

סימן שיד

A. Introduction to Opening Cans and Bottles

Over the past 50 years, we have been blessed to live in a world with an abundance of kosher food, many of which are distributed and sold in disposable packaging. Opening these products on Shabbos raise serious *halachic* questions that are hotly debated by the contemporary *posskim*. The subject of opening these packages, containers, and bottles is extensive and one could spend months going through all the opinions on the matter. Our goal in the upcoming sections is to give you a taste of this sea of information by learning the opinions of the major *posskim* of our generation. In this section, we will introduce the six possible *halachic* issues that arise when opening these containers on Shabbos and in the following sections, we will delve into the details of the various types of packages and how to open them on Shabbos. The 6 possible prohibitions involved in opening a package or container are:

1. כלי – destroying the סתירה
2. כלי – creating בנין
3. עשיית פתח – making a nice opening (forbidden because of מנתקן מנא, i.e., מכה בפטיש)
4. קורע – ripping
5. מחתך – precise cutting
6. מחיקה – ripping letters

We will briefly learn these six issues from the sources in the גמרא until the S'A.

בנין, סתירה ועשיית פתח – Building and dismantling/destroying a structure. The משנה שבת (עג.) lists building and demolishing as two of the מלאכות ל"ט. The *passkins* רמב"ם (י"ב) that any form of building, whether straightening out the ground or piling bricks one on top of another (with cement in between), is forbidden. With regards to סותר, the גמרא שבת (לא:) teaches that one transgresses the מלאכה only when dismantling with intention to rebuild. This is derived from the fact that the Jews traveling in the desert would dismantle the קרשים of the משכן each time they moved with intention to rebuild it at their next destination. Although the biblical prohibition of סותר only applies if one dismantles with intention to rebuild, dismantling in a destructive manner is rabbinically prohibited (see רמב"ם י:טו).

Does the prohibition of בנין וסתירה apply also to כלים – vessels, or only to structures connected to the ground? רבא is quoted in the גמרא שבת (קכב:) saying "אין בנין וסתירה בכלים" – there is no prohibition of building or dismantling כלים. Rashi (1) in ד"ה ואי חייטיה interprets this literally that the prohibition of בנין (and subsequently סותר) do not apply to any כלים. (This is also the opinion of the שבת קב: ד"ה האי in Tosfos (2).) אור זרוע (יח"ב), ריבט"א (עירובין לה.), רשב"א (עירובין לד:) argues that the rule of "אין בנין וסתירה בכלים" is only referring to vessels that are constantly disassembled and reassembled or to weak and temporary כלים (see ד"ה שובר קמו). (תוס' שבת קמו.) ד"ה שובר, but building or dismantling sturdy, full-fledged vessels is also a violation of בונה – building.

Rashi (3) in ד"ה חייב (מז.) teaches that although (in his opinion) there is no prohibition of "בנין וסתירה" with regards to כלים (because בנין וסתירה only apply to construction on the ground), there is a different prohibition of מכה בפטיש – completing a מלאכה [based on Rashi: (שבת-עה:)] (lit. hitting a hammer) that one transgresses when constructing or fixing part a כלי. For example, making a clean opening in a barrel is forbidden because of מנא/מכה בפטיש (as we will see shortly).

The (4) **משנה שבת** (קמו.) teaches that you are allowed to break a barrel on Shabbos in order to eat the figs that are inside of it as long as you do not make a nice opening. Rashi explains that the משנה is referring even to a full-fledged כלי (since there is no prohibition of breaking a כלי). *Tosfos* explains that the breaking of the barrel in the משנה is only permitted because the משנה is referring to a מוסתקי – a barrel that was glued together from broken pieces (i.e., a flimsy כלי), but breaking a full-fledged barrel is forbidden because of סותר – destroying. According to *Tosfos*, the משנה also teaches that making a nice opening even on a מוסתקי is forbidden due to מנא מתקן.

To summarize, so far we have learned three *halachos* that pertain to opening packaging on Shabbos: 1) Breaking a מוסתקי, or any lower grade package is permitted according to all, 2) Breaking a full-fledged כלי is a מחלוקת between Rashi and *Tosfos*. 3) Making a clean opening in a vessel is forbidden, and according to *Tosfos* even making a clean opening in a weak and temporary כלי such as a מוסתקי is forbidden.

The S"א in סעיף א' *passkins* like *Tosfos* that breaking a flimsy כלי that was broken and glued back together is permitted on Shabbos because the prohibitions of סתירה – destroying, and בנין – building, only apply to strong and complete vessels (see סעיף ז'). The S"א quotes the גר"א who *passkins* like Rashi that even breaking a sturdy כלי does not violate the biblical prohibition of סתירה. The S"א then adds the second half of the משנה that making a nice opening even in a flimsy כלי is forbidden because of מנא מתקן. This *halacha* is also brought later in סעיף ו'. However, to biblically violate the prohibition of עשיית פתח, one would need to make a hole in a full-fledged כלי that is "להכניס ולהוציא" – used for both inserting items into the vessel and for removing items from the vessel. If the hole is used solely for removing or filling, it is rabbinically forbidden (see משנ"ב סק"ו). The S"א in סעיף ו' also teaches that if you completely remove the top of a barrel you are not in violation of עשיית פתח because your intention is not to make a reusable opening but only to be able to easily remove the contents of the barrel. Additionally, the prohibition of עשיית פתח is only forbidden if that is your intention, but if you do not intend to make an opening it is permitted (see משנה פרק יב"ב). The questions that the modern day *posskim* discuss related to this issue are whether our packaging is comparable to a flimsy כלי and how to define a "nice opening."

קורע – Ripping. The **משנה שבת** (עג.) lists ripping as one of the מלאכות. The **גמרא שבת** (עד:) explains that ripping was used in the maintenance of the משכן when small holes made by bugs would appear on the יריעות. If the craftsmen would sew the circular hole by pulling the two sides close to one another, it would create a crease in the fabric. Therefore, to maintain a crease-free fabric, the craftsmen would first cut above and below the hole and then bring the fabric together, creating a stitch that does not pull or crease the fabric. The (5) **משנה שבת** (קה.) teaches that ripping is biblically forbidden only if you plan to re-sew the pieces together, but ripping merely in order to destroy is forbidden מדרבנן. The **רמב"ם** (י"ה) explains that ripping is biblically forbidden if one benefits from the ripping in any way, even if the pieces are not sewn back together. For example, if you tear a shirt out of anger, you have violated the איסור

מנחת חינוך (מוסך) because the tearing served as a benefit of calming you down. The *passkins* that the prohibition of קורע (and תופר – sewing) only applies to soft material, similar to the יריעות of the משכן. However, breaking strong material, such as the tin cans, is not a violation of קורע.

The S”A in יד - **סימן שמ** - *passkins* in accordance with the above משניות that ripping for a productive purpose is forbidden. The **משנ"ב סקמ"ג** explains that ripping is biblically forbidden if you benefit from it in any way, even if you do not plan to re sew it. Additionally, ripping in a destructive manner is still rabbinically forbidden.

The (6) **גמרא שבת** (קמו.) teaches that on Shabbos you are allowed to rip open **חותלות** – baskets made from date branches, where dates were placed inside of them to ripen. The S”A in **סעיף ח'** *passkins* based on the גמרא that the prohibition of קורע – ripping, does not apply to חותלות (see ביה"ל ד"ה חותלות). He explains that ripping the חותלות is similar to cracking open a nut (or peeling a banana) where קורע does not apply. The **משנ"ב סק"מ** elaborates that ripping חותלות is certainly not forbidden due to סותר because they are not full-fledged כלים (and are even considered less of a כלי than מוסתקי). The question that the modern day *posskim* discuss is whether our packages and wrappers have the status of חותלות, where the prohibition of קורע does not apply, or are they of a sturdier nature than חותלות, such that קורע applies and might even be an איסור דאורייתא since you are benefiting from the tear. For example, ripping potato chip bags, cereal bags, and the aluminum lining on the cover of wine bottles enables you to benefit from the product.

מחתך – Precise cutting. The **משנה שבת** (עג) lists מחתך – cutting as one of the מלאכות ל"ט. Some of the יריעות in the משכן were made of leather that needed to be precisely cut to fit the measurements of the משכן. The **משנ"ב סימן שכב סקי"ח** quotes the **רמב"ם** (יא-ז) who *passkins* that the prohibition of **מחתך** is transgressed when cutting any type of material (even hard material such as wood and metal), but only when one cares about the exact measurement that is cut. Cutting without intent to create a specific measurement is not in violation of מחתך. The **משנ"ב** adds that מחתך can be transgressed even when cutting by hand if the item you are cutting is commonly cut by hand. However, the prohibition of מחתך does not apply to foods (see **משנ"ב סקי"ב**). מחתך – cutting differs from קורע – ripping in that מחתך is only transgressed when you care about the exact measurement of the cut, while קורע is transgressed whenever two soft items are torn apart (and some sort of benefit is achieved from the tearing). The question that the modern day *posskim* discuss is whether the prohibition of מחתך applies to our modern-day containers, such as the splitting of yogurt containers from one another, opening a soda can, opening a tin can, opening a bottle cap, or cutting along the perforated line of plastic seals on wine, grape juice or vodka, since in all of these cases you are making a precise cut.

מוחק – The **משנה שבת** (עג.) lists מוחק – writing and erasing, as two of the מלאכות ל"ט. The **משנה** (7) **שבת** (קג.) explains that when בני ישראל traveled in the desert they needed to disassemble and then reassemble the קרשים – the planks of the משכן. Small markings would be made on the קרשים to ensure that they would be reassembled in exactly the same order that they were originally assembled. If one of the קרשים was accidentally marked incorrectly, they would erase the marking in order to write the correct marking. The **גמרא שבת** (עה:) teaches that the biblical prohibition of מוחק is violated only if you plan to rewrite something in that area.

The S”A in ג' – **סימן שמ** *passkins* in accordance with the above משניות and the *Rama* adds that cutting through letters on a cake is forbidden. The משנ”ב ס”ק י”ז explains that the prohibition of cutting letters on a cake is rabbinic since you do not intend to write in that area. The משנ”ב also adds that only cutting the letters (or a picture) is forbidden, but ruining the writing by biting into the cake is allowed. The question that the modern day *posskim* discuss is whether ripping letters on packaging violates the prohibition of מוחק (see below, section K).

Modern day packaging is made from various materials and comes in many different sizes and shapes. Opening many of these packages on Shabbos may involve violating one or more of five איסורי דאורייתא and one דרבנן (the prohibition of מוחק). Therefore, the *posskim* recommend opening all packages before Shabbos (see, e.g., שש”כ ט:א, (8) פסקי תשובות עמ' שה, ארחות שבת ח”א ימ' שסו, שש”כ ט:א). However, if one forgot to open them before Shabbos or if opening specific packages before Shabbos will ruin the food inside, the *posskim* discuss permissible ways of opening the packaging on Shabbos.

As a final introduction, it should be noted that there are two disputes among the *achronim* that will reappear and escort us when discussing this topic. One with regards to מחתך and one with regards to קורע. With regards to מחתך, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (שולחן שלמה שיד - יג:ג) holds if you are precisely cutting material along the manufacturer’s predetermined perforations or indentations, but do not care about the exact size (as is the case when opening a can of coke or separating yogurt containers) you are not in violation of מחתך. **Rav Elyashiv** (הלכות שבת בשבת - פרק יד הע' 65) argues saying that whenever you precisely cut a material (and benefit from it) you are in violation of מחתך even if you do not care about its exact size. With regards to קורע, **RSZA** (בנין שבת פל”ו עמ' ריט) holds that קורע is not violated when ripping packages that are included in the category of “חותלות”. The ארחות שבת (פי”ב) argues saying that קורע could apply to חותלות if they are carefully ripped to an exact size in order to be reused in the future.

In the next sections, we will discuss the opening of all the common packaging that exist today and whether they have the status of a full-fledged כלי, a מוסתקי or חותלות (you should familiarize yourself with these terms). We will tackle this feat by discussing each packaging method and learning whether the six possible prohibitions mentioned above apply to opening that specific package. HERE WE GO!

B. Opening Tin Cans Such as Tuna, Corn, Green Beans, and Pickles

In this section, we will discuss the opening of various tin cans on Shabbos and we will address each of the 6 possible issues mentioned in the previous sections. There are two types of cans: One requires a special can opener that slowly opens the can as it circles around the lid, and the other has a metal tab on top of the can (similar to a can of coke) that is pulled upward to open the container. The *halachos* that pertain to opening cans on Shabbos apply equally to both types of cans unless noted below.

