

THINKING AND WRITING

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

"You should think about Torah day and night" (Tehilim). From here the Vilna Gaon derives that one must recite a blessing before thinking about Torah. Both the Shulchan Aruch and Rema disagree, and do not require a blessing to think about Torah (47,4).

When performing a mitzva one will inevitably have to think of the halachos connected to its execution. Even according to the Vilna Gaon who requires a blessing to think about Torah, one can do a mitzva without first reciting the blessings on the Torah. Since one's intention is not to learn but to perform the mitzva properly, no blessing is required (Mishna Berura 47,7).

Writing differs from thinking in that it is more of a physical action and at times a person speaks as he writes. Because of this the Shulchan Aruch rules that one should make a blessing when writing words of Torah. However most poskim equate writing with thinking, and do not require a blessing (Mishna Berura 47,4).

Shimon wakes up early in the morning to write tefilin and mezuzos. Must he recite the blessing on the Torah beforehand? Since Shimon is writing professionally, he may not be required to recite the blessings on Torah beforehand. Shimon should make sure and learn after saying the blessings on Torah before starting to write (Biur Halacha 47,3).

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