

ליקוטי ופסקי הלכות

"חוקי חיים"

ותלמוד
"חוקי חיים"
לעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם



שע"י "חדר הזרחה" שכונת מנחת יצחק פעיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

Halochohs compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

Halochohs of Soaps, Creams, Gels on Shabbos

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Soap, Creams, Gels on Shabbos

Balak [E"V] – Chukas-Balak [Chu"l] 5780

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Issur of Memacheik and Memareiaich

Memacheik [Smoothing]

- One of the 39 melachos on Shabbos is the issur of memacheik, which is smoothing out a skinned animal hide by removing the hair from it (משה) (שבת ע"ג). By extension, smoothing out any particular surface, e.g., a wooden or stone surface, is an issur deoraisa of memacheik (גמי שבת ע"ה).

Memareiaich [Smearing]

- The issur of memareiaich is a toldah of memacheik. Memareiaich is smearing a thick substance onto a surface and filling in dips until the surface is smooth.
- Wax over a hole in a barrel.** Thus, if a barrel has a hole in its side that wine flows out from, one may not seal the hole by smearing wax over it and smoothing it out. This action is the issur deoraisa of memacheik (גמי שבת דף קמ"ו ע"ב, שו"ע סי' ש"ד סי' א').
- Cream on a compress.** Similarly, smearing cream onto a compress and smoothing out the surface is an issur deoraisa of memacheik (גמי שבת) (דף ע"ה ע"ב). This is because it evens out the depressions in the compress (רש"י עירובין ק"ב: ד"ה שהוא, מ"ב סי' שכ"ח סקפ"א). Alternatively, the issur is spreading the cream on the wound itself (פסקי הרי"ד).

Types of Substances Subject to Memareiaich

Sources in Shas and the Poskim

- The poskim discuss several types of substances to determine which ones are subject to the issur of memareiaich. We will cite sources from the Gemara and Rishonim regarding several types of substances and what the poskim say about them. This will be a starting point for us to examine common modern-day substances and their consistencies.
- Wax.** As mentioned above, the Gemara forbids smoothing out wax to fill a hole in a barrel. Wax is a substance that is solid, but pliable enough that it can be smoothed, stretched, and shaped.
- Thick oil.** On a deoraisa level, thick oil is not subject to memareiaich and may be used to seal a hole in a barrel. However, Chazal made a gezeirah against sealing a hole even with thick oil to prevent people from ultimately using wax and doing memareiaich (גמי שבת) (דף קמ"ו ע"ב). Ostensibly, the issur derabanan is specifically with regards to a barrel. In other words, it is not that thick oil is subject to memareiaich; just one may not use thick oil since that may lead to using wax, which is subject to memareiaich.
- We don't know exactly how thick the oil discussed in the Gemara was. However, it was able to seal a hole in a barrel to prevent wine from coming out. It could be it was about as thick as industrial oil used in factories or similar consistency to mayonnaise, which is thick and has some properties of a solid, but is also soft, like toothpaste. It is very possible that something liquid that flows like other liquids is not included in the gezeirah against thick oil, as it does not at all resemble wax.
- Fat.** Fat is a substance that is solid but flexible when cold, but melts into a liquid when heated. Some poskim say it is like wax and subject to memareiaich deoraisa (סקמ"ה), while others hold it is like the abovementioned thick oil (רמב"ם פכ"ג שבת ה"א, ע"י ארחות שבת פ"ז הע"מ לשון הראב"ן סי' ש"פ).
- Oil.** Regular oil that is not thick is not subject to memareiaich even midrabanan. One may therefore rub it on himself on Shabbos (שו"ע סי' א') or apply it to a wound (שו"ע סי' שכ"ו ס"א).

