

## 25. Trapping

### הַצַּד

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to restrict, by trapping, snaring and capturing, the freedom of movement of a living creature, of the kind that is ordinarily trapped or hunted (בְּמִינוֹ נִיצוּד), for the purpose of bringing it under human control. Activities prohibited in this *melachah* include trapping animals,<sup>1</sup> birds, or fish, whether by hand, by setting<sup>2</sup> a snare, trap or net, or by entrapping them and confining them in an enclosed area where you will not have to catch them again.

Therefore, you would have violated the *melachah* if you chased an animal into the house or into the yard and shut it in, or if you caused a bird to fly into the aviary and shut it, or if you drew a fish from the sea into a tank of water.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, if the animal entered the house or yard of

1. **Freeing a Trapped Animal** You are permitted to free an animal from a trap on Shabbat, but you should, if possible, avoid handling the animal as it is considered to be *muktzeh*.
2. **Setting a Trap Before Shabbat** You may set a trap or spread out a net before Shabbat to trap wild animals, birds, or fish, even if they will be caught on Shabbat.
3. **Catching Fish on Shabbat** Fish are classed as creatures that it is customary to trap. Catching a fish and removing it from the water is a violation of this *melachah*, even if it is immediately put it into a tank or bowl of water. If it remains out of water until it dies, or for such time that it cannot be revived, you have also violated the prohibition of taking a life (*netilat neshamah*), even if you returned the fish to the water while it is still alive. You may not draw the fish into a tank of water or some other

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its own accord and you shut it in, you would have violated the *melachah*. Similarly, if a small bird such as a sparrow enters a box or cage and you shut it in, or a large bird enters the house and you shut it in, you have violated the *melachah*.

However, if you chase a small bird into the house, and shut it in, no violation has occurred, inasmuch as it still has to be caught. It is, nevertheless, rabbinically forbidden to do so.

In the case of animals and birds that are domesticated, you are permitted to shut them in, so long as you do not need to snare and catch them. However, if they are not yet domesticated, or if they rebelled and fled and fail to return at night, you may not capture them or shut them in, as it would be a violation of the *melachah*.<sup>4</sup>

2. Also included within this *melachah* (*toladot*) are setting a dog after a wild animal such as a fox or a rabbit, or sending out a predatory bird such as a hawk to hunt other birds. In these instances if you actively participate in the hunt, for example by frightening the animal and blocking its path until it is overtaken, you are culpable. If you do not take active part, but only send the dog or the hawk after its prey, the trapping is rabbinically forbidden.

3. *Chazal* prohibited setting a trap for mice;<sup>5</sup> catching flies or other creatures of the kind that are not customarily trapped (אֵיזֵן בְּמִינֵי נִיצוֹר) for food or for other use; and catching fish with a fish hook or in a net without taking the fish out of the water.

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receptacle where it can readily be retrieved, but drawing the fish into a pool of water where it can elude you and must be caught again is not a violation of the *melachah*. You may not ask a non-Jew to catch fish for you on Shabbat. If a non-Jew caught fish on Shabbat, a Jew cannot handle them on Shabbat, but may do so afterwards, once sufficient time has passed that the non-Jew could have caught the fish after Shabbat.

4. **Retrieving a Domesticated Animal** If your domesticated animal (or fowl) has wandered away from the house and you fear that it will be lost or stolen, you may drive it into your yard or house or request a non-Jew to capture it.
5. **Trapped Mice** As stated above, you may not set a trap on Shabbat to catch mice or other creatures and insects, but you may do so beforehand. If you should find a dead mouse in the trap on Shabbat, you may remove it, even though it is *muktzeh*, because you are allowed to remove anything that is repulsive.

