

HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

When coming indoors from the snow, one usually has snow on his clothing. If he hangs it or places it in the usual way, it will cause a pool as it melts. During the week, one shakes, brushes, or knocks it off the surface. May this be done on Shabbos? If it may not, may the clothing be hung where they will not cause a mess, such as over the sink or bathtub? May the clothing be placed on top of a towel?

The issues [mostly adapted from Halochoscope XVII:20]:

- 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.

Libun and *sechita* apply to any cloth item. [Another type of *sechita*, squeezing juice from fruit, 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 and poskim define levels of washing. 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*. 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 a part 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 or raincoats, 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 is not that interested in drying the clothing. Nonetheless, he does not want the clothing to spoil while soaking. Thus, the manner of hanging them out does involve a *libun* issue. He is more interested in preventing a mess. This could mitigate the *libun* slightly, since it is an indirect unintended result. It would still be forbidden, at least Rabbinically, especially if he stands to gain from it. Let us assume that some items are indeed dried 'flat', that is, they are spread out on a surface, which is usually absorbent. This would mean that laying the items out on a towel involve a *libun* issue. However, in our case, this is done to prevent the floor or furniture from getting wet. If the clothing is simply placed there, as it would be on any other surface, without any action taken to dry it, this could be permitted. This would depend on the type of clothing and how old it is. As we shall see in the next section, there could still be an issue with the appearance of laundering or one of its processes.

The towel itself raises a *libun* issue. By placing the clothing on it, one wets it. The absorbed storm water is not clean. Therefore, one is not actively cleaning the towel. On the contrary, it is getting dirty from it. This is called *derech lichluch*, and many poskim permit it. One must still be careful when doing this. If the towel becomes saturated, one could be tempted to wring it out. The poskim debate whether one should avoid *derech lichluch* in such situations. Assuming that one does not anticipate the towel becoming saturated, he may drop the clothing onto it. However, if it does become saturated, he must be careful when replacing it. Apart from the issues of *muktzeh* [see section C], he may not squeeze it in any way. He may only pick it up if it is so wet that the water will drip out by itself. [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

B) *Maris ayin*

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.

There is some measure of *maris ayin* here in any event. To avoid it, one should place the towel where it is always left during the week, in a way that it is obvious that it is only there to prevent a mess. Assuming that *libun* is not an issue, and the only issue is *maris ayin*, that would not apply if onlookers do not see it as a forbidden activity. [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 clothing around, once they have been removed, if they are *muktzeh*. The issue of *muktze* arises in this case, because the wet clothing 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 clothing or the towel after it gets saturated 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* arises, as discussed. They might not be *muktzeh* if the material does not raise the *sechita* issue.

There could also be another part to this, if the water absorbed is filthy. The water itself is *muktzeh*, and the items are 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 clothing, the water in and of itself is less of an issue. As long as it is not squeezed out, it is secondary to the clothing, which are not unwearable.

If the items are indeed *muktzeh* due to their wetness, one may not move them

around once he takes them off. 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 take them off until he is in a place where they can be put down without raising the issues discussed. We have already mentioned that to avoid *maris ayin*, the towel should be placed right near the door or wherever it is left during the week.

If the items 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. 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, the clothing may be placed on a towel if it is clear that the towel was only there to prevent a mess. Any of the items may not be moved around if they are moderately wet. If they are so saturated that the water oozes out by itself, they may be moved. If the person wants the items to dry out, he must avoid any action that causes this directly or indirectly. He must also avoid any appearance of causing this. Shaking the items vigorously is forbidden. Shaking them gently, to remove the surface water, is permitted. Knocking them in a way that the surface water or snow falls off is allowed, but one should take care not to knock them hard enough to remove any absorbed water. One may not brush the surface of a wet item. One may brush off snow gently, because he will not be brushing the absorbed water. Hanging them over a bathtub depends on how it will be perceived by the onlookers.

On the parsha ... it shall cover the eye (visibility) of the land, and it will not be possible to see the land ... [10:5] .. and the land was darkened .. [10:15]. What difference does it make whether the land will be darkened or not visible [see *Kli Yakar*]? Is it possible that anyone would think that there is no land under the locusts? The essence of the plague of locusts was to deprive Mitzrayim of its usage of its land, more than simply consuming the produce. The locusts would take over. A person's entire status was based on the boundaries of his properties. By concealing the actual ground, the boundaries between properties were also concealed. This way, individual Egyptians would lose the ability to point to their own property. Although they still owned it in theory, the eye would not be able to see this, and they could do nothing about it!

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