

# Derech Ha-Rif

Excerpts from the Torah discourse delivered by The great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

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## First Shabbat Meal

**“You shall not ignite fires in all of your dwelling places on the day of Shabbat (Shemot 35:3).”**

**A Person Must do all that is Within their Capabilities to Avoid Arguing on the Day of Shabbat.**

In this week's portion, Hashem commands the Jewish people about the observance of Shabbat, telling them that they cannot kindle fires anywhere within their dwelling places on the Shabbat day. Let us ask, what is the connection between the concept of observing Shabbat and the prohibition of lighting a fire?

It is necessary to be aware of a key concept, which each person must engrain deeply within their heart and remember it forever. It is forbidden for a person to anger another, one must make efforts not to provoke or antagonize one's fellow. If one's friend became angry and it was not one's fault, then it is the other person's problem that they are prone to anger. A person will do that which they think is correct in life, and if, within one's life, one crosses paths with someone who does not like one's conduct, and the second person always becomes angry when the first speaks, eats or drinks, and overall, they are angry that the other person exists, this is his or her problem. The first person will not be punished for the anger of the second, as they have not done anything to bring it about.

However in regard to the topic of Shabbat, our holy Rabbis teach that the command "You shall not ignite fires in any of your dwelling places on the day of Shabbat" means to say that not only is it forbidden to anger one's fellow or argue with them, but a person must be careful and think of how to prevent this, and not come onto something which may possibly lead one's fellow to become angry. Throughout the entire Torah, a person must be careful not to do evil to another, but in regard to Shabbat, a person has to not only avoid angering another or arguing with them, a person must think of ways of avoiding entering into argument or dispute with others on Shabbat.

For example, a person needs to think of the possibility that if they wear a certain item of clothing, their child will become angry. Generally, it is permitted for a person to wear a given garment, no one is forbidden from wearing it on account of a concern that it may anger another. On the eve of Shabbat, a person should think ahead, one should ensure that the table is set and that one's wife is happy, a person should lay the table even if they do not need to. In regard to the day of Shabbat, Hashem commanded us to think ahead and prepare in order that no problem or argument come up, even though one is not technically bound to do so in general.

This is the special novelty which Hashem commanded in this week's portion. The command is not only not to argue with one's fellow, but to be careful to avoid reaching a narrow point at which one will need to argue with one's fellow. All or most of the commands are in regard to dealing with a problem, the novelty here is to think from the outset how to avoid entering an uncomfortable area which can lead to dispute with one's friend, one's spouse, one's neighbor, business partner, or any person. It is necessary to know that the fire of Gehinnom (Hell) burns the Resha'im (wicked people) all week long. However, when Shabbat comes in, Hashem extinguishes the fires of Gehinnom. When a person is angry, his anger ignites the fires of Gehinnom; the moment that the fire of Gehinnom is lit, people who have burnt all week long become burnt once again. These people then raise accusations against a person and desire that evil should befall him, for he caused them to be burnt again. There is rest on Shabbat, as the fire of Gehinnom does not damage them. Once a person becomes angry, a fire is ignited, this causes evil to those in Gehinnom and they accuse a person.

Our holy Rabbis say that a person should always try to bring in Shabbat early and take Shabbat out late, for the moment a person brings Shabbat in early, the fires of Gehinnom stop. In the merit of the first Jew to bring Shabbat in, the fire of Gehinnom ceases. It is not relit until the final Jew takes Shabbat out. Therefore, the earlier a person brings Shabbat in and the later they bring Shabbat out, the more they prevent people in Gehinnom from suffering from its fires.

On Shabbat, a person is commanded not only to avoid arguing, but to ensure that they do not enter a place of conflict, for the moment a person becomes angry and argues with another, they light up the fires of Gehinnom, and all the people there begin to hate them. They raise claims of accusation against such a person because he has caused them evil, as they are now burnt due to this person's actions. However, a person who prevents argument and/or stops arguments, and even loses out in order that there should not be dispute, causes the fires of Gehinnom to be cooled. A person who cools the fires of Gehinnom merits to climb to great heights and to receive the most incredible things.



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## Soul Of the Rif

**"A G-d of faith is He, with no iniquity, Righteous and fair is He (Devarim 32:4)." A person needs to strengthen themselves on the strongest level in the belief that all that happens within a person's life is for the good. As the Talmud teaches, "All that the Merciful One does is for the good" - everything which Hashem does is for the good. The reality that we do not know how to take the correct perspective on what He does is our issue. A person must know that Hashem is a merciful and loving father, a merciful and loving father will not do something bad to his children. Even if the child thinks that the parent has dealt harshly with them or been nasty to them, the child is making a great mistake.**





## 2nd Shabbat Meal

**"And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael (Shemot 35:1)."**

The accolade of the Portion of Vayakhel is that it was said to the entire Jewish People Together.

