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Judaism at Home

WHEN THE ONLY PLACE
JUDAISM CAN THRIVE IS AT HOME

Rest Assured #2

SUMMARY



I. PROGRESS

- Two possible attitudes for Shabbos day:
 - More of the same.
 - How can I *advance*?
- We aim for the latter, and this is hinted at in our Shabbos prayers:
 - On Friday night: “You have *sanctified*” (p. 168).
 - On Shabbos morning: “Moshe *rejoiced*” (p. 213).
 - Shabbos afternoon: “You are *one*” (p. 262).
- Another difference:
 - On Friday night: “May we rest in *her*.”
 - On Shabbos morning: “May we rest in *him*.”
 - On Shabbos afternoon: “May we rest in *them*.”
- These differences represent how Shabbos is not supposed to be a static experience but a dynamic one—from betrothal, to marriage, to oneness.

II. THE DAYTIME MEAL

- The meal on Shabbos day has many similarities to the meal on Friday night:
 - We begin with Kidush (albeit with a different liturgy; *Siddur*, p. 249).
 - We wash our hands and eat the bread in the same manner as we do Friday night.
 - We emphasize lavish foods, especially fish and meat.
- The most notable dish on Shabbos day is the slow-cooking stew that Ashkenazi Jews call *cholent*.
 - We have an obligation to delight in Shabbos, and food is usually more delightful when it is served hot.

- o By eating a hot dish on Shabbos day, we underscore our belief in the authenticity of the Oral Tradition.

III. FORBIDDEN WORK

A. THE PRINCIPLES

- The Mishnah lists thirty-nine activities that are prohibited on Shabbos.

THE THIRTY-NINE MELACHOS

Baking	Cloth and Leather Making		Constructing	Other
1. Sowing	12. Shearing	25. Trapping	32. Writing	39. Carrying from a private domain to a public domain (and vice versa)
2. Plowing	13. Bleaching	26. Slaughtering	33. Erasing	
3. Reaping	14. Combing	27. Skinning	34. Building	
4. Binding Sheaves	15. Dyeing	28. Tanning	35. Breaking Down	
5. Threshing	16. Spinning	29. Smoothing	36. Striking the Final Hammer's Blow	
6. Winnowing	17. Stretching the Threads	30. Scoring	37. Extinguishing a Fire	
7. Selecting	18. Making Loops	31. Cutting	38. Kindling a Fire	
8. Grinding	19. Weaving			
9. Sifting	20. Separating the Threads			
10. Kneading	21. Tying a Knot			
11. Baking	22. Untying a Knot			
	23. Sewing			
	24. Tearing			

- These are *avos melachos*, “parent labors,” indicating that there are secondary activities related to each that are forbidden (*tolados*).
 - o Watering a plant is a *toladah* of planting.
 - o Milking a cow is a *toladah* of threshing.
 - o Gluing papers together is a *toladah* of sewing.
 - o Plucking eyebrows is a *toladah* of shearing.
 - o Making mud is a *toladah* of kneading.

- Each of the thirty-nine *melachos* has a common denominator: a human being applies their knowledge and skill to make a positive change, even if only a minor one, to nature.
- The list does not include *avodah*.
- Shabbos rest is defined by *melachah*, not *avodah*, because our rest is to emulate G-d's rest.
- According to some, the thirty-nine categories, along with their progeny, include *all conceivable activities* where a human being applies their knowledge and skill to make a positive change to nature.
- What is the purpose of this Shabbos rest? Once a week, we stop being *creators* and take time to focus on the fact that we are the *created*.
- One exception is the last *melachah*—carrying from one domain to another. This exception proves the rule.

B. PRACTICAL

- The subject of forbidden and permitted Shabbos activities is vast. Below are just a *few* practical implications of *some* of the laws that are relevant in the modern context.

