



Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5762

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Is there a problem scraping mud off one's shoes on Shabbos?

The *Shulchan Aruch* mentions various problems related to scraping mud from one's shoes on Shabbos, namely: breaking up dried mud – the prohibition of *Tochen* (grinding), filling in crevices in the ground – *Boneh* (construction), smoothing the jagged pieces of leather on one's shoes – *memacheke* (smoothing).

Grinding – once the mud has caked up, one is forbidden to pry it off one's shoes in such a way that the mud would break up into small pieces.¹ Therefore, scraping it on the sidewalk would be prohibited. The only option is to continue walking, hoping that the dried mud will come off.²

Construction – Imagine yourself walking on a dirt road, and upon noticing a crack in the ground, you scrape off the mud clinging to your shoe into the crack. You have just committed a heinous act of *chillul*³ *Shabbos*. For this reason we find in the *gemora*⁴ various opinions as to whether one is permitted to scrape mud on one's shoes onto the ground or onto a wall. Their concern is lest one repairs the ground or improves the cement on the wall.

¹ *Simon* 302:7 and *M"B* 36.

² There is another option – soaking the mud in water. This is halachikally complicated (see *SS"K* 15-40, footnote 137) and a *Rav* must be consulted.

³ Desecration of the shabbos.

⁴ *Shabbos* 141.

According to the *halacha* one may scrape shoes onto a wall. As for the ground, if it is a dirt track, there is room for stringency (*Mishna Berura* 28), but onto a tarred road or asphalt, since the mud does not unite with the tar, no real repairing takes place, and therefore one is permitted to scrape mud onto the pavement or sidewalk.

May one not scrape shoes with a mud-bar?

This brings us to the third problem – **smoothing**. *Chazal* taught us that by scraping shoes onto a sharp edge, one inadvertently would smoothen out jagged parts of the shoe. Contemporary *poskim* say that this factor does not apply to our shoes (which are manufactured with precision) and if anything, the scraping is detrimental. Therefore one may scrape shoes onto a mud-bar, and if done gently, there is no problem at all.⁵

Cholent splashed onto my shirt, what am I supposed to do?

Change your shirt, there is not much you can do. It is permitted to remove whatever is sticking to the outside of the garment, but to remove the remnants of the stain that penetrate the garment is much more of a problem, as we will soon see. It is strictly forbidden to sprinkle water, **saliva** or any other cleaning agent onto a

⁵ *M"B* 26.

stain. The maximum one may do is gently scrape the mess sticking to the shirt.

Accordingly, it is forbidden to sprinkle salt onto spilled *chraim* etc. even though the salt will not get rid of the stain, but since it is part of the cleaning process, it is forbidden.

Is it permitted to remove the stain with one's fingernail?

The *Ta'az* is of the opinion that one may scrape away a stain with one's fingernail (as long as the stain is not made of a substance that breaks up due to the prohibition of grinding⁶). The *Mishna Berura*⁷ however, strongly opposes his position, and says that it is strictly forbidden to totally scrape away a stain that has penetrated the cloth, and only dirt sitting on top of the cloth may be scraped away. Accordingly, one must refrain from cleaning any stain that has penetrated garments, tablecloths etc. As for using a non-Jew to clean the garment, a Rav should be consulted, as there is room for leniency. Water, however, may not be used under any circumstances.

Vort On The Parsha

“Al pi Hashem isu v'al pi Hashem Yachanu” (B'nei Yisrael traveled at the word of Hashem and they encamped at the word of Hashem). Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz of Mir explained that wherever B'nei Yisrael were, they felt as if they were in the bosom of Hashem. If you would ask a baby, which is

⁶ Products made of ground substances – biscuits, bread – are not subject to this prohibition, because a ground item cannot be ground again (*ein tochen achar tochen*). For some reason, this rule does not apply to mud.

⁷ *Simon* 302:36 and *Bi'ur Halacha d'havi*.

carried in the arms of its mother from home to work to town, where are you? The baby would answer, “I am in my mother's arms”. So too B'nei Yisroel, even though they traveled in the desert from place to place, they were always “in the arms of Hashem”. We should also bring ourselves to the realization that wherever we are and whatever we do, we are in the arms of Hashem.

Food For Thought

Is one permitted to wet a clean garment?

Would it be permitted to make a compress on Shabbos?

How come I am allowed to dry my hands on a towel on Shabbos, am I not wetting the towel?

If a garment catches fire, may water be poured onto the section that has not yet caught on fire?

Answers coming next week.

Iggeres HaGra - (part 14)

Therefore, train them well, since one must work hard on one's speech and character traits, and only through good habits can we control ourselves (Shaarey Teshuvah). All beginnings are hard (Mechilta Yisro). But afterwards, one is worthy of praise (Mishlei 20:14). For the wicked person knows that he is taking the wrong path, but it is hard for him to change. But this is man's main task, not to go after his desires, but (Tehillim 32:9) "to restrain himself with a bit and bridle when he is being groomed." Man must deprive himself until he dies, not by fasting or asceticism, but by controlling his mouth and desires.

In memory of R' Shmuel Engel zt'l.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.