

ליקוטי ופסקי הלכות "חוקי חיים"

ותלמד
"תקצי תנים"
לעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם



שע"י "חדר הוראה" שכונת מנחת יצחק פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

Halochos compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

Please do not
read during
davening or
Krias HaTorah

Electric Sensors on Shabbos – 1

Balak (E"v) / Chukas (Chu"l) 5783

301

World Full of Sensors

Sensors Everywhere

1. In today's technologically advanced world, it is nearly impossible to go around on the streets and in public places without passing various types of sensors which activate electric devices, e.g., lights, cameras, doors, and the like. There are also satellites that constantly capture people's movement in the world. This presents an issue on Shabbos. Thus, we saw a need to bring up the issues and suggest heterim and solutions to avoid violating the issurim of Shabbos, ח"ו.
2. **Vacation houses in Chutz l'Aretz.** This problem is also relevant in many vacation houses in Chutz l'Aretz and Europe belonging to non-Jews who build their houses with all the newest innovations in various sensors. During the vacation season, they rent their houses to Jews, creating issues around staying there for Shabbos.
3. **Hotels.** Similarly, hotels and hospitals throughout the world often operate with sensors everywhere. This makes it difficult for someone who keeps Torah and mitzvos to stay in these places.

Classification of Electricity

4. As an introduction to all the halachos we will discuss in the current issue and in the coming issues, we must understand some principles of the issur of melachah on Shabbos involved in operating electric appliances and devices. Electricity itself is not considered fire. Rather, it is something that actualizes energy innate in the world. Over time, scientists discovered ways of producing electricity, transferring electricity from one place to another, and creating electric currents to operate all sorts of devices by sending electricity to them via wires, etc.
5. **Two categories of electric appliances.** There are primarily two categories of electric appliances. There are those that are related to fire, e.g., when electricity flows through a heating element, it creates a sort of "fire" that heats up until the metal is like an actual fire. Also, when electricity passes through a thin, metallic filament, the filament heats up like fire and gives off light. An example of this is the old type of light bulbs [incandescent], as opposed to LED bulbs, which do not heat up and are not considered fire.
6. There are other electric appliances unrelated to fire. Electricity causes these things to activate using all sorts of methods, e.g., a motor spinning, sound waves, light waves, etc. The poskim discuss which melachos are involved in turning these on on Shabbos, as will be explained (ש"ת אחיעזר ח"ג סי' ס', ש"ת מהרש"ם ח"ב סי' רמ"ז, ש"ת) ש"ת חלקת יעקב ח"א סי' ע"א והלאה, ש"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ג סי' ל"ט, ש"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' ט).
7. **Using electricity in Israel from Chevrat HaChashmal [Israel Electric Corporation].** It should be noted that we are not discussing here the general use of electricity on Shabbos in Eretz Yisroel. The poskim have already discussed the possible issurim of Shabbos involved in using electricity generated by chillul Shabbos of non-Jews, and sometimes also Jews, at the power plants. There is also a potential general issue of chillul Hashem involved. Because of this, many scrupulous people with yiras Shomayim do not use electricity generated by Chevrat HaChashmal on Shabbos. They suffice with consuming electricity from a local generator, batteries, paraffin lamps, or the like [as the Chazon Ish ruled].

Melachos in Turning on Electric Devices on Shabbos

Electric Appliances with a Heating Element

8. All poskim agree when one turns on an electric device which creates glowing sparks that have the ability to burn something or a glowing fire, he violates the issur d'oraisa of mav'ir [kindling] [besides for the melachos mentioned below]. After all, he made a fire on Shabbos – it makes no difference whether he lit an actual fire or something considered fire using electricity (ש"ת אחיעזר שם, ש"ת מנחת שלמה ח"ב סי' ט).
9. **Turning off electric device.** Additionally, turning off one of these devices that cause fire and entail mav'ir violates mechabeh [extinguishing]. This is despite the fact that doing this just prevents the constantly renewing electric current from reaching its destination and does not actually extinguish a fire (ש"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' ל"ב).

Electric Devices Unrelated to Fire

10. There is another category of electric devices that are unrelated to fire and do not produce a flame that can burn things. They receive electric energy to operate machines and spin rotors with the electromagnetic force. Sometimes they activate various lights which don't have any red-hot metal, but work using special gases, e.g., fluorescent bulbs or LED lights which do not heat up at all; or, for example, an air conditioner. All poskim agree the issur of using these on Shabbos is not mav'ir, as there is no fire involved. Rather, it is boneh [building] or mesakein mana [lit., fixing an item], but the poskim argue whether it is a d'oraisa or d'rabanana violation.
11. **Boneh d'oraisa.** Some poskim hold turning on these devices on Shabbos violates the issurim d'oraisa of boneh and makeh b'patish, as it enables them to function properly with a steady electric current. The device without electricity within it is useless as a physical item. Only when one turns it on and sends electricity to it by closing an electric circuit does it become a proper item with a purpose and life that can be fulfilled (חזו"א סי' נ' סק"ט).
12. Although electricity is only within it temporarily until it is turned off, so there should theoretically be no issur d'oraisa of boneh, nevertheless, without electricity it is like there is nothing there; its whole existence and purpose is for its particular usage. The fact that the electricity will be interrupted is viewed as a separate point going forward (מכתב החזו"א, הובא בש"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' י"א).
13. If we view turning something on as boneh, then turning it off is soseir [dismantling]. However, if turning it on is makeh b'patish, there is no melachah involved in turning it off.
14. **D'rabanana.** However, most poskim hold there is no d'oraisa issur of boneh. Turning a device on does not do anything to the device itself, which was already considered a usable item when it was fashioned even before it was activated. Sending electricity into a device is just how it is used, like pouring water into a pipe to make it flow to another point. There is no change in the device itself. There is also no change in the physical wires; there is just an invisible force flowing through them. The "fixing" that is achieved by enabling it to operate with electricity only lasts temporarily, while electricity flows to it (הגרשו"א, ש"ת מנחת שלמה שם בחילופי מכתבים עם החזו"א, ש"ת אבן ישראל ח"ט סי' כ"ב).
15. Consequently, most poskim hold turning on something electric that does not have "fire" is only an issur d'rabanana (ש"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' כ"ג, יצחק ח"א סי' כ', ח"ב סי' ט"ז, ח"ג סי' כ"ג, ח"ד סי' כ"ו).
16. Nevertheless, there are poskim who are concerned for the opinion that it is assur d'oraisa as per the Chazon Ish (ע"י ש"ת אג"מ ח"ד סי' פ"ד, ש"ת מנחת יצחק ח"א סי' ק"ז, ח"ג סי' כ' וסי' ע"ז).

