

The list of labors and their division into groups

The **mishna** (7:2) provides a list of those labors that are prohibited on Shabbat:

The primary categories of labor³⁰ are forty-less-one.

1. One who sows; one who plows; one who reaps; one who gathers sheaves into a pile; one who threshes, removing the kernel from the husk; one who winnows threshed grain in the wind; one who selects the inedible waste from the edible; one who grinds; one who sifts the flour in a sieve; one who kneads dough; and one who bakes.
2. One who shears wool; one who whitens it; one who combs the fleece and straightens it; one who dyes it; one who spins the wool; one who stretches the threads of the warp in the loom; one who constructs two meshes, tying the threads of the warp to the base of the loom; one who weaves two threads; one who severs two threads for constructive purposes; one who ties a knot; one who unties a knot; one who sews two

30. As explained below, the mishna enumerates the “primary categories of labor,” that is, the fundamental labors that are prohibited on Shabbat, from which many other similar labors are derived, which are called “subcategories.”

stitches with a needle; and one who tears a fabric in order to sew two stitches.

3. One who traps a deer or any living creature; one who slaughters it; one who flays it; one who salts its hide, a step in the tanning process; one who tans its hide;³¹ one who smooths it, removing hairs and veins; and one who cuts it into measured parts.
4. One who writes two letters and one who erases in order to write two letters, one who builds a structure and one who dismantles it, one who extinguishes a fire and one who kindles a fire, one who strikes a blow with a hammer to complete the production process of a vessel, and one who carries out an object from domain to domain. These are the primary categories of labor, and they number forty-less-one.

In light of the aforementioned principle, that the prohibited labors of Shabbat are derived from the Tabernacle, the **Gemara** asks how several of the labors were performed in the Tabernacle, such as: Where was there tying in the Tabernacle; where was there tearing in the Tabernacle? (74b).³² Ultimately, the **Gemara** determines where each and every one of these labors was performed in the Tabernacle.

The division of the labors in accordance with their function in the Tabernacle

In light of the statement of the **Gemara**, one can explain the logic of the mishna's order of the labors. It is possible that the order is determined in accordance with the **function of the labors in the construction of the Tabernacle**. The thirty-nine primary categories

31. The **Gemara** (75b) states that Salting and Tanning hide are identical labors, and therefore one of them should be deleted, to be replaced by **Drafting**, i.e., drawing lines on a hide to indicate where it should be cut.

32. This is also indicated by the **Yerushalmi** (7:2): What plowing was there in the Tabernacle? ... What dyeing was there in the Tabernacle? ... What tying was there in the Tabernacle? ... What tanning was there in the Tabernacle? ... What erasing was there in the Tabernacle? ... What building was there in the Tabernacle?

of labor can be divided into four groups, in accordance with the purpose for which they were performed in the Tabernacle:

1. Eleven labors for **preparing dyes for dyeing the curtains**. It can be inferred from the **Gemara** (74b) and **Rashi** (73a, s.v. *ha'ofeh*) that the first group of labors, from Sowing to Cooking, was performed in the Tabernacle in order to prepare the dyes with which the curtains and the hides that covered the Tabernacle were dyed. For this purpose it was necessary to grow plants which contain the spices for dyeing (Sowing, Reaping, etc.), to separate the spices from the other parts of the plants (Threshing, Selecting, etc.), and subsequently to ground, knead, and cook them in water.
2. Thirteen labors for **preparing the curtains themselves**: Extracting and preparing the wool for use (Shearing, Whitening, etc.), through preparing the threads and the fabric (Spinning, Weaving, etc.), until Sewing and Tearing, as all these serve to prepare the woolen curtains that covered the Tabernacle (as well as the Veil and the Screen).³³
3. Seven labors for **preparing the hides for covering the Tabernacle**: Trapping and Slaughtering, to Tanning and Cutting a hide.
4. Eight labors related to the **construction of the Tabernacle**: Writing and Erasing were performed when they would mark the boards of the Tabernacle so that it should be known where each belonged (Gemara, 103b); Building and Dismantling were an essential part of the construction of the Tabernacle; Igniting and Extinguishing were carried out, for example, in order to melt metals for the fashioning of the sockets and beams;³⁴ Striking a

33. According to the conclusion of the **Gemara** (74a), the labors of Tying and Untying were not performed in the process of fashioning the curtains, but rather as part of the trapping of the snails, done in order to prepare the sky-blue dye. The trappers of the snails would need to tie or untie knots in their hunting nets.

