

## 37. Extinguishing a Fire

### הַמְכַבֵּה

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to extinguish a fire, or to decrease it, or to slow its progress for some productive purpose. Activities prohibited within this *melachah* include blowing out a flame, raking the coals to put out a fire, extinguishing a fire with your hands, stamping on it, pouring water over it, covering it with sand or earth, spraying it with chemicals, etc. The *Melachah* of Extinguishing a Fire is applicable to any of the processes described in the previous *Melachah* of Kindling a Fire.

2. Also included within this *melachah* (*toladot*) are removing oil from a burning lamp, tilting or adjusting it so as to impede the flow of oil to the flame, and removing some fuel from a tank or other container that is supplying the fuel to feed the fire.

3. You are not permitted to extinguish a fire<sup>1</sup> for any reason, even if it is not for some productive purpose. Among the prohibited

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1. **Opening a Door or Window Opposite a Burning Candle** You should not open a door or a window directly opposite a burning candle lest it be extinguished by the wind blowing in from the outside. In case of necessity you may open the door or window gradually so as not to cause a sudden draft that might extinguish the flame. Shabbat candles should be placed where they will be protected from a draft or the wind blowing in from the outside.

## II: Principal Classes of Labor (*Melachot*)

activities are turning off or lowering the flame of a gas<sup>2</sup> or electric<sup>3</sup> burner, extinguishing a fire by closing off its supply of air, shutting off a motor,<sup>4</sup> and turning off<sup>5</sup> an electric incandescent light<sup>6</sup> or a battery powered flashlight.

2. **Turning Off the Gas if the Flame Goes Out on the Stove** If the gas flame on the stove is accidentally extinguished on Shabbat you are permitted to turn off the gas, as the continued flow of gas constitutes a danger. It makes no difference if the stove has an electric ignition system or if it is completely manual. If possible it should be done in a manner different from the usual, but in any case, you may not allow the gas to continue to flow over Shabbat.
3. **Disconnecting an Electric Current** Whether or not disconnecting an electric current is a violation of this *melachah* depends on the *halachic* nature of connecting an electric current. See note 9 in the previous *melachah*.
4. **Parking at a Hospital** As discussed above in *Melachah* 36, note 1, there are situations in which you are allowed to drive on Shabbat. However, when the threat to safety has passed, and you must park the car, turning off the engine poses its own *halachic* issue. Clearly, the best option is to ask a non-Jew or a child to turn the car off. If that is not possible, you may turn it off yourself if you are worried that the car will be stolen, or that it might fall into the hands of someone who might create a dangerous situation while driving it, or if continuing to run the engine will result in a health risk, as is the case in an indoor garage. The *halachah* is more lenient regarding turning off a car than driving it—since the extinguishing is not for a productive purpose (i.e., nothing is created by turning off the engine) it is prohibited *miderabanan* but not *min HaTorah*. Finally, it should also be noted that any leniency in turning off the engine would not extend to turning off the head lights. A drained battery is easily remedied and does not constitute “a great loss” for which rabbinic decrees may be suspended.
5. **Turning a Switch Off When the Current is Disconnected** You should not remove a plug from an electric socket or turn an electric switch off on Shabbat, even when the electric current is disconnected, as the plug and switch are *muktzeh*. Some *poskim* permit removing the plug or turning the switch off when the current is disconnected, if necessary, to prevent it from coming on again, by doing so in some manner different from the usual, such as with your elbow or foot. In the event that the electricity is cut off as a result of a general power failure, it is permitted, in the opinion of some *poskim*, to turn the switch off to keep the lights and electrical appliances from going on when the current returns. You should do this in a manner different from the usual as well. In a case of extreme necessity some permit turning the switch on so that the lights and electrical equipment will go on again when the current is reconnected.
6. **Extinguishing a Light for a Dangerously Ill Person** In the case of a dangerously ill person, you may put out a light if it keeps him or her from falling asleep or causes discomfort. You should first try to shade the light or move the sick person to another room, provided moving will not aggravate his or her condition. If the light is transportable (as in a battery operated lamp or a candle) it is better to remove it than put

### 37. Extinguishing a Fire

4. The prohibition against extinguishing a fire does not apply where there is possible danger to human life. In such a case, when a fire breaks out and there is cause to fear that it may spread, it should be promptly extinguished.<sup>7</sup> However, you may not directly extinguish a fire only to save material possessions.<sup>8</sup> But you may take indirect measures to keep it from spreading and to cause it to be extinguished, such as pouring water in its path, etc. Likewise, if a burning candle should fall onto the table,<sup>9</sup> you may shake it off the table, even if that will extinguish it.

