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Shulchan Arukh

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Spanish Jews taking refuge in the Atlas Mountains in the fifteenth century

(Spanish Jews taking refuge in the Atlas Mountains, illustration by Michelet c.1900 (colour litho), Bombed, Louis (1862-1927) / Private Collection / Archives Charmet / The Bridgeman Art Library International)
“A person should dress differently than he does on weekdays so he will remember that it is the Sabbath.”

Overview

The Shulchan Arukh, literally translated as “The Set Table,” is a compilation of Jewish legal codes. Written in the sixteenth century, it represents the first codification of Jewish law that is universally accepted by religiously observant Jews. It encompasses laws observed by both Ashkenazic Jews, those with German and eastern European roots, and Sephardic Jews, those with Spanish and Middle Eastern roots. Rabbi Yosef Karo composed the work in an effort to provide an authoritative legal text that would help to guide Jews in properly observing religious obligations. Although he composed the text before subdivisions of Judaism existed, the Shulchan Arukh persists as the most important document for Orthodox Jews. Its text expounds upon the legal code, and its importance indicates the significance of religious laws in the lives of observant Jews.

The Shulchan Arukh is divided into four volumes. The first, Orakh Hayyim, contains laws pertaining to the Sabbath, the synagogue, prayer, and holidays. The second volume, Yoreh De’ah, describes the laws of charity, kosher dietary restrictions, religious conversion, and sexual purity. The third volume, Even Ha-Ezer, discusses Jewish marriage and divorce. Finally, the fourth volume, Koshen Mishpat, covers laws pertaining to finances and Jewish legal systems. All contemporary Orthodox rabbis are expected to be well versed in the text. The Shulchan Arukh is written in Hebrew; rabbinical students are expected not only to be able to read the text but also to offer interpretation of it. Indeed, although the Shulchan Arukh provides a listing of laws, it is the rabbinical interpretation of the laws that brings them to life for religiously observant Jews. The text is largely inaccessible to those who cannot read Hebrew. This forces individuals who are interested in the laws to seek rabbinical interpretation.

The Shulchan Arukh’s endurance speaks to its universal appeal. Contemporary Orthodox Jews still uphold the same laws that Rabbi Karo codified in the sixteenth century. Certainly, he could not have anticipated the development of the automobile, computer, cell phone, or Internet. However, through continuous rabbinic interpretation, the Shulchan Arukh continues to serve as a guide in the fast-paced contemporary world.

Context

Jews in the Middle Ages (ca. 500–1450) found themselves for the first time in competition with other monotheistic religions. Both Islam and Christianity claim to have roots in Judaism but to have superseded Judaism with subsequent revelations and prophets. This led to times of great oppression for Jews. With the endorsement of Christianity by the emperor Constantine I as a legal religion in 313 ce, it quickly became the favored religion of the Roman Empire. Jews were heavily persecuted by the Romans, and Jewish communities were controlled by severe restrictions that perpetuated the idea of Jews’ inferior status.

As Jews were forced out of various European countries, Judaism became a religion of exile. Jews were driven out of England in 1290, expelled from France in 1394, and barred from numerous districts of Germany, Italy, and the Balkan Peninsula between 1350 and 1450. In 1478, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile began the Spanish Inquisition with the intent to establish and maintain Catholicism in Spain. Out of this came the 1492 Alhambra Decree, also called the Edict of Expulsion, which drove more than two hundred thousand Jews out of Spain. Prior to the decree, Spain had boasted the largest Jewish settlement in Europe. Not until December 16, 1968, after 476 years, would the Spanish government finally revoke the Alhambra Decree.

Most of the Jews fleeing Spain resettled in the new Slavic kingdoms, which promoted a slightly higher degree of religious tolerance. The Jews who dared to remain in Spain and Portugal were referred to as Marranos—literally, “pigs.” Although an estimated one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand Iberian Jews converted to Christianity to avoid persecution, their conversion was still suspect. Small-scale hate crimes were perpetrated against them, and they were also blamed for a plague in Portugal. For this reason, from April 19 to 21,1506, a mob rioted and killed more than five thousand Jews in Portugal, an occurrence known as the Easter Massacre.

One of the most impressive features of medieval Judaism was that the scattered groups of Jews managed to main-
tain a relatively high degree of uniformity. These Jews accepted the same sacred books, engaged in the same rituals, and recited nearly identical prayers. That said, two main cultural groups of Jews emerged during this time. The Ashkenazic Jews lived in the Christian European lands and are generally considered to be those with German and eastern European roots. The Sephardic Jews are those with Spanish and Middle Eastern roots. Although these two groups differed socially, linguistically, and culturally, their religious observances remained quite similar, in large part owing to their shared canon of literature.

Many Jews moved to the Slavic kingdoms in search of religious tolerance and more equitable employment. As the influence of Catholicism began to spread into this area, many Jews felt pressure either to convert to Christianity or to relocate once more. There were movements that attempted to convert Jews to Christianity through writings and religious disputations. Eventually these movements were deemed ineffective, and in certain locations Jews were forced to live in walled ghettos. The first Jewish ghetto was established in 1516 in Venice, Italy. This model of ghettoization established the foundation for segregated living for Jews throughout much of Europe. When they were outside of the ghettos, Jews were forced to wear badges that identified them as Jewish. In many regions, local governments forced Jews to wear a *Judenhat*—literally, a “Jew hat”—a yellow conelike hat that distinguished them from non-Jews.

