



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

"It is permissible to squeeze lemons [on Shabbat]." So rules the Shulchan Aruch, categorically and without reservation. But don't go anywhere yet ☺.

We'll take the next few installments of Shabbat Shorts to explore the category of squeezing fruit on Shabbat, known as *sechita* (סחיטה), and we will soon come to the question of what is permissible to do if life should give us lemons on Shabbat.

Sechita is not itself one of the 39 categories of forbidden labor on Shabbat. It is rather derived from the category of "threshing", i.e. the labor of separating grain from the chaff. This derivation by analogy to threshing is significant, as it limits the category of *sechita* to situations in which **the juice of the fruit would be considered analogous to the "grain", and the fruit itself merely the "chaff"**. It is therefore not surprising to discover that the only fruits to which the prohibition of *sechita* applies biblically are grapes and olives. Especially in Mishnaic times - and still today - the primary use of olives and grapes was to produce oil and wine. The fruit, in these cases, could credibly be compared to chaff, thus justifying the analogy to threshing.

Before we get to rabbinic *extensions* from olives and grapes to some other fruits (you knew that one was coming ☺), we'll first note an important parameter on *sechita* that applies even when squeezing grapes and olives. In order for an act to be classified as one of "separating the juice from the fruit", it is necessary that the juice meaningfully exist as a liquid. Thus if oil, for example, were squeezed directly into or onto a solid food (salad, fish), no act of *sechita* will be deemed as having taken place. It is only considered *sechita* if the juice is squeezed into a cup or bowl, or if it squeezed into another liquid. This limitation on the definition of *sechita* will similarly apply to fruits beyond olives and grapes.

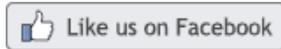
The Talmud extends the prohibition (by rabbinic law) to include pomegranates and a particular kind of berry, two fruits which *some* folks apparently squeezed for their juice, even though (unlike olives and grapes) their primary use was for eating. Quite arguably, oranges would today fit into this rabbinic category of *sechita* as well.

With this, we have set the stage for our discussion of lemons and lemonade!

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