



Parshas Vayeishev/Chanukah 5764

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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*¹ writes that except for the *Ohr Zarua*,² 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?

AWe must first state that writing one letter is an *issur d'oraisso* but in order for the violator to be liable for bringing 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 *pottur* (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 *pottur* 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?

An *issur d'rabanan* there certainly is, 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.³ The *Mishna Berura* brings a case⁴ 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* writes⁵ that one is *chayav* for drawing a picture, being that it is a *Toladab* of the *melacha* of כותב – writing. The *Bi'ur Halacha*⁶ understands from the *Yerushalmi* (the *Rambam's* source) that one would be *chayav* for drawing a single picture,⁷ 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

¹ *Bi'ur Halacha simon* 306:11 שלהם בכתב.

² Cited in the *Rama* 306:11.

³ *Simon* 32:5 (18).

⁴ *M"B simon* 32:19.

⁵ *Rambam Shabbos* 11:17.

⁶ *Simon* 340:4 towards the end of השלחן על.

⁷ A picture is worth a thousand words?

to make a relationship between two letters written on the planks, but a drawing or picture stands on its own and does not require a partner.

Accordingly, when tearing a wrapper in the permitted manner one must take precaution that letters or drawings are not torn,⁸ because in effect one is erasing the letters and drawings.

Would it not be similar to the halacha mentioned in the Rama (cited in the previous shiur) where he holds that one may open a book with writing on the edge?

First of all we mentioned that many *poskim* argue on the *Rama* and therefore when there is an option one should *l'chatchila* not open such a book. However, one could differentiate between the two cases. A book is made to be opened and closed and therefore the *Rama* does not see the letters as being erased, whereas a wrapper is permanently ripped or torn and the “erasing” of the letters is permanent.

Would tearing between the letters be a problem?

No, tearing between letters is not called erasing⁹ even though a word is “erased”. The reason is because placing a piece of paper with a letter written on it next to a similar piece of paper is not called writing even though one has “joined” two letters, so too the separation of such letters would not be called erasing.¹⁰

Vort on the Parsha

The *possuk* says וישב יעקב which *Rashi* explains to mean that *Ya'akov Avinu* wished to have a peaceful life. *Hashem* thought otherwise saying that the peace they have in the World To Come is sufficient, and immediately began the saga of Yosef. *Ya'akov's* life was full of unrest – *Eisav*, *Lavan*, *Dinah* - the diametrical opposite of peace and tranquility - why is that? *Rav Sternbuch* relates that a *bochur* before marriage approached his *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Rav Moshe Shneider*, asking for a *b'rocho*. The *Rosh yeshiva* asked him whether he had anything particular in mind. The *bochur* replied that he would like a *b'rocho* that everything in his life should be *glatt* – go smoothly. The *Rosh yeshiva* replied that that is not a *b'rocho*, rather he blessed him that he should be able to overcome all his trials and tribulations in life.

Rav Sternbuch enlightens this saying that this world is one of trials and hardships and therefore *Ya'akov* could not have peace in this world because it is through trial that one elevates oneself to higher spiritual levels. Peace and reward is in the next world.

Food For Thought

May one play with word games on Shabbos, such as Scrabble?

Is one permitted to make a line in a book with one's fingernail in order to remember where one left off?

May one fold over a page corner to mark one's place when it makes a crease in the page?

Answers coming next week.

⁸ *SS"K* 9:12 based on the *M"B* 340:41.

⁹ *SS"K* 9 footnote 48 citing *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*.

¹⁰ See the *תקונים ומילואים* *ibid*.

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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.