Rabbi Yosef Karo and his writings were a product of this time. Along with his family, he experienced forced exiles at a young age. Although he escaped much of the violence of this period, he was very much aware of the plight of his Jewish contemporaries. As his career advanced and his religious authority increased, his sense of responsibility to oppressed Jews grew. His attempt to codify Jewish law in the Shulchan Arukh represented a desire to standardize the Jewish experience for a dispersed people. Although he was living in a time of great animosity toward Judaism, he upheld Judaism as a worthy lifestyle full of religious truth.

### About the Author

Yosef (or Joseph) ben Ephraim Karo was born in 1488 in Toledo, Spain. Only four years after his birth, in 1492, the Alhambra Decree was issued in Spain, forcing most Jews to flee the country or convert to Christianity. Karo and his family left Toledo that year and subsequently settled in Portugal. That nation, however, did not afford his family the protection they sought; Jews were expelled from Portugal in 1497, just five years after Karo’s family arrived. They fled to Nicopolis (now Nikopol), Bulgaria, where Karo remained through his youth.

Karo began his religious studies with his father, Ephraim, who was a well-known scholar of the Talmud, a compilation of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, and customs. He continued his studies in Adrianople (now Edirne), Turkey, between 1520 and 1522 and immigrated in 1535 to Palestine. He
surrounded himself with scholarship, which is apparent even in his marital record; he was widowed three times, and each of his wives was the daughter of a prominent Talmudic scholar. Immersed in study and scholarship, Karo remained in Safed, Palestine, until his death in 1575 at the age of eighty-seven.

From a young age, Karo experienced mystical visions and dreams. He believed them to be messages from God, which motivated him to study intensively. He was greatly influenced by the Portuguese mystic Solomon Molcho (ca. 1500–1532) and Rabbi Yaakov Beirav (1474–1546). Upon Beirav’s death, Karo was appointed as the head of the Safed Beit Din, the central rabbinical court for Palestine. This meant that Karo had the ultimate say in Jewish legal decisions and issues. For this reason, his influence has been likened to that of Moses ben Maimon, or Maimonides (1135–1204), who is considered the preeminent medieval Jewish philosopher and Torah scholar.

Only three of Karo’s works reached publication during his lifetime—his commentary Beit Yosef, the Shulchan Arukh, and a commentary on Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah, titled Kesef Mishneh. Posthumously, six additional commentaries of Karo’s would be published between 1598 and 1799. He remains best known for authoring the Shulchan Arukh, a text that despite its age remains surprisingly pertinent and applicable in the modern world.

**Explanation and Analysis of the Document**

This excerpt from the Shulchan Arukh comes from the first volume, Orak Hayim, which covers laws about the Sabbath, the synagogue, prayer, and Jewish holidays. The selected chapters discuss some of the Sabbath laws that observant Jews uphold. The Sabbath begins at nightfall on Friday and lasts until three stars can be seen in the sky on Saturday. Some of these laws may seem unfamiliar or even extreme; not all Jews follow these laws, but Orthodox Jews base their Sabbath observance largely on the laws found in these chapters. For Orthodox, the Sabbath is considered the most important religious holiday, a time to focus on God, spirituality, family, friends, and rest.

**Chapter 22: Fire and Food Preparation on the Sabbath**

Jews are forbidden to kindle a fire on the Sabbath. When Karo wrote this text, he was thinking of fire in terms of a burning source of heat and light. But modern commentators have taken this further to include creating a spark or igniting something; thus, since a car’s engine is ignited by sparks, driving a car on the Sabbath is forbidden. In terms of electricity, if lights are turned on before the Sabbath, they may remain on. However, once the Sabbath has begun, lights should not be switched on or off. To accommodate this, many Sabbath-observant Jews set their lights on timers or sensors. Some groups dispute this, stating that if one’s actions result in lights turning on, in however delayed a fashion, the individual has still kindled a fire through physical movement. Therefore, these groups choose to leave their lights switched on throughout the duration of the Sabbath.

Another significant impact of the injunction not to kindle fire pertains to cooking and food preparation. Since the observant are not permitted to cook with fire or any heated device, food preparation for the Sabbath is different from on other weekdays. Often food is prepared in advance and eaten at room temperature or chilled. One popular option is cholent, a rich stew that cooks for a long time at a low temperature. In this way, the food can be cooked in a slow-cooker or an oven set at a low temperature that is turned on before the beginning of the Sabbath.

Karo explains some interesting particularities in this chapter. He admonishes readers not to separate inedible material from food, but rather to separate the food from the nonfood item. This dictum ties into the idea that things should be done differently on the Sabbath in order to create mindfulness about the day. While it is a normal impulse to pluck something from food when it does not belong there, removing the food from the item requires a greater degree of conscious behavior. Along similar lines, salt and spices may be ground in nonstandard ways, and food may be cut with a knife but not passed through a grater. These methods force the cook to be aware of the difference of the Sabbath day.

