

הלכות שבת • פרק שביעי

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CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, we begin our deep dive into the core foundations of Hilchos Shabbos, focusing on the thirty-nine melachos (forbidden labors) that are the very pillars of the day's sanctity. The Rambam introduces us to the concept of avos melachos (primary categories of labor) and toldos (their derivatives), explaining how we determine what constitutes an av (primary category) based on the holy work that was done to construct the Mishkan.

We will learn the famous list of the thirty-nine melachos, starting from the agricultural steps of making bread—such as plowing, sowing, reaping, and baking—and moving through the processes of making garments, preparing hides, building, and transferring between domains. The Rambam lovingly lays out how these activities, which were necessary to build Hashem's sanctuary, define the boundaries of our rest on Shabbos.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

ה"א

שְׁלֹשִׁים וְתֵשַׁע אַבֹּת מְלָאכֹת הָאֲסוּרוֹת בַּשַּׁבָּת

Halacha 1 • The Thirty-Nine Primary Categories of Forbidden Melacha on Shabbos

מְלָאכֹת שְׁחִיבִין עֲלֵיהֶן סְקִילָה וְכָרֶת בְּמֵזִיד אוֹ קָרְבֵּן חֹטֵאת
sin offering a sacrifice of or intentionally and kares stoning upon them that one is liable Labors

בְּשִׁגְגָה. מֵהֶן אַבֹּת וּמֵהֶן תּוֹלְדוֹת. וּמִנֵּין כָּל
all and the number of are derivatives and some of them are primary categories some of them unintentionally

אַבֹּת מְלָאכֹת אַרְבָּעִים חָסֵר אַחַת. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן. הַחֲרִישָׁה. וְהַזְרִיעָה.
and sowing plowing are and these one minus is forty labors the primary categories of

וְהַקְצִירָה. וְהָעֲמֹר. וְהַדִּישָׁה. וְהַזְרָה. וְהַבְרִירָה. וְהַטְחִינָה. וְהַהֲרָקָה.
and sifting and grinding and selecting and winnowing and threshing and gathering sheaves and reaping

וְהַלִּישָׁה. וְהָאִפָּה. וְהַגִּזְזָה. וְהַלְבֹּן. וְהַנְפוּץ. וְהַצְבִּיעָה. וְהַטְוִיָּה. וְעָשִׂית
and making and spinning and dyeing and combing and bleaching and shearing and baking and kneading

הַנִּירִין. וְהַנְסַכָּה. וְהָאֲרִיגָה. וְהַבְצִיעָה. וְהַקְשִׁירָה. וְהַהֲתָרָה.
and untying and tying and splitting and weaving the warp and setting up the heddles

וְהַתְפִּירָה. וְהַקְרִיעָה. וְהַבְנִין. וְהַסְתִּירָה. וְהַכָּאָה בְּפִטִּישׁ. וְהַצִּידָה.
and trapping with a hammer and striking and demolishing and building and tearing and sewing

וְהַשְׁחִיטָה. וְהַהֲפָשְׁטָה. וְהַהֲעֲבָדָה. וּמַחֲיִקֵת הָעוֹר. וְחִתּוּכוֹ. וְהַפְתִּיבָה.
and writing and cutting it the hide and scraping and tanning and skinning and slaughtering

וְהַמְחִיקָה. וְהַשְׂרִטוּט. וְהַהֲבָעָרָה. וְהַכְּבוּי. וְהַהוּצָאָה מִרְשׁוֹת לְרְשׁוֹת:
to a domain from a domain and transferring and extinguishing and kindling and ruling lines and erasing

This halacha lists the thirty-nine primary categories of forbidden labor on Shabbos, for which intentional transgression carries the penalty of stoning or kares, and unintentional transgression requires a sin offering.

