



THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

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Is one permitted to rub oil on chapped hands?

Applying oil to one's body on Shabbos is not a problem unless it is done for one of two reasons. If one applies oil in order to massage one's body it is a problem and should be avoided.

¹ If applied as medication, one encounters the problem of dealing with and administering medicine on Shabbos. As previously mentioned, *Chazal* prohibited medication on Shabbos unless one is ill, as described in the previous shiur. Chapped hands or lips are not severe enough to be termed illnesses and therefore one may not apply oil etc. as treatment.²

If however, it is customary in that vicinity for healthy people to apply oil on a regular basis, one may apply oil to chapped hands as well, because then it is not seen as medication.³

May one smear oil on one's body for pleasure?

We mentioned that massaging is a problem but applying oil for its own benefit and not for medicinal reasons is not a problem. Vaseline and any other thick oily substance is prohibited on account of *ממרח* – smoothing. We are only referring to a liquid.

May one apply oil to leather shoes on Shabbos?

The *Mishna Berura* ⁴ explains that there are two problems applying oil to shoes. The basic problem is that oiling leather is one of the methods for treating leather. Tanning is an *Av*

Melacha and oiling leather is part of the process. Oiling new shoes might involve an *issur d'oraisso*, but even old shoes must not be oiled.⁵

The second problem is coloring. Polishing black shoes black is obviously the *Av Melacha* of coloring,⁶ but even oiling shoes when the purpose is to enhance and shine the shoe is also a severe problem.⁷

How can oil, which is neutral, be called coloring?

The idea behind coloring is to give an item a certain appearance. An oiled surface enhances the color beneath it and gives it a shine. The same applies to smearing colorless liquid on lips or painting fingernails with a neutral color on Shabbos. All these enhancers are intended to highlight the natural color beneath and are all prohibited on account of coloring.⁸

May one climb up a tree on Shabbos?

Climbing a tree on Shabbos is not a *melacha* in itself. *Chazal* however were concerned that were it permitted to climb trees on Shabbos one might easily pick a fruit, or break a branch, or remove some leaves from the tree.

In order for the breaking of a branch to be an *issur d'oraisso* it must be broken intentionally⁹ and not by merely stepping on it. If so, one may ask, if

¹ See *siman* 327:2 and *M"B* 5-7 how one may rub oil in the permitted manner.

² *Rama* in *siman* 327:1 and *M"B* 4.

³ *Mechaber* *siman* 327:1.

⁴ *Siman* 327:12.

⁵ *M"B* *siman* 327:12.

⁶ See the *SS"K* 15 footnote 127 in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ Shoes - *SS"K* 15:37 and footnote 128. Lips – *SS"K* 14:58. Fingernails – *SS"K* 14:57.

⁹ *M"B* 336:5.

it does not seem to be a likely probability, why was it necessary to make such a *g'zeira* (decree)? It is not for us to question the broad mind of *Chazal* (and even if we do not fathom their perception, we must still accept everything they tell us); however, to somehow add spice to the necessity of such a ruling we can say the following. Imagine climbing a tree and you see a beautiful, rosy apple, you might momentarily forget that it was Shabbos and pick the apple. This is an *issur d'oraisa*!

Accordingly one should be permitted to climb a branchless, leaveless and fruitless tree.

That is a correct observation but *Chazal* did not differentiate between the various trees and issued an overall prohibition to climb trees.¹⁰

May one climb down a tree on Shabbos?

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹¹ presents various scenes, as follows. If one blatantly climbed a tree on Shabbos, *Chazal* did not permit one to climb down. The reason is because in order to climb down a tree one must lean and use other branches. 'Using' those branches is prohibited on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *ztzl* adds¹² that if one is able to jump off the tree from the branch one is on without having to lean on or use other branches, one must do so. If one forgot the *halacha* or one forgot that it was Shabbos and climbed a tree on Shabbos, one may descend the tree.

Is there a problem placing something on a tree or removing something from a tree on Shabbos?

For the same reason one is prohibited to climb a tree on Shabbos one may not **use** a tree either. This prohibition includes placing items on trees and removing items placed on trees before Shabbos. One may not tie one's horse to a tree either.

Chazal were so steadfast with their decree that they said that even if a *shofar* was placed on a

branch before *Rosh Hashana* and this *shofar* was needed for blowing, a Jew may not remove the *shofar* from the tree.¹³

A gentile may be asked to retrieve the *shofar* because one may instruct a gentile to 'violate' an *issur d'rabanan* for the sake of a *mitzvah*.

We even find that *Chazal* prohibited¹⁴ placing certain items on trees before Shabbos lest one will need that item and remove it from the tree on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman says¹⁵ that this is not a blank prohibition and it only refers to items one constantly uses.

- One may not hang a coat or jacket on a tree on Shabbos.
- One may not put a siddur or a sweater (cardigan) on a branch on Shabbos.

Orchos Chaim LaRosh

ויתרחק מן הכעס – distance oneself from

anger.

Rav Avigdor Miller *ztzl* writes that to ascend the ladder of *avodas Hashem* one must acquire the *middah* of *Menuchas Hanefesh* – tranquility. A branch of tranquility is being *צופר ידען* – satisfied and content. This means that when one faces unexpected situations, one does not get upset, or angry, or bitter, rather one knows that this is the predicament *Hashem* prepared for that day and this is what is best for him. *Bitachon* and *ratzon* complement each other. *Bitachon* is for the future and *ratzon* is for the present.

¹⁰ *Siman* 336:1 and *M"B* 1.

¹¹ *Siman* 336:1.

¹² *SS"K* 26 footnote 42, see inside.

¹³ *Hilchos Rosh Hashana siman* 586:21.

¹⁴ *Siman* 277:4.

¹⁵ *SS"K* 26:50.

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com.

Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.