

## סימן שיד

- 1) How many possible prohibitions can one violate when opening modern-day packaging on Shabbos?

There are six possible prohibitions:

1. **סתירה** – destroying a כלי
2. **בנין** – creating a כלי
3. **עשיית פתח** – making a nice opening for the sake of reuse (forbidden because of מתקן מנא)
4. **קורע** – ripping
5. **מחתך** – precise cutting
6. **מחיקה** – ripping letters

- 2) Your 3-year-old is throwing a fit and refusing to eat anything except for his favorite food – a tuna bagel sandwich. Are you allowed to open the tin can on Shabbos? Does it make a difference if it is opened with a can opener or a ring/tab that you pull on?

Everyone agrees its best to open tin cans before Shabbos, and everyone agrees that if you plan to reuse the can for a different purpose you are not allowed to open it on Shabbos. However, if you plan on throwing out the can after the contents are finished, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** held that you are allowed to open it but it is best to first (carefully) puncture a hole in the bottom of the can and then open the top to be חושש for the opinion of the א"ח who held that opening a can is a violation of בונה - building (see notes for more details). The *Sephardi passkim* 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.

**RSZA passkins** that opening tin cans with a pull-tab ring is not a violation of מחתך – precise cutting, since you do not care about the exact measurement of the lid being removed; the size of the cut is predetermined by the manufacturer. **Rav Elyashiv** argues and forbids opening these types of tin cans because precisely cutting the lid violates מחתך. (Opening a tin can with a can opener does not yield a precise cut and would not be a violation of מחתך even according to Rav Elyashiv.)

- 3) Mazel tov! You had a baby boy on Friday! You don't have time to prepare for the שלום זכור so you ask your *shviger* to pick up some beer. When you arrive on Friday night, you see that she only bought beer cans. Are you allowed to open them on Shabbos?

According to the **חזון איש** (11), opening a can is a prohibition of **בונה** as you are making a functional כלי. **Rav Elyashiv** (21) forbade because of **מחתך** – opening the lip of the can creates a precise cut in the lid that is convenient for pouring out the beverage. **RSZA** allows opening a can on Shabbos because a can is considered a מוסתקי where **בונה** does not apply (13), and there is no issue of **מחתך** (22) because you do not care about the exact size of the opening of the can. You are only opening it along those lines for convenience, but it wouldn't bother you if the manufacturer made the opening bigger or smaller.

- 4) On Shabbos morning you wake up early in the mood for a coffee. When you open the fridge, you see that the milk carton is closed. You are **מהמיר** not to open plastic bottle caps. Are you allowed to open the flaps of the milk carton on Shabbos?

We will first address the “olden day” milk cartons (without a cap) and then discuss opening the modern-day milk cartons (with caps) the old-fashioned way of pulling the tabs apart to create a spout. **Rav Moshe** (25) forbids opening the old-fashioned milk cartons because of **עשיית פתח** – the opening is sealed shut in production and opening it is considered creating a new opening on Shabbos. The **ארחות שבת** (26) felt that even when the carton is sealed in production it does not lose its status as an opening, since it is not a tight seal. However, opening a milk carton is still forbidden because of **קורע**. This is based on the **משנ"ב סקכ"ה** who says that ripping a leather covering off a wine barrel is permitted unless you make the leather into a spout. Similarly, with a milk carton you violate **קורע** when you create a spout by ripping the top. **RSZA** (28) held that **קורע** would not apply since the carton is considered **הותלות**. It would seem that with regard to the modern-day milk cartons (with the cap) the **ארחות שבת** would forbid it by pulling the tabs apart also due to **עשיית פתח** since the cardboard flaps are sealed tightly. On the other hand, the **אור לציון** (ה"ב-פכ"ז:ז) explicitly allows opening milk cartons in the regular way. *Lem'ase*, opening a milk carton is permitted if you puncture a hole at the top of the carton or rip open the top in a destructive manner. In such a situation there is no prohibition of **עשיית פתח** since you are not creating a nice opening with intent to reuse, and there is no prohibition of **קורע** since you are ripping in a destructive manner to access the milk (as the **חזון איש** (27) explained).

- 5) You decide to skip the coffee at home because your shul also provides coffee. When you arrive at shul you see that they bought milk bags this week and they are all sealed. Are you allowed to open a milk bag on Shabbos?

