

Parshat Vayakhel 5776

Moshe assembles the people and before commencing his instructions about the building of the *Mishkan*, he reminds them that while *M'locho* is permitted for 6 days of the week it is prohibited on *Shabbos*. This short passage (*Sh'mos* 35: 1-3) has 39 words plus the word *Shabbos* itself. It is a neat allusion to the 39 *M'lochos* which may not be carried out on *Shabbos* and which *M'lochos* we learn out from the activities involved in constructing the *Mishkan*.

Bal HaTurim points out that the word *La'asos* (in the phrase "*Asher Tzivo Hash-m La'asos Osom*" in the first *Posuk*) consists of a *Lamed* (= 30) and an anagram of *Teisha* (= 9), i.e another hint at the 39 prohibited *M'lochos*. He notes that the word *La'asos* is unusually spelt defectively without a *Vav* (which = 6 and therefore represents the 6 weekdays when these *M'lochos* are allowed). This is an example of the Torah's amazing facility to teach us something from the presence or unexpected absence of a single letter.

The last of these 3 *P'sukim* says: "*Lo S'va'aru Aish B'chol Mosh'voseichem B'yom HaShabbos*" meaning: "*You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the day of Shabbos*". Why is this one of the 39 *M'lochos* mentioned here to the exclusion of all the others and why does it need to be repeated at all as the *Aseres HaDibros* (10 Commandments) already forbade all *M'locho* in *Sh'mos* 20:10?

There are many different explanations some of which we will summarise:

Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Ramban all suggest that since a fire may be lit on *Yom Tov* in order to cook food it was necessary for the Torah to make clear that that does not apply on *Shabbos* and **Ramban** adds in the name of **Rabbi Nossan** in the **Mechilta** that it shows that it is not just for cooking that making a fire on *Shabbos* is prohibited but for other bodily purposes like washing.

Rabbenu Bachaye and **Sforno** suggest that it was necessary to warn against lighting a fire since it does not look like a *M'locho* and often one does it only as a preparation for other *M'lochos*.

Kli Yakar cites **Talmud Bavli Shabbos 20a** that the verse states that you shall not kindle fire in your dwellings so as to exclude the *Beis Hamikdash* where a fire was permitted but only for burning the limbs and fats of *Korbonos* (sacrificial offerings).

Tiferes Y'honson argues that since we abstain from *M'locho* on *Shabbos* in recognition of G-d's resting from creation of the world and since fire was only created at *Havdalah* after the first *Shabbos*, we might have thought that creation of fire on *Shabbos* itself is permitted, so it has to be expressly forbidden.

Rashi notes that creation of fire is singled out since (according to some) it is a "*Lav*" for which the punishment is *Malkos* (lashes) not death, as in the case of other *M'lochos* (i.e it is a less serious prohibition because on *Yom Tov* fire is permissible). Also, it shows that each *M'locho* one does, has its own punishment. You might have thought that you are only guilty if you have carried out all 39 *M'lochos* or that if you carry out several *Melochos* unintentionally (for which you have to bring a *Chatos* (sin-offering)), then you only need bring one offering in total but in fact you have to bring one for each.

Sefer HaChinuch says this prohibition is directed at the *Sanhedrin*, not the individual. The courts may not carry out the capital punishment of burning (*S'reifah*) on *Shabbos* and from this we also learn that no means of capital punishment may be carried on *Shabbos*.

The **Zohar** attributes a metaphorical meaning to the prohibition of creating fire, namely, don't be angry with people on *Shabbos* as this leads to rebellion. A mystical idea is that the fires of *G'hinnom* don't burn on *Shabbos* but an act of *M'chalel* (profaning) *Shabbos* causes these fires to be reignited.

On *Shabbos Parashas Sh'kalim* (the *Shabbos* occurring on or immediately before 1st *Adar*, or *Adar Sheni* in a leap year like this one) we read as the special *Maftir* the commandment from the *Sidra Ki Sisoh* for everyone to contribute a half *shekel* towards the cost of upkeep of the *Mishkan* (and later the *Beis HaMikdash*).

We don't have space for a meaningful *D'var Torah* about that also but fellow calendar geeks may be interested to know that in the 75 leap years between 1900 and 2100 (5660 to 5860) *Parashas Sh'kalim* coincided or will coincide with *Vayakhel* 54 times (72%) like this year) and with *P'kudei* 21 times (28%), whereas in the 126 non leap years in that period *Parashas Sh'kalim* coincided or will coincide with *Mishpotim* 123 times (97.62%) and only 3 times (2.38%) with *T'rumoh*. Why those different proportions apply only a geekier geek could tell us!