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Wick of Cloth and its Susceptibility to Tumah

A wick (*made*) of a cloth (*three by three fingerbreadths*) which was folded but not singed, Rabbi Eliezer said: it is susceptible to *tumah*, and one may not light (*the Shabbos light*) with it. Rabbi Akiva, however, maintained: It is not susceptible to *tumah*, and one may light (*the Shabbos light*) with it.

The *Gemora* notes: As for the matter of *tumah*, it is well, for they differ in the following: Rabbi Eliezer holds that folding (*which is not a lasting change*) is of no effect, and it remains in its previous condition (*as a cloth, and not as a wick, and therefore it is still susceptible to tumah*), while Rabbi Akiva holds that folding is effective, and it (*its previous condition*) is indeed annulled. [*They all agree, however, that if it would be singed, it is regarded as a wick, and is not susceptible to tumah.*]

But, the *Gemora* asks, with reference to lighting, regarding what do they differ?

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Elozar said in the name of Rabbi Oshaya, and Rav Adda bar Ahavah said likewise: The reference here is to a cloth exactly three (*fingerbreadths*) square, and also to a Festival falling out on a Friday. Now, all agree with Rabbi Yehudah, who maintains that one (*on a Festival*) may fuel a fire with (*whole*) utensils, but not with broken utensils. [*A whole utensil may be handled on Festivals, and therefore it may be used for burning. But if a utensil is broken on the Festival so that it can now be used as fuel only, it is regarded as something newly-created (referred to as ‘nolad’ - a new use for it has just been created), and such may not be handled on Festivals. This is regarded as ‘muktzeh,’ for one did not anticipate at all that*

these things would be in existence.] Furthermore, all agree with Ulla’s teaching, which is that one who lights (*the Shabbos lights*) must light the greater part (*of the wick*) which protrudes (*from the oil, for the law is that the flame must be able to rise on its own accord after the lighter withdraws his hand*).

Rabbi Eliezer holds that folding is of no effect (*and it is still a garment*), and immediately after one kindles it slightly, it becomes a broken utensil (*since it was the minimum size originally*), and when he continues kindling it (*until the majority of the flame is lit*), he is kindling a broken utensil. [*Since the vessels broke on Yom Tov, they are considered new objects (i.e. broken vessels instead of whole ones) and are muktzeh due the prohibition of nolad. As the cloth under discussion is exactly 3x3 fingerbreadths, the moment one light such a wick, and a slight amount of it burns away, its status is changed from that of a vessel (i.e. clothing), to that of a broken vessel (clothing that is not susceptible to tum’ah since it is less than the minimum size). One may therefore no longer hold a fire to it – as Ulla instructs, since it is considered a different and new object. This is why R’ Eliezer rules that such a wick is unacceptable.*] Rabbi Akiva, however, holds that folding is effective, and it does not bear the character of a utensil (*even before it was lit*), and therefore when he kindles, he kindles a mere piece of wood (*one that was already broken, and therefore, it is not muktzeh on account of “nolad”*).

Rav Yosef observed: This is the explanation of what I learned in a *braisa*: exactly three (*fingerbreadths*) square, but I did not know in reference to what law. [*It is now evident that it was referring to our Mishna.*]

The *Gemora* asks: Now, since Rav Adda bar Ahavah explains it in accordance with Rabbi Yehudah, it follows that he himself holds as Rabbi Yehudah. Yet did Rav Adda bar Ahavah say thus?



Surely Rav Adda bar Ahavah said: If a gentile (*on Yom Tov*) hollows out a *kav* (a certain measure) in a log, a Jew may fuel a fire with it on a Festival. Yet why? Is it not '*nolad*' (for it was created on Yom Tov)!!?

The *Gemora* answers: He states it (*R' Yehudah's opinion*) according to the views of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva, but he himself does not subscribe to this view.

Rava said (*an alternate explanation regarding the Tannaic dispute in the Mishna*): This is Rabbi Eliezer's reason: It is because one must not light (*the Shabbos lights*) with an uncharred wick or uncharred rags (*for they do not light properly*).

The *Gemora* asks: Then when Rav Yosef observed: exactly three (*fingerbreadths*) square; with reference to what law was that taught?