**RSZA** (28) *passkins* that making a nice sized hole in your personal milk bag is forbidden because of **עשיית פתח** – as you are creating a nice hole for the sake of reusing in the future (as you finish the milk on Sunday or Monday), thereby perfecting the bag and transgressing the prohibition of **מכה בפטיש**. However, if you cut a smaller (or larger) than usual hole it is permitted because you are actively showing that your intention is not to

perfect the bag. RSZA adds that in a Yeshiva or in any location where the milk will be finished fairly quickly (such as in shul) you are even allowed to cut it in a nice way since the opening will not be reused at a later time. The **ארהות שבת** (30) forbids opening the bag in a normal way because of **קורע** and *passkins* that you should only open it in a destructive way, such as biting into it. Both according to RSZA and the **ארהות שבת**, you need to be careful not to cut the letters or pictures on the milk bag. It should be noted that the **אור לציון** allows opening milk bags even in the normal way.

- 6) You can't resist a cup of coffee and decide to open the milk bag. Are you allowed to use scissors?

Using scissors to open the bag is forbidden for *Ashkenazim* based on the **משנ"ב** סימן שה **כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור** (the scissors) when you have other non-מוקצה options available (such as a knife). However, if the scissors do a better job cutting than your knife, you would be allowed to use the scissors. The **ילקוט יוסף** (שזה-ט) argues on the **משנ"ב** and allows you to use the **כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור** even if you have a non-מוקצה object easily available and you would always be allowed to open the milk bag with scissors.

- 7) On Shabbos afternoon, your kids and their friends want to have a “Shabbos Party.” Are you allowed to open a bag of chips for them? What if it is a large “party sized” bag of chips?

According to **RSZA** (34), opening a bag of chips (whether big or small) that you will finish immediately is permitted. Even opening a big bag of chips that you will finish over a few days is permitted since they are considered **חותלות** where **קורע** does not apply (and they were only sealed temporarily – until the consumer opens them), and there is no issue of **עשיית פתח** since you open the top of the bag completely. The **ארהות שבת** (36) quotes those who held that opening a bag of chips the normal way is a violation of **קורע** (which according to him applies even for **חותלות** if you plan on later benefiting from the tear.)

- 8) Another kid finds a bag of crisped dried apple chips in the cabinet. “These are my favorite! Can I have it?” he asks. This bag is made with a slit towards the top to assist in completely tearing off the upper section of the bag (also very coms with Craisins in the US). Are you allowed to open the bag by tearing at the indicated slit?

**RSZA** (38) holds that there is no prohibition of **מהתך** since you do not care about the exact size that is being cut off from the bag. **Rav Elyashiv** (39) forbids cutting along the perforated line because ultimately you are cutting along that line to an exact size.

- 9) In the meantime, your wife is changing the baby's diapers when she yells for more wipes. You quickly run around the house looking for wipes. You find a closed package of wipes,

the ones that are packaged in a flimsy plastic wrapping with a “pull-tab” to open it. Are you allowed to open it on Shabbos?

According to **RSZA** (28), it is forbidden to open the wipes on Shabbos in the regular way since you are making a nice hole for the sake of reuse. However, you are allowed to destroy the package and store the wipes in a Ziploc bag.

- 10) The kids at the Shabbos party are thirsty and want some orange juice and milk. You unscrewed the caps before Shabbos but forgot to pull out the plastic ring-tab that is under the cover (the ones that have a plastic ring where you place your finger through the ring and pull on it thereby removing the tab). Are you allowed to open it on Shabbos?

**RSZA** (41) allows opening the OJ by pulling the plastic tab. The carton is viewed as a container with a preexisting hole that was later sealed, and opening a preexisting hole is not in violation of עשיית פתח. There is also no violation of קורע since all modern-day packages are considered חותלות. **Rav Elyashiv** would hold that opening the container is a violation of מחתך since you are cutting an exact measurement, similar to his prohibiting the opening of a can of coke or a tuna can will a pull-tab on Shabbos.

- 11) One boy yells, “I don’t like OJ! Can I open this apple juice box?” Are you allowed to open an apple juice box on Shabbos?

Opening an apple juice box by puncturing the tinfoil is not considered עשיית פתח as the opening was always there and only lightly sealed by a piece of tinfoil. There is also no problem of קורע according to **RSZA** since the boxes are חותלות.

