

COMPASS

NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF SHLICHUS FOR SHLUCHIM BY SHLUCHIM

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אמירה לנכרי

Using a Shabbos Goy

What do Colin Powell, Vladimir Putin, Al Gore, and Barak Obama have in common? Each is rumored to have served as a Shabbos goy.

The following is a compilation of specific circumstances where amira l'nochri would be permitted. Please bear in mind that each situation is different and one should not apply a rule from one example to a non-identical situation without first consulting a rov.

Additionally, some of the following are permitted *only* in bedieved situations, when confronted with a situation on Shabbos itself. On Erev Shabbos, one is obliged to take appropriate measures so that he should not have to resort to the said leniencies.¹

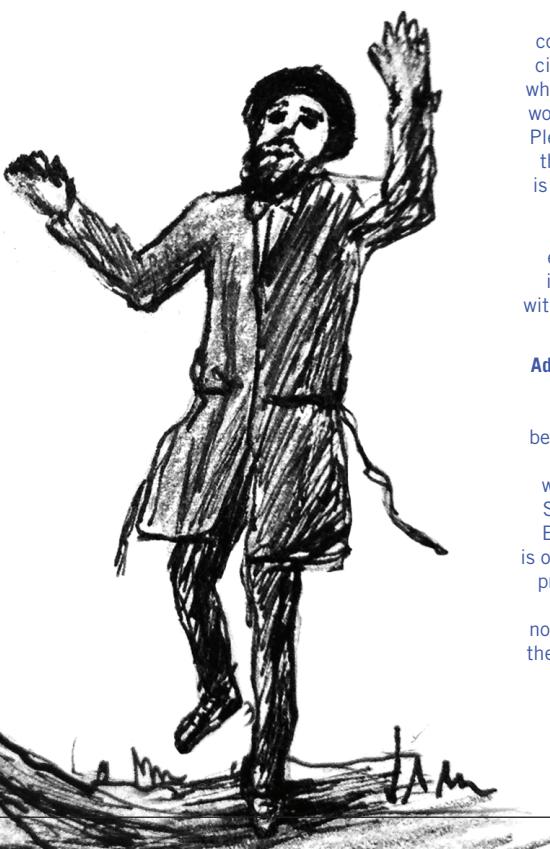
Though using a Shabbos goy is quite common, and was especially so in past generations before the explosion of automation, the laws pertaining to amira l'nochri on Shabbos are quite complicated. Here's a refresher to keep in mind at your Chabad House.

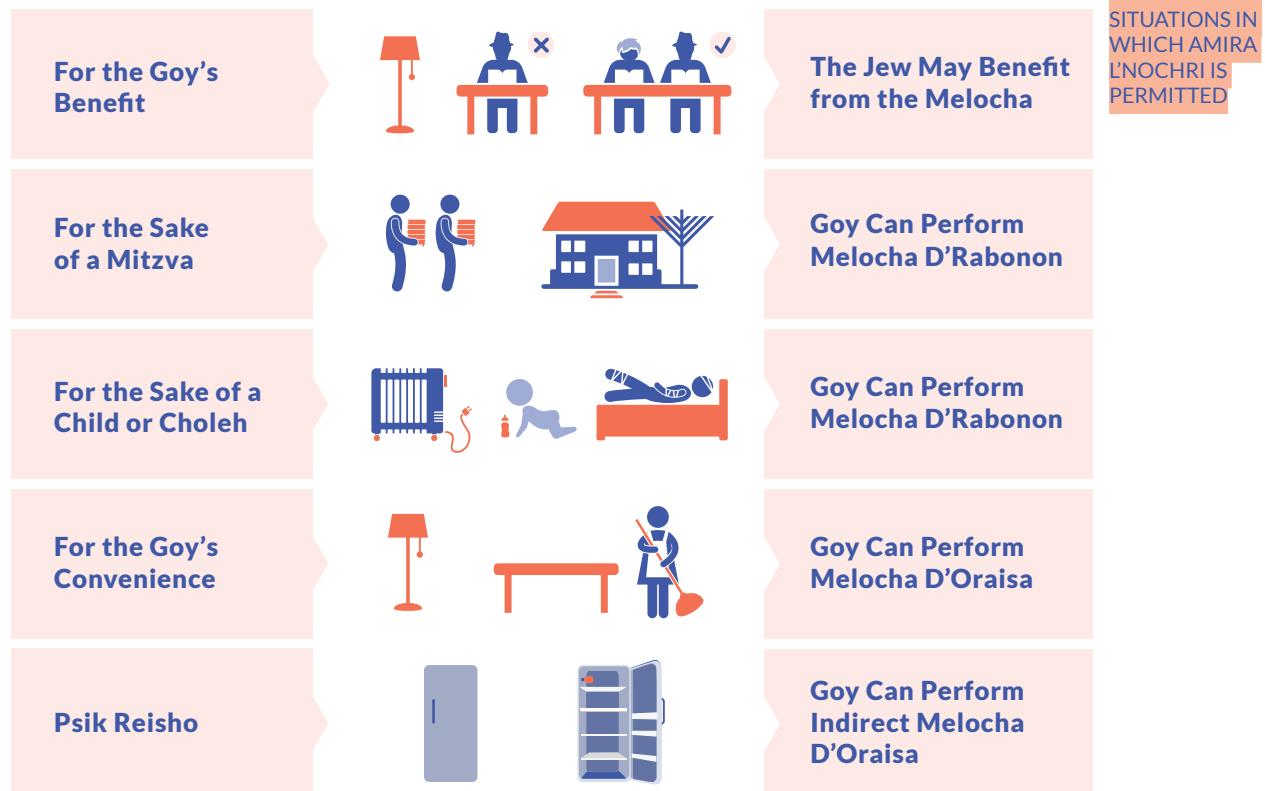
מלאה שעוזה הנכרי לצורך עצמו
For the Goy's Benefit