**Chapter 23: Care of the Body and Clothing on the Sabbath**

This chapter discusses the restrictions on bathing and clothing during the Sabbath. One of the most important elements of this chapter is the idea that “a person should dress differently than he does on weekdays so he will remember that it is the Sabbath.” For some groups of Hasidim—one movement or subgroup of Orthodox Jews—men
wear a black satin caftan or long silk jacket on the Sabbath. Some wear a large round fur hat, called a shtreimel. Others wear black slip-on shoes so that they do not have to knot their shoelaces. Often these shoes are coupled with white knee socks that are worn with black knickers. Some also wear a gartel, or a belt that signifies the division of the lower and upper body, as is prescribed elsewhere in the Shulchan Arukh. This is done to create a separation between the heart and genitalia during prayer; the idea is that the gartel helps to control man’s animal instincts and helps the individual focus on the heart and brain. Some Hasidim wear a gartel as part of their daily attire, while others wear one only during prayer. Although dress varies between groups of Orthodox Jews, the idea of dressing nicely for the Sabbath and not in daily work clothes is prevalent. As with other practices, this change in dress helps to signify that the Sabbath differs from other days.

Karo recognizes that clothing is so much a part of daily life that it can be overlooked during the Sabbath. For this reason, typical clothing-maintenance behavior is discouraged. Laundry and ironing should not be done, which falls in line with work prohibitions. Likewise, clothing should not be spot-cleaned. Although it is permissible to rub the hand or fingers over clothing, rubbing with the intention of cleaning is not permitted. Clothes also should be folded in a nonstandard way to remind the individual that the Sabbath is different from a normal weekday.

♦ Chapter 25: Constructive Activities on the Sabbath

Constructive activities, or actions that create something, are forbidden on the Sabbath. Although it is easy to say that work is forbidden, Karo’s explanation of what is included in this demonstrates that it is not always clear what consti-
tutes construction. He elaborates his description of work to include the gathering, planting, or watering of plants, breaking things, widening openings, making or assembling items, and chopping wood. His attention to these actions indicates that they had at some point come into question among observant Jews. Many of these prohibitions do not affect contemporary Jews, as most are based in agrarian circumstances. The inclusion of these specific prohibitions, however, is interpreted to include contemporary work situations that Karo could not have anticipated.

♦ Chapter 26: Other Activities on the Sabbath

In this chapter, Karo presents a list of miscellaneous activities that are forbidden on the Sabbath. They include playing musical instruments, gossiping, reading secular documents, engaging in monetary transactions, planning for activities that are forbidden during the Sabbath, making loans, gambling, arresting, punishing, marrying, divorcing, and making financial offerings. Many of these activities center on money; accordingly, observant Jews do not conduct any financial transactions during the Sabbath. For this reason, unlike in many Christian churches, no collection plate is passed around during Jewish services. Any contribution to the synagogue or other groups is made during the week. Likewise, all shopping, money lending or collecting, and other financial transactions are completed on weekdays.

While Karo discourages running and idle talk during the Sabbath, he encourages walks and social conversation, as the Sabbath centers on spending time with friends and family. Outside of religious services, Jews usually spend the day eating together, enjoying leisurely walks, chatting, or reading. After a busy week, many find this quiet time with family to be a much-needed break from work and stress.

♦ Chapter 27: Things That Must Not Be Handled on the Sabbath

It is forbidden to carry things outside the home during the Sabbath. Karo details the various ways in which items should not be handled or moved, including broken utensils, large quantities of food, and water. These prohibitions are linked to the idea of resting during the Sabbath. Even though carrying large quantities of food from one home to another is not work that is typically done during the week, it is considered work during the Sabbath unless it is for religious purposes or for guests. The same is true for water, although most contemporary Jews no longer have to draw water from an outside source. They are permitted to use water freely in their homes as long as it is not used in excess.

Although this chapter may seem outdated for contemporary Jews, the concept of not carrying on the Sabbath remains very important. As one can imagine, these laws are considered by many as among the most difficult to uphold. Observant Jews do not carry anything outside of the home during the Sabbath, including house keys, medicine, hooks, purses, wallets, and many other things. For this reason, prayer shawls and prayer books are kept at the synagogue. Doors are often left unlocked; or in some communities the key is integrated into a belt, in which case the key functions to hold the belt closed and is therefore considered to be part of the belt. Hence, the wearer is not carrying the key as a separate item.
♦ Chapter 28: Moving Things from One Domain to Another on the Sabbath

This chapter details the difference between public and private domains. Although Karo details the measurements of specific realms, a rule of thumb is that whatever is inside one’s home is considered private. Once the house is exited, the area becomes public. For this reason, if a newspaper were to be delivered to the driveway during the Sabbath, it would be forbidden to pick it up and move it inside. However, if a letter came through a mail slot installed in the front door, it would be within the private area and could be picked up off the floor and moved to a table.

