

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

When coming in from the cold, people often put their gloves on the heater. Is this an issue on Shabbos? What if the gloves are wet from snow or rain? Does the material matter?

The issues:

- A) *Libun*, laundering on Shabbos
- B) *Maris ayin*, things forbidden due to appearances
- C) *Muktze* in reference to the soggy gloves

A) *Libun*

In the order of the *avos melachos*, primary categories of activities forbidden on Shabbos, *melaben* refers to bleaching fleeces of wool for their further production. The *toldos*, secondary categories, include all activities normally done during the washing or laundering process. These include wetting the fabric or garment, scrubbing it, including scratching dirt out of or off a dry garment, *sechita*, squeezing and wringing it and drying it out, usually in an 'oven' of sorts. Additional *toldos* include other things done to improve the look of clothing, such as polishing shoes and brushing clothes. Polishing shoes or other leather items can also involve scraping or smoothing the surface, part of a separate *melacha*, *memachek*. This is also relevant to our question, if the gloves are leather.

Libun and *sechita* apply to any cloth item. [There is another type of *sechita*, squeezing juice from fruit. This also forbids removing a wanted liquid that is currently trapped in another medium. Thus one may not wring a cloth soaked in beer, when the beer is wanted. This does not apply in our case.] The Talmud cites various confusing and contradictory statements on the status of leather with regard to washing *melachos*. Therefore, the Talmud concludes that there are differences between leather and other clothing. There is a difference between soft leather, such as that used for gloves, and stiff leather, used for shoes. One must also define levels of washing, and then apply them to leather items. The first level is wetting it. On a slightly soiled item, this might clean it totally. The next level is swishing it around in the water, or running water over it in a continuous or intermittent flow. The third level is scrubbing it using an agent, such as cloth or a hard stone. Finally, rubbing it against itself is considered the strongest form of washing some items.

Absorbent fabrics are considered washed by having water poured on them. The poskim debate whether wetting a clean garment involves a Scriptural or Rabbinical *melacha*. Swishing, rubbing, scrubbing and squeezing are all forbidden Scripturally. Leather is slightly absorbent in its natural state. However, wetting it is not considered *libun*. One may not scrub it. Some maintain that this is Scripturally forbidden on all types of leather. Others maintain that on stiff leather this is Rabbinically forbidden. Rubbing it against itself is forbidden on stiff leather. Wood items are excluded from the *melacha*.

If the gloves were wet at the onset of *Shabbos*, they remain *muktzeh* for the rest of *Shabbos*. They are treated like wet laundry. If they got wet on *Shabbos*, they become *muktzeh* for the duration of their wetness. When they dry out, they lose their *muktzeh* status. For the purposes of this discussion, the dryness must be enough that they cannot be squeezed. There is a level of wetness that could be excluded from *muktzeh*. The item might be wet to the touch, but not enough to wet the fingers so that they can transfer wetness to something else. This is called *tofaiach shelo al menas lehatfiach*. The poskim go further and say that *muktzeh* would not apply if there is only a small amount of wetness. The gage for this is that the person does not really care about it. In our case, if the person would not be putting the gloves on a radiator to dry but for convenience, he does not care about the wetness. Therefore, the gloves are not *muktzeh* for him. He may place them wherever he wants, and he may move them around to make room for other gloves. However, if he feels that they are wet enough that he wants to dry them out, they might be considered *muktzeh* anyhow. [See Kesubos 5b-6a, Poskim. Refs to earlier sections.]

In conclusion, dry gloves may be warmed on a radiator. Wet gloves pose a problem. Snow may be shaken gently, but not vigorously. If the gloves remain wet enough to require drying, they may not be placed on a warm radiator. If the material is fully absorbent, they may not be placed on a cold radiator. If they are non-absorbent material, they may be placed on a cold radiator. Leather gloves may be placed on a radiator. If the gloves are very wet, they are *muktzeh* until they dry out enough to be worn again.

On the parsha ... He made the copper *kiyor*, basin .. with the mirrors of the women .. [38:8] Moshe found them distasteful, since they were used by women to dress up to attract their husbands. Hashem told him, there are the most precious of all .. the righteous women used them to maintain the holiness of the Jewish marriage! (See Rashi) Why were these more distasteful than all of the other jewelry? The women wore all of their jewelry to attract their husbands! The *kiyor* was made exclusively out of the mirrors. The other gold included jewelry and other gold items. [See Ramban] Some add, the *kohanim* would all wash hands and feet from the *kiyor*. The other utensils were only used by a small number of *kohanim*. In addition, the *kiyor* was used right at the beginning of the day, and of the service, setting a tone of sorts. One could ask, if Moshe was indeed concerned about the others, why did he not raise the issue? Furthermore, why did Hashem not give Moshe the same explanation for all of the gold? Perhaps there was an additional aspect to all this. The main concern that Moshe had was that the appearances would be unsavory. He knew that the actual sacrifice of the women was greatest with regard to the mirrors. However, all the other utensils were not so much in the public view. The *kiyor* was, according to some, close to the entrance of the courtyard. The other utensils were slightly more hidden from view. Moshe thought that in terms of *maris ayin*, the other utensils were 'in inner chambers'. Therefore, the issue of appearances was not so critical. Hashem's answer was that the *kiyor* represented much more than the distasteful side of all of the adornments. On the contrary, all of the adornments had the same lofty goals of attracting Jewish husbands to their wives. The special aspect was publicly acknowledged as an example for all of the utensils, right at the entrance, right at the beginning of the *avodah*, and for use by every single *kohain*.