In this week's portion, Hashem asks of Moshe to assemble all of the Jewish people in order to tell them something. Let us ask the question, when did Hashem command Moshe to speak to them, how did Moshe transmit the command of Hashem to the people? What is the difference between a passage shared with them in a communal setting and a passage not shared with them in a communal setting?

It is possible to explain as follows: When Hashem commanded Moshe about a specific Mitzva, for example the Mitzva of Tefillin, Moshe would enter into the Ohel Moed and hear all of the laws and the concept of the Mitzva. After this, Moshe would emerge from the Ohel Moed and call Aharon, his brother, and tell him about the Mitzva of Tefillin. After this, Aharon would stand to the right of Moshe, and Moshe would then call Aharon's sons and teach them all that he had taught Aharon. After Aharon's sons had heard it, they sat alongside Moshe, and then the Zekeinim (elders) entered to hear the word of Hashem. After this, Hashem commanded Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael what He had told him. During this instruction, the elders would sit alongside the sons of Aharon. The entire nation would enter and Moshe would review a further time over the command of Hashem. Overall, it emerges that every matter which Hashem commanded Moshe was heard by Aharon four times; three times by his sons, twice by the elders and the Jewish people heard it once. This happened every time Hashem commanded Moshe about a Mitzva in the Torah.

The exception to this is this week's portion, in which the command is different to any other command found in the Torah. Hashem told Moshe to speak to the entire nation at once, rich and poor, Kohanim, Levi'im and Yisraelim. They all heard the word of Hashem, and not in the format that the rest of the Mitzvot were shared, with Aharon being instructed, then his sons, then the elder and then the entire nation.

It is necessary to be aware of a key concept, this week's portion has immense power, Moshe told it to the entire nation in one go, and that which can be extracted from this portion is of incredible and immeasurable power.

## Q & A with the Rif



### Question:

Dear Rabbi, Thank G-d, over the past year, I have improved, but I do not have true joy in Avodat Hashem (Service of G-d). I am very patient in my prayers, however nothing holy excites me, and I feel as if the Creator of the World is almost like a stranger to me. I am religious only because I know that one pays a price for sins, however this is the only reason I am observant. Rabbi, what should I do?

### Answer:

Simcha (joy) is something which a person must work for, it is impossible to serve Hashem on the basis of being in one emotional state or another, a person cannot say, "Today I am happy, so I will be a tzaddik; tomorrow, since I will not be happy, I will not be a Tzaddik." A person needs to fulfill the Torah and the Mitzvot without connection to whether they are happy or not. Once a person performs Mitzvot because they carry out the commands which Hashem gave them, then they need to take care to avoid being guilty of that which the Torah describes, "Because you did not cause serve Hashem your G-d with joy and good-heartedness, out of abundance of all (Devarim 28:47)." It is imperative that a person takes joy in Mitzvot.

A person who performs Mitzvot needs to take joy in the fact that they are causing joy to Hashem. When you fulfill a Mitzva, you must be aware that you are causing joy to Hashem. First of all, fulfill the Mitzva like ticking a 'box,' even if at that point you do not understand why you are doing it. Once you have fulfilled, then go through the Mitzvot one at a time, studying them to understand their depth, for you will need this in order to do it with joy. If you do not perform Mitzvot with joy, after you do everything, then work through the Mitzvot on an intellectual basis one by one, you will come to understand their depth and realize that you need to act with joy when performing them.







## 3rd Shabbat meal

"You shall not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling places on the day of the Sabbath (Shemot 35:3)."

A person who ignites his soul during the day of the week with the fire of Torah and Kedusha (holiness) will have these fires light up for them of their own accord.

The holy Torah commands us in this week's portion, "You shall not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling places on the day of the Shabbat." This is a prohibition that we cannot light fires in our houses or in any place on Shabbat. It is known that the Jewish people were commanded about the Shabbat on three occasions. The first was by Moshe, as the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 1:28) brings that when they were in Egypt, Moshe was like a son to Pharaoh. During the enslavement, Moshe went in to Pharaoh and reasoned with him as follows: If a person has a slave, would they want them to be strong or weak? Pharaoh answered that of course, they would want the slave to be strong in order that they can work well and effectively.

Moshe then told Pharaoh that since the Jewish people were working all days of the week, they are not resting, they are weakened and will die from this. He suggested giving them one day of rest, Pharaoh accepted the suggestion and gave Moshe the option of choosing which day would be given to them to take off. Moshe asked that Shabbat be the day they have off, and from that time onwards, they were given Shabbat off. The Midrash teaches that they would sit and take out old scrolls which they had from the time of the Avot, they would learn Torah with these. This was the first time that Shabbat was given to the Jewish people.

