



Parshas Shemos 5765

December 31, '04
Volume IV Issue 13

Can one take sleeping tablets on Shabbos?

The debate regarding the consumption of sleeping tablets centers mainly around two concepts. Is not being able to sleep an illness and are sleeping pills medication?

If we define a person who cannot sleep as **not** being ill, then such a person may consume a sleeping tablet. This is based on several *halachos* in the *Shulchan Aruch* that say that one may chew gum to eradicate a trace of bad breath¹ and one may consume sweet herbs² and a raw egg in order to improve one's voice. The *poskim* explain that the reason this is permitted is because bad breath and a hoarse voice are not considered symptoms of being ill.³

The reason behind this leniency is because *Chazal* instituted a *g'zeira* prohibiting the grinding of herbs to cure an illness, which one might do out of concern for one's illness. When one is not ill, the concern for grinding herbs falls away.

The *K'tzos HaShulchan*⁴ writes that a person who cannot sleep is not considered as being ill. He concludes that based on this concept (and a few others) one may consume a sleeping tablet if, when abstaining from doing so, will cause much distress and suffering.

On the other hand, the *Minchas Yitzchak* writes⁵ that since it is made into pill form it is subject to the *g'zeira* of consuming medication on Shabbos. Other *poskim* write⁶ that since a sleeping pill has therapeutic attributes, it is subject to the *g'zeira*. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *ztz"l*⁷ is of the lenient opinion and says that when a person will be greatly distressed from lack of sleep, a sleeping tablet may be consumed.

Is one permitted to make a compress on Shabbos?

A compress is normally used to soothe a sprained ankle etc. and is not something that healthy people would normally do. As such it is *ossur* to apply to someone who is not halachikally defined as an ill person.⁸

The problem with making a compress is the soaking of the cloth in water, on account of *libun* – laundering, because any soaking done to cloth is considered laundering. This is true according to many *poskim*⁹ even if the cloth or dressing is clean and has no need to be laundered.

If one knows before Shabbos that a compress will be needed, one should soak dressings in water before Shabbos and keep them wet in a plastic bag. When it becomes

¹ *Simon* 328:36.

² *Simon* 328:38.

³ *M"b simon* 328:116 and 122. The *Vilna Ga'on* in *se'if* 38 says that the source is *se'if* 36.

⁴ *Simon* 138 footnote 31.

⁵ 3rd vol. *simon* 21 and other *seforim*.

⁶ *Tsits Eliezer*.

⁷ *SS"K* 33:16 footnote 67.

⁸ *SS"K* 33:19.

⁹ *Rama* in *simon* 302:10.

necessary to prepare a compress on Shabbos, it should be done as follows:

- A gentile should soak the dressing in water and apply it to the patient. We thus gain twice – the soaking in water, and avoiding the problem of squeezing the dressing.
- Soak the dressing or cloth in colored water, if available. It is forbidden to color water for this purpose on account of coloring.
- There are other solutions however: the *Mishna Berura* says¹⁰ that since we are dealing with the biblical prohibition of laundering, one must be stringent and not wet even a clean cloth. As such, one must ask one's rav for a solution in the event that a gentile is not available.

What about putting a sprained ankle into a bowl of warm water?

Since “washing feet” is something that is done by healthy people as well, one may put feet in water on Shabbos, even if one's intention is therapeutic.¹¹

What about placing ice or any other frozen object on a bruise to reduce swelling?

Obviously in itself it is not a *melacha*, and the only consideration is whether it is included in the *g'zeira* of applying medication on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *ztz"l* writes that since this is not normally done with medication, the *g'zeira* does not apply. The explanation being that the reason for the *g'zeira* was to avoid the possibility of one grinding herbs to cure an illness, but if for this particular illness or ailment there is

no medication, the basis for the *g'zeira* does not apply.

Accordingly one may apply frozen items or a knife blade (the flat part) to a bruise in order to suppress it.¹²

Vort on the Parsha

Hashem says to Moshe that He knows that Pharaoh will not let you go from Egypt, and not even when a strong hand is brought upon him (3:19). The *Meshech Chochmah* explains that a Jew's inner self is pure and strives to be good, and yet sometimes it is clouded over by the mundane body. However, when the shell – the body is punished, the pure inner self is free from its constraints and can shine and be good. Pharaoh's inner self was rotten just as much as his external, mundane being, and therefore, even though he would be punished and tormented, he would still not want to let the *B'nei Yisroel* go out of Egypt. That is what is meant by the last words of the *passuk*.

Food For Thought

Is one permitted to cut a dressing to the necessary size?

Is one permitted to window-shop on Shabbos?

What about walking through my garden on Shabbos, and thinking what needs to be done?

May I stand at a bus stop before Shabbos is over in order to catch the first bus after Shabbos?

Answers coming next week.

¹⁰ *Simon* 302:49 and *Bi'ur Halacha* “*she'yeishi*”.

¹¹ Based on *simon* 328:30.

¹² See the *SS"K* 35:34 and the 3rd vol. footnote 87.

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@shemaisrael.com, or www.shemaisrael.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@shemaisrael.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.