

# RELIGION OF DEEDS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*This dvar Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 90, Melacha of Carrying. Good Shabbos!*

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## Shabbos -- Commemoration Of Creation And G-d's Involvement In History

*In Parshas Vayakhel, the Torah mentions the laws of Shabbos: "Six days you shall do work, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for G-d..." [Shmos 35:2]*

The 39 categories of labor that are prohibited on Shabbos are derived from the labors that were needed in the Mishkan. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the 39 categories of work represent man's mastery over the physical world. Therefore, by resting on Shabbos, I am making the statement that there is a greater Master over this physical world than myself.

If by working six days, I proclaim my mastery over the physical world, then by resting on the seventh day, I am saying "but there is a greater Master over the physical world, and that is HaShem [G-d]". Therefore, observing the Shabbos is giving testimony that we believe in HaShem's creation of the world.

This works well for 38 of the 39 categories of work. However there is one type of forbidden work that does not seem to fit in with this philosophical framework. The prohibition of carrying does not seem to show mastery over anything. The object remains the same as it was before. One has not shown mastery over anything by transporting an object between a private domain and a public domain or within a public domain. Carrying seems to be the exception to the rule.

The prophet Yirmiyahu seems to confirm this [Yirmiyahu 17:19-27] by repeatedly distinguishing between "performing labor" and "carrying burdens out of your houses" when bemoaning the lack of Shabbos observance in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem].

If the 38 labors represent man's mastery over the world, what is the philosophical implication of the labor of carrying?

Rav Hirsch says that 'Carrying' represents social interaction -- taking from the private domain into the

community and taking from the community into the private domain. This is the social interaction of human beings.

The sum total of all human social interactions can be called 'history'. When I refrain from carrying on Shabbos, I am making the statement that not only is G-d Master over the physical world, but G-d is Master over social interaction. G-d is Master over history.

This is what Yirmiyahu told the Jews of Yerushalayim:

"If you refrain from carrying..."

(Meaning: If you recognize G-d's mastery over history...)

"...then I will make My Divine Providence (Hashgocha Protis) felt and Yerushalayim will have fame and glory."

"However if you refuse to listen to Me and you do carry on Shabbos..."

(Meaning: If you refuse to acknowledge G-d's place in history), the result will be that I will remove myself from history and, (Rachmana l'tzlan) Yerushalayim will be destroyed."

This, says Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, is what we say in the Shabbos Kiddush. Shabbos is "in commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt" and it is "in commemoration of the Act of Creation". By abstaining from 38 types of labor, we acknowledge that Shabbos is in commemoration of the Act of Creation. By refraining from carrying (the 39th category of labor), we acknowledge the Exodus from Egypt, which represents the Hand of HaShem in the history of human beings.

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## Glossary

**Rachmana L'tzlan** -- (Aramaic) May the All Merciful spare us.

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## Sources and Personalities

**Rash"i** -- Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105); Torah commentator par excellence; France

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei are provided below:

- Tape # 047 - Pikuach Nefesh: To Save a Life

- Tape # 090 - The Melacha of Carrying
- Tape # 138 - The Melacha of Tying Knots
- Tape # 185 - The Melacha of Writing
- Tape # 231 - Making A Siyum
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