Karo is very specific about what constitutes certain domains, likely because of questions that were posed to him in the rabbinical court. When individuals and communities were uncertain about what constituted a region, they asked their rabbis. Karo explains that a partition must be able to withstand a normal wind—in other words, it has to be stable enough to really be considered a partition. Likewise, a partition cannot have large gaps and must be continuous. When considering the prohibition of carrying items outside the private domain, it becomes apparent why it is so important to understand what is included in the private and public realms. The specifics offered here by Karo help to illuminate how particular the understanding of each domain is.

♦ Chapter 29: Restrictions on Private Domains; Combining Private Domains

One way that the prohibition of carrying items is negotiated is through the creation of an eruv, a symbolic fence or border that a community creates around itself. It must be at least twelve square feet and create a continuous border; the perimeter may constitute row homes, natural bodies of water, land formations, or telephone and electrical wires. Where a continuous border fails, Orthodox communities erect something that looks similar to a doorway using two poles and wire or fishing line. The constructed eruv increases the size of the private sphere to include areas of the public realm. Within the eruv, observant Jews may carry items, push baby strollers or wheelchairs, and engage in a greater degree of social interaction outside of the home during the Sabbath.

Most cities with larger Jewish populations have established an eruv, although not all observant Jews utilize it, as some believe it is not a valid interpretation of Jewish law. Karo asserts that neighbors may create an eruv by connecting their two private domains. Some observant Jews object to an eruv’s being extended to include additional properties. This is done by symbolically renting the land from the city, and more often than not, the non-Jews who live within such an eruv are unaware of its existence.

Audience

The original audience for the Shulchan Arukh was learned Jews. In the age when it was written, literacy rates were low—perhaps between 20 and 30 percent among Jews in their own dialects, while the Hebrew literacy rate was perhaps between 5 and 10 percent. Thus, few other than rabbis and Jewish scholars, who would have also been experts in Jewish law, and who were responsible for disseminating and interpreting information for fellow Jews in their area, would have been able to read Karo’s text.

Jews have long considered themselves a diasporic people. A diaspora is formed when a group of people who share a common culture or identity are scattered and form new pockets of their ethnic or cultural group within other nations. The Jewish diaspora began in 586 BCE with the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem and destruction of the First Temple, which brought the Kingdom of Judah to an end. As related in the Hebrew Bible, the First Temple was built in 957 BCE by King Solomon and had been the sole location for Jewish sacrifice. After the Babylonian conquest, the Jews emigrated, and the realm now referred to as ancient Israel eventually ceased to exist, rendering Jews a people without a country. After settling across Europe and the Middle East, they remained a distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural group within their new homelands. During the Middle Ages, forced Jewish exiles continued. Not until 1948 would the modern State of Israel be founded to create a safe haven for the Jewish people.

Karo’s attempt to codify Jewish law represents an important step in the broader effort to maintain a unified cultural and ethnic identity for a group of people living in different lands, speaking different languages, and experiencing and assimilating to different cultures. In turning to authoritative works like the Shulchan Arukh for guidance, Jews sought to combat the ethical perils of assimilation and remained surprisingly similar despite geographic dispersion. Even now, the text remains paramount for observant Jews worldwide.

Impact

The enduring impact and authority of the Shulchan Arukh are astounding, especially when one considers that the Shulchan Arukh was compiled by Karo and is not considered divinely mandated. Karo’s audience was vastly different from contemporary Orthodoxy, and the questions and problems that he addresses are also significantly different from those faced in modern times. Nonetheless, few documents have had and continue to have such a profound influence upon observant Jews.

The strength of Karo’s writing rests in his sound logic. He attacks questions by referring to other texts in the Jewish canon, such that his approach can be likewise extended to address contemporary situations and concerns. Orthodox Jews have thus chosen to continue to accept Karo’s interpretation of laws, even if their life circumstances are very different from those of Karo’s original audience. For example, while it may be easier for contemporary Jews to avoid drawing water on the Sabbath, it is certainly more difficult to be unable to spark a car’s ignition to drive to services on the Sabbath. Jews in Karo’s time also walked to the synagogue, of course, but they were based in smaller towns and did not have to grapple with the transportation issues present in a commuter culture.
Karo's text has also evolved with time. In 1571, Rabbi Moses ben Israel Isserles, who was situated in Kraków, Poland, and was attentive to the needs and questions of Ashkenazic Jewry, published commentary on and additions to the Shulchan Arukh. Known as the Mappah (Tablecloth), his commentary helped to illuminate Karo's Sephardic text for a larger audience. This was particularly important for the text when the first Hebrew printing press was established in 1577 in Safed, Palestine. The existence of the Mappah, which is traditionally appended to the Shulchan Arukh, helped to increase the circulation of Karo's work within both Sephardic and Ashkenazic readerships.

The most significant impact of the Shulchan Arukh has been its role in helping to standardize the Jewish experience. Even with the creation of the State of Israel, Jews remained scattered throughout the world. This text continues to help unify them and create certain similarities in religious observance and practice. Although Jews in Israel, Ethiopia, Poland, and the United States all have different life experiences, certain aspects of their religious observance are quite similar. They may dress differently and speak different languages, but their local religious authorities consult and interpret the same Hebrew texts.