Cooking/Baking

- It is forbidden to place food on a fire, in the oven, or in a microwave on Shabbos. It is likewise forbidden to extinguish a flame, lower a flame, to turn off an oven, etc.
- To have hot food on Friday night, there are a few workable options:
 - o Put your food in the oven to get hot before Shabbos begins. Right before Shabbos, switch off the oven and your food should still be hot if your meal is within an hour or two.
 - o Place already baked or cooked food into your oven before Shabbos, and turn on the oven to a low temperature on time bake. Set the time bake to go off around the time of your meal.
 - o Place your cooked food on a hot plate before Shabbos comes in. When doing so, you can use a timer to switch off this appliance for when it is no longer needed.

- o Set your stove to a low temperature and cover the source of heat with a metal sheet, called a *blech* (which means “tin”). Place your already cooked or baked food on this tin before Shabbos and keep them there until they are served. When doing this, the flame will have to remain on for the entire Shabbos.
- For Shabbos day, it is common to use a slow cooker (crockpot) for the *cholent*, though a blech also works for this.
- A few important notes about the above options:
 - o When serving the food on Shabbos, it has to be removed from the heat source (blech, hotplate, crockpot) before serving.
 - o When food is left on a heat source for Shabbos, at the moment Shabbos comes in, it has to either be completely raw (turned on a few minutes before candle lighting) or relatively edible before Shabbos begins.
 - o The knobs and dials of the range, crockpot, etc., should be covered.
 - o When food is on the blech, it is permitted to move the pot closer/further away from the flame on Shabbos.
 - o On Shabbos, we cannot place any food on a blech or any other heat source. However, we may place solid food near a fire to take the chill off, as long as it cannot become hot in that spot. This is not allowed for liquids.
 - o When using the time bake feature in an oven, it is best to wait until the oven turns off before removing your food. If the oven is still on and you want to remove the food, you may do so, provided that you remove all the food from the oven. You cannot leave any food inside if the oven is still on because by opening the door, you are causing the thermostat to kick in and are thus intensifying a fire in a way that will benefit the food that remains.
- The simplest way to have hot water on Shabbos is to use an urn. It must be filled, plugged in, and the water already boiled before Shabbos starts.
- However, there are some important rules about mixing the hot water with other food items, such as coffee or tea. Hot water can itself cause

cooking. To solve this concern, we take certain steps to cool the water slightly before making hot drinks:

- o Release water from the urn into a dry cup.
- o Pour the contents of this cup into a second dry cup.
- o Then pour in the coffee granules or tea bag.
- On the subject of coffee, if you use a press or drip, the simplest option is to create a concentrate before Shabbos (you can keep it in a thermos to keep it warm) and to mix this into hot water on Shabbos morning, per the guidance above.

Electronics

- We do not actively engage with electricity on Shabbos. The implications of this are significant:
 - o We don't use our phones, computers, tablets, television, etc.
 - o We don't turn on/off lights.
 - o Many appliances have lights that turn on automatically when they are opened. Many of these appliances have a Shabbos mode that disables this for Shabbos. To learn whether your appliance has a Shabbos mode, visit <https://www.star-k.org/appliance/>.
 - ▶ For a refrigerator that does not have Shabbos mode, a band can be applied each Friday afternoon to disable the light controls for Shabbos.
 - o It is permissible to use a timer so that lights will turn on and off automatically throughout Shabbos, but the timer must be set before Shabbos.
 - o We do not adjust a thermostat on Shabbos.
 - o We don't use elevators on Shabbos unless it's a specially designed Shabbos elevator.

Going Out

- We do not drive or ride in a car on Shabbos.
- We may not carry things when leaving home.

- o The *Code of Jewish Law* tells us to check our pockets before leaving home.
- The Jewish community in some cities or neighborhoods constructs an *eiruv* which encloses several blocks and renders these blocks, from the perspective of Jewish law, as a private domain where carrying is permitted.
- If you live in an area without an *eiruv*, there are sometimes other ways to get an important object from one place to another on Shabbos. The best example is a key that becomes a *genuine* part of a Shabbos belt.
- It is permitted to run for a mitzvah purpose or for pleasure.

