



THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

Published by



A Project of
The Shema Yisrael Torah Network

based on the shiurim given by

RABBI DOVID OSTROFF shlita

developed from the Chabura of the
Shulchan Aruch Project

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



Parshas Nasso (in Eretz Yisroel) 5766
Yom Tov Sheini for Chutz La'aretz

June 2, '06
Volume V Issue 25

May one spray insect repellent into the air on Shabbos?

It is permitted to spray in a way that repels the insects but not in a way that exterminates them. Even though mosquitoes and other flying insects are small and “insignificant” creatures, since they are living creatures it is forbidden to kill them.¹ The *gemora*² stresses this point saying that one who kills a camel on Shabbos, a creature of enormous proportions,³ and one who kills a flea have violated the biblical prohibition of slaying on Shabbos.

The issue of trapping⁴ must also be considered and therefore an avenue of escape, such as an open window, must be provided.

Is it permitted to smear repellent on one's body?

Yes, it is not medication and is categorically permitted.⁵ However, one may not smear soothing ointments or liquids on mosquito bites,⁶ as this is the same as taking medication on Shabbos.⁷ One may wash or soak the uncomfortable area in water, as that is

something that one might do even without having been bitten.⁸

The *Shulchan Aruch* writes⁹ that one may not apply oil to bites in places where smearing oil is not common because it is ‘applying medicine on Shabbos’. However, he adds that one may pour oil onto healthy skin above the sore and the oil will slide onto the sore. Since the oil is applied to healthy skin it is not *refuah*.¹⁰ Likewise, one is permitted to pour soothing liquid above the affected area, which would slide down onto the bite. Ointments and creams may not be used. The *halacha* is different for young children and soothing creams and ointments may be applied directly to bites. Utmost care **MUST** be taken not to smooth cream and ointments, as it involves a *d'oraisso*, rather one must use a spoon etc. and **place** it onto the bite without smoothing.

Similarly, one may use electric mosquito and insect repellants by plugging them into the socket before Shabbos.

What may I do to a mosquito buzzing around my ears?

Besides crying or yelling, nothing much. As stated above, you may use repellent but you may not hit, trap or kill the mosquito.

If it's biting, must I sit back and watch?

No when it is biting or crawling on your skin you may remove it by hand and throw it out. You may even trap it to throw it out. This is all permitted by *Chazal* to prevent bodily *tza'ar* –

¹ Simon 316:9.

² Shabbos 107b.

³ Rashi ibid.

⁴ See Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach SS”K 25 footnote 30.

⁵ SS”K 14:29 citing the *K'tzos haShulchan* end of *simon* 138.

⁶ See Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in SS”K 34 footnote 65.

⁷ We are not referring to cases of infection etc.

⁸ Based on *simon* 327.

⁹ Simon 328:22.

¹⁰ Rashi, M”B *simon* 328:77.

pain and discomfort.¹¹ Although a mosquito is *muktze*, the *P'ri Megadim* explains that removing it falls under the umbrella of handling a *g'raf shel re'i* – something vile, which is permitted.¹²

But hearing a buzzing mosquito is also bodily tza'ar, so why is it forbidden to trap it?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explained¹³ that *Chazal* only permitted certain actions to prevent actual **physical** *tza'ar* not **mental** *tza'ar*.¹⁴ Hearing a mosquito buzzing like a dive bomber next to your ear is tantamount to torture, but it is not physical *tza'ar*. His proof is that we find that if, *Hashem yishmor*, a house is ablaze (in certain circumstances) one may not extinguish the fire even though the mental anguish is unbearable, yet one may violate a *d'raban* to prevent a mosquito from biting.

A lizard is in the children's bedroom and the children are very frightened, what are my options?

Children's psyche is different to that of adults and in certain cases *Chazal* permitted violating even a *d'oraisa* to quell their fears. For example, the *gemora* (and *halacha*) says that if a child is locked in a room, one may violate a *d'oraisa* to extricate him because life is in danger. They understood that a terrified child is endangered. I don't know if a lizard in a room is comparable, but one would have to evaluate the situation at hand.

Obviously one may use a broom to 'sweep' it out of the room, or use a pan to scoop it up. In both cases one is merely handling *muktze*, in which case the lizard is a *g'raf shel re'i*, which may be moved. Trapping is more severe, and if lizards are trapped for their skins, it is far more severe.

How do you deal with a cockroach on Shabbos?

¹¹ Based on *simon* 316:9 and *M"B* 37.

¹² See *SS"K* 25:3 and footnote 21.

¹³ Footnote *SS"K* *ibid*.

¹⁴ Mental *tza'ar* bordering on *pikuach nefesh* is something else.

The same as the lizard. It may not be killed, but it may be chased out of the room with a broom. Avoid trapping it because it is mental *tza'ar* – not physical.

Vort on the Parsha

The *Cobanim* were by large dependant on *K'lal Yisroel* for their sustenance, which could lead the people to feel that the *Cobanim* were beneath them. The *K'sav Sofer* explains that in order to avert this problem *Hashem* gave the *Cobanim* power to bless *k'lal Yisroel*. Henceforth, any *b'racha* invested in the people's wealth must be attributed to the *Cobanim*, and it is from this very *b'racha* that the people supported the *Cobanim*.

Food For Thought

May one cover an exposed manhole on Shabbos?

May I call the electricity company to report a live wire in the street?

May one open a manhole to shut off the water mains?

Is it permitted to sprinkle sand on an oil spill?

Answers coming be"H next week.

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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.