- Saliva.** The Rishonim write that it is an issur to smear saliva on the ground (רש"י שבת דף קכ"א ע"ב ד"ה רוק, אורחות חיים למהר"א מלוניל שבת סי' (קכ"ג, טור סי' שט"ז, מג"א סקכ"ד). The sefarim ask: saliva is much more liquid than oil – how is it subject to memareiaich?
- Some explain that these Rishonim are referring to saliva that is mixed with dirt on the ground and is getting smeared evenly on the ground – the melachah of smearing is really being done on the clod of mud, not just the saliva (ארחות שבת שם, נשמת השבת ח"ה סי' קצ"א).
- Others answer that the "saliva" that is subject to memareiaich is really phlegm, which can come up when a person has pneumonia and is very thick mucus that resembles the consistency of the abovementioned thick oil (7-8). This is what the Rishonim were discussing (אהרונים).

Using Soap on Shabbos

Bar Soap

- Issur of nolad.** The poskim discuss whether using soap that is solid and hard like rock is an issur of nolad due to its similarity to crushing snow or hail on Shabbos (שו"ע סי' שכ"ט). Some say snow and hail are subject to the issur of nolad since water is obtained from them and crushing them might lead to squeezing fruit to obtain juice; soap, on the other hand, which does not bring forth drink and is not used for the liquid that comes out, may be used lechatchilah (בשם שלטי"ג).
- However, most poskim hold it is an issur of nolad to use bar soap (מרדכי, רמ"א שכ"ו סי' (סמ"ג, טור).
- Memacheik.** Smoothing out a bar of soap's surface while using it is not an issur of memacheik since one does not care if it is smooth, his intention isn't to smooth it out whatsoever, and this action isn't significant enough to be a melachah at all (פ"ז הע"ל ל"ט).
- Memareiaich.** There is also no problem of memareiaich. Since soap is used with water and the outermost layer of soap dissolves into the water right away, all a person is rubbing onto his body is water mixed with soap (שו"ת באר משה ח"א סי' ל"ו).
- In practice.** The minhag Yisroel is to be machmir not to use solid, hard soap (מ"ב סי' שכ"ו סק"ל).

Soap Cream, Soft Bar Soap

- There is a type of soap that is soft but somewhat solid and similar in thickness to toothpaste [we will shortly discuss today's liquid soap (below, 24)]. There is also a soap that is solid and shaped like a regular bar, but softer than regular bar soap and pliable, like wax.
- Nolad.** It could be soap cream is not an issue of nolad since it both starts out and ends up soft (קצות השלחן סי' קל"ח בדה"ש סקל"א). Soft bar soap might be an issue of nolad since it starts solid but ends up as a liquid. In this way, it is like fat.
- Memareiaich.** Some poskim say rubbing it onto the hands, body, and the like is an issur of memareiaich (תפארת ישראל הובא במ"ב סי' שכ"ו סק"ל).
- However, many poskim are surprised at this, as people are not interested at all in rubbing smooth soap on their hands to smooth out the surface. In fact, they rinse their hands and body right away and remove the soap. They therefore hold that using this soap is not an issur of memareiaich at all (קצות השלחן סי' קמ"ו בדי השלחן סק"ד ד"ה וצבע השפתים).
- In practice.** Although one may strictly speaking use these types of soap, since people also treat soap cream and soft bar soap as assur (מ"ב סק"ל), they are in the category of "muttar things that people treat as assur." Thus, lechatchilah they shouldn't be used (שו"ת הגרש"א, שש"כ פ"ד הע"מ).

