

## Bais HaVaad on the Parsha, Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei

### Fire Power

*Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Dayan Yitzhak Grossman*

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[https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SHE81\\_010\\_Vayakhel\\_Pekudei\\_Unplugged\\_Electricity\\_on\\_Shabbos.mp3](https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SHE81_010_Vayakhel_Pekudei_Unplugged_Electricity_on_Shabbos.mp3)

*You shall not kindle fire in any of your settlements on the Shabbos day.*

Shemos 35:4

Ever since the advent of electricity, *poskim* have hotly debated its halachic status. Although all *poskim* agree that it is forbidden to use electricity on Shabbos, significant disputes exist as to whether the prohibition is *d'Oraisa* or *d'Rabbanan*, and which prohibition is violated.

With regard to the *melacha* of *hav'arah* (lighting a fire) specifically, some *poskim*, such as the Maharsham, posit that electricity, even incandescent lights, might not be included, because the chemical reaction of combustion does not occur, and nothing is burned, and because it is dissimilar to the *hav'arah* of the *mishkan*. Others, like the Bais Yitzchak, suggest that electricity violates *molid*, an *isur d'Rabbanan* to create a new entity—in this case, fire—on Shabbos. (He suggests that incandescence might be *hav'arah*.)

A third group of *poskim*, which includes the Melamed L'ho'il, holds that lighting incandescent bulbs constitutes *hav'arah d'Oraisa* because the filament gets hot and gives off light (and it is consumed, though very slowly). *Poskim* such as R' Yosef Eliyahu Henkin and R' Ovadia Yosef note that according to this approach, electricity without incandescent bulbs (such as with a refrigerator or microphone) is not considered *d'Oraisa*, but would still be *asur* Rabbinically. Within this approach, some argue that incandescent bulbs are subject to a dispute between the Rambam, who holds that heating metal violates *hav'arah*, and the Ra'avad, who holds it does not (though it may violate *mevashel*). Others reject this analysis.

A fourth group of *poskim*, led by the Chelkas Yaakov, argues that electricity causes sparks and that makes it *hav'arah d'Oraisa*. But many others, including R' Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, the Chazon Ish, and R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, disagree, explaining that such sparks are not usually generated, and even if they are, they do not constitute *hav'arah* at all, because they are temporary and indirectly caused.