4. You are permitted to snare and trap a dangerous animal or a venomous reptile or insect whose bite is deadly, even if it is not pursuing or threatening you.<sup>6</sup> You are also permitted to snare and trap any animal or reptile that can cause injury if it is pursuing or threatening you.<sup>7</sup>

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6. **Trapping and Killing a Dangerous Animal or Reptile** You may trap and kill a dangerous animal or reptile, such as a mad dog or a venomous snake, even when it is in flight. You may trap and kill other creatures that are not deadly but are by nature harmful and can cause serious injury, if they are in pursuit or behaving in a threatening manner. See also *Melachah* 26, paragraph 4.
7. **Trapping and Killing Insects** If an insect whose bite or sting is not deadly, but can cause severe pain or injury, is not pursuing you at the moment, but you fear that it may do so, you are permitted to trap it by covering it with a cup, etc., but you may not kill it. If it pursues you and you cannot trap it, then you may kill it. You may kill a wasp or a bee that is near an infant or someone who is allergic to its sting. You may also kill insects of the kind that are known to spread dangerous disease. For insects such as mosquitoes and fleas whose bite or sting causes only minor pain or discomfort, you can only chase them away, but not kill them. If one is biting or stinging you, or is on your body or your clothes, and you cannot chase it away, you may catch it and remove it, but you may not kill it; since trapping a mosquito is *patur aval asur* (as mosquitoes are not generally hunted), we can be lenient in the case of discomfort. However, killing a mosquito does not have that leniency. On the use of an insect repellent see *Melachah* 26, note 4.



## 26. Slaughtering

### השוחט

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to terminate the life of a living being. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include killing animals, cattle, fowl, fish and insects by slaughtering, stabbing, striking, and similar means. The prohibition applies to any living creature irrespective of its size. If you kill a spider, a worm, a flea or a fly, you are as culpable as for killing an animal of greater size.

2. Also included within this *melachah (toladot)* are taking a fish out of the water or pouring out the water, thereby causing the fish to die, and drawing blood from a living being for a constructive purpose.

3. Forbidden activities include inflicting a wound that causes bleeding;<sup>1</sup> sucking blood from a wound; pressing a wound and drawing out blood; extracting a tooth<sup>2</sup> and drawing blood; bleeding by the use of leeches; and drawing blood to the surface of the body by means of

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1. **Removing a Splinter** You may remove a splinter on Shabbat even with a needle, but you should take care not to cause unnecessary bleeding.
  2. **Extracting a Tooth** You are not permitted to extract a tooth on Shabbat. However, if the pain is severe you may treat it medicinally and, if necessary, have it extracted by a non-Jewish dentist. For the law in case of emergency, see Part IV, Chapter 8, paragraph 4 and note 17.

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cupping. You are allowed to draw blood in a case of emergency for one who is critically ill.<sup>3</sup>

4. You may kill a dangerous animal, such as a mad dog or a poisonous snake whose bite is deadly, even if it is not in pursuit. In the case of other destructive creatures, such as snakes that can cause injury but are not a threat to life, you may kill them only if they are pursuing you. You are nevertheless permitted to trample them while walking, even with intent, provided you do not appear to be doing so intentionally. You are not allowed, however, to kill ants, insects,<sup>4</sup> or other creeping creatures that are not harmful,<sup>5</sup> neither by trampling them intentionally while walking, nor by other means.<sup>6</sup>

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3. **Drawing Blood for One Who is Critically Ill** You may draw blood as a therapeutic measure, or take a sample of blood for testing and diagnosis when necessary for a person who is critically ill. You are, likewise, permitted to donate blood and to draw blood for a transfusion when it is needed for one who is critically ill.
  4. **Spraying an Insect Repellent** You may not trap or kill ants, worms, flies, and other such insects which do not bite or sting. You may not spread poison in order to kill them, but you may pour some other substance in their path that will keep them away. You may spray a room with an insect repellent in order to drive flies and other insects away from an infant or a sick person but you may not direct the spray on the insects so that it will kill them. You should leave a door or window open to allow the insects to disperse. See also *Melachah* 25, note 7.
  5. **Spreading Poison for Rodents** You may not spread poison on Shabbat to kill mice and other creatures or insects. You are, however, permitted to do so before Shabbat. See *Melachah* 25, note 5.
  6. **Stepping on Ants and Other Insects** You should avoid deliberately stepping in a place where there are many insects, such as ants and the like, inasmuch as you will surely crush and kill them, even though you do not intend to kill them.