Liquid Soap

24. The liquid soap that is common today – both for dishwashing and for washing the body – is completely liquid and has no solid properties. It is thick, but it can be poured like any other liquid and will run down a slightly inclined surface. Hence, it more resembles regular oil (paragraph 10) than thick oil that cannot be poured (paragraph 7). With this in mind, the poskim discuss whether it may be used on Shabbos.
25. **Lathers.** Some poskim are concerned about the issur of memareiach. The Igros Moshe explains that when soap is used with water, it makes a lather and expands to a larger volume, and he is therefore not sure that it isn't memareiach (שו"ת אג"מ או"ח ח"א סי' קי"ג). His talmidim also treat it as assur (שו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"ד סי' ס"ה ב').
26. **Diluting with water.** According to the ones who hold it is assur, one may dilute the liquid soap in water until it is just as liquid as water and then use it on Shabbos. Some say it must be diluted before Shabbos (אג"מ ע"ט אות קכ"ג); others allow diluting it even on Shabbos (קצוה"ש סי' קכ"ז הע' י"ג).
27. Most poskim, however, allow using liquid soap lechatchilah as is. They hold it certainly can't be memareiach only due to the lather expanding when it is mixed with water and becoming watery, more than the soap itself, which is obviously thicker. It is not clear why the lather would be more of a reason for memareiach (מעדני השלחן עמ' ק"ח), (הגרש"א, הגר"ח, הגר"ח פ"י שבת פ"ז אות כ"ז).
28. **Nolad.** The lather and bubbles created by the soap and water do not present a concern of nolad since they are insubstantial (ג"ג סי' י"ד, קצות השלחן סי' קמ"ו בדה"ש סוף סקל"ב).
29. **In practice.** As long as the liquid soap can be poured like liquid, one may lechatchilah use liquid soap on Shabbos, whether for dishes or washing the body, even if it is thick (הגר"ח קנייבסקי בשם החזו"א). It does not need to be diluted with water before Shabbos. It is not even so clear that solid, hard soap is assur (above, 24) if not for the fact that people treat it as assur (23); there is certainly nothing assur about liquid soap.

Various Types of Creams, Gels, and Oils

30. People use many sorts of creams, oils, gels, and the like in their day-to-day life, whether for healing, personal hygiene, or skin care. We will now go through several rules regarding using them on Shabbos.

For Healing

31. Someone who is sick, but not in danger, bedridden, or classified as sick throughout his whole body ["choleh kol gufo"], may not take medicine on Shabbos due to the gezeirah against grinding herbs (שו"ת סי' שכ"ח). This gezeirah is to prevent people from ultimately grinding or cooking things to produce medicine to heal himself.
32. However, a person who is in danger, sick throughout his whole body, or "bedridden" – i.e., unable to function regularly, even if not actually in bed (חוט שני ח"ד פ"ט סקכ"ז) – may take medicine. He may also use cream for healing if there is a possibility of a wound or burn getting infected or if there is already inflammation and he needs an antibiotic cream. However, the cream must be applied in a permissible way, as will be explained.

Cream Meant to Be Absorbed in the Skin

33. The issur of memareiach applies when one wants to smooth something out with cream so that it is smooth and even. Therefore, if one smears thick cream on his skin and it stays there uniformly and smooth, he transgresses the issur of memareiach. However, cream that is meant to be rubbed into the skin until it is totally absorbed and does not leave a layer on the skin does not involve the issur of memareiach according to several poskim (ע"פ מג"א סי' שט"ז סקכ"ד).
34. **Non-dangerously ill person.** Thus, the poskim allow someone who is sick – even if his illness isn't dangerous – to do this on Shabbos (דעת תורה סכ"ו, שו"ת מנח"י ח"ז סי' כ'). He should make certain that it gets totally absorbed into his skin and no cream is left on top of the skin (הגרש"א, ש"ש"כ פ"ג הע' נ"ח). But this should only be done in a case of sickness.

Permissible Way to Apply Cream

35. **Squeezing cream out of a tube.** One may squeeze a tube to extract cream. Squeezing the cream out of the tube in a uniform, smooth way is not a problem of memareiach since a person doesn't care how it comes out; it just so happens to come out that way to facilitate measuring the desired amount (חוט שני).

