



ERETZ HEMDAH ASK THE RABBI SERVICE

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SUKKOT



Are the Four *Minim* *Muktzeh* on Shabbat?

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: If someone forgot to find a good place for his four *minim* before Sukkot, which starts this year on Shabbat, can he move them on Shabbat?

Answer: Since it is forbidden to do the *mitzva* of the four *minim* on Shabbat (Sukka 42b), the *lulav* is purposeless and *muktzeh* (Rama, Orach Chayim 658:2). The Rama calls it “like wood.” In other words, unlike a shofar, which is a *kli shemelachto l'issur* (Rama, OC 588:5), which can be moved if it is getting in the way, a *lulav* (and *aravot*) has no usage other than a *mitzva* that does not exist on Shabbat. As *muktzeh machmat gufo*, it cannot be moved to use it or to get it out of the way. (The Taz 658:3 is a minority opinion that a *lulav* too is a *kli shemelachto l'issur*.)

However, the Rama (OC 658:2) rules that an *etrog* is not *muktzeh* on Shabbat because it can be used for smell. The *gemara* (Sukka 37b) interestingly asserts that although objects used for *mitzva* become forbidden to use for

other things, only the main non-*mitzva* usage is forbidden. For *hadassim*, *muktzeh l'mitzvato* forbids smell; for *etrog*, it forbids eating, but smell remains permitted. The usage for smell keeps an *etrog* non-*muktzeh*. (See Magen Avraham 268:1 for explanations of how we avoid the problem that we generally should not make a *beracha* on smelling an *etrog* on Sukkot.)

In contemporary times, several *poskim* view the Rama's leniency as functionally inapplicable. Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (22:55) cites Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and *Dirshu* (658:5) cites Rav Elyashiv, as holding that modern owners are uniquely meticulous with their *etrogim*. Consequently,



Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (on the left)

the *etrog* becomes *muktzeh machamat chisaron kis*—a severe type of *muktzeh*. The Aruch HaShulchan (OC 308:17) already implies a similar viewpoint. This presents a conceptual difficulty: while this assessment seems to accurately reflect contemporary reality, it is hard to assume that historical *etrogim*, which were far scarcer and relatively more valuable, were handled less sparingly. Rather than dismissing the applicability of earlier precedent

based on modern assumptions, some suggest deferring to the Rama's lenient assessment of the *etrog*'s status (see Be'er Moshe 8:73). On the other hand, it is somewhat difficult for *poskim* to defer to a **lenient** assumption which they do not see as accurate in their own times.

It is actually not fully clear to what extent Shabbat changes the overall *muktzeh* status of the four *minim*. The Yerushalmi (Sukka 3:11) says that even on a regular *Yom Tov*, once one has finished doing the *mitzva* and has put down the *lulav*, he can no longer pick it up. Many *poskim*, including the Rama (Darchei Moshe, OC 652:1), assume we do not follow the Yerushalmi, based on the concept of "there is no *muktzeh* for half of Shabbat" (Beitza 26b) or the fact that if one wanted to, there may be value in extra holding of the four *minim* (see discussion in Mishneh Halachot VIII:242 about the *minhag* in Yerushalayim of carrying the *lulav* around throughout the day (Sukka 41b)). One way or the other, *halacha l'ma'aseh* we assume that only on Shabbat are they *muktzeh*. (The fascinating discussion – see Teshuvot V'hanhagot V:212 – about why it would not be a problem to move the *lulav* before daybreak (the beginning of the *mitzva*) is beyond our scope.)

In most ways, there is not a difference in this regard whether the first day is on Shabbat or any other day. However, it is possible that being on the first day could make the matter more lenient. At least part of the *muktzeh* problem stems from the fact that the *minim* are set aside for the *mitzva* and the *mitzva* does not exist on Shabbat. However, until the

mitzva has been carried out once, the *mitzva* preparations are called "*hazmana*" and are not halachically impactful (see Rama, OC 638:1). Although *lulav* and *aravot* are anyway not unusable, since *hadasim* can be used for smell, they are very possibly not *muktzeh* on Shabbat this year (Shoneh Halachot 568:3). ■

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