

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

In Suspense

May 18, 2023

Q There is a hammock in my backyard, hanging between two trees. May we lie in it on Shabbos?



A Chazal forbade climbing on trees on Shabbos, lest one pull off a branch or a fruit and violate the *melacha* of *kotzeir* (Beitzah 36b). Included in the decree is using a tree in any way, including leaning on it (Mishnah Brurah 336:2), placing something on it, or hanging something from it (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*).

If something is affixed to a tree, it is treated like the tree itself and may not be used (*ibid.* 13). A typical hammock may therefore not be used on Shabbos. But there is a manner in which it would be permitted: The Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.*) says that one may climb a ladder that is leaning on a nail affixed to a tree, as the ladder is separate from the tree. So if you hammer a peg into a tree and tie the hammock rope to the peg, you could lie in the hammock on Shabbos. (Tying a second rope to the existing rope is not a viable solution, because the second rope would be viewed as part of the hammock; see *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah perek 26 n. 58.*) The hammock must be hung before Shabbos, as hanging the hammock on the peg is considered direct use of the tree (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 60). Only a solid tree that doesn't shake when you lie down may be used, because moving the tree this way is considered direct use of it (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 63).

According to some *Rishonim*, a visibly dead tree is not subject to the prohibition, because there is no concern of *kotzeir* (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 1). But the halacha follows those *Rishonim* that don't differentiate between them (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.* 1).