



# THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

## HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

Published by



A Project of  
The Shema Yisrael Torah Network

based on the shiurim given by

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developed from the Chabura of the  
Shulchan Aruch Project

These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to HaGaon HaRau Moshe Sternbuch, shlita



Parshas Balak in Eretz Yisroel 5766  
Parshas Chukas/Balak in Chutz La'aretz

July 7, '06  
Volume V Issue 30

### *The top of my hat got knocked in, may I straighten it on Shabbos?*

Items that are easily repaired may be repaired on Shabbos. One may return feathers etc. to a pillow slip (as opposed to placing therein for the first time) because it is easily performed.<sup>1</sup> Lenses from spectacles that often fall out, may be returned provided that one does not tighten the screw. When the lens often falls out, it is easy to replace and does not require force, thus its repair is not *makeh b'patish* – fashioning a *ke'li*.<sup>2</sup>

It is permitted to push out an indented hat for the same reason, i.e. it is easy to repair.

### *May I inflate a rubber duck on Shabbos?*

We discussed this in detail in Volume II issue 12 and volume III issue 12. Winding a toy is mentioned in the same issue.

### *May one open letters on Shabbos?*

The *poskim* relate to two types, an aerogram and an envelope. Slitting the sides of an aerogram is a serious violation of tearing for a beneficial purpose and possibly *makeh b'patish* – making a *ke'li*. The *melacha* of tearing is detrimental, but when the benefit is derived from the torn item, it is called a beneficial tearing and one would be liable to bring a *korban chatas*.<sup>3</sup>

### *What if I discard the letter after reading it?*

<sup>1</sup> *Simon* 340:8.

<sup>2</sup> *Binyan Shabbos* pg 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Bi'ur Halacha simon* 340:13 *d"b haniyar*. *SS"K* 28:4.

It makes no difference. Tearing in a beneficial manner is *ossur* even when the benefit derived is for a short period.

### *Is an envelope different?*

An envelope contains a letter unlike an aerogram which is the letter itself. Tearing the envelope enables one to extract the letter and it must be viewed in a similar manner as opening a bag of potato chips, as we will see.

Many open an envelope by slitting the top thus enabling the letter to be returned to the envelope for safekeeping. Such an action is making a *ke'li*.<sup>4</sup> Even if one would slit the top but have in mind to discard the envelope and not reuse it, it would still be making a *ke'li* and forbidden.

### *And if I rip the envelope in a destructive manner?*

The *Chazon Ish* initially wrote that it would be permitted to open an envelope if one did not intend to reuse it (or in a manner that might destruct it). He compared it to a famous *halacha* called *קורע עור על פי חבית* – ripping the leather covering a barrel.

Barrels would occasionally be covered with leather and the *halacha* is that one may slit this leather in order to extract the barrel's contents. The leather is destructed in this manner and not made into a *ke'li*. Compare it to a coffee jar sealed with paper. The paper may be slit on Shabbos as one is not creating a *ke'li*.

<sup>4</sup> *M"b simon* 340:41 and *Bi'ur Halacha* *ibid*. *Chazon Ish simon* 61:2. *SS"K* 28:4.

### *Sounds like a good analogy.*

It is, but the *Chazon Ish* had something else in mind. The *Chazon Ish* explains that opening an envelope and intending to reuse it is an *issur d'oraisso* and therefore we cannot take the liberty to open it in the normal manner thinking that we don't care if it tears because we won't reuse it. In other words, if one opens an envelope by ripping the top part, since many times it remains usable one is making a *k'li*.

### *And if I rip it to pieces?*

The *Chazon Ish* writes that one may open it in such a way that it is rendered useless. Such is the opinion of many *poskim*, but it appears that the *Mishna Berura* does not permit opening letters at all.

Ripping the envelope to pieces is not creating a *k'li* and is analogous to tearing the leather covering the barrel.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Summary:**

- One may not slit the sides of an aerogram.
- One may not open an envelope by ripping the top, whether with a knife or by hand.
- One may destroy an envelope to extract a letter.

### *But is there a problem in reading the letter on Shabbos?*

Indeed there is, as pointed out in previous sheets. But let's say that the letter contains torah insights etc. which one obviously may read on Shabbos.

### *May one ask a gentile to open a letter?*

The *Mishna Berura*<sup>6</sup> cites the *Agudah*<sup>7</sup> who say that when necessary one may say to a gentile – I

cannot read a closed letter – and if he understands and opens the letter it is permitted.<sup>8</sup>

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### **Vort on the Parsha**

Rashi says that *Hashem* warned Bilam not to curse Am Yisrael who keep the three Festivals. Why did *Hashem* not say that they keep Shabbos? The *K'sav Sofer* says that it could be natural to keep Shabbos because everyone needs a day of rest, but keeping Yom Tov, which must be for Divine reasons and not merely to rest, as Yom Tov can fall after Shabbos. *Hashem* therefore mentioned the three festivals to propel Am Yisrael's righteousness.

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### **Suggestion – Time for Change**

I think it is time for change and I suggest we learn a different subject. We can either learn Hilchos Yom Tov or Chol Hamoed. Maybe readers can come up with another suggestion.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Binyan Shabbos* pg 226-227.

<sup>6</sup> *Simon* 340:41.

<sup>7</sup> A *Rishon*

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<sup>8</sup> See *Sha'arei Teshuva simon* 307:5 citing the *Ya'avetz*.

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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.