ה'י"ב

הגדרת אבות מלאכה והדומה להן

Halacha 2 · Defining the Primary Categories of Labor and Their Analogous Activities

כָּל אֵלֹהֵי הַמְּלָאכוֹת וְכָל שֶׁהוּא מַעֲנִינָם הֵם הַנִּקְרָאִין אָבוֹת מְלָאכוֹת. כִּי־צֶד
How labors fathers of are those called they of their matter that is and all the labors these All
הוּא עֲנִינָן. אֶחָד הַחֹרֵשׁ אוֹ הַחֹפֵר אוֹ הַעוֹשֶׂה חֲרִיץ הָרִי זֶה אָב
is a father of this behold a groove he who makes or he who digs or He who plows one their matter is
מְלָאכָה. שֶׁכָּל אַחַת וְאַחַת מֵהֶן חִפְיָהּ בַּקֶּרְקַע וְעֲנִין אֶחָד הוּא:
it is single and a matter in the ground is digging of them and one one for each melacha

This halacha defines the primary categories of labor (Avos Melachos) and explains that activities identical in nature to them are also classified as primary categories.

ה'י"ג

הזורע והנוטע והזומר בשבת

Halacha 3 · The Primary Category of Sowing and Its Derivatives on Shabbos

וְכֵן הַזּוֹרֵעַ זְרָעִים אוֹ הַנוֹטֵעַ אֵילָנוֹת אוֹ הַמַּבְרִיךְ אֵילָנוֹת אוֹ
or trees one who extends or trees one who plants or seeds one who sows And so
הַמַּרְכִּיב אוֹ הַזּוֹמֵר. כָּל אֵלֹהֵי אָב אֶחָד הֵן מֵאֲבוֹת מְלָאכוֹת
labors from the primary are one primary category these all one who prunes or one who grafts
categories of
וְעֲנִין אֶחָד הוּא. שֶׁכָּל אַחַת מֵהֶן לְצַמַּח דָּבָר הוּא מִתְכַּוֵּן:
intends he a thing to cause to grow of them one for each it is one and concept

This halacha establishes that sowing, planting, extending, grafting, and pruning are all classified under a single primary category of labor because they share the same objective of promoting plant growth.

ה'יד

הגדרת אב מלאכה של קוצר ותולדותיו

Halacha 4 · Defining the Primary Category of Reaping and Its Subcategories

וְכֵן הַקּוֹצֵר תְּבוּאָה אוֹ קִטְנִית אוֹ הַבוֹצֵר עֲנָבִים אוֹ הַגּוֹדֵר תְּמָרִים
dates one who harvests or grapes one who harvests or legumes or grain one who reaps And so
אוֹ הַמוֹסֵק זֵיתִים אוֹ הָאוֹרֶה תְּאֵנִים. כָּל אֵלֹהֵי אָב מְלָאכָה
of labor a primary category these all figs one who gathers or olives one who harvests or
אַחַת הֵן. שֶׁכָּל אַחַת מֵהֶן לְעַקֵּר דָּבָר מִגִּדּוּלּוֹ וְעַל דְּרָךְ זֶה
this manner and in intends from its place of growth a thing to uproot of them one since all are one
שָׂאֵר הָאָבוֹת:
the primary categories the rest of

This halacha explains that harvesting different types of produce, though called by different names in Hebrew, all fall under the single primary category of reaping.

ה'ט"ה

התולדה היא המלאכה הדומה לאב מאלו האבות. פיצד.

How so primary categories from these a primary category that resembles the labor is The derivative

המחית את הירק מעט לבשלו הרי זה חייב שזו המלאכה תולדת
is a derivative labor for this is liable this one behold to cook it finely the vegetable — One who cuts

טחינה. ששהטוחן לוקח גוף אחד ומחלקו לגופים הרבה. וכל העושה
who does and anyone many into bodies and divides it one body takes for one who grinds of grinding

דבר הדומה לזה הרי זה תולדת טוחן. וכן הלוקח לשון של
of a bar one who takes And similarly of grinding is a derivative this behold this that resembles a thing

מתכת וסף אותו כדי לקח מעפרו כדרך שעושים צורפי הזהב הרי
behold of the gold goldsmiths that do like the way from its dust to take in order it and files metal

זה תולדת טחינה:

of grinding is a derivative this

The Rambam defines a derivative labor as one that resembles a primary category, illustrating this with examples of grinding vegetables and filing metal.