- 12) Another kid runs up to you holding a yogurt. “I love these yogurts! Can I have one?” he asks. Are you allowed to open the cover of a yogurt on Shabbos?

Everyone agrees that you are allowed to open these packages on Shabbos since it is similar to the משנ"ב סקכ"ה who says that you are allowed to remove the leather on top of an existing כלי.

- 13) After the kids leave you need a shot of whiskey. When you grab your only bottle you notice there is a plastic tamper proof covering with perforated lines to assist in the opening. Are you allowed to cut it along those lines?

Ripping along the perforated lines is permitted on Shabbos (as long as you do not cut through letters or images, according to the approach of *Ashkenazim*). **RSZA** will explain that you do not care about the exact size of the cut and are only cutting there for convenience. **Rav Elyashiv** would also permit because the prohibition of מחתך is only

when you are benefiting from the precise cut, but here the entire seal proof wrapper is immediately disposed of (see (הלכות שבת בשבת (י"ד הע' 70)).

- 14) Instead, you grab a beer, but it is one of those bottles with a pull-tab cap. Are you allowed to open those on Shabbos?

The S" A in ' סעיה ו' *passkins* that cutting off the top of a מוסתקי barrel is permitted and the משנ"ב סקכ"ג writes that removing a lid even from a full-fledged barrel is permitted. Therefore, removing the cap of a beer bottle is permitted, and even opening the pull tab caps that are common on some beers in Israel is permitted as long as you do not rip through the letters on the cap. Sephardim allow even if you rip through the letters.

- 15) It's time for סעודה שלישיית but you ran out of challah and only have a box of machine matzah. Are you allowed to open the box on Shabbos? A minute later your son comes in wanting cereal. Are you allowed to open the cereal box on Shabbos?

The ארחות שבת (43) forbids opening cardboard boxes in the normal way because of קורע, while RSZA (based on the בנין שבת (42) permits since they are considered חותלות. There is also no issue of עשיית פתח because the box is viewed as already having an opening that was temporarily sealed. Everyone agrees that you can open the box by destroying it.

- 16) Your son is home from Yeshiva and is מקפיד to drink wine at every meal (as the רמב"ם writes). You only have wine bottles with metal caps, is he allowed to open the metal cap on the bottle?

RSZA (47), Rav Elyashiv (51), Rav Asher Weiss (46) and many more *posskim* forbid opening metal caps on Shabbos because the cap becomes functional only once the bottom ring is removed (before the bottom ring is removed there is no way to add it to another bottle). Therefore, screwing off the bottom ring is in violation of מכה בפטיש since you are making a functional cap. Rav Ovadya (50) allows opening metal caps on Shabbos because a cap in essence is a covering for a bottle and metal caps act as a covering before the bottom ring is removed. Therefore, your act of removing the bottom ring did not make it into a cover. (RSZA and the other *posskim* argue that the definition of a cap is a reusable cover and removing the bottom ring is the final touch of creating the cap, i.e., מכה בפטיש.)

- 17) There are two types of Jews in the world: Those who open plastic caps on Shabbos and those who don't. Which one are you? Why?

RSZA (48) allows opening plastic caps on Shabbos because the cap was fully functional before it was added to the bottle. (This is evident from the fact that a plastic cap with the

bottom ring intact can be added to a bottle neck.) Therefore, detaching the bottom ring does not make it into a cap. **Rav Elyashiv** (51) agrees that there is no violation of **מכה בפטיש**, but he still forbids unscrewing plastic caps on Shabbos because of **מחתך** – you are precisely cutting off the bottom ring from the rest of the cap. **RSZA** argues that there is no prohibition of **מחתך** since you do not care about the exact measurement of the ring. Rather, you are cutting there because the manufacturer made it convenient to cut there. **Rav Asher Weiss** (46) forbids opening even plastic caps on Shabbos and holds it is an **איסור דאורייתא** of **מכה בפטיש**.

- 18) *Le'chaim!* Your buddy from Yeshiva just got engaged! The guests at your table want a shot of whiskey but your bottle is closed. Are you allowed to open the tamperproof plastic wrapper that is around the cap if you are certain that you will rip the letters?

