



Parshas Vayigash 5765

December 16, '04
Volume IV Issue 11

May one gargle with whisky or brandy to soothe a sore throat?

Firstly, one should ask whether one may **drink** whisky or brandy to soothe a sore throat, since it is being imbibed for a “medical” reason. The *Shulchan Aruch*¹ teaches us that food and beverages that are consumed by healthy people may be consumed for medical reasons as well, since it is not noticeable that one is intending them for medication. For example, a person with a toothache may not swoosh vinegar and spit it out, because then it becomes visible that it is being done for health reasons. One may swallow it in the regular manner. The *Mishna Berura* adds² that one may not even hold it in one’s mouth and then swallow, because then it is noticeable that it is for medical reasons.

What is the halacha with regards to taking vitamins on Shabbos?

In the previous shiur we learned that only a person who is halachically defined as being ill may consume tablets on Shabbos. Such a person, who requires vitamins in order to recuperate, would generally take them in order to assist on the way to recovery. Here we are referring to two types of people who consume vitamins. The first case deals with people who have recovered from an illness, but are weak, and would like to

fortify themselves with vitamins. The second case deals with people who consume vitamins on a daily basis “to keep healthy”. The *Shulchan Aruch* continues³ with the subject of “regular food” and states that items that are only consumed for medical reasons may not be consumed on Shabbos by people who are weak or suffering from even a slight ailment, but people who are fully healthy may consume them, since their intention is to consume them as food.⁴

Why would it make a difference whether one is fully healthy or not, after all it is “medication”?

There is no such *melacha* called “administering medication” on Shabbos, rather it is a decree (*g’zeira*) that *Chazal* instituted in order to prevent people from grinding and preparing medication in a prohibit manner. *Chazal* said that this only applies to infirm or ailing people who might violate the Shabbos because of their ill situation, but a healthy person would not violate the Shabbos as he is not in a circumstance where he **must** administer medication.

So where do vitamins fit in?

Based on the above the *halacha* is as follows:

- One who is fully healthy and consumes vitamins to supplement food, may continue with them on

¹ Simon 328:37.

² Simon 328:101.

³ Simon 328:37.

⁴ M”B 328:120.

Shabbos if they are tasty, because the vitamins are considered food.⁵

- One who is healthy but consumes vitamins in order to fortify one's body (and prevent illness, for example), Rav Moshe Feinstein *ztz"l* says⁶ that one may continue on Shabbos as well, being that one is healthy and as such the *g'zeira* instituted by *Chazal* does not apply. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *ztz"l*⁷ disagrees and says that when taken for health reasons it is forbidden to consume vitamins, as the *g'zeira* applies here as well.
- One who is slightly ill (regular medication is forbidden) may not consume vitamins.
- One who has recovered from an illness and wants to consume vitamins to restore body strength and health, may not consume them on Shabbos. In this case they are functioning as medication and it is *ossur*.

What about the use of creams and lotions on rashes etc?

There are two issues involved with the using of creams and lotions. The more severe issue involves the prohibition of smoothing – *memare'ach*, which could involve an *issur d'oraissa* (biblical prohibition), and another *issur* of applying medication on Shabbos. It is *ossur* to apply creams and lotions on Shabbos when the intention is for medical reasons⁸ (we will deal with the issue of smoothing later, *be"H*), unless one's ailment

⁵ Rav Sternbuch *shlita*, and similar to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in the *SS"K* 34 footnote 85.

⁶ *Iggros Moshe* vol. III *simon* 54.

⁷ *SS"K* *ibid*.

⁸ *Simon* 327:1.

is one which could be harmful and requires antibiotic cream etc.

Accordingly one may not apply cream or even oil to chapped hands or lips, being that it is only done to unhealthy skin. The same would apply to smearing oil or cream on a sore or scab,⁹ being that it is health related. If the lesion is causing pain to a degree that one is classified as a *choleh*, one may apply ointment and we will see *be"H* in the next shiur how to apply it.

In a location where oil is rubbed on hands on a daily basis, unrelated to chapped hands or unhealthy skin, one may smear oil on one's hands even though one's intention is for health reasons.¹⁰ This conforms with the above *halacha* that one may consume items that healthy people usually consume.

Vort on the Parsha

The *possuk* says that Yosef himself prepared his chariot that would take him to meet his father. Imagine the "king of England" going himself to the garage to fetch the Rolls in order to perform a mitzvah – unheard of. Rav Sternbuch *shlita* says that this serves us a lesson, that when a mitzvah is involved there is no such thing as tardiness and self-honor.

Food For Thought

When is cream permitted to be smeared on Shabbos?

May a doctor turn on his otoscope on Shabbos?

What about taking sleeping tablets on Shabbos?

Answers coming next week.

⁹ *M"B* 327:2.

¹⁰ *Simon* 327:1 and *M"B* 2.

One may receive and distribute these weekly shiurim by calling or writing: Office 99 Rechov Bayit Vegan, Yerushalayim, Phone Numbers: U.S. and Canada 732-370-3344 Israel 972-3-616-6340

South Africa 083-714-3166 UK 44-020-8731-6666 Australia 61-296835626 Switzerland 0114143 333 0288

• e-mail: shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com, or www.shemayisrael.com,

weekly sponsorships are available as well.

If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at 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.