



FOUNDATIONS OF JUDAISM: SHABBAT

39 PROHIBITED LABORS

Gavriel Z. Bellino

Two Classical Methods of Structuring the 39 Prohibited Labors

Labors of Man

- Baking bread.
- Making clothes.
- Writing.
- Building a house.

Labors of the Tabernacle

- Making the paint for the fabric coverings and curtains.
- Making the coverings.
- Making coverings from skin.
- Making the Tabernacle itself.

11 Steps of Baking Bread

- 1. Plowing** **Choreish** **חורש**
Definition: Preparation of the soil for the purpose of making it suitable for planting.
Examples: Plowing, digging, raking, fertilizing, pouring water (to loosen earth).
Applications: Dragging chair legs on earthen floor, high-heels on lawn, sharp cane.
- 2. Sowing** **Zoraya** **זורע**
Definition: Promotion of plant growth.
Examples: Planting, fertilizing, watering plants, pruning.
Applications: Hand washing on the lawn, spraying insecticide. Putting detached flowers in water is prohibited under Rabbinic Law.
- 3. Reaping** **Kotzair** **קוצר**
Definition: Severing all or part of a plant from its source of growth.
Examples: Picking an apple, a flower, or a weed.
Applications: Walking on delicate plants, extracting sap from a tree. Climbing a tree is prohibited under Rabbinic Law.
- 4. Gathering** **M'amer** **מעמר**
Definition: Collecting or combining of scattered produce that grows from the ground.
Examples: Gathering already picked apples near a tree, stringing figs.
Applications: Raking leaves to be discarded (i.e., destructive gathering) or gathering of

ground items such as stones or salt is prohibited under Rabbinic Law.

5. Threshing Dash דש
Definition: Removal of an undesirable outer from a desirable inner.
Examples: Breaking apart kernels of grain, picking cotton, husking corn.
Applications: Mefareik meaning unloading, e.g., removal of peas from a pod, squeezing fruit for their juice (also called sechita). Also applied to squeezing of wet fabrics/sponges to extract water.

6. Winnowing Zoreh זורה
Definition: According to the Babylonian Talmud: Sorting undesirable from desirable via the force of air. According to the Jerusalem Talmud: dispersal via the force of air.
Examples: Using the wind to separate chaff.
Applications: Aerosol can (?).

7. Sorting Borer בורר
Definition: Removal of undesirable from desirable from a mixture of types.
Examples: Removal of spoiled grapes from a bowl, straining impurities from liquid, trimming away undesirables, sorting silverware, sorting laundry, removal of bones from fish.
Applications: Peeling fruit to be eaten later, Cards (?).

8. Grinding Tochain טוחן
Definition: Reducing an object to small particles.
Examples: Grinding flour, pepper, etc.
Applications: Fine chopping. (There's no real measurement for what that means). Taking medicine under Rabbinic Law.

9. Sifting Tochain מרקד
Definition: Separating by means of a sifting device.
Examples: Sifting pebbles, straining food, etc.
Applications: Tea-bags (?).

10. Amalgamation Lash לש
Definition: Combining particles into a semi-solid/solid mass via liquid.
Examples: Combining of solid and liquid together to make a paste or dough-like substance. Kneading.
Applications: Dough, pastes. Egg-salad? Instant oatmeal?

11. Baking/Cooking Bishul/Ofeh בישול/אופה
 Definition: Changing the properties of a substance thru heat, the heat threshold known as Yad Soledet (lit. Hand [by reflex] recoils [due to heat]) approx. 110° F.
 Examples: Baking, cooking, frying.
 Applications: Melting wax. Toasting bread. Pickling is forbidden under Rabbinic Law.
 Some methods of reheating.

13 Steps of Making Clothes

12. Shearing Gozez גוזז
 Definition: Severing/uprooting a body-part of a creature.
 Examples: Removing wool, cutting one's hair.
 Applications: Combing/brushing hair in a way that will remove hair. Nail cutting. Skin trimming.

13. Scouring Melabein מלבן
 Definition: Cleaning absorbent materials.
 Examples: Washing raw wool, bleaching, laundering, scrubbing.
 Applications: Wiping a stain, pouring water on a carpet to loosen dirt.

14. Combing Menapeitz מנפיץ
 Definition: Separating/disentangling fibers.
 Examples: Beating wool with rods, combing wool.
 Applications: Combing a wig.

15. Dyeing Tzovea צובע
 Definition: Coloring/enriching the color of any material or substance.
 Examples: Painting, coloring.
 Applications: Adding food coloring. Nail polish. Make-up?

16. Spinning Toveh טווה
 Definition: Twisting fibers into a thread or twining strands into a yarn.
 Examples: Making yarn.
 Applications: Re-twining tzitzit, making a wick.