Muktseh

- *Muktseh* means “designated” or “set aside.” In the context of Shabbos it means that certain items are set aside for a non-Shabbos use, and so the sages ruled that it is forbidden to even handle these items. A number of reasons have been provided for this enactment:
 - o Carrying.
 - o Moving around household items.
 - o Brings a Shabbos consciousness to all.
- There are a number of different categories of *muktseh*. The most famous definition is an object whose primary purpose is for an activity forbidden on Shabbat: pen, phone, car keys, art supplies, money, power drill, nails, battery toys, scissors.
- However, one is allowed to move these objects if the place the object occupies is needed, e.g., if a pen is on a chair you want to sit on. However, when there’s a less “invasive” option, like tilting the chair, or brushing the pen with an elbow so that it falls to the floor, we opt for that.
- It is wise to make a *muktseh* sweep of the home before Shabbos to make sure these items are out of the way.

C. IS A HACK KOSHER?

- Not every hack is kosher. The “workaround” has to be executed properly.

- Sometimes a hack is not kosher because it truly undermines the objective of the mitzvah.
- It requires a lot of scholarship to be able to make these determinations. This is why these devices are only introduced by the greatest of Jewish sages.

IV. HAVDALAH

- At the end of Shabbos, we feel as if a part of ourselves is departing. The Havdalah ceremony is geared, among other things, to help us cope.
- We mark the onset of Shabbos with a cup of wine. When Shabbos departs, we do the same: over a cup of wine, we bless G-d for distinguishing Shabbos from the weekdays. We call this ceremony Havdalah (literally, “separation”).
- For the Havdalah ceremony, you’ll need:
 - o A prayer book (p. 296; or print out the Havdalah text at www.tinyurl.com/3mf69bw)
 - o A cup (that holds at least three fluid ounces).
 - o Wine or grape juice.
 - o Aromatic spices (whole cloves are popular).
 - o A multi-wick candle.
- We begin Havdalah by reciting a collection of biblical verses:
 - o We first say, “Indeed, G-d is my deliverance; I am confident and shall not fear, for G-d is my strength and my praise, and He has been my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2).
 - o We continue: “You shall draw water with joy from the wellsprings of salvation” (ibid., 3).
 - o The fourth verse expresses how G-d is with us: “The G-d of the many heavenly and worldly beings is with us.”
 - o Overall, all of the verses reinforce the idea of G-d being there for us. Therefore, we say in the seventh verse that just as the miracle of Purim led to “light and joy, gladness and honor,” so will be for us.

- o So sure are we of our success that we preemptively raise a cup in thanks over our forthcoming salvation, which is what we say in the eighth and final verse of the series.
- After the aforementioned verses, we engage in a multisensory experience that involves taste, smell, and sight.
- First, we recite a blessing over the wine (as we read in the final verse, we are raising a cup of wine in thanks over our salvation), which we will drink after the ceremony is complete.
 - o Wine, when consumed in moderation, can awaken joy.
- Next, we chant a blessing over a pleasant fragrance.
 - o This too enhances our mood and makes us feel refreshed and reenergized.
- We then chant a blessing over the flame of a multi-wicked candle and we gaze on the flame and observe its light.
 - o On a most basic level, we kindle a flame on Saturday night to commemorate and thank G-d for the fire that humans first used on Saturday night.
 - o However, there is something deeper at play as well: just as G-d cared for Adam and Chavah and provided them with a solution for their weekday difficulty, so too, we can rest assured, He will do so for us.
- After the blessing on the fire, we look at our nails under the glow of the flame.
 - o We show that our light has the proper measure of strength.
 - o Nails constantly grow; this provides not only a good omen but also a strong message about how we need to launch into the week.
- Ultimately, however, the greatest comfort ensues when we realize that we never really part with Shabbos. There is something we can do to hold onto it all week. This insight is gained from the core of Havdalah, which is the final blessing, the blessing of separation.

