

Practical ramifications

Removing grain from its stalks is the primary labor of Threshing. Any removal of food or drink from the place in which it has been enclosed is a subcategory of Threshing.¹⁶ It should be noted that subcategories of primary labors are also prohibited by Torah law.

Various activities
that are prohibited
due to Threshing

Accordingly, **peeling or shelling legumes** may be prohibited by Torah law due to Threshing, and the same applies to **squeezing olives and grapes** (since one removes the liquid contained within them), and sometimes even to wringing out clothing.¹⁷ In addition, there are other actions prohibited by Torah law or by rabbinic law due to the labor of Threshing, such as squeezing other fruits, milking animals on Shabbat, and crushing ice. These activities will be discussed below.

It is permitted to
shell nuts, almonds,
and sunflower
seeds

As stated above, it is prohibited to remove the outer, green shell of walnuts, as this is a labor normally performed in the field, but one may shell nuts and remove their hard, brown shells, because this is an act that is generally performed at home. Similarly, one may crack open **almonds or sunflower seeds** and even coconuts (with regard to peanuts, see below). Likewise, the **Rema** implies that it is permitted to remove the green shell together with the brown shell beneath it, without separating them (319:6).



It is permitted to shell sunflower seeds for eating immediately.

One must remove
the shells just
before eating, due
to Selecting

Is it necessary that the shelling of the nuts, almonds, and similar

16. See **Rashi** (73b, s.v. *mefarek*); **Rambam** (8:7); **Shulhan Arukh HaRav** (305:28).

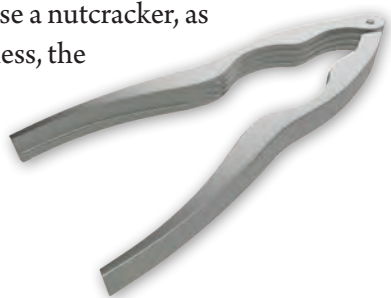
17. Squeezing wet clothing might also be prohibited due to the labor of Whitening. This book does not discuss the issue of squeezing clothing. God willing, this will be addressed at length in a forthcoming book that will discuss the prohibited labor of Whitening, as well as other labors.

foods be performed immediately before eating? One might think that if the prohibition of Threshing does not apply to such home activities, they should be permitted even for non-immediate use. Yet, the *Mishna Berura* implies that one should shell nuts only for **immediate use** (319:24). It seems that the reason for this is that although the prohibition of **Threshing** does not apply to activities performed at home, the prohibition of **Selecting** still applies, and therefore one may peel fruit and vegetables only for immediate use, due to Selecting (see p. 841). As explained in the discussion concerning Selecting, preparation **just before the meal** is classified as an act for immediate use and is permitted.

May one shell nuts **by means of a nutcracker** or only by hand? With regard to the prohibition of **Threshing**, there would seem to be no problem in using a utensil, as this is a home-based activity and therefore is not included in the labor of Threshing at all. Nevertheless, as stated above, shelling nuts also may involve the prohibition of **Selecting**, and if so, it should be prohibited to use a nutcracker, as Selecting is prohibited with a utensil. Nevertheless, the **mishna** explicitly states that one may take a **hammer** to crack nuts (122b). The *Eglei Tal* explains that shelling nuts with a utensil is not prohibited due to Selecting, as even after cracking the shell **the food is still contained within it** (Selecting 10). Consequently, it is permitted to shell nuts with a nutcracker, but after cracking the shell, when one wants to discard the shards of the shell and extract the food from inside, this must be performed proximate to eating, due to the prohibition of Selecting.

If, after cracking the nut the food is still left among the shells, the broken shells may be removed just before eating. Although this is the removal of the waste from food, it is not prohibited due to Selecting, as the act is an integral part of preparing the food (*Mishna Berura* 319:24).¹⁸ But if the shells have already been removed, and on the

It is permitted to use a nutcracker



Use of a nutcracker is permitted.

It is permitted to remove shells that cover the food

18. According to the *Mishna Berura*, the *Peri Megadim* rules stringently

Is it permitted to remove the hard shell of peanuts?

plate there are, for example, sunflower seeds mixed with remnants of shells, one must remove the food from the shells rather than take away the shells.

Peanuts have a thin red covering, which is enclosed in a hard brown shell. It is stated in the name of the *Hazon Ish* (*Orehot Shabbat* 4, note 7) that it is permitted to remove the hard shell of peanuts, and the same is ruled in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (3, note 92). Nevertheless, one must consider the issue in light of current reality. In the past, peanuts were generally sold in their hard shells, and therefore the removal of the shells was an activity performed **at home**. By contrast, nowadays peanuts are almost always purchased in their thin, red casing, without their hard shell; only occasionally does one find peanuts in their hard shells. Consequently, the removal of the hard shell should be considered a **labor of the field**, and should therefore be prohibited, and this is the ruling of the *Shevet HaLevi* (1:81).

Yet, it can be claimed that since some people buy entirely unshelled peanuts and even present them in that form on their tables, such peanuts should be considered a fully-processed food, and therefore the removal of their shells should not be classified as a labor performed in the field, but an act of preparing the food for eating. Although most people nowadays purchase shelled peanuts, that is because they prefer to buy ready-to-eat food, but this does not mean that unshelled peanuts do not have the status of food (see *Hut Shani*, vol. 2, p. 53).