הל"ו

מלאכת בורר ובונה בגבינה ותולדות המלאכות

Halacha 6 · The Prohibition of Selecting and Building in Cheese Making and the Nature of Derivatives

וכן הלוקח חלב ונתן בו קיבה כדי לחבצו הרי זה חייב משום

because of liable this behold to curdle it in order stomach lining in it and placed milk one who takes And so

תולדת בורר שהרי הפריש הקום מן החלב. ואם גבנו ועשהו גבינה
cheese and made it he curdled it and if the milk from the whey he separated for behold selecting a derivative of

חייב משום בונה. שכל המקבץ חלק אל חלק ודבק הכל עד שייעשו
they are made until the whole and glues part to part who gathers for anyone building because of liable

גוף אחד הרי זה דומה לבנין. וכן לכל מלאכה ומלאכה מאלו

from these and labor labor for every And so to building resembles this behold one body

האבות יש להן תולדות על דרך זו שאמרנו. ומגורף

and from the body of that we said this way upon derivatives to them there are the primary categories

המלאכה הנעשית בשבת תדע מעין אי זה אב היא

it is primary category this which from the likeness of you will know on Shabbos that is done the labor

ותולדת אי זה אב היא:

it is primary category this which and a derivative of

The Rambam explains how curdling milk and making cheese violate the labors of selecting and building, and establishes how to categorize any derivative labor.

הל"ז

הפירוש בין אבות לתולדות לענין קרפון

אֶחָד הָעוֹשֶׂה אֶב מַאֲבוֹת מְלָאכוֹת אוֹ תוֹלְדָה מִן הַתּוֹלְדוֹת
 the derivatives of a derivative or of melachos of the primary a primary category who performs One

בְּמִזִּיד חַיֵּב כִּרְתּוֹ. וְאִם בָּאוּ עֲדִים נִסְקָל. בְּשׁוּגָג חַיֵּב חֲטָאת קְבוּעָה.
 fixed a sin offering is liable unintentionally he is stoned witnesses came and if karet is liable intentionally

אִם כֵּן מָה הַפֶּרֶשׁ יֵשׁ בֵּין הָאֲבוֹת וְהַתּוֹלְדוֹת. אֵין בֵּינֵיהֶן
 between them there is no and the derivatives the primary categories between is there difference what so if

הַפֶּרֶשׁ אֵלֹא לְעֲנִין הַקֶּרְבֵּן בְּלֻבֵּד. שֶׁהָעוֹשֶׂה בְּשׁוּגָג אִם עָשָׂה
 he performed if unintentionally for one who performs alone the sacrifice regarding except difference

אֲבוֹת הֶרְבֵּה בְּהֻעָלָם אֶחָד חַיֵּב חֲטָאת אַחַת עַל כָּל אֶב
 primary category every for one a sin offering is liable one in a lapse of awareness many primary categories

וְאֵב. וְאִם עָשָׂה אֶב וְתוֹלְדוֹתָיו בְּהֻעָלָם אֶחָד אֵינוֹ
 he is not one in a lapse of awareness and its derivatives a primary category he performed and if and primary category

חַיֵּב אֵלֹא חֲטָאת אַחַת:
 one a sin offering except liable

This halacha explains that while both primary categories of labor and their derivatives carry the same capital and spiritual punishments, they differ in the number of sin offerings required for multiple unintentional transgressions.

ה'ל' ח

חייב חטאות על מלאכות שונות בהעלם אחד

Halacha 8: Liability for Multiple Sin Offerings in a Single Lapse of Awareness

כִּיצַד. הִרִי שֶׁחָרַשׁ וְזָרַע וְקָצַר בְּשַׁבָּת בְּהֻעָלָם אֶחָד חַיֵּב שְׁלֹשׁ
 three is liable single in a lapse of awareness on Shabbos and reaped and sowed who plowed behold How

חֲטָאוֹת. וְאַפְלוּ עָשָׂה הָאֲרָבָעִים חִסֵּר אַחַת בְּשִׁגְגָה כְּגוֹן שֶׁשָּׁכַח
 that he forgot for example inadvertently one minus the forty he performed And even if sin offerings

