

Vayak'hel-Pekudei & Hachodesh Exodus 35:1-40:38 & 12:1-20

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver, copper, blue, purple and red-dyed wool, goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Vayak'hel-Pekudei & Hachodesh

Exodus 35:1-40:38 & 12:1-20

, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the *Parochet* (Veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers and the *Masach* (Screen) that fronts it; the Ark and its cover with the Cherubim; the Table and its Showbread; the seven-branched Menorah with its specially-prepared oil; and the Golden Altar and the incense burned on it; the Anointing Oil; the outdoor Altar for Burnt Offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the Courtyard; and the Basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors .

Vayak'hel-Pekudei & Hachodesh Exodus 35:1-40:38 & 12:1-20

An accounting is made of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Ahaliav and their assistants make the Eight Priestly Garments -- the Efod, Breastplate, Cloak, Crown, Turban, Tunic, Sash and Breeches - - according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy Anointing Oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.

This being the Shabbat that falls on or before the 1st of Nissan, we also read the section of *Hachodesh* (Exodus 12:1-20) which relates G-d's words to Moses in Egypt two weeks before the Exodus, instructing us to set the Jewish calendar by the monthly new moon and to regard Nissan as the "head of months." G-d also instructs to bring the Passover offering, to eat it with matzah and bitter herbs, and to abstain from leaven for seven days.

- §1 The Holy Shabbos is the great sign and the covenant that the Holy One, Blessed is He, has given us, so that we should know that in six days Hashem created the heavens and the earth and everything therein, and He rested on the seventh day. This is the foundation of our belief in Hashem. Our Sages, of blessed memory, have stated “The mitzvah of Shabbos is equal to all other mitzvos combined.” Whoever observes Shabbos in accordance with its laws is regarded as if he is fulfilling all the mitzvos of the Torah; conversely, whoever desecrates Shabbos is regarded as if he has denied the entire Torah. This same concept is also expressed in the verse stated in the Book of *Ezra* (*Nechemiah*[4] 9:13-14): *And You descended upon Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven and You gave to them Torah and mitzvos. Your sacred Shabbos You made known to them.*

- §8 Even the most destitute of Jews should vigorously exert himself to acquire the necessary funds to make the Shabbos enjoyable. He should minimize his expenditures throughout the week so that he should have money to spend for the honor of Shabbos. If he has no money, he should borrow, even on collateral, to purchase the Shabbos necessities.
- Regarding this situation, our Sages, of blessed memory, have stated (*Beitzah* 15b): “The Holy One, Blessed is He, says to the Jewish people: My sons, borrow on My account for Shabbos, ” and I will repay your loans.”
- Furthermore, all of a person’s income for the year is fixed for him by Heavenly decree on Rosh Hashanah, with the exception of expenditures for Shabbos and Yom Tov (festivals), for which, if one spends more, they add more from Heaven (*ibid.* 16a).
- However, if he is experiencing extremely pressing financial times,[34] regarding such a situation our Sages, of blessed memory, have stated (*Shabbos* 118a): “Treat your Shabbos as a weekday, and do not be dependent on people for aid.”
- Nevertheless, even if he is faced with such a situation, if he is able to, he should at least see to prepare something small for the honor of Shabbos, such as small fish, or the like.[35] Regarding one who was sent something to be eaten on Shabbos, it is proper for him to eat it on Shabbos, and not leave it over for the weekday.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

- In one breath, God said both, "*Guard and remember* the Shabbat." Love of God, time with family, reconnecting with friends and with oneself -- all these fulfill the commandment to "remember" Shabbat.
- But these beautiful concepts must also be grounded in a foundation of strength, a structure that will provide the soil in which these ideas can take hold, root and blossom. This foundation is the commandment to "guard" Shabbat, as detailed in halacha, Jewish law. Yet the word halacha does not literally translate as "law," for it comes from the root *halach*, which means "to go," "to walk." Halacha means "a path." It is not about cold do's and don't's, but about movement. When one learns the laws in a deep way and applies them within a Jewish lifestyle, halacha becomes not a restriction, but a direction. And when paired with the beauty of "remember," the coupling opens up a world without limitations -- a world of endless depth and opportunity.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

- The two commandments, to guard and to remember, were said by God in one breath, for one without the other would be empty. If you are in a relationship and you hear from the other person the words "I love you," there is a nice feeling. But suppose the person never did anything, never demonstrated the love in any way. Words without action are merely... words. If you want to make real the idea that God is Creator, you must stop creating. Otherwise it is a beautiful concept that remains in the theoretical.
- On Shabbat the world is complete. I am complete. Shabbat is the weekly reminder of this completeness. We recognize it, but the only way to make it happen is to live it, to emulate it. When God says, "Six days a week you will do all your work," He is not just talking about making the office deadlines. He is talking about us, and how we strive to work on ourselves. Shabbat is there, calling us to where we want to be: self-actualization; nature; oneness; completion. The ideas are within reach; grasping them means heading in the right direction. The path is halacha.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