## 27. Skinning

### הַמַּפְשִׁיט

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to separate the skin from the flesh of a dead animal. The activities prohibited within this *melachah* are stripping the skin off of animals, fowl, and fish.
2. Also included within this *melachah (toladot)* is splitting the hide of an animal to separate the inferior part that lies opposite the flesh from the part opposite the hair that is of superior quality for the manufacture of parchment.<sup>1</sup>

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1. **Manufacture of Parchment** The manufacture of parchment involves stripping off the hide, removing the hair, and treating the hide and the skins in a prescribed process. Parchment made of the whole hide (גויל) is suitable for writing a *Sefer Torah*. Parchment is also produced by splitting the hide through its thickness into two parts, thus forming two skins. Parchment made from the thick, inner skin next to the flesh (דוכסוסטוס) is suitable for writing a *mezuzah*. Parchment made from the thin, outer skin next to the hair (קלף) is of superior quality and suitable for writing *tefillin*.





## 28. Tanning

### הַמַּעֲבָד

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to process the hide and prepare it for a useful purpose. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include salting the hide; treating it with lime or a substance of plant origin, such as tannin-rich bark; or treating it with a chemical agent of similar effect in order to convert the hide into leather.

2. Also included within this *melachah (toladot)* are hardening leather by treading on it, softening leather by oiling it or bending it by hand, and smoothening leather by pulling it or stretching it on a frame.

3. *Chazal* also prohibited oiling or polishing shoes, as well as salting and pickling in order to preserve meat, fish, radishes, cucumbers, onions, etc.<sup>1</sup>

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1. **Salting Food for Shabbat Meals** You may salt cooked meat, eggs, vegetables, and other foods that you intend to eat at the meal on Shabbat. However, you may not salt cooked eggs and meat to put aside for later use, because it resembles tanning and pickling. Some *poskim* take the prohibition to apply even if it is done to prepare the eggs and meat for a later meal on Shabbat. Others, however, take it to apply only if you intend to set it aside for after Shabbat, and they permit salting meat and eggs for another meal on Shabbat. You may be lenient in this matter, particularly in hot weather, if refrigeration is not available, when the salting prevents the eggs and meat from becoming spoiled.

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You are likewise forbidden to salt meat or to soak meat in water<sup>2</sup> in order to *kasher* it for cooking.

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2. **Soaking Meat Before Three Days Have Elapsed** Meat kept for three full days (seventy-two hours) without being soaked or washed cannot be made kosher for cooking purposes by soaking and salting it, because the blood will not come out by merely salting. At that point, you may not cook the meat, but only broil it, since broiling more effectively removes blood. If the third day falls on Shabbat, you are not permitted to soak the meat, because soaking softens it and prepares it for salting. However, in a case involving a loss, for example, meat belonging to a butcher, you can have the meat soaked on Shabbat by a non-Jew. When this is not possible, you may yourself do the soaking, preferably indirectly by pouring the water over your hands and onto the meat.

## 29. Marking

### הַמְשַׁרְטֵט

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to mark a line on a surface in preparation for cutting<sup>1</sup> or for writing. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include tracing a line on leather in order to cut it to measure, and tracing lines on parchment in order to write on it. The prohibition applies to tracing and scoring lines with ink, a dye, an instrument, or with anything that will make a lasting mark.

2. Also included within the *melachah (toladot)* is marking out a line<sup>2</sup> on wood or tracing a line on stone in preparation for cutting, as is customarily done by woodcutters and stonecutters.

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1. **Marking Food Before Cutting** The prohibition of marking does not apply to marking food before cutting and eating it. You are therefore permitted to mark lines with a knife on bread or on cake in order to cut it into slices, or to cut lines around an orange in order to peel it. In fact, it is customary on Shabbat to mark the *challah* with the knife before reciting *hamotzi*.
  2. **Marking a Book or Paper with Your Fingernail** While some permit it, you should nevertheless refrain from making a mark in a book or on a sheet of paper with your fingernail, even though it does not leave a lasting impression. Tracing the form of a letter with your fingernail is definitely not permitted. It is likewise not permitted to trace a line on paper or on wood with an implement that will make a deep impression.