סותר – the תהלה לדוד (סימן שיד-יב) *passkins* that aluminum cans that are used to store sardines may not be opened on Shabbos because you are breaking a full-fledged כלי, and the S”A *passkined* that סותר

applies to strong כלים. However, **RSZA** (10) quoted in (פ"ט סק"י) argues that since the cans are not important כלים, they are similar to a מוסתקי where even the S"A agrees that the prohibition of סותר does not apply. The (סימן נא סע' י"א) **חזו"א** (11) *passkins* that since the tin cans are hermetically sealed and one cannot simply access the contents inside, they are not considered a כלי and סתירה does not apply. *Lema'ase*, the majority of *posskim* hold that there is no issue of סותר with regards to aluminum tin cans.

בונה – The (נא-סקי"א) **חזו"א** (11) *passkins* that opening a tin can is still forbidden on Shabbos because you are making it into a כלי, i.e., you are violating the prohibition of בונה. When the can was sealed it was not a כלי since you were not able to access its contents, but with its opening you made it into a functional כלי. The (פי"ב הע' ו') **ארחות שבת** (12) explains that the חזו"א forbade opening a tin container even if you plan on throwing it out after its use (i.e., you do not intend to make it into a long-lasting כלי) for three reasons: 1) Lest you come to use it again. 2) In some instances, it takes a few days to finish all the contents in the tin container (such as pickles in Israel) and in that interim you have made it into a כלי. 3) Even if you plan on immediately throwing out the can, it is still forbidden because we do not care about your intentions, and at the moment you opened it, you made it into a כלי.¹

RSZA (13) quoted in (פ"ט סק"י) argues on the premise of the חזון איש that a sealed can is not considered a כלי. **RSZA** holds that when the tin can is filled in the factory, it is considered a כלי and sealing it shut does not nullify its status as a כלי. The reason is that the purpose of the seal is to preserve and transfer its contents from one place to the next. Therefore, opening a tin can on Shabbos is not a violation of בונה since the can is already considered a כלי. Furthermore, even if you want to say that the sealed can is not considered a כלי, you are still allowed to open them (and there is no prohibition of בונה) because they have the *halachic* status of a מוסתקי where סותר (and בונה) do not apply (as mentioned above). According to **RSZA**, tin cans are considered a מוסתקי since they are always disposed of nowadays after consuming their contents even if it will take you a few days to empty the contents of the can (as is the case with Israeli pickles). He proves this from the גמרא ביצה that states that מוסתקי vessels were used more than once and yet, the prohibition of בונה and סותר do not apply to them.

Rav Moshe (14) in (או"ח ח"א סימן קכב-ט) goes one step further and says that tin cans could have the status of חותלות (the date leaf basket) where tearing them open is completely permitted. **Rav Moshe** explains that the S"A *passkins* in ח' סעיף ח' that tearing open חותלות is permitted because the baskets are used only once, and are similar to the shell of a nut that is בטל to the nut since it is only protecting the food and not serving as an actual כלי. Similarly, if you plan to throw out the tin container immediately after consuming its contents, it has the status of חותלות (and not a כלי), to which the prohibitions of סותר and קורע do not apply. **Rav Chanan Cohen**, the author of *בנין שבת*, world expert on opening packages on Shabbos and longtime *talmid* of **RSZA**, relayed that **RSZA** vacillated throughout his life about the status of modern-day packages and ultimately held that they are all considered חותלות (this opinion of **RSZA** is quoted in the שש"כ סקי"ב and will be elaborated on below).

¹ This is how the חזו"א is understood by many contemporary *posskim*, but others understand that even the חזו"א only forbade when many people save and reuse such cans (see עמ' שו-שח). We will learn the חזו"א as explained by the ארחות שבת above.

עשיית פתח: To better understand whether opening a tin can on Shabbos is a violation of **עשיית פתח**, we will elaborate on the original source in the **משנה** quoted in the previous section. The **משנה** taught that breaking open a barrel is permitted if you do not have in mind to create a nice opening, but fashioning a nice opening is forbidden. The **בנין שבת** (פרק יז) (15) (written by Rav Chanan Cohen) explains that the **משנה**'s prohibition of making a hole is because you are perfecting the barrel by creating an additional access point. Before the hole was formed, the only way for you to access the contents of the barrel was from the opening on the top, but once you made an additional opening from the side of the barrel you created an easier way to access the contents of the barrel. This is a violation of **מכה בפטיש** because you perfected the barrel. Making a hole is only forbidden if your intention is to add a benefit to the barrel, but if your intention is not to perfect the barrel, there is no violation of **מכה בפטיש**.² Therefore, if you plan to throw out the barrel immediately after opening it, there is no prohibition of making a nice hole.

What emerges is that the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** applies when you intentionally make a nice opening in a container with intent to reuse it in the future, thereby creating a functional hole that perfects the container and violates the prohibition of **מכה בפטיש**. If you do not plan to reuse the container (i.e., you will finish its contents in one sitting) making a nice hole is permitted because your action is viewed as emptying the contents of the container and not perfecting the container itself. **RSZA** (13) writes that although the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** applies even to flimsy disposable **כלים**, opening a tin can is not in violation of **עשיית פתח** since you are not intending to make a nice opening for reuse. **RSZA** (16) elaborates in **שיד-סק"ה** that although the opening in a tin can is nicely cut (and is reused as you finish the can's contents),³ it is not considered as if you intended on making a nice opening since the only way to open a can is with a can opener (that automatically creates a nice opening). In other words, the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** is when you have an option to either make a nice opening or a not-as-nice opening, and you deliberately make a nice opening in order to use the container in the future in a more convenient manner. However, if the only way to open the container is in a nice manner and your intention is not to reuse the container, it is permitted. Therefore, in our case of the tin can, if you plan to throw it out after its use and the only way to open the container is by creating a nice hole with a can opener or by pulling the built-in tab, there is no prohibition of **עשיית פתח** when creating the nice hole.⁴

To summarize in one sentence, the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** (i.e., **מכה בפטיש**) applies when you have an option to either make a nice opening or a not so nice opening in a container, and you deliberately choose to make a nice opening for the sake of reuse. This is a violation of **מכה בפטיש** since you created a nice hole enhancing the use of the barrel.

קורע – As mentioned, the **מנחת חינוך** (17) *passkins* that the prohibition of **קורע** (ה-קורע) (מוסך השבת – קורע-ה) (and **תופר** – sewing) only applies to soft material, similar to the **יריעות** of the **משכן**. However, breaking

² See **פרק כט-עמ' קפט** based on **בנין שבת** (פרק כט-עמ' קפט) and see **שיח סקל"ו** who writes based on the **מ"מ** that there is no issue of **רישא** since the violation of **מכה בפטיש** can only be transgressed with intent.

³ See **שיד-סק"ה** where **RSZA** writes that even though you will be storing the contents of the tin can in the can for a few days (such as Israeli pickles) it is still permitted.

⁴ This distinction will be relevant when discussing other containers, such as milk cartons and milk bags, where one has the option to make a nice opening or a not such nice opening.

strong material, such as the tin cans, is not a violation of קורע.⁵ Additionally, if tin cans have the status of חותלות, there is no prohibition of קורע as the package is בטל to the food inside.

מחתך – As mentioned, the prohibition of מחתך only applies when you care about the precise size of the object being cut. When opening tin cans, one does not care about the exact measurement of the lid being removed, the size of the cut is predetermined by the manufacturer. The הלכות שבת בשבת (ח"א) – you are cutting them in to a precise size. However, if you do not fully remove the lid it is permitted since you are actively showing that you do not care about the size or location of the cut. (Opening a tin can with a can opener creates a jagged cut that is not precise and would not be a violation of מחתך even according to Rav Elyashiv.)

מוחק – If the tin can has writing on the packaging, it seems from the Rama in סימן ש-מג and the משנ"ב there that you are not allowed to open it in a way that will cut the letters or ruin a picture (see משנ"ב סקט"ז and (שש"כ (ט-ג)). However, the (שיד – יט) (18) **ילקוט יוסף** says that Sephardim follow the opinion of the S" A that cutting letters on packaging is permitted. In the footnote, he explains that erasing in such a manner is a דרבנן (since you do not plan to write in that location), your intention is not to erase and it's a פסיק רישא דלא ניחא ליה since you do not benefit from the letters being cut. In any case, most tin cans do not have any writing on the actual metal lid that would be cut when removing the lid and there would be no issue of opening it with regards to מוחק. [See below in section K where we elaborate on this topic and discuss what Ashkenazim should do when wrappers can only be opened by ripping the letters.]

To summarize, everyone agrees that if you intend to use the can for a different purpose (such as storing nuts and bolts), you are not allowed to open it on Shabbos because you are in violation of creating a כלי or עשיית פתח (since you are making a nice opening for the sake of reuse). If you do not plan on reusing the can, the חזו"א prohibits because when you open it you are creating a כלי. Rav Moshe seems to permit, but concludes his (ענף י') (19) **תשובה** (ענף י') saying that one should not be מקיל to open cans on Shabbos (unless it is for a צורך גדול, such as a wedding or where a lot of guests are coming and, in those situations, it is best to first try to find a non-Jew). RSZA is מקיל and allows opening a tin can on Shabbos, but the (ט-ג וסקכ"ב) **שש"כ** quotes RSZA as saying that one who is מחמיר like the opinion of the חזו"א (that opening a tin can is a violation of בונה) can still open a can on Shabbos. This is achieved by puncturing a hole on the bottom of the can and then opening the can in the regular fashion from the top. The חזו"א would permit this because when you open the can from the top, you are not creating a כלי since the bottom is already punctured (and not functional as a regular כלי). This suggestion is also given by **Rav Elyashiv** in (ח"ג עמ' תיט) **משמרת שבת** (ח"ג עמ' תיט) and is how the (פי"ד-לד) **הלכות שבת בשבת** *passkins*. The (שיד-כב) **ילקוט יוסף** (20) *passkins* that it is best to open the cans before Shabbos, but if you forgot you are allowed to open them normally on Shabbos. In the footnote, he explains that his father, Rav Ovadya Yosef, used a couple of צירופים to be מקיל. Firstly, the majority of the ראשונים hold like Rashi that there is no prohibition of סותר ובונה with regards to כלים (as the *passkined*, quoted in (משנ"ב סק"ז) and if the S" A would have seen all of those ראשונים he would have surely been lenient. Additionally, even if the prohibition of וסתירה בנין applies to כלים, tin cans are considered מוסתקי or חותלות and opening them on Shabbos is permitted.

⁵ See also זה הרי זה and the (פי"ט סקפ"ה) **שש"כ** in the name of RSZA.

Bottom line halacha: Everyone agrees that it is best to open cans before Shabbos. Additionally, if you plan on reusing the can for a different purpose, everyone agrees you are not allowed to open it on Shabbos. However, if you are unable or forgot to open it before Shabbos and you plan on throwing it out after the contents are finished, it is best to first (carefully) puncture a hole in the bottom of the can and then open the top (though those who open the tin can in a regular fashion have upon what to rely). The *Sephardi poskim* write that puncturing a hole in the bottom is not necessary and one can open a can in a regular fashion if he forgot to open it before Shabbos. As usual, ask your LOR for your final *psak*.

C. Opening Cans of Coke and other Soft Drinks

In this section, we will discuss the *halachic* issues that arise when opening a can of soda (see **video** for sections C-D: bit.ly/SCPcans). As in the previous section, we will go through the six possible prohibitions listed in section A and see if they apply to the opening of these types of cans on Shabbos.

סותר: The opinions discussed in the previous section concerning סותר are relevant to cans of soda as well. According to the **תהלה לדוד**, opening a can is a violation of סותר, but **RSZA** and the **חזון איש** say that opening sealed cans is not a prohibition of סותר, either because the cans have the status of a מוסתקי/חותלות (RSZA), or because when the can is sealed it is not considered a כלי since you cannot access its contents (חזון איש).

בונה: The opinions concerning בונה for soda cans are also similar to those concerning canned foods. According to the **חזון איש**, opening the can is a prohibition of בונה since you are making it into a functional כלי. **RSZA** argues that a can is already considered a כלי and opening it does not make it into a כלי. **Rav Moshe** suggests that cans have the status of חותלות (the date leaf basket) where opening them is not a prohibition of בונה.

עשיית פתח: According to **RSZA**, there is no prohibition of עשיית פתח with cans of Coke since the prohibition of עשיית פתח applies only if you make a nice opening with intention to reuse it in the future (thereby perfecting the כלי). But a can of Coke is not used multiple times and your intention is not to perfect the can, but merely to access its contents. (This would also apply to larger beer cans that take longer to consume, since you do not intend to make a nice opening, and they too are not used for extended periods of time since the fizz leaves the can).

קורע: The prohibition of קורע does not apply, either because cans are considered חותלות, or because the prohibition of קורע does not apply to hard material.

