



Rubbing Cream on Someone who Accepted Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: After my wife lit candles, she realized that she had not applied (non-medicated) cream to an area of dry skin on her face. She asked me to do it for her (I had not yet accepted Shabbat). Was it permitted for me to do so?

Answer: Although your description seems to indicate no problem of *refu'ah* (medical actions) on Shabbat, your wife was correct that smearing a cream onto one's skin is forbidden on Shabbat. This is clear when one wants a film of cream to be **on** the skin for a while, but is likely true even if it will be absorbed relatively quickly (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 33:13). It is possible to dab small lumps of cream and let them spread out by themselves. However, we will address your excellent question regarding normal application.

You may be aware that even after accepting upon herself the *halachot* of Shabbat, a wife may ask her husband who did not yet do so to do *melacha* for her. The *gemara* (Shabbat 151a) allows Reuven to tell Shimon who is in the *techum Shabbat* of Reuven's produce to look after it, even though Reuven is out of the *techum* himself. The Rashba (ad loc.)

derives from this that one who has accepted Shabbat can tell a Jew who did not yet do so to do *melacha* on his behalf. The Ran (Shabbat 64b of the Rif's pages) says that one may not generalize based on the *gemara* regarding *techum*, where there is a special way to get to the distant place (*burgenin*), but elsewhere one may not ask someone to do something that he may not. The Beit Yosef (Orach Chayim 263) counters by stressing that the one who accepted Shabbat could have not accepted Shabbat early. The Shulchan Aruch and Rama (OC 263:17) accept the Rashba's leniency, including physically benefiting on Shabbat from that which was produced on his behalf.

Your question, then, is whether the leniency of letting Reuven, who did not accept Shabbat, do *melacha* for Sarah, who accepted it, applies even if Sarah will be directly involved in the *melacha* (e.g., have the cream applied to her skin). I did not find a source on this case, but sources on parallel matters should suffice, as the question is general: is direct involvement but, primarily, as an object (i.e., another person does the *melacha to him*) make one considered a partner in the action (which in your case, would be *chillul Shabbat* for your wife).

One equivalent matter is when a non-Jew

is allowed to do a *melacha* to heal a sick Jew, where a Jew, including the sick person, may not do that same thing (Shulchan Aruch, OC 328:17). The Rama (ad loc.) says that in such cases, one “may assist [the non-Jew] a little, for assistance is not [halachically] significant.” This follows the rule found in various *gemarot* that “assisting is not significant” (see Beitza 22a; Shabbat 93a). Admittedly, some point to a *gemara* (Makot 20b) that seems to indicate the opposite – one who lets someone cut his hair in a forbidden manner is punished like the one who cut it. The Taz (OC 228:1) reconciles the sources by distinguishing between cases where the person having the violation done to him needs to do something to enable the one acting to do the violation. The Taz thereby rejects the Rama’s (OC 228:3) permission to have a non-Jew pull a Jew’s tooth when necessary, because the Jew has to open his mouth. However, most *poskim* agree with the Rama, not the Taz (see Mishna Berura 328:11, 61). (Many say that forbidden haircuts is more stringent in this regard than

melacha on Shabbat – see Nekudot Hakesef (the Shach) to Taz, Yoreh Deah 198:21).

Another question about whether one having *melacha* done to him is considered a halachic “collaborator” is when a woman who did not cut her nails needs to go to the *mikveh* on Shabbat. Most *poskim* allow a non-Jew to cut them (see Nekudot Hakesef ibid.; the Taz is again stringent); Be’ur Halacha 340:1; Yalkut Yosef, OC 340, Gozez 11).

The standard *p’sak* is thus that your wife could even maneuver herself to help you apply the cream. However, it was probably simple enough to apply it without her needing to do anything, in which case, even the Taz would permit it. ■

Having a dispute?



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