- o This is also one of the ideas behind the custom to enjoy a commemorative meal on Saturday night called *melaveh malkah*, which means “escorting the queen in her departure.”
- The order of Havdalah goes from least refined to most refined:
 - o Wine—taste.
 - o Aromatic spices—smell.
 - o Fire—sight.
 - o Separation—mind.
- This hierarchy also corresponds to how these senses appear on our faces.
- Here are the directions for how to perform the Havdalah step-by-step:
 - o Fill your cup with wine until it overflows slightly. Lift the cup in your right hand (unless you are left-handed) and begin to recite Havdalah.
 - o Recite the joyous verses so that we begin the new week on a positive note (p. 297).
 - o If others are present, they will join in to recite the verse from Esther: “For the Jews there was light, happiness, joy, and honor”—to which we add: “So may it be for us!”
 - o The leader then continues and recites the *Hagafen* blessing over the wine.
 - o Now place the cup down, take the spices in your hand, say the blessing on the spices, and smell them. Allow the fragrant aroma to comfort and soothe your soul, which feels forlorn when Shabbat departs.
 - o Share the spices with others.
 - o Now say the blessing on the candle. After the blessing, hold your fingernails up to the candle’s light and gaze at them.
 - o Lift up the cup of wine again, and recite the concluding Havdalah blessing, praising G-d for separating between the holy and the mundane.

- o Sit down and drink at least 1.5 ounces of the wine.
- o After Havdalah, the candle is traditionally extinguished by dipping it in the wine that overflowed onto the tray when the cup was overfilled.
- o Once the Havdalah candle has been extinguished, many have the custom of dipping one or two fingers into the wine on the tray to demonstrate love for the mitzvah. Some also have the custom to run the wet fingers just above the eyelids, as per the verse, “The *mitzvos* of G-d are clear, enlightening the eyes” (Psalms 19:9).
- o If one did not make Havdalah on Saturday night, it can still be done until sunset of the following Tuesday evening. A candle and spices are not used if reciting Havdalah after Saturday night.

V. CONCLUSION

- The Torah is vast.
- One step at a time.
- When we cultivate a Jewish home, we share more light with the world.

APPENDIX

Text 1

Rabbi Ya'akov Tsvi of Mecklenburg, *Haketav Vehakabalah*, Exodus 35:1

Know that there is a difference between the word *avodah* and the word *melachah*.

Avodah refers to actions that do not require knowledge or wisdom and where nothing is being changed or fixed by the action. Examples include carrying loads of stones, running from place to place, carrying the clothing of one's master to the bathhouse, dressing him, or any similar work of a slave. These

tasks are associated with the word *avodah* and *eved*. The word *melachah* is never applied in the Bible to such work.

The term *melachah* applies when someone creates something new from raw materials, changing it from its previous state and improving it. Whether building or destroying [in order to rebuild], there must always be a change. When a person's work makes the world more habitable, it is called *melachah*. Therefore, *melachah* includes erasing with the intention to rewrite or demolishing with the intention to rebuild.

Every *melachah* requires learning and knowledge to know when it should be performed and with what implement. . . .

We now understand why all the work G-d did during the six days of Creation is called *melachah*, not *avodah*, as we see in the second chapter of Genesis. Therefore, we are forbidden to do *melachah* on Shabbat, as it says, "You shall perform no *melachah*." But we do not find a prohibition that says, "You shall perform no *avodah* on Shabbat."

Consequently, it is permitted to carry tables and chairs, food and drink . . . when they are needed for the joy of Shabbat. Similarly, it is permitted to run from house to house all day, and so forth. Despite the fact that there is toil and trouble, it is *avodah*—and G-d did not forbid *avodah*, only *melachah*.

On the other hand, although there is no toil and trouble when one plows just a bit, plants just a bit, or writes just two letters, these acts desecrate Shabbat because they constitute *melachah*. . . .

