

Can One Bid In an Online Auction That Ends on Shabbos?

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Question: If an online auction is scheduled to end on Shabbos, can one put in a bid before Shabbos, knowing that if his bid wins, he will be purchasing the item on Shabbos?

Answer: In eBay's terms of service, it says clearly that when you make a bid you have made a legal obligation to purchase the item unless someone else outbids you. In other words, before Shabbos, when the Jew makes the bid, he is obligating himself to follow through with the purchase if his bid wins. All that really happens on Shabbos is that the chance of someone outbidding you comes to an end. No actual *kinyan* takes place on Shabbos. Technically, if the terms would be set up in a way that one's obligation only goes into effect on Shabbos, that could be a problem. But, as far as I know, that is not the case.