The general rule is that one may *not* ask a goy to perform any melocha that is forbidden for a Jew to perform himself. This is, in part, because the goy performing the melocha is considered as if he were the shliach of the Jew for whom he does the melocha.²

An additional gezeira, established to prevent Jews from asking goyim to perform melochos for them, is that a Jew may not benefit from a melocha that was done for the Jew's benefit, even if the Jew did not ask the goy to do so.³

For example, if a goy notices a Jew sitting in the dark and turns on the light to help the Jew,





the Jew may not benefit from the light. However, benefit from the melocha of a goy is only forbidden when it was performed for the Jew.⁴ If a goy did a melocha for his own benefit, a Jew may derive benefit from that melocha afterward.

For example, if a Jew is sitting and eating in a dark room, he may invite a goy to join him for a drink. If the goy on his own accord decides to turn on the light, the Jew may benefit from this melocha. He may even ask him to leave the light on when he leaves.

שבות דשבות לצורך מצווה

For the Sake of a Mitzva

One may ask a goy to perform an act that is forbidden miderabanan, as long as it is for a mitzva.⁵

For example, if a shliach realizes on Shabbos that he underestimated the amount of people coming to shul and there are not enough siddurim, he may ask a goy to carry more siddurim through a carmelis. (This case would present itself if a shliach lived on the same private property as his shul but without a proper mechitza encom-

passing the two buildings.)

לצורך חוליה

For the Sake of a Choleh

For the benefit of a choleh, one may ask a goy to perform a melocha d'oraisa.⁶ This is the case even regarding a non-life-threatening illness, as long as the patient is ill or in pain to the extent that he is confined to bed.

It should be noted that a woman who has recently given birth is considered a choleh she'en ba sakona until thirty days after the birth and is, therefore, permitted to ask a goy to perform even a melocha d'oraisa for her.⁷

A child's needs are deemed similar to those of a choleh.⁸ Therefore, one may ask a goy to perform a melocha to provide for a child's needs.

In extremely cold weather, one is permitted to ask a goy to turn on or raise the heat. This is due to the rule that hakol k'cholim eitzel hakor⁹ (everyone is considered ill should he be exposed to extreme cold).

Some poskim also apply this rule to extreme heat.¹⁰ It would, therefore,

be permitted to ask a goy to turn on or raise the air conditioning.

ציווהו דבר היתר, והנכרי בוחר לעשות דרך איסור

For the Goy's Convenience

If a goy is performing permissible work for the benefit of a Jew, he may perform a melocha for his own convenience.¹¹ This applies as long as the job he was given can be reasonably completed without doing a melocha. Additionally, the melocha he chooses to perform cannot disturb the spirit of Shabbos by making noise.¹²

For example, if a goy is cleaning a room, he may turn on a light to allow him to see well and more easily complete his job. Another example: If a goy is asked to transport chairs around a building, he may use the elevator for his own convenience.