מחתך: **Rav Elyashiv** (21) quoted in the *passkins* ארחות שבת (יב-ה) that although there is not a definite prohibition of עשיית פתח for a can since it is disposable (and you are not creating an opening for the sake of reuse), there is a separate issue מחתך – precise cutting. The opening of a can is specifically designed to dispense the perfect amount of soda, and when you open the can you are cutting the can to that precise measurement which is forbidden. As mentioned in section A, the **משנ"ב סימן שכב סקי"ח** writes that the prohibition of מחתך applies even to hard material such as wood and metal. **RSZA** (22) in **ח"ב-יב** argues that most people do not care about the exact shape and size of a can's

opening and they would not mind if the manufacture made it a bit larger or smaller (in fact, the size of the can's opening has changed over time, see Wikipedia). The consumer is opening the can where it is most convenient and is not thinking about the size and shape of the opening. Therefore, there is no prohibition of **מחתך** when opening a can on Shabbos. RSZA concludes that opening a can of soda is permitted on Shabbos.

מוחק: The prohibition of erasing does not apply to opening soda cans since they do not have writing on the lid.

What emerges from this analysis is that a can of soda is mostly similar to a tin can except for the issue of **מחתך**, which only applies to a can of soda. Therefore, according to RSZA, opening a can is permitted since none of the 6 prohibitions apply. Although Rav Moshe says that cans have the status of **חותלות**, he *passkins* that it is best to refrain from opening these containers on Shabbos. The **חזון איש** and Rav Elyashiv prohibit the opening of a can on Shabbos either because of **בונה** (the **חזון איש**) or because of **מחתך** (Rav Elyashiv).

In the previous section, we saw that RSZA said that in order to open canned foods on Shabbos, it is best to make a hole in the bottom of the can and then open the top to be **חושש** for the opinion of the **חזון איש** that opening a **כלי** is a prohibition of **בונה**. If so, why didn't RSZA say the same with a can of coke? Isn't it better to make a hole in the bottom and then open the top, just like the tin can? The (**פי"ד-לה**) **הלכות שבת בשבת** (23) explains that making a hole in the bottom of a tin can was recommended because it is not considered making a **כלי** and is also not considered **עשיית פתח**, since you still cannot access the contents of the can. When you finally open the can from the top, it is now not considered to have made a **כלי**, since there is already a hole on the bottom of the container. However, opening a small hole on the bottom of a soda can, which allows you to access all the contents of the can, is considered making an opening that creates a **כלי**.⁶ Therefore, there is no added benefit to make a hole in the bottom of the can, and RSZA allows opening it in its normal way.

Bottom line halacha: RSZA allows opening soda cans on Shabbos, while Rav Moshe, the **חזון איש** and Rav Elyashiv forbid. The (**שיד-כג**) **ילקוט יוסף** (24) allows opening a soda can on Shabbos, but adds from his father, Rav Ovadya Yosef, that it is best not to fully open the tab (which avoids the issue of **מחתך** as explains in the (**פי"ד: הע' 66**)).

D. Opening Milk Carton with Folded Spout

In the 1990's, most milk cartons were made with a pull-out paper spout where the milk carton was glued on top and you had to pull the flaps apart and then pull out the spout in order to open it. Today, many milk cartons have a plastic cap on them, but almost all of the small milk cartons and chocolate milks are still made with the folded spout. Are you allowed to open these milk containers on

⁶ See also (**פ"ח-ב ופ"ד הע' לג**) who argues and says that making a small hole on the bottom is not considered **עשיית פתח** or making a **כלי** since it is not the normal way to open a can.

Shabbos? This question is also relevant for those who do not open plastic caps on Shabbos. Are they allowed to open the carton the “old fashioned way” by pulling the flaps apart?

סותר: A milk carton is considered a מוסתקי/חותלות (since it is thrown out after use, see שש"כ (13)), to which the prohibition of בונה and סותר do not apply. Even if a milk carton is considered a full fledged כלי, opening it is not a violation of סותר since you did not destroy the כלי. On the contrary, all you did was open a reusable lid that was glued shut. This is in contrast to a tin can, where the תהלה לדוד felt that opening it is considered destroying it since the lid was molded to the body of the can and can no longer be used.

בונה: Milk cartons are considered a מוסתקי/חותלות where there is no prohibition of בונה. Even if the milk carton is considered a כלי, there is still no issue of בונה when separating the flaps and pulling out the spout since it is considered a full-fledged כלי with a sealed opening where opening it is not considered “creating a כלי”. Rather might be a problem of עשיית פתח, as we will see shortly, but is not in violation of בונה (see Rav Moshe and ארחות שבת ahead).⁷

עשיית פתח: The S”A in סעיף ב' *passkins* that you are not allowed to reopen a sealed opening in a barrel if it is below the sediment, but if the opening was resealed above the sediment you are allowed to reopen it. The S”A explains that a hole below the sediment is tightly sealed since the weight of the wine is constantly pushing against it, ensuring that the wine does not drip out. Therefore, the resealing abolishes its status as an “opening” and opening the seal on Shabbos is in violation of עשיית פתח. However, a sealed opening above the sediment is not tightly closed since the weight of the wine is not pushing against it. Therefore, the resealing does not abolish its status as an “opening” and reopening it on Shabbos is permitted because it is not considered as if you made a new opening. Based in this, **Rav Moshe** (25) in (או"ח ח"ד-עח) *passkins* that opening a milk carton is a violation of עשיית פתח – making an opening for reuse that enables the use of the contents. He explains that the manufacturers seal it tightly to ensure that the milk does not spill during transport and opening it on Shabbos constitutes a violation of עשיית פתח. When intentionally opening a milk carton in the regular fashion (when there are other ways to open the carton without creating a nice opening), you are perfecting the carton by creating a nice, useable spout, which is in violation of עשיית פתח.⁸ The **ארחות שבת** (פי"ב הע' The **עשיית פתח** (26) argues and says that there is no prohibition of עשיית פתח or בונה when opening a milk carton because the lid is only lightly sealed with glue and never lost its status as an opening. (It is more similar to a sealed opening on the top of the barrel (above the sediment), which never loses its status of an opening.) In his opinion, only opening a tin can (or soda can), which is completely molded together, can possibly violate the prohibitions of עשיית פתח and בונה. But the more modern milk cartons, which have a cap on them, are most likely sealed very tightly on top and opening it by pulling the tabs apart may be a violation of עשיית פתח according to the **ארחות שבת**.

קורע: The **משנ"ב סקכ"ה** writes that cutting the leather on top of a barrel is permitted as long as you do not make a spout out of the leather. This is understood based on what we mentioned in section A. that ripping with some sort of benefit is prohibited (such as ripping out of anger to calm you down).

⁷ See (עמ' שח) where some hold that opening a milk carton may be a violation of עשיית פתח.

⁸ See the next section in the "עשיית פתח" paragraph, where R' Dovid Feinstein explains that Rav Moshe held that the prohibition of עשיית פתח applies to a milk carton even if it is considered חותלות.

Therefore, pulling apart the tabs of the milk carton is in violation of קורע since you are ripping for the purpose of making a spout. This is the approach taken by **Rav Ribiat** in (עמ' 837) ספר ל"ט מלאכות. However, ripping a hole on the side of the milk carton (not in the place of letters) is permitted based on חזון איש. The (נא-יג) חזון איש (27) asks why ripping the leather top of a barrel is permitted (when you are not making a spout) if you are transgressing קורע. The חזון איש answers that since your intention is to retrieve the wine and it is done in a destructive manner, it is not considered קורע. Therefore, creating a destructive hole in a milk carton is not in violation of קורע.

RSZA (28) in (שיד-ז:ה) argues on the חזון"א that ripping the leather off the barrel is permitted without concern for קורע because it is similar to חותלות where the wrapper and packaging is בטל to food. Just like there is no violation to rip the food, there is also no violation to rip the wrapper.⁹ He continues that all the modern-day packages and wrappers that are thrown out after use are only meant to transport the food and ripping them is permitted, since they all have the status of חותלות where they are בטל to the food. This view of RSZA is also quoted in (פ"ט סקי"ב) שש"כ. Therefore, there is no issue of קורע when ripping a milk carton. The problem is that there are other locations where RSZA seems to contradict himself by discussing whether the prohibition of קורע applies to modern day wrappers and packaging (see for example סק"כ סקל"ח, סקי"ב, סקי"כ among other places). **Rav Chanan Cohen**, the author of the **בנין שבת** and longtime student of RSZA, told me (as mentioned above) that RSZA was vacillating throughout his life about the *halachic* status of the various types of contemporary packaging and whether one is allowed to open them on Shabbos. Ultimately, he felt that all the modern-day packages (both plastic and cardboard) are all considered חותלות, where the prohibition of קורע does not apply, and all the comments of RSZA discussing the potential violation of קורע when opening packages were written before he concluded that all modern-day packages and wrappers are considered חותלות.

Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (see below, section F., in the square brackets) also argues against the חזון"א that the reason there is no issue of קורע is since the prohibition of קורע applies only to material that was sealed to remain that way permanently. But here, the manufacturer sealed the milk container with intent that it be opened by the consumer as soon as possible.

מחתך: There is no prohibition of מחתך since you are not detaching anything and you do not care about the exact measurement of the flaps.

מוחק: There is no prohibition of מוחק since milk cartons do not have writing on the parts of the flaps that are torn apart.

To summarize, according to Rav Moshe opening milk containers is forbidden because of עשיית פתח, while according to the ארחות שבת there is no prohibition of עשיית פתח. According to Rav Ribiat, the prohibition of קורע applies when opening the flaps in their regular way, but RSZA and Rav Scheinberg hold that opening it normally does not violate קורע.

Bottom line halacha: Opening a milk carton in the normal way is forbidden on Shabbos according to Rav Moshe. However, making a makeshift hole in the top or side of the carton is permitted

⁹ A נפק"מ between the חזון איש and RSZA would be opening a barrel by ripping the leather with intent not to drink the wine, where the חזון איש would forbid and RSZA would allow.

according to all since קורע does not apply in such a situation (see חזון איש (27) and (פי"ב-ז) and (ארחות שבת), and עשיית פתח does not apply since you are making a "bad" opening (but *Ashkenazim* should be careful not to rip letters). According to RSZA and Rav Scheinberg, there is no prohibition of קורע when opening the milk carton in the regular way (though they might still forbid like Rav Moshe due to the issue of עשיית פתח). It should be noted that the (ח"ב-פכ"ז:ז) **אור לציון** explicitly allows opening milk cartons in the regular way.

E. Opening Milk Bags

In Israel and in Canada, much of the milk is sold in plastic bags. Are you allowed to open these bags on Shabbos?

סותר, בונה: A milk bag is considered a מוסתקי (see שולחן שלמה below) or even חותלות (see ארחות שבת and the conclusion of RSZA as mentioned in the previous section) where the prohibition of פי"ב-סקי"ב and בנין do not apply (see also beginning of Section G for another reason given by Rav Moshe).

עשיית פתח: The S"A in א' סעיף א' *passkins* that making a nice opening is forbidden even in a מוסתקי. Based on this, RSZA in (שיד-ז:ה) **שולחן שלמה** (29) *passkins* that although a milk bag is considered a מוסתקי, cutting a nice sized hole is a violation of עשיית פתח since you are perfecting the bag by creating a nice, reusable opening. Rav Chanan Cohen, the author of **בנין שבת** (quoted above), says that RSZA in his later years *passkined* that milk bags (and all modern packages/wrappers) are considered חותלות. Nevertheless, in his yet to be published updated book, **Rav Chanan Cohen** (30) writes that RSZA agrees that the prohibition of עשיית פתח still applies to חותלות. This is also evident from the ש"כ סקי"ב who quotes RSZA as saying that modern day packages including milk bags are considered חותלות, yet one still needs to be careful not to make a nice reusable opening in them. Thus, it would be permitted to open milk bags only when forming a smaller than usual (or larger than usual) opening. The בנין שבת also quotes from **Rav Dovid Feinstein**, who believed that his father, Rav Moshe, also felt that the prohibition of עשיית פתח applies to חותלות. Rav Dovid explains that the basis for his opinion is from a suggested resolution to two תשובות of his father. In ח"א-קכב Rav Moshe writes that all containers have the status of חותלות, but in ח"ד he writes that opening a milk carton is prohibited because of עשיית פתח. But if a carton is considered חותלות, shouldn't you not be allowed to make a nice opening? Rav Dovid answered that Rav Moshe held that there is still a prohibition of עשיית פתח in חותלות.¹⁰ The resolution to this discrepancy in Rav Moshe is cited in **שו"ת ודברת במ** (סימן צה). Therefore, opening a milk carton and making a nice hole in a milk bag is a violation of עשיית פתח even though a milk carton/bag is considered חותלות.

