

KINDLING A FIRE ON SHABBAT

Exod. 35:3 ***“You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day.”***

This verse has caused many to be confused. Many have over-spiritualized it. Some Orthodox Jews have gone so far as to say that they won't drive a vehicle on the sabbath because the spark plugs ignite and kindle a fire in the engine. The answer is simple, as follows: In biblical times it was not a simple task to get a fire going. One had to gather the wood, chop the wood, prepare the fire pit (if it was a new location, and they were nomads) build the pre-fire, and light it. Even the actual task of lighting a fire at that time could be a strenuous task. They did not enjoy the luxuries of matches, electric starters, or click lighters. So we can safely say that igniting a fire back then was work, and taxing work at that. For those of us who use wood stoves for heat, starting a fire is a simple thing to do on the sabbath if it is cold out. Some try to associate the man put to death for gathering wood on shabbat (Num. 15:32-36), with this verse, but this is not appropriate. Obviously the man referred to in Numbers was not “kindling” wood, he was out in the field gathering wood. I would like to also note that the preceding verses were talking about intentional sin, which is what the man was doing. He was publicly intentionally sinning, mocking what Yah had told the people not to do. The concept of the tzitzit talked about in the next verse also highlights the real meaning there. “Kindling a fire”, in Hebrew, can also mean; “start no strife”, which is self explanatory. Yah obviously doesn't want us to stir up trouble on our day of rest unless the discussion is in regards to a lesson learned during a shabbat teaching, and obviously then common sense should prevail.

DASYD Ministry

Bible Commentary Jerry Hennig (Nov 28/16)