

A Practical Guide to Shabbos – Class #4
Winnowing, Selecting, and Sifting
By Rabbi Dovid Bendory

Rava taught: given the choice between *Shabbos* candles and wine for *Kiddush*, which is preferable? Candles, because they bring peace between husband and wife. Rav taught: One who is careful to light nice candles will merit to have children who are wise in Torah.

-- Shabbat 23b

Zoreh – Winnowing

Av Malacha – Separating chaff from grain by using the wind to scatter the chaff

Borer – Selecting or sorting

Av Malacha – removing sticks and stones from grain to improve the grain

M'raked – Sifting

Av Malacha – sifting coarse flour from fine flour

Principle – improving a mixture of good and bad by separating or removing undesirable parts or pieces.

There are *lots* of rules regarding *borer*; it is one of the most difficult *malachot*. The *Chofetz Chaim* writes in his introduction to the *Mishna Brura* that the line between a permissible act of *borer* and a Torah prohibition is a hair's breadth.

Any of three elements make *borer* a Torah prohibition:

- Separating for later use or storing.
- Separating the bad from the good.
- Separating using a special utensil to do so.

For selecting or separating to be permissible, it must be done **by hand, good from bad, for immediate use.** (Memorize these conditions!)

An act of eating (or using an object) is not *borer*.

What are good and bad? “Good” refers to the desired portion. “Bad” refers to the undesired portion. These are in reference to the person for whom the separating is done.

What is a mixture? For *borer* to be a *melacha*, there must be a **mixture** of some kind, part of which is desired (good) and part of which is not (bad). The act of selection must improve the mixture in some way. A mixture contains good and bad that are not easily discerned OR are not easily separated OR are two separate parts of the same thing.

The two (or more) elements must:

- differ in type, name, taste, physical state, or function; AND

- appear to be one unit rather than just a few things thrown together.

One element can be a *borer* mixture if it contains a completely inedible part.

Examples that are not *borer* mixtures:

- Different pieces of chicken on a plate is *not* a *borer* mixture.
- Large pieces of chicken and beef mixed on a plate is not a *borer* mixture.
- Potatoes mashed with the skin on is only a *borer* mixture if I never eat the skin.

If there is no *borer* mixture, there is no *borer*.

Examples of *borer* mixtures:

- Almonds and raisins if I don't like almonds (or raisins).
- Pieces of cork floating in my wine glass.
- A fly in my soup.
- A hair in my food. (Sorry.)
- Fat on meat.
- The peel of a cucumber or apple.
- A pile of books.
- Books on a bookshelf in a dark room.
- My sock drawer.

Possible Toldot

Sifting flour

Sifting sand

Sifting sand to find my ring that fell in

A salt shaker with rice in it

Using a sugar sifter to spread confectioner's sugar on a cake

Removing seeds from watermelon

Removing seeds from cantaloupe

Removing bones from fish

Removing bones from chicken

Removing skin from chicken

Trimming fat off meat

Cutting off the crusts

Peeling apples, cucumbers, boiled potatoes, etc.

Peeling a banana, orange, or grapefruit

Shelling peanuts, pistachios

Blowing away the red husk on the peanut

Eating almonds from almonds and raisins

Giving my guest raisins from almonds and raisins

A coffee filter
A “French press” coffee maker
Tea bags
A tea pot with a strainer
Pieces of cork in wine
Straining pulp from orange juice
Rinsing grapes in a colander
The sink strainer

Waiter, there’s a fly in my soup
A hair in my food
Checking lettuce on Shabbos
Removing rotten apples from the apple basket
Removing the mushy strawberries from the strawberry pint
Picking meat out of a *cholent*
I only want to serve the pears from the fruit basket

Finding my shirt in a closet
Finding my socks in the sock drawer
Choosing a toy from the toy box
A pile of books
Books on the bookshelf in a dark room
Sorting out silverware from the drying rack
Doing a puzzle
Getting food from a packed fridge
Getting wine from a dark wine cellar
Getting soda from a dark garage (fridge)

Straining a can of tuna
Straining olives
Picking a pickle out of the jar
Serving coleslaw; sautéed spinach; peas and carrots
Serving matzo ball soup
Serving salad

Splitting Oreo cookies
Eating around a Swiss Fudge Cookie
Black and white cookies
Hunting for the cookie dough in the cookie dough ice cream