Is it permitted to crack open peanuts in their hard shells?

in this regard, that one must remove the food from the shell due to the prohibition of Selecting. Nevertheless, as a matter of practical *halakha*, one may act leniently, based on the reasoning of the *Yam Shel Shlomo* (see p. 870 note 30 that removing the shell for immediate eating is considered **part of the preparation of the food**, and the prohibition of Selecting does not apply. In practice, there is room to be lenient in this regard in light of the various leniencies cited with regard to peeling produce (pp. 841–846).

In practice, since the *halakha* is not entirely clear, it is appropriate to act stringently and not to shell such peanuts in the normal manner. Nevertheless, there is a permitted way to shell them: The hard shell may be removed **by hand, rather than with an implement**, and one may remove the shells **one by one**. This is permitted even if shelling the nuts is considered a labor of the field, as this is classified as a **major alteration** in the manner of performing the act. The source is a **Gemara** in *Beitza* (13b): One who peels barley [kernels] may peel them one by one and eat them immediately. **Rashi** explains that there is no prohibition of Threshing here, because the peeling is performed in an unusual manner (ad loc., s.v. *vekhen leShabbat*).¹⁹ In any case, it is clear that the thin, red casing of a peanut may be removed normally and even in great quantities just before the meal,²⁰

In practice, each peanut should be shelled separately by hand



It is permitted to remove the red casing from peanuts.

19. Admittedly, *Tosafot* explain that this is referring to the thin husk of barley, to which the prohibition of Threshing does not apply at all, as explained above (s.v. *ve'im kalaf*). Yet, they write this only in explanation of the conclusion of the passage of the Gemara that one may peel even a large amount of barley. They do not necessarily maintain that the assumption of the beginning of the passage is rejected, i.e., that peeling one by one is permitted even in the case of produce that is subject to the prohibition of Threshing. The *Tzemah Tzedek* states likewise (*Hidushei Shulhan Arukh* 319; also, addenda at the end of *Shulhan Arukh HaRav*), as does the *Tiferet Yisrael* (*Kalkalat Shabbat, Kelalei Lamed-Tet Melakhot, Threshing*). The *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (3, note 92) writes that the *Mishna Berura* (319:22) implies otherwise, but since there is no proof that this is the opinion of the *Mishna Berura*, and in fact, there are *Aḥaronim* who permit removing even the hard shell of a peanut, as stated above, it appears that in practice one may be lenient at least with regard to shelling the peanuts **one at a time**, especially if one does so **by hand**, as this is an uncertainty involving a prohibition by rabbinic law. The *Tefilla LeMoshe* (1:42); *Menuḥat Ahava* (2:6, 3) write likewise, and the *Minḥat Yitzhak* (3:32) states a similar idea.

20. Several *Aḥaronim* write (*Eglei Tal, Threshing* 5; *Shevitat HaShabbat*,

since this shell is normally eaten, and the prohibition of Threshing does not apply to it.

Removing legumes
from their pods

With regard to **removing legumes** (such as peas) **from their pods**, the *Mishna Berura* (319:21) writes that if the pod is inedible, it is prohibited due to Threshing. But if the pod is edible, it is permitted to remove its legumes, because the prohibition of Threshing does not apply to removing one food from another food (see p. 721 note 2, below).

Removing cloves
of garlic from the
bulb

It is permitted to remove **cloves of garlic** from the bulb; there is no prohibition of Threshing here because this is a home-based activity (*Orehot Shabbat* 4:6, citing *Hut Shani*). One must do so just before the meal, due to the prohibition of Selecting. As already stated (p. 705), it is permitted to **peel garlic or onions** just before the meal (see below, p. 841).



It is permitted to separate cloves of garlic just before a meal.

Summary

IN CONCLUSION, it is prohibited to remove wheat kernels from their stalks (doing so with a utensil is a Torah prohibition; doing so by hand might be prohibited only by rabbinic law). It is also prohibited to remove the green shell that surrounds the hard, brown shell of a walnut or almond. One may remove the brown, hard shell of walnuts or almonds, and likewise, one may remove the shells of sunflower seeds. It is permitted to perform these actions **even with a utensil**,

Threshing 5) that one may remove the thin casing of peanuts specifically in order to eat them immediately, and this is also implied by the *Mishna Berura* (319:24). Nevertheless, there is good reason to permit removing this casing even some time before consumption, as many people eat the peanuts with this covering, and therefore it is considered part of the peanut, which means that the prohibition of Selecting does not apply. See the *Ketzot HaShulhan* (126; *Badei HaShulhan* 8) and *Ayil Meshulash* (12, note 56), who discuss this issue.

THE PROHIBITED LABOR OF THRESHING (*DASH*)

but the separation between food and shell must be done **just before eating** (or just before the meal). The **hard shell of peanuts** should be removed **solely by hand**, and only **one by one**. Finally, the thin, red casing of peanuts may be removed even in large quantities, but only just before the meal.