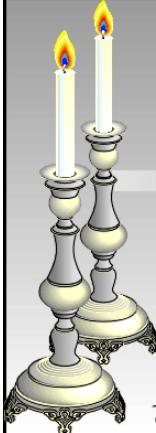


# THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

## HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

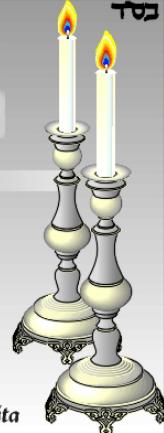


A Project of  
The Shema Yisrael Torah Network

based on the shiurim given by

RABBI DOVID  
OSTROFF shlita

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These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to HaGaon HaRav Moshe Sternbuch, shlita

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*May one remove an avocado pit from water on Shabbos?*

It is common to place an avocado pit into a jar filled with water and watch it grow. It is forbidden to remove the avocado pit from the water for the following reasons: if the pit has already sprung roots, the pit is considered as 'planted' in the water and removing it would involve the *melacha* of **קציר** – reaping; if roots have not as yet sprung forth, because it was placed in the water in order to grow, it is considered 'planted' and may not be removed from the water.



*What difference does it make whether there was intention to plant it or not, isn't it enough that it is in water to prohibit its removal?*

We find in the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>1</sup> a case where people were accustomed to deposit fragrant leaves in soil a day before shabbos in order to keep them fresh, with the intention of removing them on Shabbos.

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that they may be removed if 1) they have not yet sprung roots and 2) if there was **no intention** to plant them. The *Mishna Berura*<sup>2</sup> explains that when one intends to plant them and then decides to remove them from the soil, one might not realize that they have already sprung roots. Therefore *Chazal* prohibited the removal of leaves, grains etc. from soil (or water) when

there was an intention to plant them, even though they have not yet sprung roots.

*May one move a pot-plant from one location to another?*

Several factors will determine the *halacha* and its severity, ranging from *muktze* to uprooting.

Plants planted in a **holed** potholder are equivalent to being planted directly in the ground. Removing them from where they are situated, in many cases, is considered uprooting - a *melacha d'oraissos*. The *Bais Yosef* says that if one raises such a plant and places it on a non-permeable item such as glass or wood, one has violated an *issur d'oraissos*.<sup>3</sup> This will depend of course on where the pot-plant is located. If it is in the garden or over soil it is definitely considered attached to the ground.

The *Shulchan Aruch* tell us that one should not even raise a pot-plant that does not have absorption holes but the potholder is made from clay or wood.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *M"B Simon* 336:44.

<sup>4</sup> Whether he is referring only to wooden and clay pots or he includes all materials such as plastic, metal etc, will depend on the source of the *Shulchan Aruch*. If he means it as a general *g'zeira* it will include all pots, if it is because there is a *machlokes* as to whether one of these materials is permeable (which is based on a *machlokes Rishonim*) then his *g'zeira* would only encompass these two materials, wood and clay. See *Bi'ur Halacha* ז"ה אפיקלו איננו נקיוב.

<sup>1</sup> *Simon* 336:6.

<sup>2</sup> *Simon* 336:40.

## What if the pot-plant is in an apartment on the tiles or stone floor?

The *Chazon Ish* held that plants are capable of absorbing nutrients through a stone floor from the soil beneath the stone and therefore it is an *issur* to raise such a pot and place it on a table etc.

The general rule is that pot plants are treated as being *muktze* as a result of the various prohibitions involved and therefore one may not move pot-plants on Shabbos from one location to another.<sup>5</sup>

To conclude this issue - all pot plants are *muktze* and may not be moved around on Shabbos.

## The kitchen sink is blocked! Is one permitted to use a plunger to unblock it?

There are two ways to view this problem. One way is to say that an entirely blocked drain or sink is considered *broken* and therefore unblocking it will be repairing, which is forbidden on Shabbos. Another way is to say that it is not considered broken as the pipes are merely blocked and unblocking the drain is not called repairing the pipes.

Harav Moshe Feinstein *zts"l*<sup>6</sup> is of the opinion that a (totally) blocked pipe is comparable to not having a pipe at all and unblocking it is like making a new opening. It is therefore *osur* to unblock. One may however instruct a gentile to unblock it when very necessary.

Several other *poskim* share the same view as Rav Moshe.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zts"l*<sup>7</sup> is of the opinion that we cannot say that the pipe

<sup>5</sup> *SS"K* 26:2.

<sup>6</sup> *אג"מ ח"ד ס"י מ'אות ט'*.

<sup>7</sup> A letter from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach quoted in the *שו"ת משנה הלכות ח"ו ס"ג*. It can be found in the *Binyan Shabbos* page 303.

is non-existent, and therefore unblocking a blocked pipe is not considered as repairing anything.

Being that it is a *machlokes*, one must ask for rabbinical guidance in such an event.

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## Vort on the Parsha

The *posuk* tells us that “Avraham Avinu tells his wife that he has discovered that she is beautiful” and in order to save his life she must say that she is his brother. Many have discussed this statement of Avraham Avinu which implies that until that very minute he did not know that she was beautiful.

We can say that until that day Avraham Avinu looked at his wife through eyes of holiness and purity. He saw in her the epitome of *קדושה*, as it says that Sarah was even greater than him in prophecy. Sure he knew her. But now that he was approaching the land of *מצרים* whose people were awash with covetousness, he must look at her through different eyes in order to see whether there would be a problem in *מצריםים*. Therefore it is only now that he realized that she has other attributes, which until now were of no consequence to him. It is indeed ‘all in the eyes of the beholder’.

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## Food For Thought

*May I pluck a hair that is bothering me from my head on Shabbos?*

*Does it make a difference whether it is a white hair from black and that I am a male?*

*What about picking at fingernails on Shabbos?*

*Is there a problem to remove ‘feather remnants’ from a chicken in my plate?*

Answers coming next week.

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