The *Gemora* answers: It is in respect of *tumah*, for we learned in a *Mishna*: The three (*fingerbreadths*) square of which they (*the Sages*) spoke (*regarding the minimum requirement of a garment to be susceptible for tumah*) is excluding the hem (*for a tailor will usually sew a hem around the patch before using it; this way it will not unravel*); these are the words of Rabbi Shimon. But the Sages say: Exactly three (*fingerbreadths*) square.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: One may fuel a fire (*on Yom Tov*) with (*whole*) utensils, but not with broken utensils (*for it is 'nolad'*); these are the words of Rabbi Yehudah, but Rabbi Shimon permits it.

One may fuel a fire (*on Yom Tov*) with dates (*since they may be handled as food, they may be handled as fuel as well*), but if they are eaten, one may not fuel a fire with their pits (*as they are 'nolad'*); these are the words of Rabbi Yehudah, but Rabbi Shimon permits it.

One may fuel a fire (*on Yom Tov*) with nuts (*since they may be handled as food, they may be handled as fuel as well*), but if they are eaten, one may not fuel a fire with their shells (*as they are 'nolad'*); these are the words of Rabbi Yehudah, but Rabbi Shimon permits it.

The *Gemora* notes: They (*all three of Rav's teachings*) are necessary, for if we were told the first (*of the broken utensil*), [*I would have thought that perhaps*] it is only there where Rabbi Yehudah rules (*that they cannot be used as fuel*), for it was a utensil before (*at the beginning of Yom Tov*) but only a fragment of a utensil now, and so it is '*nolad*' (*as it is something new*) and therefore forbidden; but as for dates, since they were pits originally (*at the beginning of Yom Tov*) and are pits now, I might argue that they are permitted. And if we were informed of his opinion regarding the pits (*of dates*), I might have said that the reason is because they (*the pits*) were originally concealed but are now revealed; but as for nutshells, which were uncovered originally and are uncovered still, I might argue that that they are permitted. Thus they are necessary.

The *Gemora* notes further that this ruling of Rav (*that the pits are forbidden on account of 'nolad'*) was not stated explicitly, but rather, by implication from the following incident: Rav ate dates and threw the pits into an oven (*on a weekday*). Rabbi Chiya said to him: Son of nobles! A similar act on Festivals is forbidden. [*Rav Yehudah assumed that Rav agreed to this ruling.*]

The *Gemora* asks: Did he accept (*this ruling*) from him or not?

The *Gemora* attempts to prove this from the following incident: When Rav came to Bavel, he ate dates (*on Yom Tov*) and threw the pits to animals. Surely this means Persian dates. [*These dates ripen fully, so that the whole of the fruit can be removed from the pits. Since he threw them to animals, he evidently held that they might be handled, and could also have used them for fuel. Hence he must have rejected Rabbi Chiya's view.*]

The *Gemora* rejects the proof: No! They were Aramean dates, and since they are fit for handling on account of their fruit (*that clings to them, they are also permitted*).

Rav Shmuel bar Chanah said to Rav Yosef: According to Rabbi Yehudah who ruled that one may fuel a fire (*on Yom Tov*) with (*whole*) utensils, but not with broken utensils (*for it is 'nolad'*); immediately when one lights with it (*a whole utensil*) a little, it becomes a broken utensil, and when he stirs it (*to stoke it*), he is stirring something that is forbidden!?



The *Gemora* answers: He acts in accordance with Rav Masnah, for Rav Masnah said in the name of Rav: If branches fall from a palm tree (*which are forbidden on account of 'nolad'*) into a stove on a Festival, one adds more prepared wood and lights them. [*The branches that fell may not be handled by itself, since it was not destined for this before the Festival. Hence a greater quantity of wood set aside for fuel must be added; this will nullify the forbidden wood, and both may be handled together. The same must be done here.*]

Rav Hamnuna said (*another explanation in the Mishna in reference to the dispute regarding the wick's susceptibility to tumah or not*): The reference here (*in our Mishna*) is to cloth less than three (*handbreadths*) square, and they taught here some of the laws relating to rags (*and their susceptibility to tumah, when the owner decides to designate them for*) an insignificant use, and both Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva follow their views. For we learned in a *Mishna*: Rabbi Eliezer says that a rag that is less than three by three handbreadths and is stored for prepared or unprepared use is susceptible to *tumah*. Storing the rag demonstrates that the rag is significant to the owner. Rabbi Yehoshua, however, maintains that whether the rag was stored for prepared or unprepared use, the rag is *tahor* and it is not susceptible to *tumah*. Storing the rag demonstrates its insignificance to the owner. Rabbi Akiva differentiates between one storing the rag for prepared use, where the rag is susceptible to *tumah*, and storage for unprepared use, where the rag is *tahor*.