36. **Applying without smearing.** If one needs to put on a thick cream that is subject to the issur of memareiach, he may squeeze out some cream directly onto the affected area without smearing it at all, or use a toothpick or other utensil. Even though the cream will eventually get absorbed or smeared on its own, that is not an issur (שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"ד סי' ל"ג).

37. **Applying and covering with a bandage.** One may also apply cream to a wound without smearing it and then cover it with a bandage even though the cream will get smeared when the bandage is closed. This is because there is no intent to smear the cream and it is being done indirectly.

For a Baby

38. **Diaper cream.** A baby has the status of a non-dangerously sick person. Thus, if a baby's skin is irritated, one may put cream on the area without smearing it and then close the diaper, letting the cream smear on its own. If a baby is very irritated and is experiencing great pain, or on a area on the baby that is not covered by a diaper, one may smear the cream with a shinui, e.g., with a spoon handle, or rub it in until it is totally absorbed (see above, 34).

39. **Gel for teething.** Similarly, one may apply gel, e.g., Orajel, to a teething baby's gums. If it is thick like a cream, it should be applied with a spoon handle or the like.

40. **Post-bris.** One may also apply a cream, e.g., Bacitracin, Vita-Merfen, or Bepanthen Plus, on the area of a baby's bris milah in accordance with the mohel's instructions without smearing it and then close the diaper as usual.

41. Similarly, one may apply cream for nursing or hemorrhoid care on the affected area without smearing it, letting it get absorbed on its own.

Alcohol Hand Sanitizer

42. **Liquid.** One may use liquid hand sanitizers, e.g., alcohol, or wash his hands with water and liquid soap or liquid medical soap for the sake of hygiene. This is particularly true these days, when these things are very important due to the spread of the disease from China.

43. **Alcogel.** One may also use an alcohol-based gel hand sanitizer and the like. Even though it has thickness, it is muttar lechatchilah and there is no concern for memareiach since it pours like other liquids and thus has the status of oil. Even according to the poskim who are concerned about memareiach with the lather from liquid soaps (above, 25), alcogel does not lather and is muttar.

Use on the Body

44. **Sunscreen/sun cream.** One may not sit in the sun on Shabbos with intent to beautify his skin by tanning due to the issur of tzoveia (ע"פ ש"רע"ט סי' ש"ג ס"ה). However, if sitting in the sun itself is enjoyable, one may do so (שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ה סי' ל"ב). But one may not smear sunscreen cream or use a sunscreen stick [e.g., by Dr. Fischer] due to the issur of memareiach. If one is going out into the sun and there is a concern he will be harmed by the sun's rays, he may use sunscreen spray or sunscreen milk to protect his skin from the rays.

45. **Toothpaste.** One may not use toothpaste on Shabbos due to the issur of memareiach when putting the toothpaste in the mouth; toothpaste is thick enough to be subject to the issur of memareiach. One may rinse his mouth with mouthwash (שו"ת באר משה ח"א סי' ל"ד).

46. **Vaseline.** One may use LG or KY gel since it is considered liquid and pours and flows downward, and thus is not subject to memareiach. However, one may not use Vaseline because it is solid and subject to memareiach. One may take a bit with a spoon or the like and apply it without actively smearing it (שו"ת באר משה ח"ב סי' ל').

47. **Deodorant.** One may use spray deodorant or roll-on liquid stick on Shabbos as an antiperspirant. This is not a problem of infusing the body with a fragrance ["molid reich"] since the primary intent is to prevent perspiration. However, one may not use stick deodorant or any other solid substance due to the issur of memareiach.

48. **Mosquito repellent spray.** One may use a spray to keep away mosquitos, but not a solid type of substance.

49. **Hand cream.** One may not use creams or lotions to soften or heal the skin on his hands. However, one may smear oil – which is liquid – on the affected area where healthy people do that too or because it is for personal pleasure, not healing (הגרש"א). One may also clean his hands with liquid hand-cleansing substances, e.g., Cetaphil, even though it also maintains the skin's health.

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