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it out. If a non-Jew is readily available, you should ask the non-Jew to remove or extinguish the light. The lenient ruling in the case of a dangerously ill person applies as well to kindling a light if it should be necessary.

7. **Putting Out a Fire in a House or Apartment** If a fire breaks out in an apartment or in a house on Shabbat, whether it is in your own or that of a neighbor, you are obligated to put it out. Although the classic *poskim* frown on such action, it is clear that their stringencies are based on the assumption that there is absolutely no danger to human life. Present-day conditions preclude such certainty as no one can be certain what household products are flammable and to what extent, and, therefore, any fire constitutes a possible danger to life. The *Chafetz Chaim* permitted the *Melachah* of *Soteir* to free a child from a locked room, as it uncertain how he or she might react under the stress of being locked in (see *Melachah* 35, note 1). Certainly, a layman attempting to control a fire places all people in its vicinity at great risk. You may therefore sound the alarm and call the fire department.
8. **Saving Money and Other Valuables from Loss** You are permitted to handle money and other valuables on Shabbat, even if they are *muktzeh*, in order to save them from loss by fire, flood, or robbery. For further discussion of the rules with regard to saving valuables in case of a fire, see Part III, Chapter 5.
9. **Placing a Vessel Under a Burning Candle** It is permitted to place a vessel under a candle or a lamp in order to catch the falling sparks, but you may not fill it with water even before Shabbat. If there is a danger of fire, should the sparks or the burning candle fall onto the table, you may have a vessel placed under it, with water if necessary.



## 38. Striking the Final Hammer Blow

### הַמַּכָּה בַּפְּטִישׁ

1. The objective of this *av melachah* is to put the finishing touch in the manufacture of an article, to “strike the final hammer blow,” as it were, in any type of construction. The *melachah* comprises forbidden acts, however slight, that signify the final stage in completion of the work, such as the craftsman’s final blow with the mallet to level out any unevenness in a vessel that was made and the bricklayer’s final tap with the trowel on a brick to set it in the foundation and to align it with the row of bricks that was laid.

2. Also included within this *melachah* (*toladot*) are blowing glass to shape it;<sup>1</sup> inscribing a figure on a vessel; putting a glossy finish on an article; boring a hole that can serve as an opening in a vessel or in a building; chiseling a stone to make it smooth; opening a buttonhole or

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1. **Inflating Rubber and Plastic Articles** Articles made of rubber or plastic, such as a cushion, a pillow, a ball, and balloons of all shapes with pictures and designs may be blown up with air on Shabbat, provided that they have been used before and are now in need of more air. Blowing up such an article for the first time is considered a violation of *makeh bapatish*. You can plug the opening with a stopper, but you may not tie it closed; see *Melachah* 23, note 7.

## II: Principal Classes of Labor (*Melachot*)

neck opening in a garment<sup>2</sup> when the hole and the opening had been sewn together;<sup>3</sup> and removing the knotted ends of wool or the protruding threads from a woven garment, or the stitching or basting thread from a sewn garment.<sup>4</sup>

3. Forming or improving a utensil (תִּיקוֹן מְנַא) is, likewise, a *toladah* of the *melachah*. Therefore, you may not repair<sup>5</sup> any instrument, furniture,<sup>6</sup> equipment<sup>7</sup> or appliance. Prohibited activities also include