It is difficult to say whether Jews could have survived the forced exiles they endured without such a strong canon of texts. Even as Jews began to rebuild after the Holocaust, they still turned to the Shulchan Arukh for guidance. Contemporary liberal Jewry largely rejects the laws found in the Shulchan Arukh. Still, though they may consider the laws outdated, they remain heavily indebted to Rabbi Karo and his text for the survival of Judaism and the Jewish people. Without Karo's work, contemporary Orthodox Judaism as currently practiced would be inconceivable. The Shulchan Arukh has proved itself a critical component of the canon of Judaic texts, giving the Jewish people the roots they needed to survive and overcome even the most dire and distressing circumstances.

Further Reading

■ Books


Questions for Further Study

1. In what way, if any, does the Shulchan Arukh serve the same function in Judaism that the Hadith serve in Islam? (See the entry on the Sahih al-Bukhari for comparison.)

2. Why do you think this document is titled with words that mean “the Set Table”? What “table” is being “set”?

3. To a non-Jew, it might appear that traditional Judaism has an enormous number of laws and rules that Jews are expected to follow—and perhaps some Jews would agree. What is your response to this apparent rule-bound nature of Judaism—in contrast to a religion such as Japanese Shinto (see the entry on the Yengishiki)? What purposes do these laws serve?

4. With regard to observance of the Sabbath, can you think of another example of a modern technological development that the author could not have anticipated and how observant Jews might handle that matter? What might Karo have said, for example, about checking e-mails or dealing with a frozen water pipe that has burst? Would any type of television watching be acceptable?

5. Liberal contemporary Jews tend not to observe many of the laws in the Shulchan Arukh. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the text's value. What is this value, and why would Jews who do not follow its laws continue to recognize that value?
■ Web Sites

   http://www.chabad.org/generic_cdo/aid/253215/jewish/
   Shabbat.htm

“Shabbat Shalom.” Orthodox Union Web site.
   http://www.ou.org/shabbat_shalom

“Shulchan Aruch.” Torah.org Web site.
   http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/

—Amy Milligan
Chapter 17: Preparations for the Sabbath

In honor of the Sabbath, a person should bake bread and prepare extra food (including meat, wine, and delicacies) and special utensils before the Sabbath. He should wash clothes on Thursday, bathe or wash and cut his nails (and hair, if necessary) on Friday afternoon, and dress in good clothes. He should straighten out the house, set the table and make the beds before the Sabbath; the table should remain set throughout the Sabbath. Even if he has many servants, he should get up early on Friday and personally make some of the preparations for the Sabbath. Close to nightfall, he should ask the members of his household whether they have made their preparations. A person should plan to spend the Sabbath in a place where he is expected or can arrive in time to prepare.

A person should not eat an unusually large meal on Friday (except at a religious celebration), or even a regular weekday meal during the last quarter of the day; some people even fast every Friday. A person who voluntarily fasts on Friday should specify that he will eat immediately after the evening service; but if he is fasting because of a bad dream or a public fast, he should fast until after dark.

A person should not do regular work or study intensively on Friday afternoon; but work done in preparation for the Sabbath, such as washing clothes, preparing utensils, and cutting the hair are permitted.

It is customary in Jewish communities to signal or announce the arrival of the Sabbath half an hour or an hour in advance, so that people can stop working and complete their preparations.

A candle must be lit to illuminate the house; if there is a woman in the household, she does this for everyone. It is customary to light several candles, especially on the table. They may be lit early if the Sabbath is accepted early. When the candles are lit, the blessing “…Who commanded us to light a Sabbath candle” is recited. It is customary not to derive benefit from the light before reciting the blessing, but benefit must be derived from it afterward. Candles whose light is used on the Sabbath must be able to burn steadily and should be treated with respect.

The Sabbath begins when it gets dark. For 13 minutes after sunset it is uncertain whether it is dark yet, and things that are rabbincally forbidden on the Sabbath may be done then if they are needed for the Sabbath or for a religious purpose. Some say that a person should begin observing the Sabbath somewhat before dark; but he should not begin it more than 1½ hours before sunset. A person accepts the Sabbath by beginning the evening prayers; and a woman who lights candles accepts the Sabbath by doing so unless she stipulates otherwise. A person who has accepted the Sabbath early, or who is still observing it after dark on Saturday night, may ask others who are not observing it to do work for him, and may benefit from their work.

Chapter 22: Fire and Food Preparation on the Sabbath

A person should not engage in activities that require close attention by the light of a fire if there are grounds for suspecting that he may adjust the fire. Taking fuel from a fire, even if the fuel is not yet burning, is forbidden. Any action that may cause a fire to burn more intensively is forbidden, and so is any action that may cause a fire to be extinguished unless there is danger that the fire may spread out of control or unless the action has no immediate effect. When there is danger to life or to public safety, a Jew is allowed to extinguish a fire.

