SHABBAT UNPACKED

Session 5

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

IN HEBREW, SHABBAT IS SPELLED שבת,
WHICH MEANS TO REST.

INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THESE VERY SAME LETTERS CAN BE REARRANGED TO SPELL תשב, MEANING TO RETURN.

SHABBAT IS THE WEEKLY OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN AND REKINDLE RELATIONSHIPS, EVEN IF WE WERE DISTRACTED AND DID NOT FOCUS ON THEM DURING THE PREVIOUS SIX DAYS. PERHAPS WE WERE NOT FOCUSED ENOUGH ON OUR LOVED ONES, PERHAPS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ALMIGHTY, OR MAYBE EVEN ON OUR OWN PERSONAL WELL-BEING. SHABBAT IS THE TIME TO COME BACK HOME TO THE THINGS IN OUR LIFE THAT REALLY MATTER!

CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

As a reminder, we are told to refrain from "work," which refers to any "creative labor" or action that brings about something new.

The creative act of boneh/building surely fits into this definition as we literally craft and develop something new with our hands.

The laws of boneh/building are complex and detailed; the following summary provides an orientation as to the key areas of this category. Please be in touch with your LOR (local Olami rabbi) for practical applications.

In the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle, the large beams were assembled and formed into walls. Hence, building is one of the 39 categories of prohibited creative acts.

CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

1. The halachic (Jewish law) definition of boneh or building is the bringing together of individual components to form a larger whole.

1. Included in boneh are the following activities:

   a. Constructing a structure

      - Building a wall or fence
      - Pitching a tent
      - Opening an umbrella over a patio table

   b. Repairing or adding to a pre-existing structure

      - Nailing nails into a wall
      - Attaching hooks to a wall
      - Reattaching a shower curtain
      - Affixing a door handle or knob

   c. Assembling movable utensils

      - Building any type of furniture that requires assembly ie. Ikea
      - Replacing a leg of a table or chair
      - Affixing caps to the legs of a table or chair
      - Affixing a wheel to a baby carriage
      - Reattaching the temple of eyeglasses

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NOTE: THERE IS A DISTINCTION IN HALACHA BETWEEN LARGER ITEMS, I.E. A BOOKCASE AND SMALLER ITEMS, I.E. SCREWING A CAP ON A SALT SHAKER. THE BASIC RULE IS THAT LARGER ITEMS CANNOT BE ASSEMBLED EVEN LOOSELY. SMALLER ITEMS THAT ARE NEVER JOINED VERY TIGHTLY OR ARE TAKEN APART AND REASSEMBLED REGULARLY MAY BE ASSEMBLED ON SHABBAT. FINALLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT UTENSILS THAT FOLD AND UNFOLD EASILY ARE PERMITTED TO FOLD AND UNFOLD, I.E. STROLLERS, FOLDING BEDS, ETC.

Therefore, the following examples would be permitted:

1. Replacing the drawer of a small dresser
2. Raising or lowering a lectern
3. Opening or collapsing a folding table
4. Removing or inserting the fruit and vegetable bin of a refrigerator

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

HOW DOES THIS CREATIVE ACT APPLY TO CONSTRUCTING WITH TOYS SUCH AS LEGOS, PLAYMOBIL, OR PUZZLES?

CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

As the Jews traveled through the desert when they camped, they would erect the Mishkan (tabernacle) and, in anticipation of traveling, they would dismantle the Mishkan into moveable components, thus this category named demolition or dismantling.

As we have learned, the concept of all of these creative categories is constructive action, not destructive. Soter is considered constructive as long as one is demolishing for a constructive purpose, i.e. to build a new structure in its place. Therefore it is biblically prohibited. Rabbinically, however, it is prohibited to demolish even if it is solely a destructive task.

Interestingly, the concept of demolition goes hand in hand with the previous category of boneh or building. Soter or demolition is defined as demolishing or dismantling any building or object whose creation would violate boneh or building.

Included in soter are:

1. Demolishing a structure or removing objects attached to a structure

    a. Removing broken glass from a window frame
    b. Removing a door (if a child is locked in behind the door, this is permitted as jewish law views the child's distress as a life-threatening situation)
    c. Removing a screen from a window
    d. Removing a doorknob
    e. Removing nails or screws from a wall (one may remove a picture from the nail that is holding it on to the wall)
    f. Pulling up carpet

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2. Disassembling movable objects
    a. Unscrewing a broom-stick from a broom
    b. Removing a handle of a pot
    c. Removing the door or shelf of a large bookcase

3. Taking down a tent or temporary shelter

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CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

ASK ANY CHEF AND THEY WILL TELL YOU THAT BISHUL/COOKING IS A CREATIVE ACT!

Jewish law defines cooking as “using heat to effect a positive change in the composite of an item.” For example baking bread, boiling potatoes, or grilling meat.

Certain herbs and plants were cooked to produce dyes for the Mishkan. Additionally, the lechem hapanim (showbread) was baked each Friday to be put on display in the Mishkan on Shabbat.

Although cooking is considered a creative act and is therefore prohibited on Shabbat, we are encouraged to enjoy hot meals to enhance our Shabbat experience. (Ever try cold potato kugel or cholent??)

Jewish law does not allow us to cook on Shabbat but there are extensive details as to what we can reheat and how so as to ensure that it does not fall under the category of cooking as defined above. Today we will provide a sampling of the practicalities of prohibited cooking vs. enjoying hot food on Shabbat.

CREATION THROUGH BUILDING AND COOKING

Jewish Cooking

1. Jewish law provides a distinction in the actual food type.

   a. Cooking solid foods is accomplished as soon as they become somewhat edible.

   b. Cooking liquids where there is no visible change in the liquid is accomplished when the liquid reaches 113°F or 45°C.

2. The act of cooking is not just actually putting food on a fire, but even causing a cooking food to cook more rapidly, i.e. stirring a pot, closing an oven door, putting a lid on a pot that is on the stove.

3. Cooking can transpire even while not on the direct source of heat (such as after removing a pot from the stovetop). Even a pot that has been removed from the source of heat can still cook as long as it still contains the residual heat of 113°F or 45°C. It would therefore be prohibited to place uncooked food into that pot.

Kli Rishon/First Vessel vs. Kli Sheini/Second Vessel

We refer to the vessel in which the food was cooked as a kli rishon or first vessel. Once the cooked food has been transferred out of the pot that had been on the heat source, its ability to cook is seriously diminished. We refer to the second pot as a kli sheini or second vessel.

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AND COOKING

Halacha recognizes that a kli sheini or second vessel is less likely to cook, however, there are many foods that could potentially cook even in a kli sheini or second vessel. Therefore, we refrain from placing uncooked food or liquid in a kli sheini or second vessel. Even so it is permissible to add water or oil to a kli sheini or second vessel.

Once food has been transferred to a kli shlishi or third vessel, it basically loses its ability to cook and therefore it would be permitted to add non-cooked food to it.

There are endless applications of the laws of cooking and heating food on Shabbat. Ask your mentor or LOR (local Olami rabbi) for more resources if you want to further explore this topic.

STAY TUNED AS WE CONTINUE TO UNPACK THE 39 CREATIVE ASPECTS OF SHABBAT...

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