34. **Rashi** (73a, s.v. *mekhabeh*) explains that Extinguishing and Igniting were performed in the Tabernacle when they extinguished and kindled the fire for cooking the spices for dyes. In fact, if fire was used in the Tabernacle only for

blow with a hammer was achieved upon the end of various parts of the Tabernacle, and it signified the completion of the labor; and Carrying Out from the private to the public domain was performed by transferring beams from the ground to wagons and vice versa, as stated above.

“Our *tanna* cited the sequence of bread”

Yet, as stated above (p. 35), the **Gemara** (74b) notes that one of the labors enumerated in the mishna was not performed in exactly that manner in the Tabernacle. Cooking (of the spices for dyes) was carried out in the Tabernacle, whereas the *tanna* lists Baking:

“And one who bakes.” Rav Pappa said: Our *tanna* left out Cooking the spices, which was in the Tabernacle, and [yet] he included Baking. Our *tanna* cited the sequence of bread (*sidura dePat*).

The Gemara’s answer is that although Cooking was performed rather than Baking, the *tanna* preferred to list the activities performed as **part of the preparation of bread**, which is far more common than cooking spices. Of course, baking is a prohibited labor only because it is very similar to cooking, and cooking was performed in the Tabernacle as part of the extraction of dyes for the curtains. Nevertheless, instead of listing the labors in accordance with how they were carried out in the Tabernacle, which is the source of their prohibition, the *tanna* chose to enumerate them by their more common implementation in daily life, the preparation of bread. Perhaps the *tanna* felt that formulating the labors in their better-known, more widespread form would help the students to remember them.

this purpose, Extinguishing and Igniting should have been listed together with the first group of labors, those of extracting the dyes for the curtain. Rather, it stands to reason that Extinguishing and Igniting were included in the last group of labors, which contains various activities performed during the process of the construction of the Tabernacle, because fire was used for many and varied requirements in the construction of the Tabernacle, such as melting metals for fashioning the sockets, boards, and rings. **Rabbi Yehonatan of Lunel** writes similarly in his commentary on the Mishna.

In light of the Gemara's statement, it is usually understood that the order of the labors in the mishna was not established in accordance with their historical role in the construction of the Tabernacle but rather **their role in our daily life**. If so, the labors should be divided in a slightly different manner from that suggested above:

The division of labors in accordance with people's requirements

1. Eleven labors involving the **preparation of bread** ("the sequence of bread"), from Sowing to Baking.
2. Thirteen labors related to the **preparation of clothing**, from Shearing to Sowing.
3. Nine labors connected to **writing**, from Trapping to Writing and Erasing. The first labors (from Trapping to Cutting) are for fashioning the hide upon which one writes; they are followed by labors relating to writing itself.
4. Six labors related to the **construction of a house**, from Building to Carrying Out an item from domain to domain.³⁵

As explained earlier, this volume addresses the first group of labors, from Sowing to Cooking/Baking. These labors were performed in the Tabernacle for the preparation of dyes for the curtains, and are used in daily life for making bread.

35. A similar division can be found in *Peirush Kadmon MiMitzrayim* (see note 28, above), 7:2: The sum of the labors: Eleven in the preparation of bread, which are from Plowing to Baking; thirteen in [the preparation of] clothing until it is worn, and of all the types of clothing [the *tanna*] mentions wool, which is the common clothing in most places... and nine with regard to writing, as in the majority of places they likewise write only on hides, and these [labors] are from Trapping to Drawing; and two labors involving construction: Building and Dismantling; and three involving the preparation of vessels, which are Igniting, Extinguishing, and Striking a blow with a hammer; and one that does not refer to anything [specific], which is Carrying Out.