Electricity on Shabbat – Part 4 - Handout

# Conservative Teshuvah (May 31, 2012)

As we will see, Shabbat fosters a different state of consciousness through its detailed regulation of human behavior. Each action is analyzed through two lenses: Is it *melakhah*, the type of work prohibited by *halakhah*? And, does it undermine *shvut,* the positive obligation to rest on Shabbat?

# Part 1 – Melacha

## Exodus 31:14

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם, אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת, כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הִוא, לָכֶם; מְחַלְלֶיהָ, מוֹת יוּמָת--כִּי כָּל-הָעֹשֶׂה בָהּ מְלָאכָה, וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִקֶּרֶב עַמֶּיהָ.

You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you; *every one that profanes it shall surely be put to death*; for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

## Genesis 2:2-3

וַיְכַל אֱלֹקים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה; וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ:  כִּי בוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ, אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹקים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

## Leviticus 19:30

אֶת שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ, וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִּירָאוּ:  אֲנִי ה’

You shall keep my Sabbaths; you shall revere my sanctuaries; I am God.

## Babylonian Talmud – Shabbat Chapter 3, Mishnah 5

A kettle which was removed from the fire: one may not pour cold water into it so that it should warm up, but one may pour water into or into a cup in order to temper it.

## Babylonian Talmud – Shabbat 42a

Samuel said: One may extinguish a lump of fiery metal in the street, that it should not harm the public, but not a burning piece of wood.

## Babylonian Talmud – Shabbat 42a - Rashi

**A lump of fiery metal —** One may toss outside hot metal waste, for the biblical category of “extinguishing” does not apply to hot metal, though the rabbinic prohibition does ban it, but where there is a public hazard, they did not enforce *shvut.*

**But not a burning piece of wood**—For this is a biblical prohibition punishable by stoning.

# Writing

## Mishnah 7:2

Writing two letters - הכותב שתי אותיות

## Mishnah Shabbat 12:3

One who writes two letters (משני סממניות) - he is liable, regardless with his right hand or with his left hand, or whether the same letter twice or two different letters, or different inks. One is liable in any language.

Rabbi Yose says: They only forbade writing two letters because they serve as a sign, for they used to write on the Tabernacle boards to know which board went next to which.

## Yerushalmi – Shabbat 12a

“Who taught *simiyonot?* Rabbi Yossi. What is “every language”? Even *aleph/alpha*.”

## Ra’avya – 12th century

Even though Rashi explains in *Perek HaBoneh* that one who writes two letters in any language is liable, in the script‐appearance of every people, it is a mistake, for we read in the Yerushalmi, “what is ‘every language’? *aleph/alpha, beitha/beta*,” namely, in Hebrew or Greek. But as for writing in other languages he is not liable, as I have previously written.

## Mishnah Shabbat 12:5

One who writes with a liquid, or with fruit juice, or in the dust of the road, or scribes' dust, or with any substance which does not endure, he is exempt. If one writes with the back of his hand or with his foot, or with his mouth, or with his elbow, he is exempt.

## Tosefta Shabbat 11:8

He is exempt until he writes with a durable substance on a durable surface.

# Part 2 - Shevut

## Exodus 23:12

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִּשְׁבֹּת--לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ, שׁוֹרְךָ וַחֲמֹרֶךָ, וְיִנָּפֵשׁ בֶּן-אֲמָתְךָ, וְהַגֵּר.

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your ass may have rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

## Exodus 12:16-17

And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; *no manner of work shall be done in them*, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; *therefore shall ye observe this day* throughout your generations by an ordinance forever.

## Mekhilta D’Rabbi Yishmael

*Therefore shall ye observe this day.* Why is this said? Has it not already been said: “no manner of work shall be done in them” (v.16)? From this I would know only about work that can be regarded as labor [*melakhah*]. How about activities which can be regarded only as detracting from the restfulness of the day [*shvut*]? Scripture therefore says: “*Therefore, shall you observe this day*,” thus prohibiting even such work as only detracts from the restfulness of the day.

# Mishnah Beitza5:2

Any act for which one is liable on the Sabbath, whether because it is a Rabbinical abstention from work acts, or by virtue of an optional act, or regarding a religious duty, on the Sabbath, they are culpable on it on a Holy‐day.

And these are the ones under the category of Rabbinical abstention from work acts: they must not ascend a tree, nor may they ride upon a beast, nor swim on the water, nor clap hands, nor slap the thighs, nor dance.

And these come under the category of optional acts: they must not sit in judgment, nor may they betroth, nor may they perform the ceremony of *halitzah*; nor contract a *levirate* marriage.

And these come under the category of pious duties: they must not dedicate, or make any valuation vow, or devote anything, or separate priest’s dues or tithes.

All these they have proscribed on a Holy‐day, all the more so on the Sabbath. There is no differentiation between a Holy‐day and the Sabbath except on the preparation of necessary food.

# Leviticus 23:24

דַּבֵּ֛ר אֶל־בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל לֵאמֹ֑ר בַּחֹ֨דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֜י בְּאֶחָ֣ד לַחֹ֗דֶשׁ יִהְיֶ֤ה לָכֶם֙ שַׁבָּת֔וֹן זִכְר֥וֹן תְּרוּעָ֖ה מִקְרָא־קֹֽדֶשׁ׃

Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.

# Ramban on Leviticus 23:24

It appears to me that the meaning of the midrash [interpreting the phrase “Shabbaton”] is that we are commanded on Yom Tov to rest from those activities that technically do not qualify as melacha, we should not be disturbed all day to measure our grain, to weigh our fruit and possessions, to fill our vessels with wine, to move our wares, and even building stones, from house to house and place to place, and if located in a walled city, load up our donkeys, and even wine, grapes, figs and all packages could indeed be delivered on Yom Tov; and the marketplace would be filled with ongoing commerce, and the shops would be open and money changers tables strewn with coins, and the workers would arise for their duties and establish their daily wages, like the rest of the week, and so on. These and similar activities, whether on Yom Tov or even Shabbat itself, all these activities do not technically constitute melacha. Therefore, the Torah commands us “Shabbaton” -- that these should be days of rest and cessation of work, and not days of labor and toil. And this is a good and beautiful interpretation.

# Mishneh Torah – Shabbat 21:1

Regarding the Sabbath, the Torah states: "On the seventh day, you shall cease activity." This implies ceasing even the performance of certain activities that are not included in the categories of the forbidden labors.

# Mishneh Torah – Shabbat 24:12

…In this manner, no one will regard the Sabbath as an ordinary weekday and lift up and repair articles, carrying them from room to room, or from house to house, or set aside stones and the like. These restrictions are necessary for since the person is idle and sitting at home, it is likely that he will seek something with which to occupy himself. Thus, he will not have ceased activity and will have negated the motivating principle for the Torah's commandment (Deuteronomy 5:14), "Thus... you will rest."

# Mishnah Shabbat 2:5

One who extinguishes a lamp out of fear of idolaters, thieves or evil spirits, or in order to help an ill person sleep is exempt. If [he extinguished the lamp] from concern for the lamp, or the oil or the wick, he is liable. Rabbi Yose exempts in all these cases except the act preserving the wick, because he thereby creates a coal.