



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Let's talk about planting on Shabbat. The melacha of zoreah (planting) and its toldot (derivatives) by definition include any act that promotes growth in plants.

While it's not out of the realm of possibility, most of us are not tempted on Shabbat to plant our own vegetables. But even if you don't have a full garden to tend, the toldot of zoreah actually apply all of the time!!

What if someone brings us flowers on Shabbat-- can we put them in water? What if we want to water our lawns (or our drought-friendly lawns) on Shabbat? What if we want to have a Shabbat lunch picnic in a park on the grass-- can we do netilat yadayim over the grass?

We will unpack these questions in this week's Shabbat Shorts!

The Shulchan Aruch uses the example of sprinkling seeds on moist ground. A person should be careful not to do so on Shabbat, as this will entail promoting growth because the seeds can take root. So if a person sprinkles chicken feed on the ground, he must be careful not to do it on moist ground and not to use more than the amount that the chickens will eat. Otherwise, he could literally be planting! (Orach Chayim 336:4).

It makes sense then that on Shabbat watering plants (which promotes growth) is prohibited. So what about placing fresh flowers into a vase? Even though the flowers have been cut (and wouldn't be able to grow as they would in the ground), they can still blossom and their buds can open. Some argue that as long as there are no buds that can bloom (meaning no chance of growth), it would be permissible to place the bouquet in water (Rama 336:11). But this is a hard reality to gauge, and so most do not agree with this opinion.

And so, even with a bouquet of cut flowers, the water in the vase can facilitate blooming which is still considered growth. Similarly, hydroponic planting would also be prohibited on Shabbat.

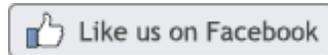
Bottom line: Flowers should be brought as gifts before Shabbat so that they can be put in water and displayed. One should not water household plants on Shabbat or add water to a vase of flowers. If one receives flowers on Shabbat, they should be set aside or put in a vase without water.

Stay tuned for next time when we will discuss watering lawns on Shabbat and Shabbat lunch picnics!

I love feedback!
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