This is different than the case of the tin can, where the שולחן שלמה said that opening it with a can opener (thereby creating a nice opening) is permitted even though you will be using the opening again (until you finish the contents of the can). The reason for the difference is that when opening a can, your intention is not to make a nice opening and the size of the cut is predetermined by the opener. In

¹⁰ See also (עמ' שי הע' 38) פסקי תשובות.

other words, since there is no other way to properly open the can, it is not viewed as if you intended to make a nice opening. However, with regards to a milk bag there are many different size openings that can be made. If you deliberately choose to create a nice sized hole with intention to reuse that hole as you finish the milk bag over time, you are perfecting the bag, which is a violation of עשיית פתח. RSZA (29) adds that in a Yeshiva, (or any situation) where the milk is finished fairly quickly and you will not reuse the opening over a period of time, you are allowed to make a nice opening in the milk bag. The reason is that the prohibition of עשיית פתח is when you are perfecting the bag by making a nice opening for the sake of reuse, but if you will quickly empty the entire bag, your opening did not enhance the bag or opening. Rather, your action is viewed as emptying the contents of the bag and not perfecting it. RSZA concludes that one should make sure to open his milk bag before Shabbos to avoid these issues.

קורע: According to RSZA's final *pssak* mentioned above, there is no prohibition of קורע with milk bags since they are considered חותלות that are בטל to the milk. However, the (פי"ב-סקי"ב) ארחות שבת (31) argues that even though a milk bag is considered חותלות, nonetheless there is still a prohibition of קורע when you care about the size of the opening. In other words, there is no prohibition of קורע when you tear apart the date-branch basket since it is viewed as a fruit peel, but if you tear it in a way that shows you care about the size and shape of the tear, you are in violation of קורע. If you tear the bag in a destructive manner, there is no prohibition of קורע (as quoted from the חזו"א in the previous section).

מחתך: The prohibition of מחתך does not apply because you do not care about the exact size of the piece that is being removed. The (עמ' שסא וסקנ"ב) ארחות שבת (32) explains that מחתך is only forbidden if you care about the exact measurement of the cut, but if you are cutting an object and do not care about the exact size, it is permitted even if you want to specifically cut a small piece. Therefore, cutting the opening of a milk bag is not a violation of מחתך even though your intention is to cut a small piece, because you do not care about the exact size of that small piece and it does not bother you if it comes out a bit smaller or bigger.¹¹

מוחק: Milk bags do not have wordings towards the top of the bag and the prohibition of מוחק does not apply.

To summarize, making a nice hole in the milk bag is forbidden according to RSZA due to the prohibition of עשיית פתח. The ארחות שבת forbids because of קורע.

Bottom line halacha: RSZA says in (ז-ה) שולחן שלמה that it is better to open a milk bag before Shabbos. If you forgot or were unable to open it before Shabbos, opening a milk bag in the regular way is forbidden. RSZA writes that if the bag will be finished immediately, there is no prohibition of making a nice opening. Additionally, you are allowed to make a smaller than usual hole (and some suggest a larger than usual hole).¹² The ארחות שבת would only allow opening the bag in a destructive manner such as ripping it with your teeth. In such a situation, there is no issue of עשיית פתח because you are creating a bad opening and there is no prohibition of קורע because you are tearing it in a destructive manner. It should be noted that the (ח"ב-פכ"ז:ז) אור לציון allows opening milk bags in the regular way.

¹¹ See other reasons for why מחתך does not apply in (סקס"א) and ארחות שבת (סימן ל) נחלת לוי (סימן ל).

¹² What is the exact size of this hole? Anything that is smaller or larger than you would normally do because you are actively showing that you do not care about making a nice opening for reuse.

Using scissors to open the bag is forbidden for *Ashkenazim* based on the משנ"ב סימן שח סקי"ב who *passkins* that you are not allowed to use a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור when you have other non-מוקצה options available (such as a knife).¹³ The (שח-ט) **יוסף ילקוט** argues on the משנ"ב and allows using a כלי מוקצה even if you have a non-מוקצה object easily available. Using this logic, **Rav Ovadya** in (ח"ה-יד) allows opening milk bags on Shabbos with scissors.

F. Opening Israeli Shoko bags

In Israel, many of the kids' drinks are packaged in plastic bags. The chocolate milk (*shoko*) is packaged in a small plastic bag (similar to the milk bag) and other sweet drinks come in a thicker plastic packaging with a straw that is inserted into the bag. Are you allowed to open these bags on Shabbos?

בנין וסתירה: There is no prohibition of בנין וסתירה because the bag is used once and immediately thrown out. This is comparable to the classic case of חותלות where the packaging was created to transport the product from one place to the next.

עשיית פתח: There is no issue of עשיית פתח with a *shoko* bag that you are opening with your teeth. There is also no issue of עשיית פתח when puncturing the bag with a straw or making a nice opening since you are not intending to reuse the bag as opposed to the regular milk bags, which are reused a number of times before disposal (where RSZA forbids making a nice opening).

קורע: The prohibition of קורע does not apply when opening a *shoko* bag because the bag is considered חותלות. Even when making a nice opening in the *shoko* bag, the (פי"ב סקט"ז) ארחות שבת writes that there is no prohibition of קורע because you are not intending to make a nice sized hole. Since you plan to dispose of it immediately after use, you do not care about the size of the opening (as opposed to the regular milk bags).

מחתך: The prohibition of מחתך does not apply since you do not care about cutting an exact size.

מוחק: The *halacha* for *Ashkenazim* is that one must be careful not to cut the writing on the packaging, although most of these drink bags do not have wording near the opening.

Bottom line halacha: Opening *shoko* bags or plastic drink bags with a straw is permitted on Shabbos when making sure not to cut any letters (see (פי"ב-ח)).

¹³ However, if the scissors do a better job cutting than your knife, you would be allowed to use the scissors. Additionally, even if the knife cuts as well as the scissors, you would still be allowed to use the scissors if the knife is in a different room and the scissors are easily accessible. See Rav Moshe in ח"ה-כא:יב (discussed in the SCP notes to Siman 308) that if it is a burden to find a כלי שמלאכתו להיתר, you are allowed to use the כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור לצורך גופו.

G. Opening Plastic Bags of Chips, Cereal and Other Wrappers

Many of the snacks, and almost all types of chips, that are currently on the market are packaged in disposable plastic bags. Are you allowed to open these bags on Shabbos? Is there a difference between a small bag and a large “party sized” bag? Are you allowed to open a bag of cereal (inside an open cereal box)? Are you allowed to open the plastic wrapper around an ice popsicle stick? Are you allowed to pull the plastic tab that opens the plastic packaging of baby wipes? To better understand the *halachic* issues of opening these bags, see the **video** on how these packages are created in the factory: bit.ly/SCPchips. As in the previous sections, we will address the 6 possible prohibitions that one might transgress when opening a plastic bag.

בונה וסותר: The prohibitions of **בונה** and **סותר** do not apply to flimsy bags of chips because they clearly have the status of a **מוסתקי** or **חותלות**. Additionally, **Rav Moshe** (33) in **או"ח ח"א סימן קכב-ו** (*passkins*) that there is no prohibition of **בנין וסתירה בכלים** with regards to clothing and soft material. **בנין וסתירה** with regards to **כלים** only applies to **כלים** made of strong material such as wood, metal or pottery that create an air space between their walls, but there is no prohibition of **בנין וסתירה** on soft materials that naturally collapse. Therefore, the prohibition of **בונה וסותר** does not apply to soft plastic.

עשיית פתח: As mentioned with the opening of a milk bag, *RSZA passkins* that making a nice opening for the sake of reuse is a violation of the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** (even for **חותלות**) because you are perfecting the bag for the sake of reuse. However, we saw that *RSZA* rules that in a *Yeshiva* or at a *simcha*, where the bag will be finished within a short amount of time, you are even allowed to make a nice opening since the prohibition of **עשיית פתח** applies only if you plan to reuse it. Therefore, there is no prohibition of **עשיית פתח** when opening any bag of chips that will be finished right away. In contrast, making a nice openings in bags that will be used over a few days such as opening the tab on a baby wipes package that creates a nice oval opening, opening a tissue box that creates a nice opening for the tissues to dispense one at a time, or deliberately making a nice small opening in the corner of the cereal bag or an *Osem* bag of soup crotons for the contents to slowly pour out is a violation of **עשיית פתח** because you are creating a nice opening, thereby perfecting the bag for the sake of reuse. If you open these bags in a manner showing that you are not trying to create a nice opening, it is not a violation of **עשיית פתח**. Therefore, completely opening the top of the cereal/crotons bag from the top or opening the baby wipes from the side is permitted because you are going out of your way to show that you are not creating a nice opening.

What is the *halacha* with regards to other bags of foods that are usually fully opened on the top such as a large party sized bag of chips that will take you a few days to finish? Do we consider it as if you are making a nice opening for the sake of reuse, or since you are opening the entire opening it is not considered as if you are deliberately making a nice opening? The *S"A* in **סעיף ו'** (*passkins*) that removing the top of a barrel is permitted if your intention is to easily remove the contents and not to make a nice hole. The reason is because you are not improving the barrel, but on the contrary, you are ruining it (as it cannot be reused normally in this state). Similarly, in our case, fully opening the bag is not a violation

of עשיית פתח as you are ruining the bag by fully opening it and your intention is only to access the food and not improve the opening.¹⁴

קורע: According to RSZA that all packages have the status of חותלות, opening bags on Shabbos is not a violation of קורע. However, according to the ארחות שבת who held that קורע could apply to חותלות (see section E) and according to what RSZA initially felt that bags are considered a מוסתקי, we need to first study how plastic bags are created and filled in production in order to determine whether opening bags would be permitted (see video above). In almost all factories, there is a long plastic sheet that is wrapped in a circle to create a hollow tube. When the chips are ready to be bagged, the tube is sealed at the bottom by compressing the two sides of the plastic sheets together, after which it is filled with the exact amount of chips and then sealed on top by compressing the opening of the bag. When the bag is sealed (by compression) on top, it also seals the bottom of the next bag and then a knife cuts the seal in the middle, leaving the bottom bag sealed on top and the top bag sealed on the bottom. This process is also used with milk bags, but opening a plastic bag of chips or a cereal bag differs from opening a bag of milk. A bag of milk is opened by completely removing a small piece of plastic in the upper corner of the bag, while opening a plastic bag of chips or a cereal bag is opened by separating the two sides of the bag that were glued or fused together. Concerning the latter case, RSZA is quoted in (פ"ט סקכ"א) (34) **שש"כ** as saying that there is no prohibition of קורע when opening a bag in the regular way on Shabbos. This is based on the **משנ"ב** סימן שמ סקמ"ה who writes that you are allowed to separate paper that mistakenly got glued (or fused) together. This is because the prohibition of קורע applies only if you separate something that was sewn or stuck together with intent to remain there permanently, but separating something that was only mistakenly glued together is not a prohibition of קורע. Similarly, RSZA rules that something glued together with intention to be opened shortly thereafter by the consumer is not considered "sewn together", and opening it is not considered קורע. Therefore, opening a bag in the normal manner is permitted according to RSZA even if the bag is not treated as חותלות, or if קורע is still prohibited for חותלות, because it was sealed with the intention of being opened as soon as the consumer is ready to use it. This is also how the (ח"ב כז:ז) **אור לציון** approaches the issue of קורע in this case.

[Optional: The prohibitions of **קושר ומתיר** – knotting and unknotting – are similar to the *halachos* of **תופר וקורע** – sewing and ripping. Only knots that are tied with intent to remain long-lasting (של קיימא) are forbidden to tie and untie, and the prohibition of קורע also only applies to items that were sewn together in this manner.¹⁵ With regards to **קושר**, and subsequently with regards to **תופר**, there are differing opinions of how to define "long-lasting." The *Rama* in **סימן שיז"א** writes that something that was tied for a week is considered tied "long-lasting," while others say that even something that was tied for a day is included. Therefore, untying or ripping something that was sewn for a week or 24 hours is a violation of **מתיר** and קורע. If so, how are you allowed to open a bag of chips if the bag has been sealed for at least a day, and most likely longer than a week? **Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg** (35) in (יב: י-יב עמ' רי) **שנה יב: י-יב עמ' רי** explains that the prohibition of ripping something that was sealed for a day or a week is only if it was sealed together with the intention of not being opened within

¹⁴ See also (פל"ב) שבת בנין where he writes that a making a "regular opening" (where your intention is not to make a nice opening) in a מוסתקי is permitted.

¹⁵ See *Rama* **שיז"ג** and (שמ-כז) פסקי תשובות

that period of time. However, in our case the manufacturer would prefer to have the consumer immediately buy the product and open it within a day or before it leaves the factory, it just happens to be that there no one is present in the factory to buy it. Since the package is ready to be opened immediately, the packaging is *halachically* viewed as been being sealed for a few moments, where opening it even many days later is allowed.]