שֶׁאֵלוֹ הַמְּלָאכוֹת אֲסוּרוֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּשַׁבָּת חַיֵּב עַל כָּל מְלָאכָה וּמְלָאכָה
 and labor labor every for he is liable on Shabbos to be done are forbidden the labors that these

חֲטָאת אַחַת. אֲכָל אִם טָחַן וְחָתַךְ הַיֶּרֶק וְשָׁף לְשׁוֹן שֶׁל מִתְּכַת
 metal of a strip and pulverized the vegetable and cut he ground if But one sin offering

בְּהֻעָלָם אֶחָד אֵינוֹ חַיֵּב אֵלֹא חֲטָאת אַחַת. שֶׁהִרִי לֹא עָשָׂה אֵלֹא
 except did he perform not for behold one sin offering except liable he is not single in a lapse of awareness

אֶב אֶחָד וְתוֹלְדוֹתָיו. וְכֵן כָּל פְּיוּצָא בְּזֶה:
 to this similar all And so and its derivatives one a primary labor

This halacha explains when a person is liable for multiple sin offerings for performing different primary labors, versus a single offering for performing a primary labor and its derivatives.

ה'ל' ט

חייב חטאות אחת על מלאכות הרבה מעין מלאכה אחת

הַעֹשֶׂה מְלָאכוֹת הֶרְבֵּה מֵעֵין מְלָאכָה אַחַת בְּהֶעֱלֵם אֶחָד אֵינוֹ
 is not single in a lapse of awareness one labor of the type of many labors One who performs
 חַיֵּב אֶלָּא חֲטָאת אַחַת. פִּיּוּצָד. הִרִי שְׂזָרַע וְנָטַע וְהִבְרִיךְ וְהִרְכִּיב וְזָמַר
 and pruned and grafted and layered and planted who sowed Behold How so one a sin offering except liable
 בְּהֶעֱלֵם אֶחָד אֵינוֹ חַיֵּב אֶלָּא חֲטָאת אַחַת שְׁכָלָן אֶב אֶחָד
 one a primary category for all of them one a sin offering except liable is not single in a lapse of awareness
 הֵן. וְכֵן כָּל פִּיּוּצָא בְּזֶה:
 to this similar all and so are

This halacha teaches that performing multiple subcategories of a single primary labor during one lapse of awareness requires only one sin offering.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter establishes the thirty-nine primary categories of forbidden labor (avos melachos) on Shabbos, which are derived directly from the activities performed in the construction of the Mishkan. The Rambam enumerates each of these thirty-nine melachos in order, spanning agricultural, textile, leatherworking, and construction activities, as well as kindling, extinguishing, and transferring. Finally, the halachos clarify the definition of an "analogous activity," explaining that actions which are identical in nature and purpose to a primary category—such as digging or making a groove in the ground, which are identical to plowing—are treated as part of that very same primary category of labor.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

When we look at the thirty-nine melachos of Shabbos, it is easy to get lost in the technical details of plowing, sowing, or grinding. But the Rambam is teaching us a profound secret about how Hashem structured His world. Every single action we do has a root, an "av" (a father), and many branches, the "tolados" (the children). The Torah is showing us that nothing we do is isolated. A small, seemingly minor act like chopping a vegetable finely or curdling milk is directly connected to the great, foundational labors of the Mishkan.

This is a tremendous lesson for our daily avodah. Sometimes, the yetzer hara tries to convince us that our small deeds do not matter. We think, "What is the big deal if I say one small word of lashon hara, or if I show a tiny bit of anger, or conversely, if I do one small favor for another Yid? It is just a minor detail!" But the halachah of av and toldos teaches us otherwise. Every small action is a child of a larger spiritual reality. A small act of patience is a toldah of deep emunah; a small slip of the tongue is a toldah of a lack of yiras Shamayim. Everything is connected to a root.

When we realize that our smallest daily choices carry the weight of their spiritual parents, we begin to live with more mindfulness and respect for our own actions. We see that we are not just drifting through random moments, but constantly building or, chas v'shalom, tearing down.

Today, before you perform a seemingly small act of chesed or make a minor decision in your service of Hashem, pause for one second and remind yourself: "This small deed is a toldah of something eternal and holy."

