

Work of the Mind – *Melechets Mahshevet* on *Shabbat*

Outline of Shiur on Parashat *VeYakhel-Pekude* 5778 by Dayan Yosef Greenwald, Bet HaVa'ad, Yerushalayim

In the beginning of *Parashat VaYakhel*, Moshe commands *Am Yisrael* not to do *Melacha* on *Shabbat*.

The commentaries explain this is to negate the notion that the building of the *Mishkan* overrides *Shabbat*.

We also derive from here that a *Melacha* that is forbidden on *Shabbat* is a *Melacha* that was done to build the *Mishkan*.

“*Melechets Mahshevet*” means a “planned” or “designed” *Melacha*, which means that there must be a purpose and plan in doing the *Melacha*.

Thus, any *Melacha* that is not done in a fashion classified as *Mahshevet*, such as a destructive *Melacha*, or one done in an unusual way, is permitted from the Torah, although it is often forbidden *MideRabbanan*.

Sometimes, this concept can be a stringency. The *Gemara* in *Bava Kama* (62a) writes that one is not liable in *Bet Din* for an indirect damage – “*Gerama*”. An example is having the wind carry a damaging agent that one has created, in which sometimes one cannot be forced to pay in *Bet Din*. Nevertheless, because the person’s intention was to achieve a specific result via this act, although it was indirect, the *Gemara* says that it would be prohibited on *Shabbat* from the Torah.

The *Ramban* (*Shabbat* 153, and *Sefer HaMitzvot, Shoresh 14*) writes that this is why plowing is considered to be one’s own act on *Shabbat* – although he may be using an animal as the main catalyst of the *Melacha*.

While the prohibition of *Mehamer* on *Shabbat* (driving one’s animal to do *Melacha* on *Shabbat*) is forbidden on *Shabbat* but is not considered a bona-fide *Melacha*, plowing with the use of an animal is the way the *Melacha* is designed to be performed and thus is considered to be the *Melacha* of the person himself.

Similarly, the *Even Ha’Azul* writes that grinding via the use of a water-mill is forbidden from the Torah, although it is done through the use of the power of water.

He compares this to the use of leeches to suck someone’s blood, which accordingly would be forbidden from the Torah as it is a form of a planned “*Melechets Mahshevet*”.

This concept can be applied to *Shabbat*-clocks (timers) in which one can argue that changing the pins to cause the act to happen sooner or to happen may also be forbidden as a form of *Melechets Mahshevet*. This was the ruling of Rav Elyashiv זצ”ל.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זצ"ל disagreed as pushing the pins of a *Shabbat*-clock is not the form of performing the *Melacha* of lighting or the like.

Regarding the general concept of *Melechut Mashevet*: see *Maharal*, *Rav Tzaddok HaKohen* and others who explain that after the severing of the completion of the word there is a need for *Tikkun* – correction – of the world, which will only be completely achieved at the end of days.

However, the building of the *Mishkan* is a microcosm of a complete world which is built in a complete and perfect fashion.

Thus, the *Melachot* of the *Mishkan* are those which are forbidden on *Shabbat* because they represent the “*Melachot*” with which *Hashem* created the world, from which we have to rest.

The *Mishna* says that there are 40 *Melachot* minus 1. Why not say 39? The commentaries explain that there are really 40 “*Melachot*” which *Hashem* used for the creation of the world. However, the 40th *Melacha* is the first one – to create matter from nothing. That is something we cannot emulate and thus, practically, there are only 39 forbidden *Melachot*.

The commentaries say that there is the study of Torah is similar to the creation of matter from nothing, and the *Zohar* extols the importance of studying and understanding new *Hiddushim* (novel ideas) on *Shabbat*.