

The Pesticide Blessing of Shemitta

Special thanks to Revach L'Neshama for the story

Thirty six years ago, the members of the moshav Talmei Eliyahu had determined to adhere to the laws of Shemitta in the approaching Shemitta year of 5740. Yehudah, one of the members of the moshav, owned an orchard of gladioli which were cultivated in a hothouse, and which he sold for export every year. At the beginning of the flower-picking season in the year before the Shmittah year, he and his workers were greeted with a dismaying sight in the hothouse. The flowers were all stained with strange white stains, and definitely would not be able to be sold. Upon investigating the matter, Yehuda discovered that an airplane had flown over an adjacent moshav to spray their fields with pesticide. The plane had then expelled the remaining pesticide over a barren field, but the gusting winds that day had blown the pesticide into the hothouse. Yehuda was devastated; he had lost all his produce for the entire year, and the next year was a Shemitta year. However, he was still determined to keep the laws of Shemitta, despite his fears of how he would support his family.

Several days later, he received a letter in the mail, with a check for 84,000 liras, which was a tremendous amount of money in those days. The fertilization company, Chem Avir, had sent it as compensation for the harm its airplane had caused the flowers. Yehuda received the money without any effort, and not only was it sufficient for his family to live on for the next two years, but he was even able to pay back several debts. He was clearly able to see the actualization of the verses, "And if they say, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we don't sow... I have commanded my bracha for the sixth year and it will produce for three years." ♦

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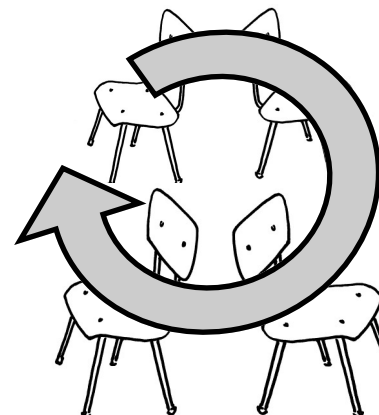


Halacha Challenge

"And Yaakov pitched his tent on the mountain"

Reverse Disassembly

by Shlomo Epshteyn



On a Friday afternoon, Yosefa and Shuli built a big play tent from many chairs and blankets. They were very proud of their construction. Yosefa proposed an idea: "Let's keep it like this until the time when people will need to sit on these chairs for the Shabbos seuda." Shuli thought for a moment and said: "We must take apart the tent before Shabbos starts, because I've learned that it is prohibited to take apart a pretend tent on Shabbos." Yosefa replied and said: "Didn't we learn that it's allowed to build a pretend tent on Shabbos if it's done in reverse order? So why don't we do the same when we take it apart on Shabbos—we'll hold the roof and someone will take away the chairs!"

Question: Should they take apart the tent before Shabbos starts or may they wait and take it apart in reverse order on Shabbos?

Answer: They should take apart the tent before Shabbos starts.



Dedication Corner

This week's issue is dedicated
in the z'chut of a refua sheleima of tinok ben Rochel Tziporah Yenta

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Halacha Challenge (cont.)

Explanation: We have learned, in the previous issue, that 'constructing' and 'destroying' an אוהל עראי (a temporary shelter) are interdependent: an אוהל which may not be assembled on Shabbos may not be disassembled as well¹.

But we have also learned that it is permitted to build an אוהל עראי on Shabbos if the way of constructing it is reversed²: The roof should be set up first, by having the people hold it above the area where they want to build an אוהל עראי, and only afterwards they may set the walls or the frame that will support the roof. After that step is complete, the people who were holding the roof may then lower it and place it upon the walls (or the frame).³

Since, as mentioned above, 'constructing' and 'destroying' an אוהל עראי are interdependent, it would seem logical that just like reverse construction is permitted, so too, reverse destruction would be permitted as well. However, the later poskim say that this is not the case.⁴

The sefer Chut Shoni⁵ (a collection of *shiurim* from HaRav Nissim Karelitz *shlit"a*) explains that Chaza"l permitted reverse construction of a temporary אוהל, because building a structure involves following a specific order of construction; for example, when constructing a building, a foundation is laid first, then the walls are erected, afterwards the roof is placed on the walls, etc. In other words, typically, only forming a structure in a specific order will achieve the desired results. Hence, constructing something in reverse order is not called 'building' with respect to the בונה of מלאכה.

On the other hand, destroying a structure does not need to involve a specific order of taking it apart, because the goal is to simply negate the structure. Since that goal can be achieved without a specific order of dismantling the structure that one wants to negate, 'reverse destruction' is still called 'destructing' with respect to the סותר of מלאכה.* ♦

1. רמב"ם פרק כב הלכה כז, מ"ב סימן שטו ס"ק א 2. חז"א סימן נב ס"ק ב אות ו, ז, יא. אורחות שבת פרק ט ס"ק יא, טו 3. חוט שני פרק לו (ט) 4. חוט שני שם, חז"א סימן נב ס"ק ז 5. חוט שני פרק לו (ט)

* Note: Regarding the halacha of dismantling a structure that merely appears like an אוהל (e.g., a table that has four walls), see sefer Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchosa 24:22.

Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



Zeidy, when Yaakov Avinu saw the ladder, Hashem promised him many things. Included in those promises are that Hashem will be with him, and that Hashem will guard him, and that Hashem will bring him back to Eretz Yisroel. But later on, when Yaakov made a *neder*, he said "If Hashem will be with me and will guard me...". Since Hashem already promised those things to Yaakov Avinu, why did he use the word 'if'?



Those promises were not regarding Yaakov. In those promises, Hashem assured Yaakov that He will take care of his children when they will be dispersed in *galus* and that ultimately He will bring them back. These promises are right after the verse that talks about how Yaakov's children will be dispersed in the four directions of the world.

[*peirush* Chasam Sofer]

Wonders of Creation

Aldabra Giant Tortoise



Aldabra Giant Tortoise is the world's largest species of tortoise, with a body length of about one meter. They are mainly found in the Aldabra Islands of the Indian Ocean. It is believed that many of the Indian Ocean species were driven to extinction by over-exploitation by European sailors, and it would seem they were all extinct by 1840 with the exception of the Aldabra Giant Tortoise.

These species prefer to be in areas of dense vegetation. Their diet includes grass, herbs, leaves and fruits. Hashem equipped them with long necks so that they can tear leaves and grasses from the higher tree branches. Due to the fact that not a lot of fresh water is available for drinking in the tortoises' natural habitat, they know how to obtain moisture from their food. Their environment has sandy surface. To help them walk across these surfaces, Hashem gave them legs that are thick and short with flat and round feet.



What's truly fascinating about these creatures is that their average life span is 255 years! What do they do all this time? Majority of life is spent in just browsing for food and taking rest. ♦

Riddles



Riddle

Which four blessings are said exactly once every year?

Answer to the last issue's riddle

(Riddle: Where in parshas Toldos we seemingly meet the same concept - a certain sense is expected to be used in an unordinary way?)

ANSWER:

In the event where Yitzchok was blessing Yaakov, Yitzchok said: "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field...". The sense of sight is being asked to be used to smell.

[For the explanation of this verse, see the commentary of Meshech Chochma].