One could argue that according to the ארחות שבת who held that קורע could apply to חותלות, there is still no prohibition of קורע when opening bags of chips since they were not closed in perpetuity. However, the ארחות שבת (פי"ב-סקט"ו) himself does not accept this סברא and offers a number of reasons to be strict: Some forbid opening even a temporary seal, the Rama did not permit opening it for the masses, and many times that bag stays sealed for long periods of time. Rav Elyashiv (37) quoted in (י"ד-לט) also argues on RSZA and Rav Scheinberg and holds that opening a bag of chips from its opening on top (i.e., the regular way) is a violation of קורע. This is also the opinion of Rav Falk from Gateshead quoted in (פ"ט-ו) פיה פתחה בחכמה.

As mentioned, the above discussion of RSZA's opinion represents the way he initially felt that packages might have the status of מוסתקי, where קורע applies. However, we have also mentioned a number of times in the previous sections that Rav Chanan Cohen, author of the בנין שבת and longtime student of RSZA, relayed that RSZA ultimately *passkined* that modern day packages (both plastic and cardboard) are all considered חותלות where the prohibition of קורע does not apply.

To summarize, opening a bag of chips from the top does not violate קורע according to the אור לציון and Rav Scheinberg since they were sealed temporarily. The ארחות שבת, Rav Elyashiv and Rav Falk forbid opening bags of chips from the top because it is in violation of קורע. RSZA ultimately *passkined* that all packages today are considered חותלות where the prohibition of קורע does not apply, (but the prohibition of עשיית פתח does apply).

מחתך: The prohibition of מחתך does not apply since you are not cutting off a piece of the bag, but only separating sides that were glued together. (Opening a soda can is a question of מחתך since you are removing a precise piece of the lid, but with a bag you are only pulling apart two parts that were glued together or fused together by compression).

There are some packages where towards the top of the bag there is a slight slit to assist in opening it (such as a big bag of Craisins) and some of these bags even have a resealable Ziplock under the opening. Is completely removing the top a violation of מחתך? RSZA (38) quoted in (פ"ט-ד) שש"כ held that using the slit to completely remove the top of the bag is not considered מחתך since you do not care about the exact size that is cut off. Therefore, you are allowed to cut off the top along the indicated indentation. However, Rav Elyashiv (39) forbids cutting in the intended area because of מחתך and קורע (see (י"ד-מא) הלכות שבת בשבת). The same applies to baby wipes that when pulling the tab creates a nice opening. According to RSZA there is no problem of מחתך (although there is an issue of עשיית פתח if you will be reusing it and a prohibition of מוחק according to Ashkenazim if you are ripping letters).

מוחק: Ashkenazim should be careful not to rip the letters on the packaging, but Sephardim are מקיל (see (ח"ב-כ"ז) אור לציון).

Bottom line halacha: Everyone agrees that opening plastic bags of chips, cereal, baby wipes, and the like is always permitted if you destroy the bag and do not cut along the letters. If you open it nicely, RSZA permits if you finish the contents of the bag immediately. If it will take you a few days to finish the contents of the bag, then it depends on the type of packaging. Fully opening a bag of chips is permitted, but carefully making a small opening in a cereal bag, or opening baby wipes (that have a nice oval opening) is prohibited because of עשיית פתח. There is no issue of קורע either because the packages are considered חותלות (RSZA) or because the opening were not sealed in perpetuity (Rav Scheinberg and the אור לציון). The ארחות שבת, Rav Elyashiv and Rav Falk forbid opening any packaging by separating the parts that were compressed together due to קורע. Rav Elyashiv adds that opening a package by removing the top of the bag using the manufactured slit to assist you is forbidden because of מחתך and קורע.

Summary chart on next page.

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע- Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line <i>Halacha</i>
Cereal Bag, Baby wipes (and other bags that are not fully opened)	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA Forbidden when carefully making a nice opening for reuse, but if you cut along the entire top of bag permitted	RSZA Permitted (חותלות) אור לציון/Rav Scheinberg Permitted (temporarily sealed) ארחות שבת/Rav Elyashiv - Forbidden	Permitted Rav Elyashiv – opening baby wipes is forbidden	<i>Ashkenazim</i> – careful not to cut letters	Everyone agrees destroying bag is permitted when not cutting letters, RSZA allows when completely opening top
Bags of Chips	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted (either because you will quickly finish the contents and even if it will take you a few days, it is still permitted if you completely open the top)	RSZA Permitted (חותלות) אור לציון/Rav Scheinberg Permitted (temporarily sealed) ארחות שבת/Rav Elyashiv - Forbidden	Permitted	<i>Ashkenazim</i> – careful not to cut letters	Everyone agrees destroying bag is permitted when not cutting letters RSZA allows to open normally

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע - Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line <i>Halacha</i>
Craisins and Packages Where Top of Bag is Torn Off	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted (you are completely opening top)	Permitted (even Rav Elyashiv permits because you are not separating sides that are glued together)	RSZA – Permitted Rav Elyashiv - Forbidden	<i>Ashkenazim</i> – careful not to cut letters	Rav Elyashiv forbids and RSZA permits when not cutting letters

H. Opening Plastic and Aluminum Seals on Yogurt Covers, Coffee Containers etc.

Many of the food products packaged today come with an aluminum or plastic seal to either maintain the freshness of the product or as proof that the product has not been tampered with. For example, yogurts, leben, cottage cheese, Pringles, and coffee containers all have an aluminum/plastic seal to preserve the freshness of the product. Similarly, glass beer bottles have a metal lid/cap that preserves the freshness of the beer by not allowing the fizz to escape and wine bottles have corks that do not allow oxygen in and also preserve its freshness. Some orange juice, milk and oil containers have a plastic ring-tab under the cap that is pulled off by placing your finger through the ring and pulling off the tab to open the container, see the **video** on how these packages are created in the factory: bit.ly/SCPpringlesOJmilk. Children's apple juice containers have a small tinfoil covering that is opened with a straw. Are you allowed to open these products on Shabbos? Additionally, there are bottles of wine, vodka and some herring containers that have an additional plastic or aluminum cover around the cap/lid to ensure the product has not been tampered with. These tamper-proof linings are usually perforated to assist in their removal. Are you allowed to tear these open on Shabbos? Are you allowed to cut them along their perforated lines?

In order to address the above cases, we need to learn two סעיפים in the S" A. The S" A in **סעיף ג'** teaches that you are allowed to make a hole in a resealed section of the barrel (i.e., in an opening of a barrel that was sealed) if the sealed hole is above the sediment (as taught in **סעיף ב'**), and this may be done even using an instrument that is specially designed for making holes. The **משנ"ב סקי"ר** writes that we learn from the S" A that you are allowed to remove a cork from a glass bottle even by using a bottle opener because you are not making a new hole, but rather you are just opening one that was temporarily sealed. The S" A in **סעיף ו'** teaches that you are allowed to completely cut off the top of a barrel because it is evident that you are not making a nice opening for the sake of reuse. Rather, the big opening makes the removal of the barrel's contents more convenient. The **משנ"ב סקכ"ג** explains that

the S" A is only referring to a מוסתקי where there is no prohibition of וסתירה, but removing the top of a full-fledged barrel is prohibited because of סותר. The משנ"ב explains that when the S" A forbids removing the top of a full-fledged barrel, that is only if you are cutting off part of the barrel itself (thereby destroying it), but completely removing the lid is always permitted even from a full-fledged barrel. In addition to the two סעיפים mentioned in the S" A, a third relevant case is mentioned in the משנ"ב סקכ"ה, where he quotes the ברייתא that tearing the leather lid off of a wine barrel is also permitted. We can derive from these three cases that uncovering an existing opening that was sealed (i.e., removing a cover) is permitted on Shabbos and not in violation of עשיית פתח.

בונה, סותר: According to RSZA and the חזון איש, the prohibitions of וסותר and בונה do not apply to containers of yogurt, leben, cottage cheese, orange juice, milk and oil since they are considered a כלי and the lid just covers that כלי. Even the חזו"א would agree to this because he only said that tin cans lose their status of a כלי when the top is molded on, but with the above products it is evident that they are כלים that were later covered. Therefore, opening them does not violate the prohibition of וסותר.

עשיית פתח: With regards to tearing the aluminum or plastic tamper-proof lining around bottles of wine and vodka, there obviously is no prohibition of עשיית פתח since you are not making any opening.

With regards to removing the yogurt, leben, and cottage cheese covers, **RSZA** in שולחן שלמה holds that there is no prohibition of עשיית פתח since it is similar to, and even better than, the ברייתא quoted by the משנ"ב סקכ"ה that one is allowed to tear a leather covering in order to access the contents of a wine barrel. Similarly, there is no violation of עשיית פתח when opening a beer bottle because the opening was always there and the cap just covers the opening. **RSZA** (40) in (שיד-ט) writes that it does not make a difference if the covering was added once the כלי was built (as in the yogurt, see video) or before the כלי was built (as in the Pringles containers). In both cases, we view the containers as full-fledged כלים with lids that were added to them. **RSZA** also writes that you are even allowed to open the orange juice, milk and oil containers by removing the plastic pull-tab because the containers are considered full-fledged כלים and the plastic pull-tab is just a covering to an existing opening, similar to the leather seal on a wine barrel (see video where the cartons are created with a hole and later in the assembly line the caps are added).¹⁶ The same would apply to children's apple juice boxes where opening it with a straw is permitted because the hole was always there and only temporarily sealed with tinfoil. Thus, opening it is not considered making a new opening. This is different than opening a milk bag, baby wipes or a milk carton where the opening is made to the body of the container and the prohibition of עשיית פתח will apply. In contrast, yogurt, orange juice, milk and oil containers have the plastic lid/tab added after production and are therefore most similar to the case of removing a lid from on top of a barrel, which is permitted.

קורע: In section F, when discussing opening plastic potato chips bags, we saw that Rav Scheinberg, the אור לציון, and **RSZA** said there is no prohibition of קורע since the manufacturer temporarily sealed it until it reaches the consumer. Similarly, in our case of yogurt, orange juice, milk, and oil containers, there is

¹⁶ Even Rav Moshe who forbade opening the older style of milk cartons (with the folded tabs that are pulled out) might permit opening these containers since the containers have a premade opening that is later sealed by a cap, which never loses its status of an opening, and opening it would be similar to opening a resealed hole above the שמרים (see S" A ב' סעיף).

no prohibition of קורע since they were sealed for a short period of time. Alternatively, according to the בנין שבת, RSZA felt that all packages today are considered חותלות, where the prohibition of קורע does not apply. Additionally, even the ארחות שבת (פ"ב סק"כ) permits because the covers have no value, are not reused and compared to the leather covering on the barrel of wine where removing it is permitted.¹⁷ The same would apply to the aluminum and plastic seals on wine or herring containers.

מחתך: Opening the yogurt is not in violation of מחתך since it is similar to removing a leather cover from the barrel. Tearing aluminum foil that covers wine is also not מחתך because you do not care about the size of the cut. However, with regards to opening orange juice, milk and oil containers that have a pull-tab ring under the cap, the same מחלוקת between RSZA and Rav Elyashiv as we saw with regards to soda cans is relevant. **RSZA** quoted in (פ"ט סק"ז) and in (38) שש"כ (פ"ט סק"ז) (mentioned above) holds that you are allowed to pull the tab in order to open your drink because you do not care about the exact size of the opening. **Rav Elyashiv** in (יד-הע' 75 ו-91) writes argues that pulling the ring tab violates the prohibition of מחתך because you are cutting to an exact measurement.

With regard to cutting along the perforated line of aluminum or plastic covers on vodka, herring covers, and other such packaging even Rav Elyashiv would agree that there is no prohibition of מחתך. In הלכות שבת בשבת (י"ד הע' 70), Rav Elyashiv says that the prohibition of מחתך is only if the precise cut is creating something useful. In our situation, nothing is being created from the tearing of a tamperproof seal, and since it gets immediately thrown into the garbage, cutting along the perforated lines is permitted. (In contrast, opening a can of coke, pulling the ring-tab on under the cap of the OJ or a milk bottle, and even cutting a piece off of a milk bag there is a question of מחתך since the packaging is being improved by the precise cut.)

מוחק: According to *Ashkenazi* practice, one must be careful not to cut the letters on the yogurt lid, especially on the aluminum/plastic tamperproof wrappers commonly found on the lids of wine and vodka. (If the only way to open the tamperproof plastic wrapper is by ripping through letters, see below in section K.)

