



תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Vayakhel-Pekudei/HaChodesh

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the safety of the IDF.

Parshah: We Didn't Start the Fire

Ask ten Jews to name three activities that are biblically prohibited on Shabbat, and odds are that most of them will mention some version of lighting a fire – driving a car, turning on an incandescent bulb, turning on a stove, etc. And yet, the great *tanna* Rabbi Yosi argued that the prohibition against lighting a fire on Shabbat is **less** severe than actions like transporting between domains and setting up a loom.

Rabbi Yosi's position is based on the beginning of our parshah, in which Moshe reminds the Jews to observe Shabbat, and he specifies not to ignite a fire in our homes (Shemot 35:3). Chazal were puzzled; why did Moshe single out lighting a fire? There are 39 prohibited *melachot*!

They offered two options (Shabbat 70a):

- 1) Rabbi Natan explained that I might have thought that all of the *melachot* are part of one giant prohibition, with only one liability for performing many *melachot* in the same span of error. The Torah singles out lighting a fire to teach that each *melachah* carries independent liability.
- 2) Rabbi Yosi argued that the Torah singles out lighting a fire to teach that other *melachot* carry very harsh penalties, even potentially the death penalty, but the penalty for lighting a fire is **less** severe.

The Maharal of Prague asked the obvious question: Why should lighting a fire be less severe than other *melachot*?

His answer conveys a message about the meaning of Shabbat.

The Maharal explained (Gur Aryeh to Shemot 35:2) that lighting a fire is a less interventionist event than the other *melachot*. Other *melachot* involve human beings manipulating their environment, but fires often ignite in the wild, without any human intervention. Therefore, Rabbi Yosi views it as a less serious *melachah*.

In truth, Maharal's point seems questionable – after all, planting a seed is also a *melachah*, even though seeds often germinate and take root naturally in the wild. But his lesson regarding *melachah* is fascinating. He defines *melachah* not simply as a task, but rather as **human manipulation of our environment**.

In this, Maharal foreshadows an idea which Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch would later expand in *Horeb* (141). Rav Hirsch explained that Shabbat reminds us that we did not create ourselves and we do not control the universe. Every six days, we stop manipulating our environment and playing Master of the Universe, and recognize Hashem as our on-going Creator. Therefore, the more a *melachah* involves obvious human intervention, the greater the liability.

We don't *pasken* like Rabbi Yosi, but may we absorb his point about the message of Shabbat.

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: At the start of the parshah, which *melachah* did Hashem say not to perform on Shabbat?

Age 8-12: How do we cook the korban pesach: Fried, Sous Vide or Roasted? See Shemot 12:8.

Age 12+: Why did Hashem begin teaching about the Mishkan by saying to keep Shabbat? See Rashi on Shemot 35:2.

Journey Through Tanach: Shemuel I 11:3-13 - Shaul Succeeds!

Last time, we saw Amon threaten the Jewish city of Yavesh Gilad in an apparent attempt to humiliate the new king Shaul – who had relatives in Yavesh Gilad. Amon's price for a truce is that the people of Yavesh Gilad put out their right eyes. The people ask for seven days to see if anyone will defend them; Nachash agrees, as part of his plan to humiliate the Jews and their new leader. (11:3, as explained in Abarbanel)

Yavesh Gilad reaches out to Shaul for help. Inspired by Hashem, Shaul rallies the nation. He slaughters his own cattle and sends pieces around the land, warning that he will do the same for the cattle of anyone who doesn't follow Shaul and Shemuel into battle. (11:4-7) [Mentioning Shemuel demonstrates that the king serves Hashem.]

The people respond to Shaul's call; he conducts a military census and finds 300,000 soldiers in general, plus 30,000 from Yehudah. (11:8) Abarbanel explains that Yehudah is

counted separately because of their role as the lead tribe, a position given to them by Yaakov in Bereishit 49.

The text says Shaul counted the people "with *bezek*" or "in a place called Bezek." It's unlikely that this is a place, since in 11:4 we were told they were in Givah. Rather, a gemara (Yoma 22b) explains that *bezek* here refers to pottery shards or to stones. Shaul used these as a substitute for counting people, to avoid violating Hashem's promise that the Jews would be innumerable.