2. **Opening a Neck Hole** Alternatively, this prohibited act may be a *toladah* of Tearing, see *Melachah* 24, paragraph 3.
3. **Separating Clothing Tied or Sewn Together** You should separate before Shabbat new clothing that comes sewn or tied together, such as a pair of socks or gloves. Some *poskim* permit severing the connecting thread, since the articles were intended to remain tied only for a period of time and not permanently. Tearing the thread is not a problem of Tearing since the thread is destroyed and no productive use is accomplished relating to the thread itself. The same reasoning applies to removing the price tag generally attached to clothing by a plastic loop.
4. **Removing Pins from a New Shirt** You are permitted to remove the pins from a new shirt.
5. **Winding a Mechanical Toy or Swing** *Poskim* permit winding up a mechanical toy or swing on Shabbat, provided the toy or swing does not produce sparks or a distinctive sound.
6. **Using a Broken Bench** You are forbidden to reattach a broken leg to a bench on Shabbat. Because of this prohibition, you may not use the leg as a support for the bench, or even rest the broken bench on another bench, for fear that you might come to reattach the leg and wedge it in tightly. Therefore, if the leg is completely broken or no longer available for some other reason, the prohibitions do not apply. Also, if there is a danger that the bench might fall and cause injury, you may remove it or rest it on another bench in order to sit on it.
7. **Use of a Plunger to Unclog a Sink or Toilet** You may clear a temporarily clogged sink or toilet with a plunger or a snake, if it is urgently necessary to do so. You may cover the drain in the sink with a perforated cover, or plug it with a stopper.

### 38. *Striking the Final Hammer Blow*

sharpening a knife, straightening a crooked pin, and<sup>8</sup> inserting shoelaces into new shoes<sup>9</sup> or laces into a new garment.<sup>10</sup>

4. *Chazal* also prohibited immersing a vessel in a *mikveh* for ritual purification,<sup>11</sup> since that would make it finally fit for use; separating the

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8. **Repairing Eyeglasses** You may not repair eyeglasses by straightening a bent frame, or replacing the lens that fell out of the frame. If the frame is unusable, it becomes *muktzeh*, while the lens is not. If the eyeglasses are usable, you may wear them. The stringency of making the detached leg and bench *muktzeh*, as discussed above in note 6, is not applied to eyeglasses for the following reason: while it is not possible to sit on a bench with a missing leg, it is possible to use eyeglasses with a missing ear. Therefore, the cases are not seen as comparable.
  9. **Inserting Laces into Shoes** Replacing laces on shoes is a matter of debate among *poskim*. Some argue that the holes are usually constructed to maximize ease of inserting the laces and it is therefore allowed. However, many *poskim* reason that laces are meant to stay on a shoe permanently, and once inserted, the shoe becomes functional, and the laces become secondary to the shoe (בטל). They therefore rule that laces may not be inserted. If your laces break on Shabbat and need replacing, a reasonable compromise is to insert the laces in a manner which will require you to unlace and lace again after Shabbat. Since the insertion is not permanent, it is permitted.
  10. **Inserting a Belt into a Garment** You may insert a belt into a new pair of trousers or into a new dress, since it is not left there but is regularly removed; see note above.
  11. **Immersing a Vessel in a Mikveh** If necessary, you can immerse the vessel on Shabbat by dipping the vessel and drawing water with it. In such a case, you should not recite the blessing. If lack of the utensil will deprive you of a meal on Shabbat, you may immerse it in a *mikveh* in the usual way.

## II: Principal Classes of Labor (*Melachot*)

*challah* portion from bread,<sup>12</sup> as that would make it finally fit to be eaten; and winding<sup>13</sup> a watch<sup>14</sup> or a clock.<sup>15</sup>

5. In addition to activities which are similar to or appear to be fixing an object, *Chazal* also prohibited<sup>16</sup> certain general activities because they might lead you to make or repair an instrument to be used for that

