



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Last time on Shabbat Shorts, we explored the melacha of zoreah (planting). It turns out that the impact of our green thumb goes much further than we may think!

We established that watering plants or flowers on Shabbat is prohibited under zoreah since it promotes growth. So does that mean we should set our sprinklers so they don't go off on Shabbat?

Most poksim agree that using a timer on Shabbat is permissible, as long as no human action is being done on Shabbat, and of course the timer was set beforehand. It follows then that setting a timer on a sprinkler should be no different than setting a timer on a plata or a light.

This is true, with the exception of one detail. To understand, we have to look at a disagreement between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel in Masechet Shabbat (17b-18b). Beit Shammai does not allow one to set a process in motion before Shabbat that will continue on Shabbat (like setting a trap), while Beit Hillel does allow it. We follow Beit Hillel (as evidenced in our lighting of Shabbat candles that burn into Shabbat and much more). But the Gemara explains that the only caveat to Beit Hillel's position is that the process set in motion must not disrupt the Shabbat atmosphere (zilzul Shabbat), like setting a loud alarm.

The question then remains, do sprinklers disrupt the Shabbat environment? In general, sprinklers are not considered disruptive or loud enough to take away from the enjoyment of Shabbat. But there is much more of a chance of them pulling us out of the Shabbat vibe when they go off during the daytime when people are walking around. For this reason, the practice for those who want to set their sprinklers on a timer on Shabbat, is to do so early in the morning (but not so early that it creates a different kind of disruption!!).

Let's now end with our question about Shabbat lunch picnics in the park and netilat yadaim. Since we know we cannot water plants on Shabbat because of zoreah, the same applies with grass. This means that when we do netilat yadaim in a local park, we should be careful not to do so over grass, but over cement. This is because even though our intention with netilat yadaim is not to water the grass, it is an inevitable consequence that we will cause (psik reisha).

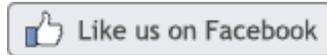
On Shabbat, we recognize God as our Creator and desist from being creators ourselves. Zoreah embodies how we can create life all around us. And in

refraining from it-- whether in how we set our sprinklers or how we wash our hands at a park picnic-- we acknowledge that it is ultimately God Who gives us life and the ability not only to create, but to also promote growth.

I love feedback!
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