After this, Hashem gave them the Mitzva of Shabbat in Mara. This meant that before the Jewish people received the Torah, Hashem gave them the Mitzva of Shabbat, however, the Shabbat about which they were commanded then had different laws to the Shabbat laws which we have. If it were comfortable to move objects, it was permitted, the Shabbat was more of a rest and pleasure for the body, based on what was comfortable for people. This was the Mitzva of Shabbat given to them in Mara. The third time that they were commanded about Shabbat was when the Torah was given, this command was based upon the thirty-nine Melachot (forbidden labors) which were performed during the week in the Mishkan. These Melachot entail Avot (primary labors) and Toldot (subcategories within the Avot), these are activities which are forbidden on Shabbat.

Therefore, the following question must be asked: If lighting a fire is only one of the thirty-nine Melachot, why does the Torah only mention this prohibition and not any of the other Melachot? Why does the Torah emphasize only this prohibition, writing, "You shall not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling places on the day of Shabbat?"

It is possible to explain based on a key principle of our teacher, the Chatam Sofer. He teaches that throughout all of the days of the week, a person must ignite their soul with great enthusiasm, and on Shabbat, the greatest levels of enthusiasm must break forth and light up as if a fire was lit on Shabbat. This is the meaning of "You shall not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling places on the day of Shabbat," - you shall not ignite a fire of enthusiasm in Torah and sanctity, because it is not necessary to light this up on Shabbat, only on the days of the week.

Over the course of the days of the week, a person must ignite themselves, one who exerts themselves on the eve of Shabbat will have food to eat on Shabbat (Avoda Zara 3a). On every Sunday, we say, "Today is the first day towards the holy Shabbat." From the first day of the week onwards, we give power to Shabbat, this continues during the other weekdays, as we store up strength in our souls, an inner fire in honor of Shabbat. The purpose of all of the days of the week is to honor the holy Shabbat.

Just as the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash was built with three branches on the right and three branches on the left, each side leaning towards the middle, the same is true of the days of the week, three days belong to the Shabbat which has passed, and three belong to the upcoming Shabbat.

The holy Shabbat is the source of blessing, and it is the greatest and holiest thing. Throughout the entire week, we need to make our soul ascend and gather strength and fire in our souls. When the Shabbat comes in, our souls will light up of their own accord, and the light of Shabbat will ignite on its own accord.

The verse means to say that one should not light a fire on the day of Shabbat because when the Shabbat day arrives, there will be no need to awaken your soul, for it will be lit up by the fire which you have ignited during the days of the week. This is the meaning of that which we say in Lecha Dodi, "Meirosh Mikedem Nesucha" - from the outset, from early on, it [the Day of Shabbat] is anointed." There are twenty-four hours in the day, if we multiply this by six, it comes to a total of 144, which is the Gematria (numerical value) of Mikedem. From the six days, the holy day of Shabbat is anointed. A person takes the power of the holy Shabbat and through it, a person ascends throughout all of the days of the week. Therefore, if a person elects to live their life in an ordinary manner and then arrive at Shabbat, thinking that they will press on a switch that the moment Shabbat comes in, they will have light, sanctity and an elevation of their soul, they are making a grave mistake. This is the meaning of not igniting a fire on Shabbat, the fire of Shabbat is already lit up during the days of the week, based on a person's efforts and toil prior to the Shabbat. This fire burns in every person and elevates every individual.

Therefore, a person needs to be aware of a key concept, namely, that all study of Torah and worship of Hashem, all Yirat Shamayim and subjugation of the heart which we build over the course of the week is a preparation for Shabbat. We gather enthusiasm, Yirat Shamayim, good deeds and the study of Torah in order that a person will burn like a fire on Shabbat, in order that we will not need to ignite a fire on Shabbat, rather the fire of sanctity will burn strongly within us of its own accord. Through this, we will ascend and have the ability to attain the great fire and greatest spirituality from Hashem.



## Treasure charms from the Rif

One needs to understand and explain the depth of Birkat HaMazon (Grace After Meals). Birkat HaMazon is one of the truly great things which Hashem has given us. Indeed, the holy Sefarim (books) relate that one who is particular to recite Birkat HaMazon will merit great things. The 'Ba'al HaChinuch' says that he had a tradition from his teachers, that anyone who recites Birkat HaMazon can be assured that he will have a sustained flow of food. Indeed, there are numerous stories of deceased individuals who came to their relatives in their dreams and relayed that they were being judged in Heaven on account of not having been particular to recite Birkat HaMazon. The Ari HaKadosh said that it is imperative for one to recite Birkat HaMazon with joy. Even though there are certain moments during Tefilla (prayer), in which it is proper to be more cautious, cognisant that one is standing before Hashem, this should not be confused with Birkat HaMazon. Rather, Birkat HaMazon ought to be recited with joy and through this, one will surely be privy to bountiful sustenance.