- ❑ Our tradition tells us that through understanding the Mishkan, we will understand Shabbat.
- ❑ This was to be the central dwelling place of God's presence. It would bring God's presence into this world. Any activity used in forming this house of the Creator would be considered acts of creation.
- ❑ On Shabbat we also strive to bring God's presence into this world. We remove ourselves from creating in order to reaffirm that we do not have mastery over our lives. Someone else is in charge.
- ❑ To learn what is considered "creating," we study the principles found in the original creation of the Mishkan. Our tradition identifies 39 categories.
- ❑ There are many books that discuss these concepts and list the laws of Shabbat in detailed form. They cover almost any possible occurrence on Shabbat and how properly to deal with it. (For example, "A framed picture falls from the wall. Am I allowed to rehang it on Shabbat?")
- ❑ However, there are very basic areas of law that deal with action, or refraining from action, that occur on an average Shabbat (assuming you are not marooned on a desert island, or on a ship at sea).

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

□ **Cooking**

- We are not allowed to apply heat to things in order to change them in any way. Loaves of bread were formed and baked for the Mishkan; thus we refrain from any sort of cooking on Shabbat. **How to approach it:** It's basically a matter of cooking ahead and keeping things warm, either by using a *blech* (cover for the stovetop) or by using a slow cooker. Water is kept hot using an urn that is plugged in before Shabbat. To properly keep this important aspect of Shabbat, careful study is required.

□ **Driving**

- Fires cannot be started or extinguished on Shabbat, and driving (which sparks and burns fuel) falls under this category. **How to approach it:** Walk! There is no greater feeling than just plain walking. It's a total slowdown, giving one time to think, look around, breathe. It's amazing what we miss, as we zoom by life in an automobile. Enjoy the break from having to go everywhere, and just enjoy being. If your synagogue is a real hike away, you may want to drive there Friday night before Shabbat begins and park the car there until Saturday night. Then there is just the one-way walk back home Friday night. During the day, the walk to and from shul seems a pleasure. Plan to visit friends and neighbors nearby, or arrange to meet with them halfway, or at the park on Shabbat afternoon.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

□ **Handling Money**

- On Shabbat, we avoid weekday activities such as shopping, and thus money is Muktzah, among the objects that have no purpose on Shabbat and thus are not to be moved. Bills (which of course can't be paid) are also muktzah. **How to approach it:** Put away wallets, purses, and loose change before Shabbat begins.

□ **Telephones**

- There is a prohibition against completing things ("the final blow of a hammer..."), which includes the completion of circuits. Telephones fall under this category, as do radios, televisions, and all electricity. It also happens to be an area that, when observed, provides one of the most pleasurable aspects of Shabbat. The island of peace that you wish to reach can be achieved only through the beautiful silence of no ringing phones. **How to approach it:** You may want family and friends to know that you will be unavailable by phone during Shabbat. People usually catch on quickly and just take it in stride that they must wait until Saturday night to call. If you really want a Shabbat atmosphere, unplug the phones so you won't be disturbed by the ringing.

□ **Lights**

- This also falls under completing a circuit, as discussed under telephones. **How to approach it:** Decide which lights should be left on and which left off before Shabbat begins. You may want to tape certain light switches in high-traffic areas, such as bathrooms, so they aren't inadvertently turned off or on. (Sleepy trips to the bathroom in the middle of the night often end in an automatic flip of the switch!) Timers can be used to automatically turn lights on and off throughout Shabbat, as long as they are preset before Shabbat begins.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

- **Toilet Paper**
- Things that are attached -- through glue, sewing, or even perforation -- cannot be unattached for a purpose on Shabbat. This would involve taking something in one form and carefully dividing it up into another for some use, thus creating something anew. Paper towels also fall into this category. **How to approach it:** Pre-tear toilet paper before Shabbat, or use tissues. For paper towels, pre-tear what you might need, or use paper napkins.

- **Watering plants/picking flowers**
- If everything is complete on Shabbat and we are refraining from things that indicate that we have mastery over the world, then causing things to live (or in some cases causing things to die) would, of course, be avoided. Thus, once Shabbat begins, we do not water our plants (nor place cut flowers in water on Shabbat). **How to approach it:** Make sure flowers are put in water ahead of time and that plants are watered before Shabbat. If someone happens to bring you cut flowers after Shabbat has begun, thank them and simply put them in a vase without water. They're usually fine; just add water once Shabbat is over.

Laws of Shabbat

Lori Palatnik

- **Writing/erasing/tearing letters** Writing, drawing, erasing, even tearing through letters on a package are avoided. Pens, pencils, erasers, etc., thus fall under the category of Muktzah. **How to approach it:** Put away pencils, markers, pens, etc., so you won't come to use them. Any packages or bottle caps that are to be used on Shabbat should be pre-opened (or carefully opened on Shabbat), so as not to tear through any letters. *Important note:* When it comes to human life, everything is done to save it. Thus one can drive on Shabbat to bring someone in an emergency situation to a hospital. Phones can be used, and so forth. The laws of Shabbat are put aside to save a life.