Bottom line halacha: Tearing the tamper-proof wrappers on wine, vodka and herring packages is permitted even when tearing along the perforated lines (as long as you do not cut through words). Similarly, opening the plastic/aluminum lid of yogurts, glass beer bottles, cottage cheese, coffee or puncturing a hole in a children's apple juice container is allowed. Removing the cork from a bottle of wine is also permitted. Opening orange juice, milk and oil containers by pulling a plastic ring-tab that is under the cap is permitted according to RSZA and forbidden according to Rav Elyashiv.

¹⁷ The ארחות שבת (פ"ב סק"א) for the *halacha* regarding a situation where you plan to reseal the yogurt with the lid.

I. Opening Cardboard Boxes on Shabbos (Cereal and Matzah boxes)

בונה וסותר: Cardboard cartons of cereal, crackers, cookies, and matzah boxes are sealed by gluing the two flaps together, one on top of the other. Since these boxes are disposed of after use, according to many *poskim* they are considered a **מוסתקי** where the prohibition of **בונה וסותר** does not apply, and according to the **בנין שבת**'s understanding of RSZA they are all considered **חותלות**.

עשיית פתח: **RSZA** (42) quoted in the **פ"ט-סקל"ח** **ש"כ** says that there is no prohibition of **פתח** since the cardboard box is viewed as already being a **כלי** prior to being opened. The flaps are consequently treated as a covering to a preexisting opening, such that reopening it is permitted and not a violation of **עשיית פתח**. The reason it is viewed as a **כלי** with a resealed opening is because the bottoms of the boxes are sealed with a strong glue (making it a **כלי**), while the upper flaps are then joined together with a weaker glue to allow an easy opening (making it a resealed opening). **Rav Moshe** in **ח"ד-עח** **אגרו"מ** (quoted above) says that opening the older milk cartons (with the folded flaps) is considered **עשיית פתח** since the opening of the carton was nullified when the lid was sealed and reopening is in violation of **עשיית פתח**. **Rav Moshe** might say that the same applies to opening a cardboard box, i.e., that it loses its status of an opening once the flaps are glued together, and opening it is a violation of **עשיית פתח**.

קורע: According to RSZA (42), there is no prohibition of **קורע** if you rip the top of the cardboard box in a destructive manner since it is similar to ripping the leather on top of a barrel. According to the **בנין שבת**'s understanding of RSZA, any form of ripping is allowed since all these boxes have the status of **חותלות** and you are only ripping them to gain access to the food. The **פ"ב-יד** **ארחות שבת** (43) argues and says that opening a carton (or Israeli sugar that is packaged in strong paper and folded at the top, creating tabs that are glued one on top of the other) is in violation of **קורע**. In the footnote he explains that there is no issue of **עשיית פתח** since we view these packages as a **כלי** whose lid was glued shut (i.e., the opening was never nullified). Yet, since these packages are glued shut for over a week, opening them violates **קורע**. He explains that although the packages are considered **חותלות**, there is still a prohibition of **קורע** when you are ripping them in a way that will allow you to reuse them (i.e., your ripping is creating a benefit (the reuse of the **חותלות**) that is forbidden).

מחתך: There is no violation of **מחתך** since you are not ripping anything off and you do not care of the exact measurements.

מוחק: There is no prohibition of **מוחק** if no letters are ripped in the process of opening the cardboard boxes.

To summarize, opening cardboard boxes on Shabbos might be a problem of **עשיית פתח** according to **Rav Moshe**, but RSZA allows since the box never lost its status as an opened **כלי**. All agree that there is no prohibition of **קורע** if the box is opened in a destructive manner, and according to the **בנין שבת** you can even open it in the normal way. But the **ארחות שבת** holds that opening the glued flaps nicely is a violation of **קורע**. Therefore, if you want to eat cereal on Shabbos, according to RSZA you can just open the top of the box normally (according to the **בנין שבת**) and when you open the bag make sure

to make a larger than usual opening (such as opening the entire bag) or a smaller than usual opening in order not to violate the prohibition of עשיית פתח.

Bottom line halacha: RSZA (as understood by the בנין שבת) allows opening cardboard boxes in the normal way. Rav Moshe might prohibit because of עשיית פתח and the ארחות שבת forbids because of קורע. Opening cardboard boxes in a destructive way, such as totally destroying the box and removing the contents, is permissible according to all.

J. Opening Bottle Caps on Shabbos

One of the most famous contemporary *Hilchos Shabbos* disputes is whether one is allowed to open bottle caps on Shabbos. In this section we will discuss the opening of two types of caps: Metal screw-on caps (most common on olive oil, Israeli grape juice, and cheaper wine bottles) and plastic screw-on caps (common on almost all beverages). In order to understand the *halachic* issues involved, it is important to understand how these caps are manufactured, see video: bit.ly/SCPcaps.

בונה וסותר: There is no prohibition of בונה וסותר concerning the bottles when removing any of the mentioned caps since they are full-fledged bottles before the caps were added. There is also no prohibition of בונה וסותר concerning the caps since they are considered a מוסתקי that is thrown out after use.

עשיית פתח: We have mentioned many times previously that making a nice opening for the sake of reuse is prohibited even in a מוסתקי because of עשיית פתח, which violates מנא מתקן (i.e., מכה פטיש) – perfecting the container. In contrast, the removal of a cap from a bottle is not considered making a new opening in the bottle since the opening always existed. However, opening the caps might be in violation of the more global prohibition of מכה בפטיש. The רמב"ם (פ"י-טז) (44) writes that any “completing of a job is included in מכה בפטיש” and the משנ"ב סק"ח explains that “מכה בפטיש” is a general term to include any action that completes a specific job. The פסקי תשובות (שיד-ג) (45) elaborates that מכה בפטיש is violated even if the כלי can be used in its current state and you are just adding final perfections to it. Additionally, מכה בפטיש is violated even if no other מלאכה is transgressed when placing the final touches on the כלי. In light of these principles, the אחרונים debate whether you are allowed to open a standard bottle cap since by detaching the cap from the plastic ring underneath it, you create a functional cap that can be reused. In a long תשובה on this subject, Rav Asher Weiss (ח"א-) in מנחת אשר (46) writes that opening both metal caps and plastic caps is in violation of מכה בפטיש and forbidden.

However, as shown in the above video, there is a fundamental difference between the way metal caps are produced and the way plastic caps are produced. According to many *poskim*, this distinction has major *halachic* ramifications. Metal caps start as a flat sheet that is molded into the shape of a long narrow tube with a perforation towards the bottom that will eventually be cut when opening the bottle, leaving a ring under the cap. The tube is placed on top of a bottle and then a special machine twirls the cap around, making indentations in it that fasten it to the bottle. In other words, the

cap is completed only after it is placed on the neck of the bottle. In contrast, plastic caps are fully formed, with all the indentations in the cap and with the ring that will be eventually detached once opened, before being placed on the bottle. The completed cap is then screwed onto the bottle. The reason why metal caps are finished on the bottle itself is because a fully completed metal cap cannot be placed on a bottle, but fully formed plastic caps can be placed on the bottle even after they are completed.

RSZA (47) in (ח"א-צא) **שלמה מנחת** writes that metal caps may not be opened on Shabbos. He explains that the caps cannot be used when they are attached to the bottom ring and even if you were to break the bottle and remove the glass fragments from inside the cap, you would not be able to place that cap (with the detachable ring still connected) onto another glass bottle (see video). Therefore, the act of detaching the ring from the cap is what makes the cap usable and is a violation of **מכה בפטיש**. Elsewhere in (ח"ב-יא) **שלמה מנחת** (48), **RSZA** writes that plastic caps are fully completed and functional before being placed on the bottles. In other words, plastic caps (with the bottom ring intact) can be used as caps on any other plastic bottle and the bottom ring is only there to fasten the cap to the bottle and as a tamperproof seal. If one would remove a cap fully intact from an existing bottle, he could then easily place it on any other bottle without removing the bottom ring and without it falling off in the process (see video). Therefore, removing the cap from the bottle and detaching the bottom ring is not in violation of **מכה בפטיש** since the cap was fully functional before this act. The (שיד-ו) **פסקי תשובות** (49) quotes many אחרונים that make the same distinction as **RSZA** between plastic and metal caps and adds that since plastic caps can be fully removed from the bottle with the tamperproof ring still intact (albeit with difficulty), the cap never lost its status as a כלי when it was fastened onto the bottle. As mentioned, **Rav Asher Weiss** above (46) argues on many points that **RSZA** brings and writes that opening both metal caps and plastic caps is in violation of **מכה בפטיש**. On the other hand, **Rav Ovadya** (50) in (ח"ב-ב) **יחווה דעת** argues on both **RSZA** and **Rav Asher** and allows opening even metal caps on Shabbos because all caps are in essence treated as covers to the bottle and do not lose their status as a cover when they are placed and molded on the bottle. He concludes that it is best to open metal caps before Shabbos but if you forgot, you may open them on Shabbos without any hesitation.

קורע: The prohibition of קורע does not apply because both metal and plastic caps are made of hard material.

מחתך: **RSZA** (47) writes in (ח"ב-יא) **שלמה מנחת** that there is no prohibition of מחתך since you do not care about the exact size of the ring that is being cut off from the cap. **Rav Elyashiv** (51) quoted in (פי"ד-כז) **הלכות שבת בשבת** writes that although there is no prohibition of **מכה בפטיש** with a plastic cap (since it is considered a כלי before it is placed on the bottle, as **RSZA** held), there is a violation of מחתך when opening the cap (this is the same reappearing מחלוקת between **RSZA** and **Rav Elyashiv** that we have seen before). However, if you do not fully detach the cap from the ring there is no prohibition of מחתך. The (פי"ד-כח) **הלכות שבת בשבת** (52) adds that opening a metal cap is in violation of both **מכה בפטיש** and מחתך, but if you make a small hole in the cap before opening it, you are allowed to open it. He explains that there is no issue of **מכה בפטיש** because you destroyed the cap before it became functional, and there is no prohibition of מחתך because מחתך is only forbidden when using the cut pieces, but in our case the punctured cap will no longer be used as a כלי. The (פ"ט-יח) **שש"כ** writes that puncturing a big hole in the metal cap before opening allows you to open it on Shabbos.

מוחק: If there is writing or a picture on the side of the cap (on the ring and the actual cap), *Askenazim* need to be careful not to cut into it. Additionally, if you do not open caps on Shabbos and you puncture the cap from the top, you need to make sure not to cut any of the wording or pictures on them. (For example, there is sometimes a picture of a cluster of grapes on the cap of Israeli grape juice bottles.)”

Bottom line halacha: Rav Ovadya allows opening both metal and plastic caps but writes that it is best to open them before Shabbos. RSZA allows opening plastic caps but not metal caps, Rav Elyashiv and Rav Asher Weiss forbid opening both metal and plastic caps, Rav Elyashiv forbids because of מחתך and Rav Asher Weiss forbids because of מכה בפטיש. Everyone agrees that you can open caps if you first make a hole in them (making sure to avoid letters and pictures).

K. Ripping Letters on Packages

When discussing opening the various types of modern-day packaging in the previous sections, we mentioned multiple times that according to the standard *pssak* for Ashkenazim, you are not allowed to rip the letters or pictures on the packaging when opening them. What should you do if there is no way to open the package without ripping the letters? This is very common with liquor/vodka/wine bottles that have a perforated plastic tamperproof covering around the cap, with lollipop wrappers that stick to the lollipop and tear when opening, bags of chips, candy bars, and many other snacks. In this section we will focus on the prohibition of מוחק as it pertains to ripping the letters on packages and see if there is any room to be מקיל. Since Chazal did not have packages with printed words on them, we will first learn the סוגיא of erasing letters and pictures that were written/designed on top of a cake and then we will apply these *halachos* to destroying words and images that appear on packages.

The (עג.) משנה שבת (53) teaches that two of the ל"ט מלאכות are כותב ומוחק – writing two letters and erasing with intent to write two letters in that place. Rashi explains that when בני ישראל traveled in the desert, they would mark the קרשים before deconstructing them in order to easily rebuild them at their next stop. Sometimes they would erroneously mismark the קרשים and would need to erase the mark to correct their mistake. The S”A in סימן ש-ג *passkins* based on this that erasing ink thereby creating a space to write two letters is forbidden if you plan at some point to write there – משנ"ב סק"ג.

