# SHABBAT UNPACKED

Session 10

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

## BURST OF INSPIRATION

A number of years ago, I was chatting with a fellow who was contemplating Shabbat observance but was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the undertaking. In the course of the conversation, I shared a suggestion that I hoped would ease the transition.

It's called the **Shabbat Room** and it's relatively simple. The goal is to designate one room in the home where Shabbat is observed properly. No phone usage, no laptop, no switching lights and appliances on and off... Essentially it offers an opportunity to experience Shabbat in bite sized pieces.

The fellow decided to start with his sitting room and try it out until he was comfortable. Once he had mastered the Shabbat in his sitting room, he extended it to his bedroom, and eventually to other additional spaces in his home. Finally, he took the plunge and mastered Shabbat observance in his kitchen!

At that point, he was able to congratulate himself for honoring Shabbat in his home, and more importantly for developing his Shabbat muscles in a healthy and practical way.

Shabbat observance is an investment. It takes energy, focus, and time, but the results are otherworldly!

# CREATION THROUGH MAAVIR/KINDLING A FIRE

Washing:

1. There is an important Rabbinically enacted prohibition that was formulated to ensure that one is careful with maavir/kindling.

The Rabbis extended the prohibition of maavir to washing and bathing with hot water to ensure that one would not heat up the water on Shabbat and potentially violate two prohibitions: kindling and cooking.

> **Note:** In the modern day home, we also refrain from using hot water from the faucet on Shabbat. Turning on the hot water causes fresh cold water to enter the boiler to be heated, which potentially violates the prohibition of cooking on Shabbat.

Here are a few details to help explain the prohibition of washing:

a. Washing includes bathing, showering, and even washing from a basin.

b. One may not use warm water, which is defined as anything above body temperature of 98.6 degrees.

c. The ruling does not distinguish between washing part of or the entire body.

# CREATION THROUGH MAAVIR/KINDLING A FIRE

There are a number of exceptions where washing with warm water may be permitted.

a. If water was heated before Shabbat ie. It is in an urn, then one is permitted to wash less than 50% of their body.

b. In cases of extreme discomfort i.e. one has a substantial rash and is bathing to soothe the itch, one may bathe one's entire body but only with water that was heated before Shabbat.

c. If a child is very dirty, one may wash the child with water that was heated before Shabbat.

**Please note:** In cases where washing is permitted, one should take care to use a free-flowing, liquid soap as one may not use bar soap on Shabbat. This is due to the prohibited creative category called Mimaraiach/Scraping

It sounds like one can wash with cold water on Shabbat!
**Please note:** Even though washing with cold water is permitted, one may not wash their entire body in cold water. What follows is that one may not go swimming on Shabbat.

# CREATION THROUGH MECHABEH/EXTINGUISHING

**CATEGORY 8 OF 39**
*(WE MENTIONED CATEGORY 7 OF 39 BRIEFLY ABOVE)*

During the construction of the Mishkan, charcoal was necessary to produce high temperature heat for melting metal. The charcoal was produced by extinguishing fires, thereby turning the kindle into charcoal. This creates the prohibited activity called mechabeh/extinguishing.

The biblical prohibition of extinguishing is exclusively to achieve a positive benefit. Merely extinguishing a fire does not fall into this category. Nevertheless, the Rabbis extended the prohibition to include extinguishing any type of fire.

Included in the prohibition of mechabeh is:

a. Extinguishing a live fire either by pouring liquid on it, blowing it out, or smothering the fire
b. Decreasing the size of a fire or flame
c. Removing fuel from a fire.

# CREATION THROUGH MECHABEH/EXTINGUISHING

**Practical applications of Mechabeh**

a. In the previous session we shared that turning on a light with an incandescent bulb is prohibited under maavir/kindling. Similarly, turning that light off would fall under the prohibition of mechabeh.

b. One may not lower a gas flame on Shabbat even if he does not completely extinguish the flame.

c. If the fire on one's range goes out, and there is gas coming out of the burner, (a potentially dangerous situation) one may turn off the gas even if the knob will pass the igniter position and potentially give off sparks. This should be done in an unusual manner i.e. using the back of one's hand.

d. On a windy day, one should avoid opening a window that is adjacent to burning candles as opening the window may cause the candles to go out.

# CREATION THROUGH MECHABEH/EXTINGUISHING

**Isn't fire dangerous? Can I put it out?**

**Warning:** If the fire creates even the smallest threat to human life, one may extinguish the fire or call the fire department. Because a house fire usually constitutes danger to human life, one is permitted to violate Shabbat to extinguish it.

In the event that the Shabbat candles tip over onto the table and there is **absolutely no danger,** there are a number of methods to deal with the burning tablecloth:

a. Carefully removing the burning tablecloth and placing it in a safe place where it will burn out.

b. Pouring liquid on the areas of the tablecloth that are not on fire, having it go out on its own.

c. Putting a large container of water nearby which will eventually burst or melt from the heat of the fire enabling the water to gush out and extinguish the fire.

**Please note:** We have provided the above general categories. There are many additional details and exceptions within these categories. For practical inquiries, please contact your LOR (local Olami rabbi).

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