



Write at My Fingertips

When typing (or dialing) is necessary for *Refua* on Shabbos, one should preferably do so with a *Shinui*, even in a case of *Pikuach Nefesh* (unless it will delay patient care), as evident from the *Rema* (328:12). Even those who follow the *Shulchan Aruch*, who does not require a *Shinui* in cases of *Pikuach Nefesh*, require a *Shinui* in this case (where there is no *Nachri* available) as typing is not direct medical care.

A *Shinui* is any method that is unusual for performing the *Melacha*. According to *haGaon Rav Asher Weiss Shlit"א*, the ideal *Shinui* should hinder the performance of the *Melacha*. It should not prevent the action entirely, but it should make it somewhat more difficult to execute such that a person wouldn't normally perform it in this manner during the week.

One recommendation is to type while wearing thimbles on the fingertips. Thimbles are usually made of rubber and protect the fingers while sewing. We will discuss whether a thimble is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* and the ramifications of that classification for their use in this context.

Even if a thimble is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur*, that would not prevent its usage on Shabbos because a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* may be used on Shabbos *l'Tzorech Gufo*. This is why one may use a hammer to crack nuts, even though its normal function is in actions that are forbidden on Shabbos. However, classifying a thimble as a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* still has relevance for two reasons:

First, the *Heter* of *l'Tzorech Gufo* only applies to a *Keli* that has a regular permissible usage on Shabbos. A *Keli she'Melachto l'Issur* that has no conventional permissible usage is considered *Muktza Machmas Gufo* and may not be used at all on Shabbos. This could well apply to thimbles. The fact that they may be used as an accessory for typing would not be considered a practical permissible usage, since it is a strange and unusual use. The *Heter* only applies to a usage that people would sometimes carry out with that *Keli*, even though there exists a specialized *Keli* to perform the same task. (For example, although a hammer is usually used for nails and other construction activities, it is not unusual to use it as a nutcracker, even though there are nutcrackers that are designated for this purpose.)

Second, even if we assume that it is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* and may be used *l'Tzorech Gufo*, the *Mishna Berura* (308:12) and *Kaf haChaim* (22) rule that one may

only use such a *Kli l'Tzorech Gufo* if there is no permissible *Keli* available. Since it is feasible that a doctor could find a permissible *Keli* to type with, negating the need for a thimble, this could raise an issue. (R' Moshe Feinstein in *Igros Moshe O.C. 5:21:12* maintains that a person need not trouble himself greatly nor borrow an item from a neighbor to fulfill this condition.)

Addressing the question of whether a thimble is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur*, on the one hand, it is one of the standard accessories of a sewing kit. Sewing is a *Melacha* that is prohibited on Shabbos, thus indicating that its usage is to perform *Issurim*. However, it is not used directly to sew but is merely placed on the finger(s) for protection. Perhaps this is sufficient to consider it a *Kli sheMelachto l'Heter*.

Several sources relate to this question. A lit oil lamp is *Muktza* since it acts as a *Basis* for the flame. When the fire is extinguished, it is considered a *Kli sheMelachto l'Heter*. The *Ramban* explains in the name of the *Ra'avad*: "It is merely a *Basis* for the wick and oil; it is not used directly to perform *Melacha*. They only [classified as *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur*] items like a hammer or saw that are used to perform the *Melacha*." In other words, even if the accessory is an intrinsic part of the *Keli* performing the *Melacha*, as long as the *Melacha* is not performed by the accessory itself, it is not a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur*.

However, *Tosfos* (*Shabbos 36a s.v. "Ha"*) argue that a *Ner* is considered a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur*. This is also the final ruling of the *Mishna Berura* (271:19, *Sha'ar haTziyun 15*). Some *Poskim* apply this ruling to a telephone book, asserting that since it is used to aid in dialing a phone number, it is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* (*Shevus Yitzchak* quoting R' Elyashiv, *Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 20 and 28*, though others forbid it due to *Uvadin d'Chol* or "*Shtarei Hedyotos*".)

Accordingly, it would seem that a thimble is a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* since it assists in the performance of a forbidden *Melacha*. However, perhaps a thimble is more lenient since it is completely unnecessary for sewing; it merely acts as protection for the finger.

Since we cannot rule definitively, the preferred option is to designate some thimbles for the permissible use of typing with a *Shinui* on Shabbos. This is based on the *Chazon Ish's* ruling (*O.C. 43*) that designating a *Kli sheMelachto l'Issur* for a strictly permissible use transforms it into a *Kli she'Melachto l'Heter*.