

**Rabbi Hubner Presents**  
**Destructive Acts on Shabbos**  
May 5, 2023

**The Multi-Tasker**

The Mishnah (*Makos* 21b) numerates a situation when one can do one *minuscule* act and in that very moment violate numerous commandments. The example given is one who plows even a tiny amount can be liable for violating eight prohibitions!

The case is when a *kohein* who took a vow if *naziris*, plowed two types of seeds that cannot be planted together, with a *kodshim* ox and a *kodshim* donkey that were tied together, on Yom Tov, in a year of *shiviis*, and the field he plowed in – was a cemetery.

The biblical violations are:

1. “You shall not plow with an ox and donkey together.”
2. Because they were already *kodshim* and one cannot derive benefit with any animal that is designated for an offering – so one violation on each animal, working with the ox
3. and donkey that had *kedushah* as well.
4. This was a case where this plowing violated the prohibition of planting the seeds together: do not sow your vineyard with mixed species, and this prohibits one from planting wheat kernels, barley kernels, and grape seeds together. Plowing (covers the seeds lying on the ground) is a form of planting.
5. During the *Shemittah* year, one must allow his land to lie fallow.
6. Yom Tov is forbidden to plow;
7. and he was a Kohen; and
8. a nazir who are each prohibited from becoming *tamei* to corpse contamination.

**The general rule of constructive labor**

The 39 forbidden *melachos* of Shabbos (and Yom Tov) is based on the building of the Mishkan. Clearly the Mishkan had a constructive purpose and therefore any destructive act cannot be classified as being similar to what was done in the Mishkan and therefore destructive acts are not prohibited (on a biblical level) on Shabbos.

**Klayim**

The Minchas Chinuch (298:13) quotes a question that he heard in the name of Reb Yonasan Eibshitz. Reb Yonasan wonders how the 6<sup>th</sup> violation can be counted! *Kilayim* is forbidden to be benefited from. As such, plowing or planting it during a Shabbos or Yom Tov is not considered a constructive act. There is no positive benefit that can be gained from planting *kilayim*!

**Physical Act**

The Minchas Chinuch answers that although destructive acts are not prohibited, we need to define what we consider a destructive act.

He explains that something that in reality is constructive, even if the Torah that adds on a prohibition to benefiting from it, it is not viewed as destructive. Planting *kilayim* is positive even if the result of what was planted is prohibited. See Minchas Chinuch (214:6).

This means we take the short-sighted view of the physical action in front of us and ignore futuristic spiritual results.

**Not Physical Act**

It should be noted that we do not *only* look at the physicality of the act to determine whether an action is constructive or destructive.

Only a child on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of its life is circumcised on Shabbos. If one circumcises a child nine days old (or older) he is a Shabbos violator.

The *Gemara* asks that the performance of circumcision is a destructive act (similar to cutting one's self close) and therefore it should not be a Shabbos violation? The *Gemara* answers that when a child becomes circumcised it is constructive because now the child is considered a circumcised Jew.

This is the opposite of what we have just stated. Here we take the futuristic spiritual results and ignore the short-sighted view of the physical action in front of us!

It could be that in as long as there is *a* constructive side to any action, we make it into a Shabbos violation.

Rabbi Moshe Hubner, © 2023