Ulla explains: Everyone agrees that that if one threw the rag in the garbage, it is not susceptible to *tumah*, because the owner has clearly demonstrated that the rag is insignificant, and it is not a garment that is susceptible to *tumah*. All agree that placing the rag in a box makes it susceptible to *tumah*, and the disagreement is regarding a case where one hung the rag on a peg or placed it behind a door. Rabbi Eliezer holds that such placement demonstrates that the rag is significant to the owner.

The *Gemora* asks: Why then does he call it 'unprepared'?

The *Gemora* answers: Because relatively to placing it in a box, it is not prepared.

Rabbi Yehoshua maintains that by not placing the rag in a chest for storage, he no longer considers it a garment.

The *Gemora* asks: And why then does he call it 'prepared'?

The *Gemora* answers: Because relatively to throwing it in the garbage, it is prepared.

Rabbi Akiva, however, holds like Rabbi Eliezer when one hung the rag on a peg, as this demonstrates that the owner considers the rag significant, whereas if he placed the rag behind a door, he has demonstrated that the rag is insignificant and it is not susceptible to *tumah*. [*This demonstrates that R' Eliezer and R' Akiva disagree regarding a rag which was originally designated for an insignificant use by its owner, and then it was decided to be used for something of importance. Rav Hamnuna says that they argue in our Mishna regarding a wick which was made from such a rag.*]

Rav Hamnuna concludes: Rabbi Akiva retracted in favor of Rabbi Yehoshua's opinion.

The *Gemora* asks: From where is this deduced?

Rava said: Since the *Mishna* stated: A wick made of cloth. Why choose to teach 'a wick made of cloth'? Rather teach 'a wick made from cloth material'? Why 'a wick made of cloth'? It must be coming to teach us that it is still (*legally*) a cloth. [*He is obviously referring to a cloth that was hung upon a peg, and by ruling that it is not susceptible to tumah, we see that R' Akiva retracted from his earlier stated opinion in favor of the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua.*] (28b – 29b)

Mishna

- 1. One may not make a hole in an eggshell and have oil drip from the shell into the lamp on Shabbos.**

The purpose of this action is that the oil in the eggshell serves as a reservoir of oil that will keep the light fueled. The Chachamim forbade one to fill the eggshell with oil, as he may come to use some of the oil, and thus will be liable for extinguishing a fire on Shabbos.

- 2. One may not use a reservoir of earthenware to allow the oil to drip into the lamp on Shabbos.**

An earthenware vessel is normally considered repulsive, but the Chachamim were still concerned that one would take from the oil in the earthenware



vessel. For this reason one may not even use an earthenware reservoir. Rabbi Yehudah permits the use of an earthenware vessel, as Rabbi Yehudah is not concerned that he will take oil from the vessel.

3. If a potter attaches the reservoir, one may use it to let oil drip into the lamp on Shabbos.

The potter attaches the reservoir to the cup that contains the light. The Chachamim were thus not concerned that one would take from the oil, just like one would not take oil from a regular lamp on Shabbos.

4. One may not fill a bowl with oil and place the unlit end of the wick in the bowl in order to draw the oil from the bowl to the lit end of the wick on Shabbos.

When the bowl functions as a reservoir of oil, the Chachamim forbade one to use the bowl because he may come to take oil from the bowl, thus causing the light to become extinguished. Rabbi Yehudah permits this, as Rabbi Yehudah was not concerned that one would take oil from the bowl.

one may detach the whole eggshell, and this is the true violation of extinguishing that is forbidden on *Shabbos*.

The *Gemora* notes why all these cases are necessary. (29b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Removing Oil from a Lamp

Concerning filling an eggshell with oil and letting the oil drip into the lamp, Tosfos maintains that removing oil from the lamp causes a partial extinguishing of the flame.

The Rosh however writes that the Chachamim were concerned that by removing oil from the eggshell, one would be causing the fire to be extinguished directly, earlier than the person had in mind. Therefore, one may not fill the eggshell with oil, because he may take oil from the eggshell.

The question is why according to Tosfos can one not fill the eggshell with oil, if taking oil from the eggshell will not cause the fire to be extinguished immediately.

The Tiferes Shmuel writes that according to Tosfos, the issue is that one may remove all the oil in the eggshell at one time, or