



Parshas Chukas 5767

June 22, '07
Volume VI Issue 30

Ma'ase and G'rama

This shiur is not intended to be a halachic source and one should not draw any conclusions from it. It is merely a guide to the halachic concepts. The *seforim* deal extensively with the definitions of *g'rama* and *ma'ase* and it is not possible in a short essay to include everything.

What is the difference between *ma'ase* and *g'rama*?

A *ma'ase* is a direct action and *g'rama* is a delayed action, for example, pouring water onto fire and extinguishing the fire is a *ma'ase*, whereas placing plastic bags filled with water in the path of a fire is *g'rama*, because the fire will melt the bags which will **cause** the water to extinguish the fire.¹

Is *g'rama* permitted?

The *possuk* says לא תעשו כל מלאכה one may not perform a *melacha*, and the *Gemora* learns that performing – doing is *ossur*, *g'rama* is permitted. *Mid'oraisso*, *g'rama* is permitted but *Chazal* prohibited *g'rama* unless in face of loss.²

Can you provide examples of *ma'ase* and *g'rama*?

- ❖ **Ma'ase:** It is an *issur d'oraisso*, on account of *zore'ah* (planting), to throw seeds onto wet ground where they can take root. The *Torah* prohibited the planting action even though the seeds will not take root for several days.
- G'rama:** It is a *g'rama* to throw seeds on dry ground during winter, not a *ma'ase*,

because seeds cannot grow in dry ground.³ After it rains the seeds can take root but it is not a direct consequence of one's action.

- ❖ **Ma'ase:** It is an *issur d'oraisso*, on account of *tochein* (grinding), to place grain in a grinder during operation, because the grinder begins grinding immediately.⁴ Even though the person is not grinding the grain by hand, placing it into the grinder is equivalent to hand grinding and is an *issur d'oraisso*.

G'rama: It is a *g'rama* to place grain in the grinder when it is not operating, because eventually when the grinder operates, it will grind the grain. It is not a *ma'ase* because at present there are no consequences to one's action.⁵

An interesting point - The *Bi'ur Halacha*⁶ is in doubt when one places grain into the grinder's receptacle above other grain and consequently the new grain will not be ground immediately. On the one hand it is a *g'rama*, because one's action does not have direct consequences but on the other hand, the grinder is in operation and the new grain will definitely be ground. One may ask that placing oil into a lamp is a *d'oraisso*, on account of *mav'ir* (making fire), even though there is oil in

³ See *Tikunim Umiluim* page 17 footnote 98, citing *Iglei Tal* and *Sh'visas HaShabos*.

⁴ Although the *M" A* considers this *g'rama* as well, the *Bi'ur Halacha* cites many *poskim* who disagree and consider it to be a *ma'ase*. Consequently, it is an *issur d'oraisso*.

⁵ See *Tikunim Umiluim* page 17 footnote 100.

⁶ *Simon* 252:5 ה. להשמעת"ד.

¹ *Simon* 334:22.

² *Ibid* in *Rama*.

the lamp. The answer is that new oil either assists the present oil's combustion or is immediately drawn into the wick and burns, i.e. there are direct consequences to one's action.⁷

- ❖ **Ma'ase:** Trapping and capturing is an *issur d'oraisso* of *tzeida* – capturing. This is brought about either by throwing a net onto an animal or fish, lassoing, or by closing a cage door etc. One's action bears direct consequences on the subject as it is no longer free.⁸

G'rama: It is only *g'rama* to set a trap, because setting a trap does not bear direct consequences on the trapped creature. Even if a short while after erecting nets or baiting a line an animal or fish is trapped, it is only *g'rama* because the creature was captured as a result of one's action, not during one's action.⁹ Some *poskim* learn that if a trap is set in a place where animals etc. are common, it is a *d'oraisso* even if the animal enters the trap after being erected.¹⁰

An interesting point – one might ask from cooking and baking, or even planting. We know that it is *ossur mid'oraisso* to place a pot of water on a fire even though cooking takes a while and yet it is *bishul*, so why is trapping different?

The answer is that indeed one might want to view cooking as *g'rama* and yet the Torah considered such an action to be a *ma'ase*. In other words, the *melacha* of cooking is to place an item near a heat source intending it to cook or bake. The direct consequence of one's action is that the item begins to cook. Trapping has a more direct action than setting traps and baiting and therefore the *melacha* is the direct action of physically trapping.

Are there examples of indirect actions that are considered a ma'ase?

Closing a cage door on an animal is *tzeida* even though one did not do anything physical to the animal.

- ❖ Drawing water from a hot water urn, where the remaining water is not fully cooked, is an action of *bishul*, because the remaining water will cook quicker.¹¹

Drawing water from a hot water urn, which in turn permits cold water to pour into the urn, some say is an action, not *g'rama*.¹²

What are examples of g'rama?

Placing a burning candle in sand will cause the candle to extinguish prematurely. It is only *g'rama* because it will only take place later and nothing has altered the burning candle. On the other hand, removing oil from a lantern, according to some opinions, is a *ma'ase* because the flame diminishes in that instance.

Vort on the Parsha

Rashi explains the juxtaposition of Aharon's demise and approaching Edom, that *B'nei Yisroel* dropped spiritually and consequently Aharon died. But the *posuk* says that Aharon died for failing to sanctify *Hashem's* name at the rock. The *S'fas Emes* cites R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa saying that *Hashem* does not punish an individual when the circle of acquaintances do not deserve to have pain – אמת צדקו 'משפטי ה' יחדיו, everything is taken into consideration. Indeed Aharon had to die because of his actions, but why were *B'nei Yisroel* punished? *Rashi* answers because they too were not behaving correctly when approaching Edom.

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לזכר נשמת חנה בת ברוך

⁷ *Bi'ur Halacha* ibid.

⁸ *Simon* 316:1.

⁹ *M"B Simon* 316:18.

¹⁰ *Avnei Nezer* in *Tosefos*.

¹¹ See *Tikunim Umiluim* page 19.

¹² *SS"K* 1:39.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.