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The main reason is due to its hardness, but a secondary reason is due to its source material. The question is whether synthetic fabrics could be treated slightly leniently due to this secondary reason. In addition, plastic and rubber items are not absorbent. They should be excluded totally from *libun*. Nonetheless, squeezing them does help remove the water. Therefore, in the words of one posek, one cannot consider it real *libun* or *kibus*, but it should not be totally permitted. One may wash it, but may not rub it hard against itself.

Accordingly, when an item is wet or covered in snow, it may not be squeezed out. The surface water may be shaken off gently, because this is not considered inside the item. Shaking vigorously will remove some of the absorbed water. Therefore, with regard to a wet item, one must be very careful about shaking. It is hard to gauge the difference between gentle and vigorous. Snow is easier to deal with, since it is on the surface.

One may not place the wet clothing where they will warm up enough to invoke *bishul*, cooking. Thus, they may not be placed on a hot part of the stove. Even standing in a place like this wearing the wet item is forbidden. Placing them in a warm place to dry out also touches on the Scriptural *melacha*. This is another *tolda* of *libun*, since the fabric is dried in an 'oven'. While this refers to a primitive version of a dryer, it includes placing them near a fire or other heat source. Thus, placing them on a radiator would be prohibited. This is really apart of the *sechita tolda*. Therefore, items not normally included in *sechita* would not be included in this. Thus, shoes, and even rubber or plastic gloves, might be permitted from this perspective. Most synthetic fabric absorbs as well. However, many gloves are manufactured from material used to repel water. Their level of absorption is the same as leather. Thus, from this perspective alone, it would be permitted to leave these on a radiator. [If a cloth lining is wet, all rules for cloth apply.]

Our questioner usually leaves them there to stay warm. This does not involve *libun* on a dry garment. The issue arises when the garment is slightly damp. The questioner is not really interested in the dryness, but in the warmth. However, if it is damp enough to involve *sechita*, there is a *psik raisha*, inevitable by-product of his action, that involves *melacha*. It would be forbidden. [See Shabbos 113b 128b 142b 146b-147b Zvachim 94a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 301;3-6 46 302: esp. 1 7-9 (BHL, Dirshu, esp. 49) etc., commentaries. Igros Moshe OC:II:70 YD:II:76.]

B) Maris ayin

What if the radiator is not warm at the time one places his gloves there? By the time it warms up, the gloves will be dry. It is forbidden to give the appearance of wrongdoing. There are two types of this prohibition. One type forbids bringing suspicion upon oneself. The onlooker will think that the person is involved in an activity that the onlooker knows is forbidden. The other type is a concern that the onlooker confuses the activity with one that is really forbidden. However, now that the onlooker sees the person doing, he will think it is permitted.

Based on this, the Talmud discusses hanging out clothing on *Shabbos*, that became wet while one was walking. For example, one might have walked through a puddle, or got caught in a storm. Hanging them out could lead people to suspect that they had been laundered. *Maris ayin* is forbidden, even in private places. This is instituted in order to avoid making difficult distinctions.

There are a few exceptions to this restriction. If the items are not soaking wet, some poskim permit spreading them out to dry. If the items are dirty, no-one will suspect that the person laundered them. The drying is to get rid of the wetness. They may be placed in an unusual manner that will avoid the suspicion.

If the activity that is suspected is not forbidden Scripturally, but Rabbinically, *maris ayin* is still forbidden. However, the poskim maintain that *maris ayin* of a Rabbinical institution is not forbidden in a private place. That is only forbidden when the onlooker suspects a Scriptural violation. Accordingly, the materials that we mentioned that fall into this category would be excluded from the *maris ayin* issue.

It is normal for people to dry items on a radiator after laundering them. This is also done when the radiator is cold, because this is a convenient way to spread out the clothing. It is also normal to leave items that got wet in the snow or rain on a radiator. It is also normal to leave dry items there to warm up. Thus, there is some measure of *maris ayin* here in any event. Nonetheless, there is no source to forbid hanging out dry clothing. Therefore, it would be permitted to place the gloves on a warm radiator if they were dry. If they were wet, *maris ayin* is involved. However, leather gloves, or some kinds of synthetic gloves would be permitted. Since the *sechita* issue either does not apply, or applies Rabbinically according to some, *maris ayin* does not apply. However, absorbent synthetics are not excluded from *sechita*, and according to some are forbidden Scripturally. [See Shabbos 146b-147b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 301:45-47, commentaries.]

C) Muktzeh

Muktzeh applies, primarily, to items that have restricted uses on *Shabbos*. Moving them around is forbidden. That would mean that one could not move the gloves around, once they have been removed, if they are *muktzeh*. The issue of *muktzeh* arises in this case, because the wet gloves can lead to a *melacha, sechita*.

The Talmud discusses removing a cloth a plug in a beer keg. While removing it, one will inevitably squeeze it. One way that it is permitted, is if it is so soaked that the beer can come out without squeezing it. In our case, if the gloves are sopping wet, moving them around will not lead to inevitable *sechita*. However, they are useless to be worn, and are therefore *muktzeh*. If they are not sopping wet, the issue of *sechita* rises, as discussed. They might not be *muktzeh* if the material does not raise the *sechita* issue. Due to their water repellent nature, they might also be wearable.

There could also be another part to this, if the water absorbed is filthy. The water itself is *muktzeh*, and the glove is now soaked in the *muktzeh* water. If the person wearing them does not care about the filth in the water, meaning that he will still wear the gloves, the water in and of itself is less of an issue. As long as it is not squeezed out, it is secondary to the gloves, which are not unwearable.

If the gloves are indeed *muktzeh* due to their wetness, one may not move them around once he removes them from his hands. The poskim discuss a dispensation to allow putting them away in a convenient place as long as one is still holding them. There is some controversy about this dispensation, and whether it can apply in all cases. Therefore, one should not remove the gloves until he is in a place where they can be put down without raising the issues discussed.