It is forbidden to separate inferior material from food; but it is permitted to separate food from inferior material, or one type of food from another, if the separation is done by hand and for immediate consumption. Separation of food from its natural covering should be done only by hand or in a nonstandard way. Straining a liquid is permitted only if it is clear or at the time of drinking, but it is permitted to pour off the top layer of a liquid. Squeezing juice from fruit whose juice is commonly drunk is forbidden unless it is squeezed directly into food, but juice that comes out by itself is permitted if it began to come out before the Sabbath. Squeezing liquid out of food in order to eat the food is permitted. Ingredients may be added to food even if they cause it to change color. A person should not deliberately crush ice or salt to extract water from it, but he may allow it to melt or dissolve in water, and he may break through ice to reach the water under it. Small quantities of salt water may
be made, provided it is not strong. Large quantities of food should not be salted unless it is to be eaten within a short time. A person may grind spices or salt in a nonstandard way, or crumble bread, or chop food up finely with a knife, but not with a grater, and fruits or vegetables may be chopped only for immediate consumption. A honeycomb may be removed from a beehive if it was detached or crushed before the Sabbath. It is forbidden to mix large quantities of roasted grain with water, and if it has been ground, it should be mixed with water only in a nonstandard way; and it is forbidden to mix finely divided substances with liquid so that they become a single mass. It is permitted to wash utensils that may be needed on the Sabbath, but they must not be washed with a substance that dissolves or melts. It is forbidden to wash with a depilatory or with a substance that dissolves or melts. It is forbidden to wash with a depilatory or with a substance that dissolves or melts. It is forbidden to wash with a depilatory or with a substance that dissolves or melts.

Cooking is forbidden. Cooking in the sun is permitted, but cooking in something that was heated by the sun or by a fire is forbidden. Heating solid food that has already been fully cooked is permitted, provided it is done in an indirect way, but food that contains a significant amount of liquid must not be heated if it has become cold, and additional cooking of partly cooked food, or cooking food that was previously baked or roasted, is forbidden. Adding uncooked spices or condiments to food that is still cooking is also forbidden, and soaking food to make it edible is forbidden. Some foods cook more easily than others, and should not be put even into hot water even if it is in a pot that is no longer [hot] or has not been on the fire. Foods or liquids may be warmed near a fire, but only in a place where they can never become hot. Food that has not been completely cooked should not be stirred even after it has been removed from the fire.

Chapter 23: Care of the Body and Clothing on the Sabbath

It is permitted to warm the body at a fire or to put warm objects on it. It is forbidden to wash in warm water even if the body is not all washed at once; but washing only parts of the body in water that was warmed before the Sabbath, washing in cold water after warming the body, and washing in an outdoor hot spring, are permitted. In particular, ritual immersion is permitted. It is forbidden to enter a hot bathhouse on the Sabbath, or to use a bathhouse after the Sabbath if it was heated on the Sabbath. It is permitted to walk in a public domain even if the body is wet, but this should not be done after washing until the water has dried. It is forbidden to wash with a depletary or with a substance that dissolves or melts. It is forbidden to rub the body with liquids that are usually used for medicinal purposes, or to massage it normally, or to scrub it except to remove dirt. A person must not cut his hair or nails or remove growths from his body.

It is forbidden to wash clothes, or to shake water or dirt out of them or pick things off them whose presence is objectionable. It is forbidden to fold clothes along their original creases, or to remove them from a tight clothespress, or to rub them in order to clean them, but it is permitted to wipe them or scrape them as long as this has no other effect on the clothes or the dirt or on the cleaning instrument. It is permitted to dry or wipe something with a cloth, provided this does not make the cloth very wet or very dirty, which may lead to washing it or squeezing liquid out of it, and provided the cloth does not become stained. For important purposes, a person may walk in wet clothes, but after taking them off he must not handle them or spread them out to dry.

It is forbidden to carry anything outside a private domain that is not a garment or an ornament, or wear a garment or ornament that is likely to fall off or be taken off; but nowadays we are lenient about many types of ornaments. Wearing garments outside a private domain is permitted even if they are worn only to protect the body, and things worn for medical purposes are permitted. It is forbidden to go barefoot if this is not customary, and a person should dress differently than he does on weekdays so he will remember that it is the Sabbath. If wearing something is permitted, it can be removed in a public domain provided it is not carried; but if attaching something to the clothes and wearing them in a public domain is forbidden, a person should not attach it to his clothes even in a private domain, and similarly for most types of ornaments.

Chapter 24: Animals, Children, and the Sick on the Sabbath

It is forbidden to capture an animal unless it might injure people. It is forbidden to kill an animal or cause it to bleed unless it is dangerous or is chasing someone. It is permitted to alleviate an animal's suffering, but other types of care for a sick animal are forbidden, and it is forbidden to help an animal give birth.

It is forbidden to make any use of an animal; but an animal is allowed to carry things that are attached to it securely and are needed to protect it or are normally used to protect animals of that type. An animal
that belongs to a Jew is not allowed to do work on the Sabbath, but is allowed to eat food that is attached to the ground. It is permitted to give food to animals that depend on people for their food.

A Jewish woman who is giving birth is treated like a person whose life is in danger; anything necessary must be done for her, but things that involve violations of the Sabbath should be done in a nonstandard way if possible. This applies from the time she goes into labor until three days after she gives birth; for the next four days, things that violate the Sabbath may be done for her only if she says that she needs them; and for the next 23 days she is treated like a sick person whose life is not in danger.