פסיק רישיה Psik Reisha

A goy is permitted to perform an act that is not a melocha in itself but would automatically cause a melocha to be done, even when done for the direct benefit of the Jew.¹³

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For example, if one has forgotten to disconnect the light bulb in his refrigerator before Shabbos, he may ask a goy to open it, even though he knows that the light will automatically be turned on as a result. This is permissible because turning on the light is neither the intended nor desired action at hand. (See below for further details involved in this example.)

כשייש מחלוקת הפוסקים If There Is a Machlokes

If there is a machlokes haposkim regarding a din on Shabbos, one who normally follows the stricter opinion may, in this case, rely on the more lenient opinion and ask a goy to perform the act, even for the Jew's own sake.¹⁴

For example, this din would apply in the case of opening cans on Shabbos, which is prohibited by certain poskim but allowed by others. A Jew would be allowed to ask a goy to open a can on Shabbos even if the Jew is forbidden to do so himself.

Another example: One who follows the stricter poskim and does not rely upon an eiruv despite it being a fully kosher one may ask a goy to wheel a baby carriage or carry other items for him through the public domain.

שלא בדרך ציווי או בדרך רמז Hinting

In certain situations, some poskim permit a Jew to motivate a goy to do a melocha, with proviso that the Jew avoids giving an actual instruction and instead waits for the goy to act on his own initiative (which was stimulated by the Jew!). The Alter Rebbe disagrees with this approach

and rules that the leniency that one may hint to a goy in a non-direct way (shelo b'derech tzvui) applies only if the goy believes he is performing the act to complete his job.¹⁵

For example, if a mail carrier delivers an envelope on Shabbos, one may say, "I am not able to read this if it is sealed." If the goy understands the hint and opens the letter for him, he is only doing so since he believes this constitutes part of his job of delivering the letter.

A Jew who needs a melocha done after Shabbos may also hint in the above manner to a goy on Shabbos,¹⁶ even though one is generally not allowed on Shabbos to discuss melochos to be done after Shabbos due to the prohibition of "v'daber dovor." This is permitted because he is not mentioning the melocha explicitly, only hinting to it.

Compiled by Rabbi Mannis Frankel

Recommended Reading

Hilchos Amira L'Nochri

Written by
Rabbi Sholom Dovber Levin

Published by Kehot Publication Society

1. ש"ת ג' פונטס אורהון ס' עג סק א'
2. ש"ע ד' א"ז מ"ב א'
3. שם סניין ב'
4. שם סניין ג'
5. שם סניין ד'
6. שם סניין ח'
7. שם סניין ט'
8. שם סניין י'
9. שם סניין ז'
10. מעריר בעות הולחנופר ל' ב' ס' ג'
11. ש"ע ד' ס' עג וטבשן ז'
12. ארא שם סניין ר' ב' ס' ג'
13. שם סניין ד'
14. שם סניין ט' י'
15. קתק' ג' ס' ט' ג' נ'
16. מה בסטון ט' ג' כב' קתק' ג' נ'
- לט' ג' אמור עכ' מ' נטל'.

Questions & Answers

Q The flame underneath the blech on my gas stove was extinguished on Shabbos. Is it better to turn the gas off myself, or call a goy? If I need to serve the cholent to 100 guests, can a goy rekindle the flame?

A You may not ask a goy to rekindle the flame. You may turn off the gas yourself, but since the knob is muktze, do so in an unusual manner, kil'achar yad. Alternatively, you may move the cholent to another blech that is alight, as long as the cholent is still appreciably warm. In regards to this specific situation, the fact that the cholent has been removed from the flame is not a problem believed when warm food for the Shabbos meal is at stake.¹⁷

Q The flame underneath my blech is too high. If I leave it as is, all of my food will burn. Is there anything I can do?

A A goy is not permitted to lower the flame. Place some baking pans upside-down atop the blech and set the pots upon them, minimizing the amount of heat that will affect the Shabbos food.

Q Someone accidentally knocked the plug of my slow cooker out of the wall. I am expecting 25 guests at our Shabbos meal tomorrow, and serving only fish and kugel just won't cut it. What am I permitted to do?

A A goy is not permitted to plug it back in. Transfer the contents of the slow cooker to a kli sheini and wrap it well with a blanket. Additionally, prepare a good apology speech.

Q Our house experienced a power outage on yom tov, and the oven that had been preset before yom tov turned off. Is there any way I can get a goy to turn on the oven? Does it make a difference whether the food I would like to put in is raw or has already been cooked?

A The following is applicable only on yom tov; on Shabbos, one may