The **שש"כ** *passkins* that tearing through letters of a packaging is forbidden, but in between the letters is permitted. The **ילקוט יוסף** (56) permits cutting through letters and images on wrappers. The **קצות השלחן** (61) writes that if you think you will be able to open the packaging without ripping the letters you are allowed to run the risk and if you ultimately tear the letters, it is ok. The **פסקי תשובות** (62) writes that **בשעת הדחק** you are allowed to open packaging that will certainly rip while opening because we can rely on the opinions that permit tearing through letters on wrappers. **RSZA** (60) seems to only allow opening such wrappers for the sake of the sick.

- 19) As the singing at the meal gets louder and louder, your wife complains that she has a migraine and would like to take medicine. Is she allowed to pop a pill out of the plastic and aluminum packaging if it will certainly rip letters? Is there a difference between this case and the previous one?

**RSZA** (60) *passkins* that for the sake of the sick you are allowed to open medicine that will certainly rip through the letters and images if there is no other way to open it.

- 20) You are at your *frum* friend's house for Shabbos lunch and his one-year-old baby is getting very frustrated when drinking his bottle. You look at the bottle and tell him "he's getting frustrated because there is not enough milk coming out of the bottle. You need to expand the hole in the nipple." You grab your fork to make the hole bigger when he yells "*Gevalt!* Shabbos! You can't do that!" What is he talking about?

The **S"A** in **סעיף א'** *passkins* that even expanding an existing opening in a **כלי** is a violation of **עשיית פתח** (i.e., **מכה בפטיש**). Based on this, the **שש"כ** (63) *passkins* that expanding the opening of a baby bottle nipple is prohibited.

- 21) In the middle of the meal, you excuse yourself and go to the bathroom. You are horrified to find out that there is no pre-cut toilet paper! Should you shout to your host that you need toilet paper or are you allowed to cut the toilet paper on Shabbos? Where should you cut it from?

Ripping toilet paper is a biblical violation of קורע since your tearing produces a positive outcome (of having useable toilet paper). In a situation where no pre-cut toilet paper is available, Chazal allowed tearing it with a שינוי (e.g., using your elbows or the palm of your hand). **RSZA** (68) *passkins* that if you do not care about the exact size of the toilet paper you are allowed to cut (using a שינוי) along the perforated lines since you are only cutting there for convenience. **Rav Elyashiv** would hold that cutting along those lines is a violation of מהתך. Some even suggest that according to **RSZA** it is better to cut along the perforated lines (if you do not care about the exact size of the toilet paper) because you are cutting less of the tissue (there are small pockets of air in between the dots that connect the pieces of tissue to one another). Some suggest to put the toilet paper whole in the toilet and then flush causing the toilet paper to cut by itself.

- 22) You flush and the sounds you hear cause you to tremble in fear! You are living your worst nightmare – you just clogged your friend's toilet!!! Are you allowed to unclog it with a plunger on Shabbos?

The **שש"כ** (64) allows בשעת הצורך to unclog a stuffed toilet or sink using a plunger because the pipe is viewed as a כלי where opening a preexisting hole is permitted. **Rav Moshe** in (ה"ג: או"ח - קפז) allows to לכתחילה dislodge a clogged toilet/sink by using a plunger. **Rav Ovadya** (65) forbids because unclogging a stuffed pipe is a violation of בפטיש.

- 23) Mazel tov! Your daughter just got engaged so you bring out a bottle of champagne for the Shabbos meal. When you are about to twist off the metal wire that holds down the cap your wife says "Shabbos! I don't think you can do that? Is she right?"

The **ארחות שבת** (70) quotes **RSZA** who forbids because of מתיר – untying, but the **בנין שבת** noted that **RSZA** later edited his *pssak* quoted in the **שש"כ** and felt that undoing the metal wire on a champagne bottle is not in violation of מתיר since the wire is immediately thrown out. The **ארחות שבת** quotes **Rav Wosner** and **Rav Karelitz** who permit.

- 24) For dessert, you bring out the freshly baked chocolate babka that you bought on *erev-Shabbos*. It is in a plastic bag with a little metal twist-string that is keeping the bag closed. What is the best way to open this bag on Shabbos?



The **ארהות שבת** (70) quotes **RSZA** saying that if the metal twist was placed on the opening of the bag with intention to remain there for more than 24 hours, opening it or closing it is forbidden. The **בנין שבת** notes, though, that in the edits to the שש"כ, RSZA only forbade if it will be sealed long-term (which is very uncommon with these bags).