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By the Hakham
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Asking a Non-Jew to do Forbidden Shabbath Labors

Something which comes under a Torah prohibition of Melakha (forbidden Shabbath labor), one is forbidden to ask a non-Jew to do on Shabbath. This applies even if it is for the purpose of a Mišwah.

On the other hand, something that is forbidden by Rabbinical decree (Shebuth), one may ask a non-Jew to do on Shabbath for the purpose of a Mišwah or for someone who is (somewhat) ill. There is an opinion that it is even permitted in a case of financial loss.

According to this opinion, one could have a non-Jew move articles or merchandise which are Muqṣeh (not permitted to be handled on Shabbath), in order to take them out of the rain. One may rely on this opinion in a case of great financial loss.

(See Shulḥan 'Arukh 307:5, 331:6.

Ben Ish Hai, 2nd year,

Parashath Wayyishlah, Oth17)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

Wayyishlah: In What Way Was Jacob Complete?

"וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שִׁכֶּם" (Bereshith, 33:18). It says in the Gemara of Shabbath (33b) that he came complete in his body (שֵׁלֵם בְּגוּפוֹ), complete financially (שֵׁלֵם בְּמָמוֹנוֹ), and complete in his Torah (שֵׁלֵם בְּתוֹרָתוֹ).

It says in Penei Dawid that he was complete in his body because he kept all the 613 commandments, and as we know, each commandment corresponds to a different part of the body. There was nothing lacking in any part of his body, because there was no commandment that he did not keep. A person's money is considered to be "his", only when there's no hint of stealing or deceit. This makes him complete financially (שֵׁלֵם בְּמָמוֹנוֹ).

The end result of fulfilling the two conditions of being "complete in his body" (because there is no commandment that he transgressed), and "complete financially" (because there is no hint of stealing or deceit), is that he is considered to be complete in his Torah (שֵׁלֵם בְּתוֹרָתוֹ). The reason is because it's not the study of Torah that is key, but doing what it teaches.

(See Penei Dawid, Parashath Wayyishlah)



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Finding a Lost Object with Identifying Marks

If someone found books that have an identifying mark, he must not read from them, but must keep them in an appropriate manner for the owner.

If he wishes to give them to someone else whom he trusts to look after them, he may do so. This is speaking about an object which was lost. If someone deposited an item in his charge, however, he may not give it to someone else to look after on his behalf.

If the person wishes to travel to another place and does not wish to take the item with him because it would be difficult or a big responsibility, then he can hand it over to a Beth Din (Jewish court), who, in turn, can give it over to someone else whom they consider reliable.

(See Ben Ish Hai, 1st year, Parashath Ki Thabo, Oth 7)

Forgetting to Recite the Blessing Till After Drying One's Hands

When washing one's hands (Netilath Yadayim) for bread and the like, one should, strictly speaking, say the Beracha (blessing) before washing. This is because the normal order is to say the blessing and then do the action.

We do not do so for various reasons and the custom has become, as stated by the Rama and also the Ari z"l, to first wash and then recite the blessing before drying one's hands. (One must be particular not to say the blessing while drying one's hands). If one started drying one's hands and then remembered to say the blessing while his hands were still partially wet, he may still say the blessing then.

If, however, one forgot to recite the blessing till after he dried his hands, there is a difference of opinion as to whether he is permitted to recite the blessing or not. As such, as in all cases where there is a doubt about a blessing, he should not recite the blessing. Instead, as mentioned in Ben Ish Hai, he should touch a portion of his body which will require him to do Netilath Yadayim (such as scratching one's head, etc.) and then do Netilah again with a Beracha (being careful to bless before drying).

Note: there is no issue here of causing an unnecessary blessing (which is not permitted), since he did not recite one in the first place.

(See Sh. 'A. Yoreh De'ah, 285:1. 291:3 Ben Ish Hai, 2nd year, Parashath Ki Thabo, Oth 1)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"h

To go to Synagogue or not?

(Continued from last week)

In his book, "Laws for Women", Hakham Yoseph Hayyim 'a"h, addresses the question of whether it is important for women to go to synagogue on Shabbath - to see the Torah, answer Amen, Qaddish and Qedushah.

The Ben Ish Hai relates an episode of a woman who lived at the time of the Talmud. Even though there was a synagogue in her neighborhood, she still made a point of walking to a synagogue located further away. Ribbi Yoḥanan asked her why she bothered to walk so far, when there were closer synagogues in her neighborhood. Her reply was: "If I walk to a distant synagogue, my reward will be even greater, because of the additional steps that I take". From this we deduce that going to synagogue guarantees great reward.

My dear friends, I think the answer to the question is obvious. Let us make the effort and go to synagogue and participate in the services on Shabbath. How easy it is to get a reward. But please, let us keep in mind the reason of why we go to synagogue: to strengthen our connection with our Creator. Let us not, G-d forbid, stumble and engage in inappropriate conversations and the like.