12. **Separating *Challah*** If you forgot to separate *challah* before Shabbat, you may still eat the bread on Shabbat, but you should leave a piece of it uneaten and set it aside. After Shabbat you must take *challah* from the portion that was set aside. This procedure may be followed only outside *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. **Winding a Watch** Opinions differ on the question of winding a watch or a clock on Shabbat. Some consider winding it when it has stopped as coming under the prohibition of repairing an instrument (תיקון מנא). Others, however, contend that this is the way it is designed to operate and they do not consider it a violation of the *melachah*. After all, when the watch has stopped, it does not need to be taken back to the watchmaker. It is designed so that anyone can simply wind it again. Nonetheless, since some authorities consider the winding a *melachah min haTorah*, common practice is to prohibit this act. Additionally, while most authorities permit winding a watch or a clock while it is still going and setting the hands to the correct time, it is also common practice to refrain from doing so unless it is needed for some urgent matter, as to enable a sick person to take medicine at specified times, or for the performance of *mitzvot*, such as prayer and Torah study.
14. **Wearing a Self-Winding Watch** On Shabbat, you may wear a wristwatch that winds itself automatically with the movement of the wrist, as long as it is working. Once it ceases to run, it is *muktzeh*. On wearing a wristwatch in the street where there is no *eruv*, see Part III, Chapter 4, paragraph 2 and note 10.
15. **Setting an Alarm Clock to Ring on Shabbat** You may set an alarm clock that operates mechanically on *Erev Shabbat* to ring on Shabbat. When the alarm rings you may shut it off. You are also permitted to shut off the alarm on Friday evening to keep it from ringing, and then to release the alarm so that it will ring at the appointed time on Shabbat morning, if it is necessary for the sake of a *mitzvah* and the like. If necessary, you may reset the time for the alarm to ring, provided you do not cause it to ring immediately. You may not shut off the alarm on an electric alarm clock, as it involves breaking an electrical circuit. If an electrical alarm is sounding and will not shut off, you can hint to a non-Jew to turn it off. An alarm on an iPod, cell phone, etc. is to be considered an electrical alarm.
16. **Prohibition of Related Activities** See the Introduction to the Nature of *Melachah*, the section entitled “Rabbinic Enactments.”



### 38. Striking the Final Hammer Blow

activity.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, you may not swim<sup>18</sup> in a body of water, such as the ocean, a river or a lake, for fear that you might make a tube or a raft to keep afloat. For similar reasoning, sailing and rowing in a boat and riding a bicycle<sup>19</sup> are prohibited. In addition, you are not permitted to play a musical instrument for fear that you may repair it if necessary. Moreover, you are not allowed to produce a musical sound on any instrument or any sound on a musical instrument or on a device designed for that purpose, such as a bell<sup>20</sup> or a door knocker.<sup>21</sup>

17. **Clapping Hands and Dancing** Pursuant to this decree, *Chazal* prohibited everything related to music or rhythm, including clapping hands and dancing on Shabbat. Rabbi Yosef Karo records this prohibition in the *Shulchan Aruch*. Rema, however, advises against protesting the practice, stating that it is preferable that people transgress in ignorance (מרטב שידיו שונגין) since they will most likely not heed any admonition in this regard. He also cites the view of *Tosafot* that it is permitted nowadays, because we are not ordinarily capable of making musical instruments, and it would be rare for someone to do so. Ashkenazim follow the lenient view of Rema and permit clapping and dancing, provided it is done in honor of the Torah, or for the sake of a *mitzvah*, as on *Simchat Torah* or in honor and rejoicing for a bride and groom, or to soothe an infant and keep it from crying. Sefardim adhere to the stricter view of the *Shulchan Aruch*.
18. **Swimming on Shabbat** While swimming is prohibited, it is also customary not to bathe even without swimming in a natural body of water, or in a pool, or even to shower in cold water as it is likely to lead to the transgression of Shabbat laws. Immersion in a *mikveh* when necessary, however, is permissible. For the laws of bathing on *Shabbat*, see Part IV, Chapter 1.
19. **Riding a Bicycle** You may not ride a bicycle on Shabbat, for fear that you might repair it if it breaks. However, a child may ride a tricycle or a bicycle with training wheels when it is evident that it is designed for use by children. The child may ride it in the house, in the yard, or where there is an *eruv*. You should remove the bell or horn or make it unusable before Shabbat.
20. **Sounding a Bell or a Rattle for a Child** A child should not play with a bell, horn, whistle, etc., as well as with toys that emit a distinctive sound when wound up or when handled, such as a toy telephone. You should put such toys away before Shabbat. Young children may be allowed to play with toys that only incidentally emit a sound when pulled or squeezed. You may give a baby a rattle to play with, and some *poskim* permit shaking the rattle or sounding a bell to quiet a crying baby, but you should refrain from sounding a bell or a rattle for a child's amusement. You may dress a child with shoes or slippers that are fitted with bells which ring when they walk, as it gives the child pleasure and helps to know the child's whereabouts.
21. **Sounding a Doorbell or a Knocker** In case of necessity, as when you cannot enter the house otherwise, you may ring a doorbell or sound a knocker that operates

