

## You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbos day. (35:3)

The Torah can be understood only through the interpretive eyes of the Oral Law. This prohibition is a classic example of this verity. *Chazal* teach that only the creation of fire and use of it for cooking or baking are prohibited. There is, however, no prohibition against enjoying its benefits, such as light and heat. The *Tzedukim*, Saducees, forbade all use of fire. Thus, *Shabbos* was a day during which they sat in the dark and consumed cold food. (How fitting that one who does not allow the Torah (as given on Har Sinai – both written and oral) to illuminate his life sits in “darkness” the entire *Shabbos*.) *Chazal* (*Talmud Yevamos* 6b) derive from this *pasuk* that *bais din*, Jewish court, shall not administer the death sentence on *Shabbos*. While its focus is primarily on one who has been sentenced to death by burning, it applies equally to all forms of execution.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that the *shoresh*, root, of the *mitzvah*, is that Hashem sought to honor the day of *Shabbos*, so that everyone – even sinners and guilty people– find rest on this hallowed day. It is relevant to a parable about a great king who invited the people of his country to a lavish feast, such that no man be prevented from attending. Whoever was to receive the king’s justice would receive it the following day (after the feast). So, too, did Hashem want to honor His *Shabbos* by commanding us to sanctify and honor it for our own good and merit.

As an aside, it is truly regrettable that those who either due to choice, or lack of knowledge, do not observe *Shabbos Kodesh* are unaware of the esteem that *Hashem Yisborach* has for it. Hashem gave us *Shabbos* as His special treasure, which He wanted to share with us. He gave us this day of the week, a day replete with spiritual sublimity, as a gift, as a token of love. Yet, so many reject this gift, “Thanks – but no thanks.” As the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes, “It is the feast prepared by the King, Who invites all of His subjects to attend.” Imagine telling the King, “Not interested.” This is what we do when we denigrate the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*.

A story which has made the rounds is worth sharing. Kivi Bernhard is a resident of Atlanta, Georgia, the son of a distinguished South African *Rav*. He authored a book, “Leopardology: The hunt for profit in a tough global economy.” Published in 2009, it became an instant best-seller. The book gave the businessman insights and strategies to engage in critical business thinking – all gleaned from the hunting habits and the techniques of the African leopard, who is probably the most successful predator on earth. As Kivi writes: “Not unlike the world of commerce, in the bushlands of Africa, if one is not hunting to survive, one will simply survive to be hunted.”

R’ Kivi was invited to speak all over the world. Soon he became one of the world’s top ten platform speakers. Speaking to the *Chabad* of Melbourne, Australia, he told of the many fortune 500 companies to whom he had previously spoken. He regaled the crowd with stories concerning how a *frum*, observant, Jew is able to navigate the secular/gentile business world. One of his well-known stories took place when the senior Vice President at Microsoft called him and asked him (he

was the senior assistant to Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft) to be the platform speaker for a Microsoft conference on February 11, which happened to be *Shabbos*. Kivi replied that he could accommodate them on any other day – but *Shabbos* was unacceptable.

Two days passed, and they called back. They offered to double his fee. They also reminded him that this was Microsoft speaking, and it was no ordinary conference. It was their preeminent conference of the year. R' Kivi was immovable. The next time it was Bill Gates who called. Being an individual of such enormous wealth, the thought of someone declining his request was unfathomable: "Perhaps it is more money that you are seeking. I am prepared to pay you three times the going rate." "I am sorry," R' Kivi replied. "I do not work on the Sabbath." The convention was reorganized, and he spoke on Sunday, Feb. 12. Bill Gates told his assistant that he had never before met anyone that did not have his price. Everyone can be bought one way or another. Kivi Bernhard could not be bought, because *Shabbos* is not for sale. To paraphrase Bill Gates, "That is what happens when you have something money cannot buy."

This incident continues to be an enormous *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name. If we think about it, this is the standard behavior for a *frum* Jew. Our religious commitment cannot be bought. No truly observant Jew can be swayed or bought to relinquish putting on *Tefillin* for a day – for any amount of money. This is the meaning of commitment. Anything less is just not *frum*.