17. Warping Maisach מיסך
 Definition: Creating the first form for the purpose of weaving.
 Examples: Creating the skeleton of the fabric.
 Applications: ???

- 18. Constructing 2 Loops Oseh Shtei Batei Nirin עושה שתי בתי נירין**
 Definition: Forming loops for the purpose of weaving or the making of net like materials.
 Examples:
 Applications: Making netting.
- 19. Weaving Oreig אורג**
 Definition: Passing any weft through warp for the purpose of weaving.
 Examples: Basket weaving, knitting, lattice work.
 Applications:
- 20. Unravelling Potzea פוצע**
 Definition: Removing/cutting fibres from their frame, loom or place.
 Examples: Corrective processes during weaving.
 Applications: Pulling a loose thread.
- 21. Tying Koshair קושר**
 Definition: Binding two pliant objects in a skilled or permanent manner via twisting.
 Examples: Making craftman's or permanent knots.
 Applications: Tying/retying tzitzit, double-knots?
- 22. Untying Matir מתיר**
 Definition: The undoing of any Koshair (see above).
 Examples: Untying permanent knots.
 Applications: Challah bag can be ripped but not untied if it's permanent, children's shoe issues.
- 23. Sewing Tofair תופר**
 Definition: Combining separate objects into a single entity.
 Examples: Bringing together pieces of fabric.
 Applications: Taping a torn page. Stapling?
- 24. Tearing Koraya קורע**
 Definition: Constructive tearing an object in two or undoing any Tofair (see above).
 Examples: Tearing fabric to resew.
 Applications: Destructive tearing is forbidden under Rabbinic Law.

9 Steps of Writing

- 25. Trapping Tzad צד**
Definition: Forcible confinement of any living creature.
Examples: Trapping a deer, a stray dog, catching a fish, removing a goldfish.
Applications: Does not apply to domesticated animals.
- 26. Slaughtering Shochait שוחט**
Definition: Ending the life of a creature.
Examples: Killing, flushing, spreading poison.
Applications: Causing bleeding.
- 27. Flaying Mafshit מפשט**
Definition: Removing the hide from the body of an animal.
Examples: Removing skin of raw chicken.
Applications: Does not apply to cooked food.
- 28. Tanning M'abaid מעבד**
Definition: Preserving any item to prevent spoiling.
Examples: Curing, tanning, finishing, polishing leather.
Applications: Does not apply to food.
- 29. Smoothing Memachaik ממחיק**
Definition: Scraping/sanding a surface to achieve smoothness.
Examples: Filing down wood, rubbing down leather.
Applications: Smoothing soft substances. Might apply to creams, ointments, pastes.
- 30. Scoring Mesartait משרטט**
Definition: Scoring/drawing a cutting guideline.
Examples: Making horizontal lines for writing.
Applications: Folding a paper for the purpose of cutting. Does not apply to food.
- 31. Measured Cutting Mechataich מחטך**
Definition: Cutting any object to a specific size.
Examples: Sharpening a pencil, tearing on perforated lines (?)
Applications: Does not apply to food.

32. Writing Kotaiv כותב
Definition: Writing/forming a meaningful character or design.
Examples: Writing, coloring, bending materials to form characters.
Applications: Applies only to permanent and recognizable writing. Applies to paper, fabric, skin.

33. Erasing Mochaik מוחק
Definition: Cleaning/preparing a surface to render it suitable for writing.
Examples: Erasing a meaningful and permanent symbol.
Applications:

6 Steps of Building a House

34. Building Boneh בונה
Definition: Contributing to the forming of any permanent structure.
Examples: Bringing objects together to form something new. Putting together a bicycle.
Applications: Creating shelter. Even temporary shelter under Rabbinic Law, e.g., umbrella? Creating partitions?

35. Demolishing Sotair סותר
Definition: Demolishing for any constructive purpose.
Examples: Pulling up fencing, taking down a wall.
Applications: Detaching accessories from buildings. It does not apply to food.

36. Extinguishing Mechabeh מכבה
Definition: Extinguishing/diminishing the intensity of a fire/flame.
Examples: Blowing out candles, putting out cigarette.
Applications: Shutting off oven (?).

37. Kindling Mavir מבעיר
Definition: Igniting, fueling or spreading a fire/flame.
Examples: Turning on the oven, striking a match.
Applications: Turning on most light bulbs. Smoking.

38. Final Hammer Blow Makeh b'Fatish מכה בפטיש
Definition: Any act of completion.
Examples: Creating an item of use, minor modifications. (VERY AMBIGUOUS)
Applications: Winding a watch (?), Electricity (?), Removing a tag (?)

39. Transferring Hotza'ah הוצאה
Definition: Transferring something from one domain type to another domain type.
Examples: Carrying from the house to the street.
Applications: Pushing a baby carriage.