycle, corresponding to 5778 and 5781 of the current cycle, *Maaser Ani* is given.)
 - If the 10% on the southern side is *Maaser Sheni*, it should be redeemed by transferring its *kedusha* calculated at its value plus the required extra *chomesh* 25% to the coin.
 - If the produce is *neta revai*, it should be redeemed by transferring its *kedusha* calculated at its value plus the required extra *chomesh* 25%, to the coin.

Alternatively, you can recite this simplified text:

“I hereby separate and designate all *terumah* and *maaser* and redemptions of *Maaser Sheni* and *neta revai*, as needed, in accordance with the details contained on Rabbi Brander’s *Termuah* Sheet contained on the Young Israel of West Hartford website.”

8. The separated produce (the little bit more than 1%) and the designated coin should be wrapped and discarded in a dignified manner.

Please note:

- (1) ***Terumah* and *maaser* may not be separated on Shabbos and Yom Tov.**
- (2) *Terumah* and *maaser* can only be taken by someone above *bar* or *bat mitzvah*.
- (3) These guidelines and explanations were adapted from *terumah* and *maaser* guides of the OU, Star K and CRC.

Of course, please feel free to reach out with any questions at Rabbi@YoungIsraelWH.org