

**Wembley Synagogue**

שלח לך

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Shelach Lecha 5768

What's the Sidra about?

1st Aliya: Moshe sends the Spies on their mission. **2nd Aliya:** The Spies return carrying the massive fruits of the land. They deliver their negative report and the nation loses its faith in G-d and Moshe. **3rd Aliya:** Moshe successfully argues for the life of the nation, and Hashem issues the 40 year decree of wandering and dying. **4th Aliya:** The Spies die and the nation is informed of their own punishment. **5th Aliya:** The laws of the Mincha - meal offering are stated. **6th Aliya:** The laws of separating Challah - the dough offering, and the communal sin offering are stated. **7th Aliya:** The individual sin offering; the incident with the man who transgressed Shabbat by gathering sticks; his punishment; and the Mitzvah of Tzitzit, conclude the Parsha. (Source: Rav Aron Tendler)

TREES, PLANTS, and FLOWERS ON SHABBOS

**The Weekly Halacha Discussion- A review of practical halachic topics related to the weekly Sidra
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt.**

וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ מְקַיֵּשׁ עֵצִים בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת - They found a man gathering wood on the Shabbos day (15:32) There are various opinions in the Talmud(1) regarding the nature of the offence committed by the man described in the verse cited above. Which of the thirty-nine forbidden Shabbos labours did he perform? Some say that he gathered sticks which were spread out on the ground; others hold that he carried sticks in a public domain; while others hold that he tore twigs from trees constituting reaping. There are many laws that govern handling and touching trees and plants on Shabbos, and this week's Torah reading is an opportune time to review them.

TREES

Since it is Biblically prohibited to tear a branch or a leaf from a tree on Shabbos, the Rabbis established numerous 'fences' [precautionary measures] in order to prevent this transgression. It is Rabbinically prohibited, therefore, to:

1. Shake a tree on Shabbos(2). One may touch a tree if it will not shake(3).
2. Climb, sit, or lean heavily [e.g., to tie one's shoes] on a tree on Shabbos(4). One may sit on a dead tree stump(5).
3. Swing from a branch or from an object directly connected to a tree. Thus a swing or a hammock which is connected to a tree may not be used on Shabbos(6). Even a swing which is connected to a chain and the chain, in turn, is connected to a ring which is attached to the tree is still forbidden to be used(7). If, however, poles are connected to two trees and a swing or hammock is attached to the poles, they may be used, provided that the trees are sturdy and will not move or bend.
4. To place or hang an object [e.g., a jacket, a sefer] on a tree on Shabbos.
5. To remove an object from a tree on Shabbos. Even before Shabbos, it is prohibited to place [or leave] items on a tree that are usually used on Shabbos, since one could easily forget and remove them from the tree on Shabbos(8).
6. To smell a growing, edible fruit while it is growing on a tree, since it could easily lead to picking the fruit from the tree in order to eat it(9).

It is even forbidden to eat (on Shabbos) a fruit that has fallen off the tree on Shabbos. It is permitted, however, to eat it immediately after Shabbos(10).

7. Ride an animal on Shabbos, since it is easy to forget and pull a branch off a tree while riding an animal(11). As an extension of this edict, the Rabbis declared all animals to be muktzeh(12).

All trees (whether fruit bearing or barren, living or dead) are included in these Rabbinical decrees(13). But the restrictions apply only to the part of the tree which is higher than ten inches from the ground(14). Trees and bushes which do not grow to a height of ten inches are not restricted in any way(15).