The בית יוסף (54) quotes the מהר"ם מרוטנברג who was asked whether children are allowed to eat cakes on Yom Tov that have writing on them, since the writing is destroyed in the process. He responded that you are not obligated to stop a child from transgressing an איסור דרבנן when it is performed for the child’s own benefit, but actively feeding a child an איסור דרבנן is forbidden. Therefore, you need not stop children from eating the cakes since erasing without intent to rewrite is an איסור דרבנן, but actively feeding it to them is forbidden. The מהר"ם מרוטנברג implies in his answer that adults are never allowed to eat a cake with letters on it, and this is precisely how the Rama in סימן ש-ג

passkins. The **משנ"ב סקט"ז** adds that even destroying pictures and images that are on the food is also forbidden.¹⁸

The **דגול מרבבה** (סימן שמ) in *נודע ביהודה* (55) argues on the *Rama* and allows eating cookies and cakes that have writing on them. He claims that the **מהר"ם מרוטנברג** only forbade adults from eating the cake in a specific scenario where the cakes were made to be eaten on the Yom Tov of Shavous. He explains that eating cakes with writing on them on a regular Shabbos or Yom Tov is permitted for a combination of reasons: Your intention is not to erase the writing but to eat the food, you are erasing **קלקול** – in a destructive way without intention to rewrite in that location, and you are erasing with **שינוי** (by biting the food). This is what is called **פסיק רישא בתרי דרבנן** – performing an action that is inherently permitted (i.e., eating), but its inevitable outcome will transgress a weakened **איסור דרבנן**. This form of “erasing” is a weakened prohibition since there are at least two reasons that lower the erasing to an **איסור דרבנן**: The fact that it is done **קלקול** and with a **שינוי**. The **דגול מרבבה** continues that the **מהר"ם** only forbade adults from eating a cake with words on it on the unique occasion of Shavous, where cakes were specifically baked with **פסוקים** on them to be eaten by children as a **סגולה** that the children will grow up with a passion and sweetness for Torah learning. Adults are forbidden from eating these cakes since the wording on the cakes was made specifically to be erased while eating, whereby the act of erasing is not considered **קלקול** (because it is done for the sake of the **סגולה**) or **שינוי** (since it is meant to be erased when eating). However, other cakes with writing that is not specifically made to be destroyed while eating (rather, just to stay intact until the cake is consumed) may be eaten by adults on Shabbos Yom Tov. The **סקי"ז** quotes the **דגול מרבבה** and says that one may rely upon his opinion when destroying the letters while eating, but destroying or cutting the wording on the cake before eating is forbidden. The **שער הציון סקכ"ב** explains that we rely on the **דגול מרבבה** when eating a cake because we are lenient for a **רבנן** **פסיק רישא בתרי דרבנן**, especially when **עונג שבת** (i.e., eating the cake) is involved. If we are to assume that words and images on cakes have the same status as words and images on packages, it would seem that according to the *Rama* and the **משנ"ב**'s ruling (only relying on the **דגמ"ר** when eating the letters) destroying letters when tearing a bag is forbidden since the erasing is happening in a normal fashion (i.e. tearing by hand) before the food enters your mouth.

The **ילקוט יוסף** (שמ-מוחק ב,ו) (56) writes that according to the *S" A* you are allowed to destroy letters both on top of a cake and on packages. In the footnote, he explains that there is a general **מחלוקת** between the *S" A* and *Rama* whether **פסיק רישא** with one **איסור דרבנן** is permitted -- the *S" A* permits (in most cases) and the *Rama* forbids.¹⁹ Since destroying letters when eating a cake or opening a package is an **איסור דרבנן** that is being transgressed through a **פסיק רישא**, the *S" A* is lenient.

¹⁸ It should be noted that according to the **משנ"ב סקט"ו**'s understanding of the *Rama*, it is only forbidden to erase letters and images that are written on the cake with other ingredients (such as frosting), but destroying wording that is embedded in the food and created from the actual dough, as is common with cookies and biscuits that have the company's name engraved in the cookies, is permitted. The **סימן סא סק"א** argues on this, though we will not delve into this **מחלוקת** as our discussion is focused on the wording on packages.

¹⁹ The topic of **פסיק רישא בתרי דרבנן** is a very lengthy and complicated **סוגיא**. There are some places where the *S" A* is **מחמיר** and others where he is **מקיל**. Similarly, with the topic of **פסיק רישא בתרי דרבנן** there are some places where the **משנ"ב** is **מקיל** and others where he is **מחמיר**. There are many way to reconcile the *S" A*'s and **משנ"ב**'s approach but we will not be delving into the details.

We have assumed in the last two paragraphs that since the *Rama* forbade eating a cake with words on it due to מוחק, he must certainly forbid ripping packages that have wording on them. However, it is possible that although the *Rama* forbids eating a cake with wording on it, he still may permit ripping a package with words on it. The *Rama* in (סימן קיט) **שו"ת רמ"א** (57) *passkins* that opening and closing books that have writing (or designs) on the fore edge (the outer thickness of the pages when the book is closed), as is common with many library books, is permitted and we do not say that opening the book is considered מוחק (even though the words on the fore edge are no longer readable) and closing it is considered כותב (even though the words on the fore edge of the book become readable). He explains that erasing is only forbidden when destroying letters or words, but separating letters is permitted. Even splitting a letter in half is not considered מוחק since the letter is in existence and only the distance of the two papers is separating between them. In contrast, destroying words on a cake is forbidden since the letters are smeared or destroyed, but cutting a knife through the wording of a cake and similarly, ripping a package with words and pictures on it is permitted (see also סק"ב). The (ט"ז סק"ב) **ט"ז סק"ב** (58) quotes the לבוש who argues, forbidding the opening and closing of books with words on the fore edge due to מוחק וכותב. The **משנ"ב סק"ז** writes that most *posskim* allow opening and closing such a book because it is like a door that opens and closes, where we do not view the opening and closing of the door as building or destroying. In other words, just like opening and closing a door is not a violation of בונה וסותר - building and destroying, since the door is designed to be opened and closed on a consistent basis, so too, the opening and closing of a book is not considered erasing and writing. This is different than the reasoning of the *Rama*, who writes that מוחק does not apply when separating a letter in half, even if it is not constantly separated and rejoined.²⁰ The **משנ"ב** concludes that if you have another copy of the same book without writing on the fore edge, it is best to be מחמיר like the **מג"א** and use the book without the writing on it, but otherwise it is permitted to use the one with writing.

To summarize, the *Rama* holds that separating letters and images is permitted, the **מג"א** prohibits, and the **משנ"ב** permits only when the separating and rejoining is happening on a constant basis. This dispute has tremendous ramifications with regards to ripping through letters on packaging. According to the *Rama*, it would seem that there is no prohibition of מוחק when tearing a bag since you are only separating the word/letters and not erasing them. The **מג"א** would forbid because separating letters is also considered מוחק. The **משנ"ב** would also prohibit ripping the letters on a bag because the leniency of opening and closing a book with writing on the fore edge only applies when the opening and closing happens on a consistent basis, but a onetime tearing of a bag is prohibited. How do we *passkin*?

The (פ"ט-יג) **שש"כ** (59) *passkins* like the **משנ"ב** and **מג"א** that you are not allowed to rip through letters and images on packages. A number of additional details regarding this הלכה are discussed by RSZA. For example, **RSZA** rules in (שמ – הע' ח) שולחן שלמה that it is forbidden to erase a design only if it has significance to it, but cutting packages that have checkered lines as a design is permitted. Additionally, in the footnote of the **שש"כ** (59), RSZA is quoted saying that only tearing through actual letters and images is prohibited, but you are allowed to rip in between the letters of a word. Similarly, when cutting a cake, you would be allowed to cut in between the letters of the word, but not the words

²⁰ See (כלל לז) who notes as explained here that the *Rama's* reason to be מקיל is different than that of the **משנ"ב**. See also (ח"א – סימן ו') ארחות שבת.

themselves. RSZA in (לג-ד) **שש"כ** (60) adds that for the sake of a sick person, you are allowed to rip through the letters of packaging. For example, you are allowed to pop an antibiotic pill or other medicine out of the packaging (if there is no way to get it out without cutting through the letters). In the footnote, RSZA explains that there is room to argue that just like there is no prohibition of קורע with regards to חותלות,²¹ there is also no prohibition of מוחק. Ultimately, he writes that the אחרונים do not normally allow violating מוחק when opening חותלות, though for the sake of sick person there is room to be מקיל.

In a situation where there is no sick person and you are not sure whether you will rip the letters when opening the wrapper, are you allowed to attempt to open it or is it better to avoid opening it? The (פרק קמד בדה"ש י') **קצות השלחן** (61) writes that one should be careful to cut/rip around the letters and if he then accidentally cuts the letters it is ok, because it is considered a מתכוון פסיק and not a פסיק רישא. The example that he gives is that when peeling an egg, you need to be careful not to cut the letters that are printed on the egg (which is prevalent in Israel), but if you accidentally separated them it is ok.

Based on everything we have learned, what should be the practical הלכה concerning opening modern-day wrappers where letters will certainly be torn, such as the plastic tamperproof wrappers around some wine, whiskey and vodka bottles? Are you allowed to open them on Shabbos? It seems that RSZA only allowed tearing through letters on behalf of the sick but not in other situations. The (שמ-י') **פסקי תשובות** (62) writes that בשעת הדחק if there is no way to open the package without ripping the letters, you are allowed to open it because we can rely upon the opinions that separating letters is allowed (i.e., the *Rama* in his שו"ת), and even according to those who forbid, there is still room to be מקיל since the ripping is a רישא בתרי דרבנן. He adds that in such a situation it is best to ask a non-Jew since the ripping is a רישא בתרי דרבנן. He adds that in such a situation it is best to ask a non-Jew since the ripping is a רישא בתרי דרבנן. He adds that in such a situation it is best to ask a non-Jew since the ripping is a רישא בתרי דרבנן.

To summarize, *Sephardim* allow ripping letters on packages and on food. The *Rama* writes that there is no prohibition of מוחק when separating a letter in half, but the majority of *Ashkenazi passkim* are מחמיר. RSZA writes that ripping in between letters of a word is permitted and when there is no way to open packaging without ripping the letters, you are allowed to do so for the sake of the sick. The **פסקי תשובות** writes that בשעת הדחק you are allowed to open packages even if you are certain that you will rip through the letters. *Lema'ase*, ask your LOR.

L. Other Practical Cases That Arise From סימן שיד

In the previous sections we discussed the six possible איסורים that arise when opening packages on Shabbos. In this section, we will discuss a few practical cases that were not discussed in the previous section but are also relevant to the various *halachos* in this סימן.

Baby bottle: The S"A in א' **סעיף א'** *passkins* that making a nice hole in a כלי is a violation of עשיית פתח (i.e., מכה בפטיש). He also writes that even expanding an existing hole is a violation of מכה בפטיש.

²¹ See also (שמ-ח) שולחן שלמה

are ultimately perfecting the use of the כלי by making a nice opening. Based on this, the (טו-ו) שש"כ (63) *passkins* that cutting a hole in the nipple of a baby's bottle is a violation of מכה בפטיש, and even expanding an existing hole is also a violation of עשיית פתח. However, if the hole gets clogged with food particles you are allowed to open it, as is explicit in סעיף ב' that only making a new opening is forbidden, but opening a hole that was clogged is not considered עשיית פתח.

Clogged sink and bathroom: As mentioned, the S"A *passkins* that making a nice opening in a כלי is a violation of עשיית פתח (i.e., מכה בפטיש). The משנ"ב סק"ח adds that making an opening in the floor of a house for the water to flow out is a violation of בונה. The (י"ב-יח וכג-יב) שש"כ (64) *passkins* that if your sink gets clogged or if the toilet is stuffed, בשעת הצורך you are allowed to unclog it on Shabbos even with the use of a plunger. In the footnote, he quotes RSZA who gives a few explanations for his leniency. Firstly, the pipes are viewed as a כלי whose opening got clogged, where removing the blockage is permitted. Secondly, just like everyone agrees that you are allowed to remove food that is clogging the opening of a sink, you are also allowed to remove a clog that is lodged deeper in the pipes. Lastly, clogs in the sink are many times dislodged by the water pressure of the faucet and letting the water run is certainly not considered "fixing" the pipe, so too, dislodging a clog using a plunger is also not viewed as fixing. RSZA concludes, though, that one should only rely on this leniency when needed. **Rav Moshe** in (ח"ג: או"ח - קפז) allows to לכתחילה dislodge a clogged toilet/sink by using a plunger. **Rav Ovadya** (65) quoted in the (שיד-כו) יוסף ילקוט argues on RSZA/Rav Moshe and forbids opening a stuffed pipe with a plunger both in the sink and in the bathroom and even בשעת צורך גדול. He explains that fixing a pipe by using a plunger is a possible איסור דאורייתא of מכה בפטיש since you are restoring the use of the pipe. However, he concludes that if the pipe is partially clogged, you are allowed to fully open it.