Anything necessary must be done for a newborn child if there is any chance that it will live. A boy who is definitely viable and who was born normally is circumcised on the Sabbath if it is definitely the eighth day after his birth, but the circumcision should be done only by an experienced person. Everything necessary for the circumcision may be done by Jews if it could not have been done before the Sabbath, and rabbinically forbidden things may be done by non-Jews in any case. A child must not be allowed to become accustomed to violating religious laws; his father must stop him from violating Biblical laws, and must teach him to observe all the laws when he becomes old enough.

Anything necessary must be done if there is a possibility that it will save or prolong someone’s life. In such cases, the necessary Sabbath violations may be done by anyone; they must not be done in a nonstandard way, or by a non-Jew, or minimized, unless this involves no delay, and it is permitted to benefit from doing them. For illnesses that involve no danger to life, but that affect the whole body or require bedrest, or for care of small children, things that involve violation of the Sabbath may be done by a non-Jew, and things that involve only purely rabbinical prohibitions may be done even by a Jew. Treatment of minor illnesses, even by a non-Jew, is forbidden because it might lead to preparing medications on the Sabbath; many things that are usually eaten, drunk, or applied to the body for medical purposes are therefore forbidden. However, medical procedures that are begun during the week may be continued on the Sabbath.

Chapter 25: Constructive Activities on the Sabbath

Making or removing a partition a handsbreadth wide, even if it is temporary, is forbidden if it is a roof or is a wall that serves a religious purpose, but if a handsbreadth of such a wall or roof already existed before the Sabbath, temporary addition to it is permitted. Temporary partitions are permitted if the surrounded space is less than a handsbreadth or if there is no need for that space, but the walls should not be put up before the roof.

Breaking or opening an unbroken utensil, or deliberately widening an opening, is forbidden, but removing or opening attached pieces is permitted provided they are not permanently attached and the intent is only to get access to the contents, not to create an opening or to use the pieces. Temporarily opening or closing even a permanent structure is permitted when it is done with objects that are used for that purpose, such as doors, shutters, and locks. Making holes in the ground (or in an object attached to the ground), or smoothing them out, is forbidden.

Making, assembling, or fixing a utensil is forbidden unless the parts are loose, or the utensil is made from edible material, or the repair is done in a nonstandard way.

It is forbidden to tie or untie a permanent knot. It is permitted to tighten or loosen a drawstring, but it is forbidden to tighten or loosen even temporary stitching, to paste objects together or to separate pasted objects.

It is forbidden to gather plants or natural objects from the place where they originated or to assemble them into a single object. It is forbidden to reshape a deformable substance or to soften a hard substance. It is forbidden to make or destroy even temporary markings, or to make a surface suitable for marking.

It is forbidden to drop seeds in a place where they may grow, or to spill water in a place where plants may benefit from it, or to soak seeds in water. Cut plants may be put in water so they will not wilt, but not if they may open. It is forbidden to detach parts from a plant that has taken root, even in an object that is not attached to the ground, and even if the parts are no longer alive; and it is forbidden to take such an object off the ground or put it on the ground.

It is forbidden to make any direct use of any part of a tree that is more than three handsbreadths above the ground—for example, to climb it, move it, put something on it or lean something against it. It is permitted to make use of other types of plants, provided this does not detach them from the ground, but edible parts of such plants should not be handled.
a Commandment or to do something enjoyable. It is forbidden to swim in a non-enclosed pool, or to float objects on the water, but it is permitted to enter a ship that is grounded or tied up.

It is forbidden to play a musical instrument or to make non-musical sounds with an instrument. It is permitted to set a clock before the Sabbath to strike the hours. A person should not engage excessively in idle talk, but enjoyable conversation is permitted. Commercial public announcements are forbidden.

It is permitted to read a letter that has just arrived if its contents might be urgent, but a person should not look at other secular documents. Children should not be taught new things, but reviewing is permitted. Mental calculations about things that have not yet been completed are forbidden unless they are for religious purposes. It is permitted to specify numbers of objects that are to be acquired, but not to measure or to specify quantities or prices, except for religious purposes.

A person must not inspect his property, and should not even think about his affairs. It is permitted to borrow something for a short period, and to leave a security deposit, but longer-term loans should not be made or repaid. It is forbidden to play games of chance for profit, and things should not be divided by casting lots.

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It is forbidden to arrest, judge, or punish, to marry or divorce (except on a deathbed), to sanctify or redeem, to inspect a first-born for blemishes, or to set aside offerings. It is permitted to release a person from a vow that interferes with observance of the Sabbath, and for a husband to annul a wife’s vow. It is permitted to annul community bans, or to impose bans involving matters related to the Sabbath.

Chapter 27: Things That Must Not Be Handled on the Sabbath

It is forbidden to handle utensils whose use is forbidden or that are never used even on week-days except for specific purposes that are not permitted on the Sabbath. Utensils that are usually used for purposes that are forbidden on the Sabbath may be used for permissible purposes, or may be moved if their place is needed, but otherwise they must not be handled. Other types of utensils and their parts may be handled whenever there is a reason for doing so, even if they are very large or heavy. Books, food, or utensils containing them may be handled even for no reason. Non-manufactured objects such as rocks must not be handled even for purposes of use unless they were set aside before the Sabbath for regular use or were made part of a utensil. Repulsive objects may be handled if it is necessary to dispose of them. Animals may be helped to move, but may not be lifted.