Shaul's army comes riding to the rescue; Shaul divides them into three branches, and they strike the camp of Amon from morning through midday. Amon scatters. The nation is inspired to accept Shaul as king; they threaten to kill anyone who refused to accept Shaul, but Shaul declares that no one should do on this day when Hashem saved the Jews. [See Shemuel I 14:45 and 19:5 as well.] (11:9-13)

The 613 Mitzvot: #116, 125-126, 134-137: Many Mitzvot of Menachot

Mitzvah 116, which emerges from Vayikra 2, teaches us how to bring a flour offering (s. *minchah*, pl. *menachot*) in the Beit HaMikdash. The word "minchah," literally, refers to a gift, but some menachot are obligatory.

There are various kinds of menachot. Some menachot atone for sin, others are voluntary donations. The community provides menachot in celebration of Yom Tov. Kohanim bring menachot when they first begin to work, and the Kohen Gadol brings a minchah each day (Mitzvah 136). Menachot are brought in various forms - loose flour, pieces of bread, loaves, and fried bread - and are often enhanced with oil and frankincense. A minchah brought to atone for sin does not receive oil and frankincense (Mitzvot 125, 126).

Part of a non-kohen's minchah is burned on the *mizbeiach* (altar) and the rest is eaten by the kohanim, but menachot brought by kohanim themselves are burned entirely on the *mizbeiach*. The kohanim may cook the portions they receive from menachot as they choose, but they may not turn them into chametz (Mitzvot 134-135, 137).

Rav Kook on the Siddur: Ahavah Rabbah: What Does Hashem Love?

In the berachah preceding Shema each morning, we speak of Hashem's great love for the Jewish people, and we ask for Hashem's help in our spiritual growth and our national return to our land. In this excerpt, Rav Kook links Hashem's love for the Jews with our national unity, which will lead to our redemption.

A great love.

Any desire to serve [Hashem], joy in a mitzvah, diligence in Torah study, the lightning bolt of new insights and the spark of Divine inspiration in the heart of the remnant called by Hashem, the intent of prayer and the light of its flame, all of these, and the products of the souls in their perfection, their collection and their flawlessness, **must be damaged** if the foundation of division is introduced into the collective of the Jewish people, Gd forbid.

And those who love Hashem and revere Him in truth, and who consider His Name, those are the ones who stand up to the test. They endure any pain or shame from any side,

standing in formation against all of the forces above and below that desire to swallow up the portion of Hashem and divide His united nation, which is unique in the entire universe.

These are the sons of the Jewish people whose mother sprawls over them [protectively], the harvesters of the field who enter into the Divine secret, true Torah scholars who increase peace in the world. They place peace between Israel and their Father in Heaven, transforming from potential to actual the holy light stored in each member of the nation, in all who are named "Israel," and especially in all who carry the flag of the hope of the nation and the desire for its restoration to life, the seal of love of the land that Hashem watches, and the love of Zion and Jerusalem is inscribed on their heart in whatever form and ideology it takes. All that is crooked will be straightened, and the unity of the nation for preparation for her redemption and redemption of the entire world will emerge into action with great honor...

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

PIKUACH NEFESH SHABBAT

Dessert Shiur 4:00 PM at 665 Anderson Ave.

Children's Healthcare on Shabbat, with Dr. Nechama Ackerman and Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Seudah Shelisheet 6:55 PM, Blood Donation in Halachah with Rabbi Torczyner

The Sunday Fourteen Centuries shiur is on hiatus until April 12

The Monday Women's Beit Midrash Night is on hiatus until April 13

The Tuesday Men's Gemara shiur is on hiatus until April 21

8:30 PM Tuesday March 17: A Pesach Product Zoom with Rabbi Torczyner

Zoom Session ID 791 3810 0918 passcode 18, or <http://tiny.cc/mtorc>

9:00-9:30 PM Thu Mar. 19 for Men: Pesach Chabura with Rabbi Peretz Hochbaum at ECDP

COMING UP:

7:30 PM Tuesday March 24: Haggadah Night! With Mrs. Beaty Menchel, Rabbi Schwalb and Rabbi Torczyner

Sign up for our Whatsapp Torah!

Daily 10-15 min. of Shemuel <http://tiny.cc/washemuel> ∞ Tuesday 5-10 min. of Medical Halachah <http://tiny.cc/wamedical>

Age 4-8 Lighting a fire
Age 8-12 Roasted
Age 12+ To teach that even though the Mishkan is important, we may not build it on Shabbat

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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