

Introduction to the 39 Creative Labors of Shabbat

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1. Hashem's first Shabbat

Genesis 2:2-3

ויקבל אלהים ביום השביעי, מלאכתו אשר עשה; וישבת ביום השביעי, מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה
And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

כי בושבת מכל-מלאכתו, אשר-ברא אלהים לעשות ויקדש את-יום השביעי, ויקדש אתו:
And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made.

2. Shabbat in the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:7-10

זכור את-יום השבת, לקדשו

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

ששת ימים תעבד, ועשית כל-מלאכתך, ויום השביעי-שבת, ליהוה אלהיך.
Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God.

לא-תעשה כל-מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך, עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך, וגרך, אשר בשעריך,
In it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;

כי ששת-ימים עשה יהוה את-השמים ואת-הארץ, את-הים ואת-כל-אשר-בם, וינח, ביום השביעי; על-כן, ברח יהוה את-יום השבת--
ויקדשו.

for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

3. Shabbat and the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*)

Exodus 35:1-5

ויקהל משה, את-כל-עדת בני ישראל--ויאמר אליהם: ואלה, הדברים, אשר-צוה יהוה, לעשות אתם
And Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said unto them: 'These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them.

ששת ימים, תעשה מלאכה, וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון, ליהוה; כל-העשה בו מלאכה,
יומת

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to the LORD; whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death.

לא-תבערו-אש, בכל משכנתיכם, ביום, השבת
Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.'

ויאמר משה, אל-כל-עדת בני ישראל לאמר: וזה הדבר, אשר-צוה יהוה לאמר
And Moses spoke unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying:

קחו מאתכם תרומה, ליהוה, כל נדיב לבו, יביאה את תרומת יהוה: זהב וכסף, ונחשת
Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD, whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, the LORD'S offering: gold, and silver, and brass...

4. The Thirty-Nine Creative Acts

Mishnah Shabbat 7:2

זב, אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת: החורש, והזורע, והקוצר, והמעמר, והדש, והזורה, והבורר, והטוחן, והמרקד, והלש, והאופה, הגוזז את הצמר, והמלבנו, והמנפצו, והצובעו, והטווהו, והמסך, והעושה שני בתי נירין, והאורג שני חוטיק, והפוצע שני חוטיק, הקושר, והמתיר, והתופר שתי תפירות, והקורע על מנת לתפור שתי תפירות, הצד צבי, והשוחטו, והמפשיטו, והמולחו, והמעבדו, והמוחקו, והמתכו, הכותב שתי אותות, והמוחק על מנת לכתוב שתי אותות, הבונה, והסותר, המכבה, והמבעיר, והמכה בפטיש, והמוציא מרשות לרשות--הרי אלו אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת

The categories of creative acts are forty less one: plowing, planting, harvesting, gathering, threshing,

winnowing, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, and baking; shearing wool, bleaching, combing, dying, spinning, preparing the loom, making two loom loops, weaving two threads, unweaving two threads, tying, untying, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to re-sew; hunting deer, slaughtering, skinning, salting, tanning, smoothing, cutting; writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, demolishing, extinguishing, igniting, striking the final hammer blow, and removing from one domain to another. These are the categories, forty less one.

5. The Constant Reminder to Keep Shabbat Numbers 15:32-40

ויהיו בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּמִּדְבָּר; וַיִּמְצְאוּ, אִישׁ מִקְשָׁשׁ עֲצִים--בַּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks upon the sabbath day.

וַיִּקְרְיבוּ־אֹתוֹ, הַמִּצְאִים אֹתוֹ מִקְשָׁשׁ עֲצִים--אֶל־מֹשֶׁה, וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן, וְאֶל־כָּל־הָעֵדָה

And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

וַיִּנְחֹו־אֹתוֹ, בַּמִּשְׁמֶרֶת: כִּי לֹא פֹרַשׁ, מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לֹ'

And they put him in ward, because it had not been declared what should be done to him.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה, מוֹת יוּמַת הָאִישׁ; רְגוּם אֹתוֹ בְּאֲבָנִים כָּל־הָעֵדָה, מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה

And the LORD said unto Moses: 'The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.'

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying:

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ־אֲלֵהֶם, וַעֲשׂוּ־לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי־בְגָדֵיהֶם, לְדֹרֹתָם; וַנִּתְּנוּ־עַל־צִיצִית הַכֶּנֶף, פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת

'Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them throughout their generations fringes in the corners of their garments, and that they put with the fringe of each corner a thread of blue.

וְהָיָה לָכֶם, לְצִיצִית, וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה, וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם; וְלֹא־תִתְּרוּ־אֲחֵרִי לְבַבְכֶם, וְאַחֲרֵי־עֵינֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר־אֵתֶם זֹנִים, אַחֲרֵיהֶם

And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye go not about after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go astray;

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ, וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי; וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים, לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם

that ye may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God.

6. Glossary Terms and Concepts

Malacha -- a creative act; labor; "work"

Malechet Machshevet -- intentional, professional work

Av Malacha -- one of the thirty-nine categories of "work" as it was done in the *Mishkan*; literally, "Father of the Category of Labor". Joining two separate pieces of cloth together by sewing is the *Av Malacha* of sewing.

Toldah -- a subcategory of "work" related to but different from how it was done in the *Mishkan*; literally, "a descendent". Stapling two pieces of paper together is a *Toldah* of sewing.

Gezeira -- a Rabbinic decree

Mishkan -- the portable desert sanctuary ("Tabernacle") constructed after leaving Egypt

D'Oraita (D'Oraisa) -- Biblical; literally, "from (in) the Torah". Often used to refer to a Biblical precept, e.g., "Building a house on *Shabbos* is a *D'Oraisa*."

D'Rabbanan -- Rabbinic; literally, "from the Rabbis." Often used to refer to a Rabbinic decree, e.g., "Riding an animal is a *D'Rabbanan*."

Chayav -- (for a person) guilty of violating a Biblical precept; (for an act) forbidden on a *D'Oraita* level

Assur -- forbidden, usually rabbinically

Patur aval Assur -- forbidden rabbinically

Mutar -- permitted

Miskaven -- with intentionality. To be a *D'Oraisa*, in general an act must be done with intentionality.

Aino Miskaven -- without intentionality.

Malacha she-eino tzricha l'gufo -- doing a *malacha* but not for the sake of the *malacha*. For example, digging a hole is a *toldah* of plowing, but digging a hole in order to fill up a sandbag is a *malacha she-eino tzricha l'gufo*.

Psik Reisha -- a necessary consequence of an action. Washing your hands over the grass is a *psik reisha* for watering the grass. Literally, "cutting of its head," as in, "if you cut off the head of a chicken, will it not die!?"

Psik Reisha d'Neicha Lei -- a *Psik Reisha* whose outcome is desirable, such as washing my hands over a brown patch of grass on a very sunny day. Literally, "a *psik reisha* that is comfortable to him."

Psik Reisha d'lo Neicha Lei -- a *Psik Reisha* whose outcome is not desirable, such as washing my hands over my neighbor's poison ivy bush.

Gramma -- a cause or causative act. Rolling a bowling ball down the lane is a *gramma* to knocking down the pins. The difference between a *gramma* and a *psik reisha* is that a *psik reisha* **always** results in the consequence whereas a *gramma* **sometimes or often** results in the consequence.

Misasek -- literally, "being busy"; refers to an act that is completely unintentional such as leaning against a wall where you don't know there is a light switch and accidentally switching the light on.