

Gathering (*Me'amer*)

What is the labor of Gathering?

It is gathering stalks after their reaping and grouping them into sheaves, or gathering sheaves and grouping them into a bundle. The definition of the labor of Gathering is: **Gathering items that grow from the ground, which were then detached, in the place of their growth.**

Does the prohibition of Gathering apply also to items that do not grow from the ground? For example, does one violate the prohibition of Gathering by gathering salt? The *amora'im* (73b) and *Rishonim* discuss this matter: According to Rava, one thereby violates a prohibition by Torah law, and that is likewise the ruling of the *Or Zarua* (2:57) and the *Meiri* (73b). According to Abaye, one does not thereby violate a prohibition by Torah law, and that is likewise the ruling of the *Rambam* (8:5) and the *Rosh* (7:2). According to the *Rambam* there is a prohibition by rabbinic law, and that is the ruling of the *Shulḥan Arukh* (340:9): Gathering items that do not grow from the ground is prohibited by rabbinic law.

There is an additional provision for liability for Gathering. The labor of Gathering applies only in **the place of the growth** of the produce, as *Rashi* (*Beitza* 13b, s.v. *veshelo paksu*), *Tosafot* (*Beitza* 31a, s.v. *min hakarfef*), and others write. The labor of Gathering is performed in the field, and only there does forming a pile constitute a prohibited labor.

One explanation is that gathering in the place of growth has greater significance, since there it constitutes the **conclusion of the labor of Reaping**. Although reaping itself severed the stalks from the ground, as long as they remain scattered nothing significant can be done with them. Only after gathering can the processing of the sheaves be continued. The same is true with regard to other produce: Picking the fruit becomes much more significant after the fruit is gathered in one place.

Therefore, the essence of the labor of Gathering is the gathering of a crop after reaping, which completes the reaping and accords it significance (pp. 673–679).

Attaching into a single entity: The Rambam (8:6) rules that one who gathers figs, connects them with a string, and renders them a single entity is liable since this is a subcategory of Gathering. The plain understanding is that the figs had not been gathered in the place of their growth and nevertheless, according to the Rambam, one is liable due to Gathering.

Apparently, the Rambam distinguishes between two types of gathering: Gathering produce into a pile is prohibited only if it is accomplished in the place of its growth. But attaching produce into a single entity is prohibited even if it is not accomplished in the place of its growth (*Shulhan Arukh HaRav* 340:15, but see *Mishna Berura* 340:38).

It can be explained that attaching figs together with a string creates a new item. Therefore, it is a significant act in and of itself, so one is liable even not in the place of its growth (pp. 682–684).

Primary category and subcategory

PRIMARY CATEGORY: Gathering items that grow from the ground in the place of their growth.

SUBCATEGORY: Attaching figs with a string, even if one does so in the house.

Where was Gathering performed for the Tabernacle?

For the Tabernacle, the plants were gathered after reaping.

Practical ramifications of the labor of Gathering

Is it permitted to collect oranges or pine nuts from beneath a tree?

It is prohibited by Torah law to gather grain, fruit, or vegetables in the place of their growth to bring them to another place, even if one

does not tie them together or attach them. Therefore, it is prohibited to gather fruit that fell under a tree, into a pile or into a vessel, even if they fell before Shabbat. Likewise, it is prohibited to gather pine nuts together (pp. 681–682).

Moreover, it is prohibited by Torah law to attach figs and the like onto a single string or attach several pieces of fruit together even in the house (pp. 682–686).

Rabbinic decrees due to Gathering

Gathering items that do not grow from the ground: Is it permitted to gather eggs from a chicken coop?

The Sages prohibited gathering items that do not grow from the ground, because it looks like Gathering. That prohibition too applies specifically to the place of their growth. Therefore, it is prohibited to gather salt from the place where it dried, and it is prohibited to collect eggs from a chicken coop into a vessel (*Eglei Tal, Me'amer 6*) (p. 675).

Is it permitted to make a chain of beads?

Making a chain from items that do not grow from the ground, e.g., candies, beads, and the like, is permitted. Nevertheless, on Shabbat one may not prepare an actual necklace intended to last for a long time. One may also not repair a necklace that broke, as doing so would entail repairing a vessel (*tikkun keli*) (*Ketzot HaShulhan* 146, *Badei HaShulhan* 49:25). By contrast, it is permitted to string a necklace for a child when it is not intended to last a long time, provided that one does not tie the strings in a prohibited manner (pp. 685–686).

Is it permitted to gather fruit that scattered in the house?

It is permitted by Torah law to gather fruit that scattered in the house even if one places them in a vessel, since the house is not the place of their growth. Nevertheless, from the **Gemara** (143b) it is clear that at times doing so violates a prohibition by rabbinic law. The *Rishonim*

discussed the precise circumstances, and the *Shulḥan Arukh* (335:5) integrated their opinions in his halakhic ruling: one may not gather fruit that is scattered over a **large area**, since doing so entails great exertion and is a weekday activity (in accordance with the ruling of **Rabbeinu Yona**). Moreover, one may not gather fruit that was intermingled **with dirt**, since it looks like Selecting (in accordance with the ruling of the **Ramban**).

Therefore, **if fruit is scattered inside a house, in general there is no problem to gathering it**, since they are not intermingled with dirt and presumably they are scattered in one room and not over a large area (*Mishna Berura* 340:37).

But if the fruit is scattered in a house over a large area (e.g., a carton of fruit that scattered in a large hall), it is problematic to gather it in the standard manner. In that case, if the fruit compromises the order and cleanliness of the room, it is permitted to **gather the fruit with a broom**. In that way, the gathering is not performed for the fruit; rather, it is performed for the cleanliness of the house. After the fruit is gathered and collected in one place it is permitted to place it in a vessel, as the fruit is no longer considered scattered (*Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata*, 5770 ed., 26:2) (pp. 689–692).

Is it permitted to gather candies or nuts that are thrown at a groom or the like?

There is no basis to prohibit this by Torah law, as candies do not grow from the ground, and nuts too are not in the place of their growth. Yet, if they are scattered over a large area, there should be, ostensibly, a prohibition by rabbinic law. In practice, the **Eliya Rabba** (335:5) ruled that one may be lenient and gather them, as the entire prohibition is due to exertion; since gathering the candies is part of the celebration, and the children do so as an expression of joy, not as exertion, it is permitted.

Therefore, it is permitted to gather candies or nuts that are thrown at a groom or a bar mitzva boy in the synagogue (p. 692).

HALAKHIC OVERVIEW