## II: Principal Classes of Labor (*Melachot*)

6. *Chazal* furthermore prohibited creating something new (מוליד) on Shabbat, as it resembles the performance of a *melachah*. Therefore, you may not crush snow or hail so that the water will melt<sup>22</sup> and begin to flow,<sup>23</sup> as doing so brings the water into existence,<sup>24</sup> as it were, on Shabbat. You are also not permitted to put perfume on clothing, because it generates a fragrance (מוליד ריחא) in the garment;<sup>25</sup> nor may you pour a

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mechanically. If possible, you should sound the bell or knocker in a manner different from the usual, such as with your foot, left hand, or elbow, etc. The above also applies in the case of a door that has a bell attached to it, which is set to ring when you enter—if it is urgently necessary, you may use the door to enter and leave the premises. For the laws pertaining to a bell that operates electrically, see *Melachah* 36, *Electrical Equipment and Appliances*, paragraph 10.

22. **Spreading Rock Salt on Ice** You may spread rock salt or sand on ice, where it is permissible to carry on Shabbat, in order to prevent people from slipping. This should be done out of public view, and in a manner different from the usual, by pouring it from the bag or container, etc. If possible, you should have it done by a non-Jew. Also, you may remove ice that has frozen over a door and sealed it shut, even by using a spade or iron bar to dislodge the ice. (In this latter case, there is no prohibition due to the *Melachah* of Demolishing, *Soteir*, as well.)
23. **Melting Ice in a Glass of Water** You may not melt ice in an empty container in order to drink the water. However, you may put ice into a glass of water, wine or other liquid so that the ice will melt and cool the drink. Some *poskim* even permit crushing the ice, since the water flowing from it mixes with the liquid immediately and is not discernible. In an automatic ice cube dispenser, you must take care that the electrical circuit is not activated when removing the ice cubes, and you should deactivate the mechanism before Shabbat; see *Melachah* 5, note 11.
24. **Making Ice Cubes and Refreezing Ice Cream** Opinions differ regarding the permissibility of making ice cubes on Shabbat. Many authorities permit it in case of necessity; see *Melachah* 5, note 11. You may return ice cream that has begun to melt to the freezer to be re-frozen. You may put milk, cooked meat, etc., into the freezer, and when needed thaw them out; see Part IV, Chapter 3, note 7.
25. **Use of Perfume, Air-Freshener, and Insect Repellent** You may apply perfume to your hands, face and other parts of the body, but not to a handkerchief or an article of clothing. You may spray an air-freshener in order to clear a foul odor in a room. You may spray an insect repellent on your self or in the air in order to repel, but not to kill, mosquitoes and other insects.

### 38. Striking the Final Hammer Blow

perfume into water<sup>26</sup> in order to impart an aroma to it, because it produces a fragrance in the water.<sup>27</sup>

7. It is forbidden to prepare on Shabbat for a weekday (הַכְּנֵה).<sup>28</sup> (You are not permitted to prepare for Yom Tov or for the coming Shabbat, as well.) The prohibition applies to whatever a person does which has no relevance for that Shabbat. Therefore, you may not prepare food on Shabbat for the express purpose of eating it after Shabbat. You may not fold garments<sup>29</sup> in their original folds<sup>30</sup> for use after Shabbat, nor may

26. **Scenting Food and Drink** While you may not scent water for washing or for its fragrance, you may add an aromatic essence or spice to food or liquid in order to improve its taste, or to make the food or drink more pleasant.

27. **Flushing a Toilet with a Cleaning Agent** See *Melachah* 15, note 4.

28. **Prohibition of Preparation (הַכְּנֵה)** The prohibition of preparing on Shabbat for a weekday is not classified under this *melachah*, although in several instances, as in folding garments, making the beds, and washing the dishes on Shabbat, the *Tiferet Yisrael*, and probably Rambam as well, take the prohibition to be that of forming or improving a utensil (הַיִּקוֹן מְנֵא).

