The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Shabbos, Jul 13 2024 ■ ז' תמוז תשפ"ד
סימן ש"מ סעיף ד'

Overview

Siman 340 Seif 4 (b):

- One who writes on his skin with permanent ink is liable since skin is considered a permanent surface. Even though the warmth of his skin will erase the ink over time, nevertheless, it is considered similar to one who erases permanent ink. However, one who scratches a letter onto his skin is exempt since that is not the normal manner of writing. One who cuts the shape of a letter from leather is liable. (Principles of Writing and Erasing 2)
- One who traces existing letters is exempt since his action was not productive. This is true if one traced using the same ink as the original writing but if one traced with סדיו סקרא he is liable for erasing and writing. If one traced with סדיו סקרא he is exempt since it is a destructive act. (Principles of Writing and Erasing 3)
- One is liable when he writes two letters. He is exempt for writing one letter even if that letter is next to another letter but if that one letter completes a *sefer* he is liable. If one wrote one letter and made a mark above it to represent a word, he is exempt even though it is read as a word. If one repairs a letter and thus divides it into two letters he is liable. If one intended to write a ח but wrote 2 זיינין he is exempt since his intent was to write one letter. (Principles of Writing and Erasing 4)
- One is liable for writing two letters even though they do not form an entire word and even if one wrote the same letter twice. One is Biblically liable for writing in any language. Rambam rules that one is liable even for making two markings, for example markings that represent numbers. (Principles of Writing and Erasing 5)
- One is liable even if the two letters were written on different tablets provided that they are read together. Even if one wrote one letter on one piece of parchment and then on that same Shabbos walked to another place and wrote another letter on another piece of parchment but in a manner that they could be read together, he is liable. If one wrote one letter on the ground and another letter on the ceiling or if he wrote the two letters on two different walls, he is not liable provided that the letters cannot be read together. (Principles of Writing and Erasing 6)

Halacha Highlight

Polishing shoes

Mishnah Berurah Siman 340 Writing [3]

הכותב כתב על גבי כתב

One who writes with ink on top of ink

Mishnah Berurah (כתיבה אות ג') writes that one who traces letters has not violated a Biblical prohibition. In other words, if one runs a writing instrument over letters that were already written, thereby renewing them, he is exempt from liability since his action provides no benefit being that the letters were already there and legible. However, this is true only if he traces with the same ink used to write the letters in the first place, e.g., ink over ink and red paint over red paint. However, if one traced letters originally made from red paint with black ink he is liable for two transgressions. The first violation is writing since the writing is now better quality than it was and the second violation is for erasing since he is essentially erasing the letters that had been written in red paint. If one traced letters originally made from black ink with red paint, he is exempt from liability since it is considered a destructive act being that the letters have lost quality.

Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner (שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"ז סי' מ"ג) discusses liability for polishing black shoes with black shoe polish. Seemingly, this parallels the case of tracing a letter made from black ink with black ink that does not constitute a Biblical prohibition. However, he rules that one who does so violates the Biblical prohibition of dyeing since he has darkened the appearance of the shoe. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (שמירת שבת כהלכתה פט"ו הע' קכ"ז) added that although when it comes to the *melacha* of writing this does not rise to a Biblical violation, when it comes to dyeing it does. The reason is that the intent of dyeing is for the color to be visible to others and although the color of the shoe does not change when it is polished, nevertheless, people can easily recognize the shine of recently polished shoes and thus it is Biblically prohibited. In contrast, the purpose of writing is to produce legible letters and since legible letters already existed, making them darker, does not add to their legibility and thus is no Biblically prohibited.