Separating yogurts/puddings and cutting toilet paper: Separating yogurts and puddings that are connected at the lid is a question of מחתך and a מחלוקת between RSZA and Rav Elyashiv. **RSZA** (66) in (שיד-יג:ג) שולחן שלמה writes that separating yogurt containers is not considered מחתך since you do not care about the exact size and you are only separating them where it is convenient. **Rav Elyashiv** (67) quoted in (יד-מג) הלכות שבת בשבת writes that separating yogurt containers is a violation of מחתך since you are cutting them to an exact size that is most convenient for you.²²

As mentioned at the end of section A, according to RSZA, the prohibition of מחתך applies only when you deliberately cut something to an exact measurement, but cutting to an exact size out of convenience rather than because you care about the exact measurement is not a violation of מחתך. The שולחן שלמה (68) writes that there are many cases where this definition of מחתך is relevant. For example, the S"A in (שמ-יג) סימן (as explained by the משנ"ב סקמ"א) *passkins* that cutting toilet paper is a violation of קורע – since you are tearing for the benefit of using the pieces. However, the *halacha* is that if one needs to clean himself after using the bathroom and there is no cut toilet paper (and no one to give you cut toilet paper), you are allowed to cut it with a שינוי (which lowers the prohibition of קורע to an איסור דרבנן) because Chazal were lenient and allow transgressing the rabbinic prohibition of קורע in a situation of כבוד הבריות. For example, when no pre-cut toilet paper is available, you are allowed to use your elbows or palms of your hand to cut the toilet paper. RSZA adds that when cutting using a שינוי you are even allowed to cut on the perforated line since you do not care about the exact length of the toilet

²² RSZA and Rav Elyashiv also disagreed about whether separating them violates the prohibition of כלי תיקון כלי: According to Rav Elyashiv, it might, while according to RSZA, it does not.

paper; no one counts the number of squares when they cut the toilet paper.²³ Similarly, cutting a pill in half is permitted because you do not care about the exact size of the pill, but only about the amount of medicine you are ingesting. There are two points that make it evident that you do not care about the actual size of the half a pill you cut off. Firstly, you would not mind if that half broke into smaller pieces, and secondly, you would not mind if the pill was cut vertically or diagonally.

Closing and opening bottles and packages with a metal wire: Many champagne bottles come with metal wires that hold the cap in place, preventing it from popping off if the bottle is accidentally shaken. These wires are twisted at the bottom and one needs to unwind them to remove the wire and subsequently remove the cap. Similarly, many bakeries package their bread and cakes in plastic bags with a thin metal wire (covered with paper or plastic) that is twisted to seal the opening of the bag and unwound to open the bag. Are you allowed to unwind the metal wire on Shabbos?

The (פ"י-ה) **רמב"ם** (69) *passkins* that twirling strings to make a rope is a violation of **קושר** – tying, and unwinding them is a violation of **מתיר** – untying. The (פ"י-ל) **ארחות שבת** (70) writes that based on this **רמב"ם**, RSZA forbade twirling the metal wire around a bag of bread if you intend to leave it sealed for over 24 hours.²⁴ Similarly, unwinding a wire that was closed for over 24 hours is a violation of **מתיר** – untying. Therefore, according to RSZA (quoted in פ"ט-יד) (שש"כ) you are not allowed to unwind the metal wire around champagne bottles.²⁵ Rather, you should make sure to unwind it before Shabbos or try to remove it without unwinding it. If you forgot, you are allowed to cut the wire itself. The **ארחות שבת** adds that although RSZA forbids opening and closing the wire on cakes and bread if they were sealed for over 24 hours, he would allow making only one twist in the metal wire around the cakes because making a single knot on Shabbos is permitted according to all – only double knots are prohibited. The **ארחות שבת** also quotes Rav Wosner who argues on RSZA and allows twisting and untwisting metal wires on Shabbos. Rav Wosner explains that the **רמב"ם** considers the twisting of strings to fall under the category of **קושר** – knotting, only when creating a rope, but twisting strings or wires together is not considered knotting since no knot was created (knotting is when you run the string through a loop).

The **בנין שבת** (Rav Chanan Cohen) expressed that this **ארחות שבת** is based on an older version of the **שש"כ**, but in the (פ"ט"ו על הע' קסו) **שש"כ**, RSZA adds that the twist-tie is forbidden to open only if it is meant to remain there long-term (this opinion of RSZA also appears in the third edition of the **שש"כ**). Additionally, there is an issue of **מתיר** only if you plan to reuse the metal wire, but not if you plan to throw it out. He explained that if you are planning to throw out the metal string (as is the case with the champagne bottles), even RSZA would permit because the metal string has the status of **חותלות**,²⁶ but if you plan to reuse the metal string (as is the case with a bag of

²³ Rav Elyashiv would forbid cutting along the perforated lines because of **מחתך**. Some suggest that according to RSZA it is better to cut along the perforated lines since you are cutting less (there is air in between the perforation), but when cutting in the middle of the tissue you are ripping along the entire tissue. (Some suggest to put the toilet paper whole in the toilet and then flush causing the toilet paper to cut by itself.)

²⁴ Leaving a knot tied for over 24 hours is considered a **קשר של קיימא** – a permanent knot and forbidden.

²⁵ The **קולא** of Rav Scheinberg in sections D and G. (that the knot is not considered a **קשר של קיימא** since the manufacturer wants you to immediately open the packaging) does not apply here since the manufacturer prefers for some bottles to stay closed for their taste to be enhanced, which is beneficial for branding.

²⁶ The (פ"ט-יד) **שש"כ** writes that it is best to cut the wire.

bread or cakes) it does not have the status of חותלות (and is more similar to a reusable cap), where it is forbidden to unwind if it is twisted in perpetuity. If it was twisted to be unwound within a week, you are allowed to unwind it בדיעבד.

Packages that have rope or string around them: Some packages and boxes have a rope that is tied around them and some oranges or other fruits are packaged in a bag made of string. Are you allowed to cut the string on Shabbos? In סעיף ח' ה' חותלות, the ביה"ל ד"ה חותלות writes that the prohibition of קורע does not apply to a string that you will not use to sew. The (71) ארחות שבת (יא-טז) quotes this ביה"ל in support of his ruling that cutting a string is permitted if you are not cutting to an exact measurement (i.e., you do not care about the size) and you are not planning to use it. Therefore, cutting a string around packaging or the string bag that holds oranges is permitted.

M. Conclusion

B"H, we have had the tremendous *zechus* to learn these ever so relevant *halachos* of opening packages on Shabbos, but what is the *halacha* if you mistakenly open a package in a forbidden way? Are you allowed to benefit from the contents of the package? The (72) פ"ט-כד) ששי"כ *passkins* that you are allowed to benefit from the contents of the container even if you opened it in a forbidden manner. This is based upon the consideration that you are only indirectly benefiting from the מלאכה, which many opinions permit. Furthermore, one can add that the *passkins* משנ"ב סימן שיח סק"ז that בשעת הצורך, we may rely on the גר"א that everyone is allowed to benefit from מלאכה that was accidentally transgressed on Shabbos. Furthermore, even according to the more stringent opinions, there is room to permit because you are only indirectly benefiting from the מלאכה. The (סימן שיד עמ' שה) פסקי תשובות adds that whenever there is a מחלוקת whether something is permitted or not, and you are מחמיר not to do it you are allowed to ask a קטן (and certainly a non-Jew) to perform the act for you. Therefore, in the above cases wherever there is an opinion that is מקיל and you yourself are מחמיר, you are still allowed to ask a קטן or a non-Jew to open the package for you.

For your convenience and in order to enable an easy and long-lasting retention of the material, in the next few pages you will find a summary chart of the cases we discussed above.

If possible, it is best to open all of these containers/wrappers and packages before Shabbos. If you forgot or it is not possible, the following chart is a summary of the opinions listed above.

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line Halacha
Tin cans (of tuna, corn, hearts of palm and pickles)	תהלי"ד – forbidden Other poskim – permit	חזו"א – forbidden RSZA/Rav Moshe - permit	Permitted (not reusing opening)	Permitted (doesn't apply to metal)	Permitted (הלכות שבת בשבת prohibits the pull- tab cans)	Permitted	Many permit especially if you first make a small hole on bottom. Ask your LOR
Cans of Coke, beer and other soft drinks	תהלי"ד – forbidden Other poskim -- permit	חזו"א – forbidden RSZA/Rav Moshe - permit	Permitted (not reusing opening)	Permitted (doesn't apply to metal)	Rav Elyashiv – forbidden RSZA - Permitted	Permitted	חזו"א/Rav Elyashiv - forbid RSZA - permits Ask your LOR
Cardboard milk carton with pull flabs that create a spout	Permitted	Permitted	Rav Moshe – Forbidden ארחות שבת - Permitted	Rav Ribiat – prohibited RSZA/ רב שיינברג Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Rav Moshe – forbids RSZA might permit. אור לציון – permits. Ask your LOR
Milk Bag	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA – forbidden; allowed to make smaller/larger than usual hole	ארחות שבת – Prohibited RSZA - Permitted	Permitted	Permitted (acc. to all if not cutting through words)	RSZA – make a smaller than usual opening. ארחות שבת – destructively tear it. אור לציון – open normally
Handheld Shoko bag	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted (since you are finishing it in one sitting)	Permitted (not cutting to exact size and shape)	Permitted	Permitted (acc. to all if not cutting through words)	Permitted

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line <i>Halacha</i>
Cereal bag, Baby Wipes in Plastic Wrapper	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA - Making a nice opening to be used over time forbidden. Completely opening the bag - permitted	RSZA – Permitted (חותלות) אור לציין/Rav Scheinberg Permitted - temporarily sealed ארחות שבת/Rav Elyashiv - Forbidden	Permitted Rav Elyashiv – opening baby wipes is forbidden	<i>Ashkenazi</i> – don't rip letters. <i>Sephardi</i> - allowed	ארחות שבת – tear in a destructive way RSZA – open the entire bag on top. אור לציין – allowed to open regularly. Ask your LOR.
Bag of chips, large and small	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA – Permitted (because completely opening the top is not considered making a nice hole)	RSZA – Permitted (חותלות) אור לציין/Rav Scheinberg Permitted (temporarily sealed) ארחות שבת/Rav Elyashiv - Forbidden	Permitted	<i>Ashkenazi</i> – don't rip letters. <i>Sephardi</i> - allowed	RSZA -- permits when not cutting letters Rav Elyashiv -- prohibits to open in regular way. Opening in a destructive way - Permitted
Tearing off top of bag along perforated lines (e.g., Craisins)	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA – permitted (because completely opening the top is not considered making a nice hole)	Permitted (even Rav Elyashiv permits because you are not separating sides that are glued together)	RSZA – permitted Rav Elyashiv-prohibited	<i>Ashkenazi</i> – don't rip letters. <i>Sephardi</i> - allowed	RSZA -- permits when not cutting letters Rav Elyashiv -- forbids

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line <i>Halacha</i>
Tamper-proof plastic wrapper around bottle-neck	N/A	N/A	N/A	Permitted – they are חותלות or similar to leather on barrel top	RSZA – permitted Rav Elyashiv – permitted , piece cut off is unusable	Ashkenazi – don't rip letters. Sephardi - allowed	All permit if you are not cutting letters. If you are cutting letters, <i>Sephardim</i> allow.
Removing a cork from wine bottle, opening glass beer bottle	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Aluminum & plastic lid (e.g., leben, cottage, coffee container, children's apple juice boxes)	Permitted	Permitted (they are כלי a)	Permitted - You are reopening an existing hole	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted (acc. to all if not cutting through words)	Permitted
Pull ring tab under cap of orange juice, milk, and oil containers	Permitted	Permitted	RSZA – permitted	Permitted (considered חותלות or you are removing the top)	RSZA – allowed Rav Elyashiv – forbidden	Permitted	RSZA – allows Rav Elyashiv – would forbid
Cardboard cereal and Matzah Boxes	Permitted	Permitted (They are מוסתקי or חותלות)	RSZA – Permitted (the opening already exists) Rav Moshe – might forbid like milk carton	RSZA -- permitted (they are חותלות) ארחות שבת – prohibited	Permitted	Permitted (acc. to all if not cutting through words)	If opening in a destructive manner and not cutting words, everyone permits. In a regular fashion RSZA -- permitted ארחות שבת -- prohibits

	סותר - Destroying	בונה - Building	עשיית פתח (מכה בפטיש) – Making a Nice Opening	קורע - Ripping	מחתך – Precise Cutting	מוחק - Erasing	Bottom Line <i>Halacha</i>
Plastic & Metal bottle caps	Permitted	Permitted	עשיית פתח does not apply since opening exists, but מכה בפטיש on cap might apply. Rav Asher Weiss – prohibited Rav Ovadya – permitted RSZA - plastic permitted, metal forbidden	Permitted	RSZA – permitted Rav Elyashiv – prohibited	Permitted (acc. to all if not cutting through words)	Rav Ovadya – allows opening all caps Rav Asher Weiss – prohibits opening all caps RSZA – allows opening plastic caps but not metal. Ask your LOR.