

The Donkey Brings Joy

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One cold winter day, the Gaon, Rabbi Nosson Adler, was traveling together with his esteemed talmid, the Chasam Sofer. The horses pulling the wagon were trudging through the heavy snow with great difficulty. Suddenly, one of the horses collapsed and died, and the second horse was not strong enough to pull the wagon alone. The wagon driver, having no other choice, starting walking to the nearest village to obtain an additional horse. The two venerated passengers waited in the wagon.

Eventually, the wagon driver returned, leading a.....donkey. When Rav Nosson saw the donkey, he descended from the wagon, and began to dance happily in the snow. "Rebbi," asked the Chasam Sofer, "Why are you so happy?"

"Don't you see?" asked Rav Nosson. "The wagon driver brought a donkey instead of a horse. Who would have ever thought that I would merit fulfilling the mitzva of, 'Do not plow with an ox and donkey together'? At home in Frankfurt, I never imagined that I would merit fulfilling this commandment. Now that Baruch Hashem, I merited it, I am filled with joy!"

The passengers instructed the wagon driver to return the donkey, and he brought back a horse in its place. ♦

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Halacha Challenge



Letters on the Edge of a Book

by Shlomo Epshteyn
reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz

After the Shabbos seuda, kids gathered to read together a kid's parsha book that they got from a library. When they were about to open the book, six year-old Shaina pointed to the book and shouted out, "The book says 'Library' on its side! If we open the book, we'll be erasing that word!" "True," added Binyomin, "and if we close it afterwards we'll be re-connecting the word and doing the melacha of writing!"

Question

Can this library book be used on Shabbos?

Answer

Yes. However, if there is another book like this one which does not have writing on its edge, it is proper to use it instead of the one with writing.

Explanation

Let's first describe the issue of closing such a book where the letters will re-connect to form a word. Classically, the *melacha* of Kosev (writing) constitutes an application of ink upon a surface to form letters or images. In our scenario, however, the application of ink was already done prior to Shabbos, and now the letters are just being brought close to each other, whereupon they will be readable. Does the joining of pre-written letters or parts of letters constitute the *melacha* of Kosev?



This week's issue is dedicated

l'ilui nishmas Shmuel ben Leib

Halacha Challenge

☞ The Rema in his sefer of Shailos and Teshuvos¹ brings multiple proofs from Chazal and Rishonim which show that joining pre-written letters or parts of letters does not constitute the *melacha* of Kosev. One of his proofs is as follows: The Gemora in *masechet* Shabbos² teaches us an interesting *halacha*: a person has performed the *melacha* of Kosev even if he wrote one letter on a surface (e.g., a cliff) that was located in a town of Teveria and then wrote another letter on a surface that was located in a town of Tzipori. [Appendix: Writing only one letter does not constitute the *melacha* of Kosev.] This *halacha* is showing us that when the two letters were written on Shabbos, but were separated by some distance, from the perspective of Kosev, we don't say that something was lacking in this writing, but rather the writing is considered to be fully completed. As such, since such writing is considered to be fully completed, bringing pre-written letters together does not constitute the *melacha* of Kosev. By the same token, separating letters is not a *melacha* of Mocheq. The Rema also shows that the action of bringing together (or separating) letters is not even prohibited rabbinically, and he also proves that the same *halacha* applies to connecting parts of letters together.

Another proof that the Rema brings is the following: Rashi³ explains that the *melacha* of Kosev was performed in the construction of the Mishkan when the letters were written on the *kerashim* (the vertical beams). For each pair of the *kerashim*, one letter was written on one *keresh* and the second matching letter was written on the adjacent *keresh* in order to facilitate proper assembly and disassembly of the Mishkan. Then, Rashi explains that Mocheq was performed when a mistake was made and a letter on a *keresh* needed to be erased and written again. If it would be true that merely separating the letters is *Mocheq*, Rashi would have simply said that *Mocheq* was performed when the *kerashim* were disassembled. As such, from the fact that Rashi didn't explain *Mocheq* in this way, we learn that separating letters from each other is not *Mocheq*.

In addition to this, the Rema proves that in the case of a book that has writing on its edge, where the letters are meant to be constantly broken apart and re-connected again, the *melachos* of Kosev and Mocheq do not apply – neither *m'deoraissa* nor *m'derabbanan*.

Though the Rema permits using a book that has writing on its edge, some Achronim disagree⁴. Due to the fact that most Achronim are lenient in this *halacha*, the Mishna Berura⁵ permits using such a book. The Mishna Berura does say, however, that it is proper to be stringent if the same book without writing on the edge is available. The Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchosa⁶, rules like the *p'sak* of the Mishna Berura. ♦

1. שאלות ותשובות הרמ"א סימן קיט 2. שבת קד: 3. פירוש רש"י שבת עג. ד"ה כותב ומוחק 4. עיין במג"א סימן ש"מ ס"ק ו 5. מ"ב סימן ש"מ ס"ק יז 6. ששכ"ה פרק כח סעיף ב, הערות ו-ז

Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



Zeidy, where does the saying "Torah is sweeter than honey" come from?



It's based on a pasuk in Tehillim (19:11), "...and they (the words of Torah) are sweeter than honey..." Even something like honey, only gives a person limited pleasure. Soon after eating the honey the pleasure goes away. Also, eating too much honey is unhealthy. Torah, on the other hand, is not like that: the more and deeper a person learns Torah, the sweeter it becomes, and the effect is everlasting. [based on peirush Radak and Ibn Ezra to Tehillim 19:11]

Wonders of Creation

Alligator Snapping Turtle



The alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) is the largest freshwater turtle in the world based on weight. Alligator snapping turtles are sometimes captive-bred as pets and are readily available in the exotic animal trade. Due to their potential size and specific needs, they do not make particularly good pets for any but the most experienced aquatic turtle keepers.

Despite their reputation, they are typically not prone to biting, but if provoked are quite capable of delivering a bite with their powerful jaws which can cause significant harm to a human, easily amputating fingers. Some states where alligator snapping turtles do not naturally occur (such as California) prohibit them from being kept as pets by residents. ♦

Riddles & Parsha Qs

Riddle



One day, after Matan Torah, during the first years of Klal Yisroel's encampment in the midbar, Zev became thirsty for water. He went around looking for the Miriam's well. Zev went around the whole Machane Yisroel, visiting each Degel and each Shevet inside each Degel. He even searched in Machane Levi'im. He then went outside Machane Yisroel just to see in case the well happened to be there. The well was nowhere to be found.

Where was the well?

Answer to last issue's Riddle:

(Riddle: ...Simcha went to the Beis HaMikdash to pay his pledge. After explaining to a Kohen his vow, the Kohen told him what he must give. Simcha took out his wallet, looked inside and said, "Oy, I wish I was a little bit shorter." Why did Simcha say this?)

According to hilchos Arachin, one can pledge the value of his height. If he does so, he must donate a staff, made from a material that he specified in the vow (e.g., gold, silver). The minimum length of that staff must equal this person's height. [Rambam Hilchos Arachin v'Charamim ch. 2, h. 6]

Simcha made such a pledge and did not have enough money to obtain the needed staff.