Now, there are many types of *melachot*. Some relate to extracting food from the ground, like plowing. Some relate to the production of garments, like weaving, sewing, and dyeing. Others relate to building homes for shelter. All these are included in the thirty-nine categories of labor that our sages taught in Tractate Shabbat, going all the way back to Moses at Sinai. With

divine wisdom, this number includes all potential *melachot*. For anything not included in the thirty-nine would be a corollary of one of the thirty-nine.

Text 2

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Igrot Kodesh* 15:45–47

You ask how to respond to those who say that it is permissible in our day to kindle fire on Shabbat, because the prohibition in the Torah only pertained when one generated fire by rubbing stones together—as was customary for nomadic tribes—whereas the kindling of fire today doesn’t entail any toil.

The primary reply is as you wrote in your letter—that we observe G-d’s *mitzvot* without seeking reasoning. Simple logic dictates that it is impossible for the human mind to grasp G-d’s motives, inasmuch as there is an infinite chasm dividing them. It is clear to everyone that a child who is just beginning to read the alphabet will not be able to comprehend a complex Talmudic passage with its commentaries—this despite the fact that both the child and the authors of these works are human beings. Moreover, we know that the child will soon grow, toil in learning, and find success in comprehending these works. This means that the young child currently has the potential to comprehend the deep Talmudic concepts, just this potential has yet to be realized. A fortiori, then, with regard to the chasm between human beings and G-d, where here the division is so much greater—one is Creator, the other the created.

True, there are some rationales for *mitzvot* in our literature, but these merely explain a minor portion of each mitzvah. This is why there are numerous reasons for every concept and mitzvah in the Torah.

Nevertheless, there is no room for the aforementioned question and line of reasoning even within the realm of logic—both because of historical fact and theological reasoning.

Historical fact: We know from the historical record that Egyptian technology and culture was relatively advanced at the time of the Exodus and Sinai. Even today we do not really know how the ancient Egyptians accomplished certain feats (load carrying, constructing, dying, etc.). The ancient Egyptians did not create fire by rubbing stones together but had various easier means at their disposal. In most instances, they would get their fire from preexisting flames, as can be seen in the historical record of ancient Egypt and its surrounding societies. This was especially so in the houses of witchcraft, which served as well as schools of contemporary science. As mentioned, they were quite advanced in numerous ways, which means that the kindling of fire—which they needed for their idolatrous practices—entailed little toil.

Theological reasoning: According to the basic reading of Scripture, we observe Shabbat because G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Now, it is clear to any reasoning person that G-d did not create the world with toil and under stress. And it is from this type of non-toiling work that G-d rested on the seventh day. And it is this type of Shabbat that we are commanded to observe.

Text 3

Dayan Dr. Isidore Grunfeld, *The Sabbath* (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2003), p. 27

The Sabbath testifies to G-d as the supreme Creator of heaven and earth and all they contain. Man, however, is engaged in a constant struggle to gain mastery over G-d's creation, to bring nature under his control. By use of his G-d-given intelligence, skill and energy, he has in a large measure succeeded in this. He is thus constantly in danger of forgetting

his own creature-hood—his utter and complete dependence on the L-rd of all things. He tends to forget that the very powers he uses in his conquest of nature are derived from his Creator, in Whose service his life and work should be conducted.

In a world increasingly forgetful of G-d, Israel was entrusted with the task of preserving this all-important truth for the future salvation of all mankind. G-d willed therefore that the Jew, while subduing and controlling his environment like every other human being, must recognize, *and show that he recognizes*, that his powers are derived from the One higher than himself. This recognition he is to express by dedicating one day in every week to G-d, and by refraining on this day from every activity which signifies human power over nature.

On this day we renounce every exercise of intelligent, purposeful control over natural objects and forces, we cease from every act of human power, in order to proclaim G-d as the Source of all power. By refraining from human creating, the Jew pays silent homage to the Creator.