29. **Folding and Shaping Garments and Hats on Shabbat** Occasionally folding a garment in order to put it away in a drawer would not be prohibited, as the prohibition originally applied to garments that had to be folded and pressed to retain their proper shape. This is not the case today, as folding them would in all likelihood not serve to do so in any event. However, you should not fold, sort and store garments that have accumulated after a wash, as this would be engaging in a weekday activity on Shabbat. The prohibition also does not apply to restoring a garment to its normal shape. Therefore, you may restore the dents in a hat that has been crushed, and turn up a turned down pant cuff, or adjust a shirt collar to its proper shape. Also, you may insert shoe trees into your shoes on Shabbat, even shoes that are wet from the rain in order to keep their shape, provided you do not intend to widen and reshape the shoe.

30. **Folding a Tallit on Shabbat** Authorities, such as *Magen Avraham* and *Mishnah Berurah*, do not permit folding a *tallit* on Shabbat morning after services, except where it is customary to wear a *tallit* again during *Minchah*. Others permit it if the *tallit* is not folded in its original folds. Some permit folding it in the same folds, especially if you wear that *tallit* only on Shabbat. The reason given for permitting it is that it is a *טלית של מצוה*, a *tallit* used in performance of a *mitzvah*, and the duty to beautify a *mitzvah* (הַיְדוּר מִצְוָה) requires that the *tallit* be kept in good condition and not subject to being torn and soiled when left unfolded every Shabbat; See also Part IV, Chapter 12, note 27.

## II: Principal Classes of Labor (*Melachot*)

you arrange the beds<sup>31</sup> for use after Shabbat, nor wash dishes that are not needed again for use on the Shabbat.<sup>32</sup>

8. Something you do without deliberation, which does not require effort, may be done on Shabbat even if it results in a benefit for the weekday, provided you do not specify that you are doing it in preparation for the weekday. For example, if you brought a *tallit* to *shul* on Shabbat, you may take it home after. You may, likewise, put leftover food back into the refrigerator. Upon leaving the house on Shabbat, you may take along a sweater to wear in the evening.

9. You are permitted to do something that is not forbidden and does not require excessive effort if failure to do it will result in a considerable loss, even if it is not for the sake of Shabbat. For example, you may soak meat, if the third day after it was slaughtered is Shabbat and the meat was not yet soaked, in order to prevent the meat from becoming prohibited to be cooked afterwards (see *Melachah* 28, note 2). You are permitted to remove utensils that may be handled on Shabbat to keep them from being stolen, and to take in clothing from the yard, provided it is permitted to carry, in order to keep it from getting wet in the rain, so that you can wear it after Shabbat.

10. The prohibition of **הַכְנִיחַ** does not apply when you provide for Shabbat and also for the following day without additional effort. Likewise, whatever it is permissible to do on Shabbat, which does not require

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31. **Making the Beds on Shabbat** You may make the beds and change the sheets and pillow cases on Friday night for use on Shabbat, although it is best to do so before Shabbat. It is also permitted to make the beds and straighten the covers on Shabbat morning in order to keep the house tidy in honor of Shabbat.

32. **Washing Dishes and Other Utensils** You may wash the dishes and silverware on Shabbat for use at Shabbat meals until *Seudah Shelishit* and even later if they will be used afterwards as well. You may wash glasses and other drinking utensils at any time, because there is no fixed time for drinking. If the dirty dishes are unsightly and will attract insects or cause a foul odor, you may place them in water, or rinse them, and if necessary wash them, even if they will not be used again on Shabbat. In any event, you are permitted to put the dishes into a dishwasher to be washed after Shabbat; see Part IV, Chapter 5, note 7.

### 38. *Striking the Final Hammer Blow*

undue effort, may be done even if it is intended for after Shabbat.<sup>33</sup> For example, you may go to the *techum Shabbat* and wait there until nightfall, so that you will be able to go beyond the limit immediately after Shabbat in order to engage in an activity that would also be permissible on Shabbat, such as taking a stroll, retrieving a permitted article, caring for the needs of a bride and groom, and attending to the needs of a dead person in preparation for the funeral.

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33. **Study in Preparation for an Examination** You may study on Shabbat in preparation for a *shiur* or an examination, since study is in itself a permissible and useful activity which satisfies a need on Shabbat; see Part IV, Chapter 5, note 18.