PLANTS AND FLOWERPOTS

In halachic terms, all potted plants are considered to be "nourished from the ground(16)" and consequently "connected" to the ground and forbidden to be moved or lifted on Shabbos. Regardless

of whether the pot has a hole in its base, is indoors(17) or outdoors ??it is classified as severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any purpose on Shabbos(18). It is permissible, however, to smell, touch and even bend the stem or the leaves, provided that they are soft and flexible and would not break upon contact(19). It is strictly forbidden to move a plant or a flowerpot from a shady area to a sunny area so that exposure to the sun's rays will aid its growth. It is also prohibited to open a window or to pull up a shade with the specific intention of allowing the sun or air to aid a plant's growth. Conversely, if sunlight or fresh air is detrimental to a plant, it would be prohibited to shut them out, since shutting them out promotes the plant's growth(20).

FLOWERS

Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle (21). Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos (22). They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds (23).

One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water (24). Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming. Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos (25). On Yom Tov, however, water may be added but not changed (26). Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos(27). One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water (28).

GRASS

Touching, moving, walking, running, or lying on grass is permissible (29). Some poskim (30) prohibit running in high grass if it would definitely result in some grass being uprooted, while other poskim are not concerned with this possibility (31). Grass which was uprooted on Shabbos and gets stuck on one's shoes is considered muktzeh, since it was attached to the earth when Shabbos began. One may remove it only in an indirect manner (32).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Shabbos 96b. 2 Unless mentioned otherwise, Yom Tov has the same halachos. 3 Rama O.C. 336:13. 4 O.C. 336:1; 336:13 and Be'ur Halachah. 5 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:18. Mishnah Berurah's position, however, is not clear. 6 O.C. 336:13. 7 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 62). 8 Mishnah Berurah 336:12 based on O.C. 277:4 and 514:6. [See explanation by Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 330. See also a more lenient opinion in Tehilah l'David 277:7.] 9 O.C. 336:10. 10 O.C. 322:3. 11 O.C. 305:18. 12 O.C. 308:39. 13 Mishnah Berurah 336:1. There are some poskim who are lenient in the case of a tree which has completely dried out; see Mishnah Berurah, ibid. and Aruch ha-Shulchan 13. 14 Mishnah Berurah 336:21. 15 O.C. 336:2. However, if the tree or bush which are under 10 inches high are fruit-bearing, some poskim prohibit those as well; Mishnah Berurah 336:19. 16 O.C. 336:8. Even a non-perforated pot is nourished a "bit" from the ground; Mishnah Berurah 336:43. Possibly, this is only so with wood or ceramic pots; metal or glass non-perforated pots do not allow for nourishment from the ground (Bris Olam, pg. 31). It remains questionable if plastic is like wood or like glass (see Piskei Teshuvos, pg. 223). 17 View of Chazon Ish, Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, and Harav S. Vosner (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73). There is a minority opinion that non-perforated pots are not "nourished" through solid (wooden or ceramic) floors (Bris Olam, pg. 31). 18 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:38 quotes the Pri Megadim as questioning whether a plant can be moved [when no question of reaping is involved]. While some poskim (Tehilah l'David 336:6; Bris Olam, pg. 32) are lenient and allow moving a flowerpot when there is no question of reaping, many other poskim (Kalkeles Shabbos, Zore'a; Minchas Shabbos 80:194) are stringent. It is proper to be stringent on this issue (Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73) and Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 19 Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 20 Entire paragraph is based on the rulings of the Chazon Ish, Shevi'is 22:1; Shvisas ha-Shabbos, Zore'a 10; Har Tzvi O.C. 211; Yesodei Yeshurun, pg. 25; Shevet ha-Levi 4:36. 21 Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 22 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 23 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32. 24 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333). 25 Mishnah Berurah 336:54. 26 O.C. 654:1; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333. 27 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53. Harav S.Z. Auerbach is quoted (Nishmas Avraham O.C. 336) as being stringent on this. 28 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:73. 29 O.C. 336:3; 312:6. 30 Mishnah Berurah 336:25 and Be'ur Halachah. 31 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:21. See also Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 331. 32 Mishnah Berurah 336:24.

שבת שלום!

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 10.28pm

לע"נ ר' מרדכי צבי ב"ר חיאל משה וולפסון ז"ל

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

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