## The fourth Post Shabbat meal

## Storys from the Rif

Shabbat is a foundational precept in life. It is virtuous to envelope one's Shabbat in holiness and purity, and bring Shabbat in as early as possible, seeking to take time from the weekday and add it onto Shabbat. If one does this, Hashem will undoubtedly shine His radiance down and ensure that all the weekdays provide sustenance in bounty. This idea is alluded to in the Torah itself. The Torah states that "You shall work for six days, and the seventh day shall be the holy Shabbat for you, a Shabbat for Hashem (Shemot 35:2)." This verse means to say that if you treat the seventh day as Shabbat, with purity and joy, then the other six days will serve as fine cultivators for successful work and Divine Assistance. This is especially true if one brings Shabbat in early and brings it out late.

This is why whenever the Jewish people undergo hardship, we recommend that people bring Shabbat in earlier. This is because early Shabbat is propitious to engendering Divine Assistance and increased success. This sentiment is echoed by the Talmud (Pesachim 112a) which states that one who makes the weekday into Shabbat, by bringing Shabbat in early, will be privy to financial stability, such that they won't be reliant on people.

The Talmud (Shabbat 119a) records a fascinating story involving Yosef Mokir Shabbat (Yosef who honored Shabbat). The Talmud relates that there once lived a gentleman called Yosef, who afforded special respect to Shabbat. During the entire week, he would work exceptionally hard to provide for Shabbat; he would save up any extra income and dedicate it to beautifying Shabbat. On Shabbat he would conduct himself with unbounded joy and invest the money which he saved up during the week in buying things for Shabbat. Shabbat would be the highlight of his week, which he would build-up towards the entire week.

This same Yosef was a poor man during the week. He had a gentile neighbor who was extremely wealthy and for some reason, he detested Yosef. This neighbor approached an astrologer, and to the man's horror, the astrologer informed him that in the future, all his great wealth would be transferred to Yosef.

The wealthy man got scared and resolved to prevent the prediction from coming true. With that, he proceeded to sell his possessions and purchase a beautiful diamond. Upon purchasing the diamond, he declared: 'With this diamond, I can be assured that Yosef will not come to possess my possessions. I will simply take this diamond to a hidden location and hide it, to ensure that Yosef never finds it.' The man considered different locations and decided to hide the diamond in his hat. He cut a small opening in his hat, sewed the diamond inside, safe in the knowledge that his precious diamond was now safe from Yosef's grasp.

One day, the man was walking on the side of a river, and to his horror, the wind caught onto his hat, lifted it up, and planted it in the river, where it was promptly swallowed by a large fish.

The Talmud continued to relate that during that week Yosef was going through a particularly hard time, having to work especially hard to save enough money to buy food for his treasured Shabbat. He went to the market to purchase the choicest delicacies and while there he spied an extremely large fish. He approached the fish seller and inquired about the fish, the seller informed him that due to its size, he would only be willing to sell it for a small fortune. Although everyone else had refrained from buying the expensive fish, Yosef resolved to buy it, safe in the knowledge that it would beautify his holy Shabbat. When he returned home, he began to prepare the fish for Shabbat, and upon cutting into it, noticed that the knife hit something hard. He peered in and saw the sparkle of an enormous diamond. Sure enough, Yosef had purchased his neighbor's priceless diamond, and he became a wealthy man for evermore.

Our commentators explain that Yosef Mokir Shabbat was in fact a Gilgul (reincarnation) of Yosef HaTzaddik. It is told that despite Yosef HaTzaddik having been steeped in the depravity of Egypt, he remained steadfast in his commitment to Shabbat. The verse states that Yosef instructed his household to "slaughter animals and prepare them (Bereishit 43:16)." Our sages explain that Yosef was in fact instructing the members of his household to slaughter and prepare sheep to celebrate and honor Shabbat.

Yosef HaTzaddik was particular to honor Shabbat with joy and alacrity despite his decrepit surroundings. It is for this reason that he merited to become "Yosef ... the provider (Bereishit 42:6)," namely, the primary financier of all of Egypt. With this in mind, we can appreciate how Yosef Mokir Shabbat, whose entire life was devoted to Shabbat, merited to attain the priceless diamond's unparalleled value.

For this reason, when one adds from the weekday onto Shabbat, and studies Sefer Devarim each Shabbat, then Moshe will serve as a Heavenly advocate and trigger Divine blessings to flow upon that person. Additionally, if one conducts oneself in the manner espoused by 'Shuva Yisrael,' wearing the four pieces of white clothing on Shabbat, and learning the Torah of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, serving Hashem with purity and joy, then we will speedily merit the coming of the Mashiach in our days.

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