



# THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

## HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

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***Are there any cases where erasing will be beneficial and constructive and thus ossur mid'oraissa?***

Besides the obvious case of erasing in order to be able to write in the place of the erroneous letters, there is another case. The *P'ri Megadim* writes<sup>1</sup> that erasing an IOU note that has been paid would be an *issur d'oraissa*, because it is beneficial. Usually erasing is destructive unless done with the intention of writing in its place, but in this case the erasure is beneficial on its own.

***Is there an issur d'oraissa to write over existing letters?***

The *gemora* says that it depends: writing with black ink over black ink is only an *issur d'rabanana* because one has not added anything; writing with black ink over red is an *issur d'oraissa* because of the added quality to the existing writing.<sup>2</sup> As it happens one is also violating an *issur d'oraissa* of erasing, by erasing the red ink beneath the black. It follows that if the original black ink has faded and one reinforces the writing, one would be violating an *issur d'oraissa*.

***Why is it so important to know which writing is an issur d'oraissa and which d'rabanana, after all - all are prohibited?***

There are a few answers to this question.

- 1) It is part of learning Torah. One's Torah learning must be clear and precise.
- 2) One who violates an *issur d'oraissa* must bring a *korban chatas*. This carries implications nowadays even though there is no *Beis Hamikdash* with respect to giving *tzedaka* (charity) the equivalent of a *korban*. Also, we find in the *gemora* that one of the *Tana'im* violated an *issur d'oraissa*

<sup>1</sup> Cited in the *Bi'ur Halacha* in *siman* 340:3 ד"ה המוחק דיו 340:3.

<sup>2</sup> *M"B* 340:22 (3).

unintentionally and said that he must write in his notebook that when the *Beis Hamikdash* will be rebuilt he will bring a *korban chatas*.

3) It is sometimes necessary when dealing with *pikuach nefesh* (life saving) to write down crucial details. In an emergency situation of dire proportions one would write in the normal fashion - that is with a normal writing implement on paper etc., but when the situation is not critical, even though writing is imperative, one should try and find other methods of writing which will not involve the violation of an *issur d'oraissa*.

***Name a practical example of writing that is not a d'oraissa.***

A right-handed person writing with his left hand is only violating an *issur d'rabanana*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, if time permits, one should write with one's left hand.

Writing with self-erasing ink, according to some *poskim*<sup>4</sup> is only an *issur d'rabanana*. This is because we learnt in the last shiur that one of the criteria for writing to be an *issur d'oraissa* is for the writing to be long lasting. One would therefore write on Shabbos with self erasing ink and copy it down after Shabbos.<sup>5</sup>

Although writing a single letter is an *issur d'oraissa*<sup>6</sup> nevertheless one is only liable to bring a *korban* for writing two letters. Therefore, when possible (and extremely necessary) one would write a letter with an apostrophe, such as 'ז, which is not

<sup>3</sup> See the *SS"K* 32:49.

<sup>4</sup> Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in his *sefer Minchas Shlomo siman* 91:11. HaRav Yitschak Weissz, in his *sefer Minchas Yitschak* argues with Rav Shlomo Zalman and says that if it lasts for the Shabbos it is an *issur d'oraissa*.

<sup>5</sup> Obviously when a medical condition necessitates.

<sup>6</sup> *M"B siman* 340:22 (4).

considered as writing a word (or even two letters) even though it is understood what is meant.

### **Does the *issur d'oraisso* of writing apply to *lashon hakodesh* only or does it encompass other languages as well?**

The *Mishna* in *Shabbos* 103a says that one is *chayav* for writing two letters in any language – בכל לשון. The *Bi'ur Halacha*<sup>7</sup> writes that except for the *Ohr Zarua*,<sup>8</sup> all the *Rishonim* concur that writing in any language is a violation of an *issur d'oraisso*.

### **What is the *halacha* if one writes a single letter in one place and another letter somewhere else - is it an *issur d'oraisso*?**

We must first state that writing one letter is an *issur d'oraisso* but for the violator to be liable to bring a *korban chatas* two letters must have been written.

Another interesting *halacha* is that for two letters to be considered a proper *melacha* they must be written in such a way that they could be read together.

The source for this *halacha* is the *Mishna* in *Shabbos* 104b, which says the following: One who writes a single letter on the ceiling and a single letter on the floor is *potur* (not liable) for bringing a *korban*. The *Mishna* continues, if one writes on two different walls (not adjacent to each other in the corner) one is *potur* because they cannot be read together.

If however one would write a single letter on two separate pieces of paper one would be *chayav* because the two pieces can be held next to each other and read as one.

### **Is there an *issur* to write with one's mouth?**

There certainly is an *issur d'rabanana*, but it is not an *issur d'oraisso* because it is a deviation from the normal way of writing. It is interesting to note that the *halacha* is that one must write a *sefer torah*, *tefilin* and *mezuzos* in the normal writing manner, and if a right-handed person writes with his left hand they are not kosher.<sup>9</sup> The *Mishna*

*Berura* brings a case<sup>10</sup> where someone in Egypt wrote with his mouth and the *poskim* ruled that it was not kosher being that it was a deviation from the normal manner of writing.

### **What is the status of drawing figures or pictures on *Shabbos*?**

The *Rambam* writes<sup>11</sup> that one is *chayav* for drawing a picture, being that it is a *Toladah* of the *melacha* of כותב – writing. The *Bi'ur Halacha*<sup>12</sup> understands from the *Yerushalmi* (the *Rambam's* source) that one would be *chayav* for drawing a single picture,<sup>13</sup> unlike letters where the liability to bring a *korban* is for writing two letters. The reason is probably because in the *Mishkan* it required two symbols (letters, numbers etc.) in order to make a relationship between two letters written on the planks, but a drawing or picture stand on their own and do not require a partner. Accordingly, when tearing a wrapper in the permitted manner one must take precaution that letters or drawings are not torn,<sup>14</sup> because in effect one is erasing the letters and drawings.

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## Orchos Chaim LaRosh

מדבר שקר תרחק – distance yourself from falsehood. *Hasbem's* signature is *emes*, and everything but the *emes* is detested in His eyes. Last week's parsha – Eikev began with keeping *Mishpatim*, the monetary laws, because it is with those laws we try find loopholes and escapes from commitments and obligations.

One of the *gedolim* told a family member that he is going to visit another *gadol* in a neighboring town, and because he was needed back he said 'he won't sit there', meaning to emphasize that he will not tarry. Upon arrival he did not sit down for the hour he was there, because his lips uttered the word 'he will not sit' even though he did not mean it literally.

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<sup>10</sup> *M"B siman* 32:19.

<sup>11</sup> *Rambam Shabbos* 11:17.

<sup>12</sup> *Siman* 340:4 towards the end of הלחון על השלחון ד."

<sup>13</sup> A picture is worth a thousand words?

<sup>14</sup> *S"K* 9:12 based on the *M"B* 340:41.

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<sup>7</sup> *Bi'ur Halacha siman* 306:11 ד"ה בכתב שלהם.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in the *Rama* 306:11.

<sup>9</sup> *Siman* 32:5 (18).

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at [shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com](mailto:shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com).

**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.