



Machon HaTorah V'Haaretz

A considerable number of the Torah commandments are called "commandments that are connected to the land", due to the fact that they can only be fulfilled in the holiness of the land of Israel. As the years have gone by there were very few deciders of Jewish law who discussed these commandments in a practical fashion, due to the fact that Jewish people didn't live in Israel and the small number of Jews who did live in Israel did not work in agriculture.

Once the Jewish people began returning to their land, after two-thousand years of yearning and longing, the pioneers began settling the holy land, working in agriculture, ploughing and reaping. With the renewal of the settlement of the land, came the awakening of questions regarding how to work in agriculture according to Jewish tradition. The first year of Shmittah drew near and the settlers of the land sent a question to the deciders of Jewish law at that time- were they obligated to let the land rest for the year of Shmittah – a move that could spell disaster for the small Jewish settlement of the time which so heavily relied on agriculture. As a result, a debate was held between the great Jewish thinkers of the time concerning whether work on the land could continue through the seventh year if the land is sold to a non-Jewish person- what would eventually be known as Heter Mechira. So too, Jewish law deciders were required to rule concerning issues such as the laws of the first tithe, the second tithe and the poor tithe. With the passing of the years, after the Jewish people became more established in their land and the state of Israel founded, questions such as these became more and more frequently asked.



Stemming from a deep love for the land of Israel and the Torah of Israel, in the year 1986, Machon HaTorah V'Haaretz (The Institute of the Torah and the Land) was established in order to provide clear solutions regarding the commandments concerning the land for those working on it.

In its former years, the Institute was set up in Kfar Darom in Gush Katif, directed by Rabbi Yaakov Ariel and under the supervision of Rabbi Yigal Kaminetzky and Rabbi Yehuda Amichai, exalted Torah scholars who dealt with these laws for a number of years and are extremely knowledgeable in scientific innovations and technology in the field of agriculture.

The Institute deals with halakhic research of the commandments connected to the land and the development of advanced ways of implementing and explaining them. The Institute works closely with scientists and agronomists, and receives non-stop updates regarding the technological innovations and how it is possible to implement them in the agriculture of the land of Israel.

The Institute is concerned with caring for the environment by dealing with topics such as "green" agriculture, reducing the amount of pesticides used, reducing the usage of water and preventing animal cruelty. The Institute has helped develop ways of growing vegetables that are free from bugs. Rabbis at the Institute offer agriculturalists the option of using platforms that are disconnected from the ground and which thereby solve many halakhic problems such as the prohibition of not eating fruit produced by a tree for the first three years after planting, the need to let the land rest in seventh year of the seven-year agricultural cycle, and many other commandments connected to the land.

The Institute publishes essays and halakha books on a variety of

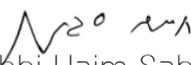


subjects. The Institute has a seminary where the commandments connected to the land of Israel are taught through conferences and seminars for a range of ages - from kindergarten children through to adults- as well as to teachers, educators and agriculturalists. The Institute produces films and games that deepen the connection to the land of Israel in Israeli children. Today, the Institute operates from the Shavei Darom community in the western Negev, reaching out to the entire land of Israel- answering questions from all over the land, strengthening Israeli agriculture and our hold on the holy land of Israel.

The Rabbis of Machon HaTorah V'Haaretz are full of the love of the land and are utterly devoted Zionists, who are working tirelessly to find halakhic solutions that will allow work to be carried out on the land of Israel while keeping the laws connected to the land. They work constantly to implement halakha in modern-day life in the most practical sense.

In consideration of the above, the selection committee has decided to bestow upon Machon HaTorah V'Haaretz the Katz Prize for 5777 (2017).


Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson


Rabbi Haim Sabato


Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)