If a utensil breaks, even on the Sabbath, the pieces may be handled if they are still usable or if it would be dangerous not to remove them, but if they were discarded by their owner they must not be handled. It is forbidden to handle food that was put away by its owner before the Sabbath because it was not yet fit to eat, or food that did not exist or was not available when the Sabbath began. Similarly, a utensil that was intentionally made forbidden (for example, a lamp that was lit) when the Sabbath began must not be handled even after it becomes permitted (for example, after the lamp goes out).

Even when it is forbidden to handle an object, it is permitted to touch it or to handle things that are in contact with it even if this causes it to move. If an object that it is forbidden to handle is put on top of a permissible object that belongs to the same person with the intent that it remain there for the Sabbath, handling the permissible object becomes forbidden unless more important permissible objects are also on top of it before the Sabbath; but if there was no such intent, the permissible object may be moved so as to cause the forbidden object to fall off it, or it may be removed with the forbidden object still on it if its place is needed. A utensil must not be put where forbidden objects will fall on it on the Sabbath unless it was put there before the Sabbath; but it is permitted to cover a forbidden object with a utensil.

Large quantities of food should not be moved unless the space is needed for religious purposes or the food is needed for guests. Food should not be transported in a standard way unless it is needed for guests, and very large quantities of water should not be drawn.
Chapter 28: Moving Things from One Domain to Another on the Sabbath

A region at least four by four handsbreadths in horizontal size and at least ten handsbreadths high that is surrounded by partitions or adjacent regions having a combined height difference (from it) of at least ten handsbreadths is called a private domain. Even a portable object can be a private domain, and smaller regions adjacent to a private domain, as well as the space above it, are regarded as belonging to it.

An unroofed region at least 16 cubits wide that is open at both ends and is used for public passage is called a public domain. Portions of such a region, or regions adjacent to it, that differ from it in height by more than three handsbreadths are not regarded as part of it unless they are between nine and ten handsbreadths high and are used by the public, and the space ten or more handsbreadths above it is also not regarded as part of it.

A region of size at least four by four handsbreadths that is roofed or is not used for public passage (for example, if it is partly surrounded by partitions, or differs in height from the adjacent regions by between three and ten handsbreadths), even if it is adjacent to a public domain, is called a KARMELIS. A smaller region adjacent to a KARMELIS is also regarded as a KARMELIS unless it is ten or more handsbreadths above it.

A small region adjacent to a public domain that differs from it in height by between three and ten handsbreadths is called a MEKOM PETUR. The space ten or more handsbreadths above a public domain or KARMELIS is also called a MEKOM PETUR.

It is Biblically forbidden to move things from a private domain to a public domain or vice versa, and it is rabbinically forbidden to move things personally from either of them to a KARMELIS or vice versa.

To be valid, a partition must be able to withstand an ordinary wind and must come within three handsbreadths of the ground. It can be composed even of movable objects or of tied animals. It must not have a gap wider than ten cubits or a gap used by the public, and a majority of it must not consist of gaps three handsbreadths or more wide. A gap covered by a lintel that has two vertical pieces under it, forming an “entrance shape,” is not regarded as a gap, but opinions differ as to whether this is effective in an uninhabited area or for a gap more than ten cubits wide.

Chapter 29: Restrictions on Private Domains; Combining Private Domains

It is rabbinically forbidden to move things more than four cubits in an unroofed private domain that is more than 100 cubits long or more than 5000 square cubits in area that is not used for residential purposes; and it is permitted to move things between such a domain and a KARMELIS.

It is rabbinically forbidden to move things more than four cubits in a courtyard or alley that is surrounded by partitions on only three sides; to make it permissible, the custom is to construct an “entrance shape” on the open side. These methods are effective even for a courtyard or alley that is open at both ends; but converting a public domain into a private domain requires doors that can be closed.

If a private domain such as a courtyard is shared by people who eat separately in permanent homes, things may be moved freely within the shared domain, but it is rabbinically forbidden to move things between the homes, or between them and the shared domain, unless the people “combine” by contributing to a common collection of food, called an ERUV CHATZEROS. Two groups of people may make a common ERUV if their domains are connected.

Similarly, when several courtyards are adjacent to the same alley, it is rabbinically forbidden to move things between the courtyards and the alley unless the residents in the courtyards form a “partnership” by contributing to a common collection of food. When an alley forms a partnership, the individual courtyards need not combine.

If someone who must participate in an ERUV or partnership did not do so, he may instead verbally annul his claim to a share in the common domain; but if he is a non-Jew, the others must rent his share from him for a token amount before they can make an ERUV.

When the food used for an ERUV or partnership is collected, the blessing “…Who commanded us about an ERUV” is recited.

Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>term</th>
<th>definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cubit</td>
<td>a unit of measurement based on the length of the forearm</td>
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<tr>
<td>eruv chatzeros</td>
<td>literally, “joining of courtyards” or “mixed courtyards”</td>
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