



Parshas Naso/Shavuot 5763

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Is one permitted to add food coloring to food on Shabbos?

One of the 39 prohibited labors on Shabbos is **צובע** or Coloring because in the process of the building of the *Mishkan* we find that they would dye the wool which was used for making the coverings of the *Mishkan*. With regards to food however, the *halacha* is that **אין צביעה באוכלין** the actual translation of which states that coloring does not take place in edibles, which in turn means that one may blend foods and liquids even though one food item will color another. It is therefore permitted to add ginger to food, pour raspberry syrup into water, mix red and white wine and pour tea essence¹ into hot water.²

Am I permitted to add food coloring solely for the sake of coloring the food?

The *halacha* is that even adding coloring for the sake of coloring is permitted but the *Mishna Berura* writes that it is better not to do so.³ This does not mean that one may dye foods at whim. One is prohibited to dye food or liquids for marketing purposes. For example, one who sells liquor may not dye the liquor in order to make it more appealing to customers. Even though one is dying a

food product and we could say that **אין צביעה באוכלין**, it is not so, because that is only true when the sole purpose is to whet an appetite. When the purpose is other than eating it takes on the regular laws of dyeing and coloring.⁴

The *Mishna Berura* adds from the *P'ri Megadim* that one who dyes water and places it in the sun will in all likelihood have to bring a *korban* as atonement.

Is there an issue of Coloring when wiping stained hands on a napkin on Shabbos?

This *halacha* might seem a bit foreign to us because we are not accustomed to dyeing clothes and fabrics. Nevertheless, since it is normal to dye fabric and cloth, coloring a napkin with one's red hands must be avoided.⁵ It appears from the *Shulchan Aruch* that this *halacha* applies to substances that are regularly used for dyeing, such as fruit extracts. However, soiling a napkin with gravy would not be a problem because one does not usually dye fabric or clothing with gravy.

Therefore, after eating raspberries, strawberries and any other colored fruit one should rinse one's hands and lips with water before wiping them on a towel or napkin.

¹ The **שער הציון** 318:65 says that putting the water into the essence, i.e. the non-colored into the colored will avoid the problem of **צביעה באוכלין**.

² *Simon* 320:19 and *M"B* 56.

³ *M"B* 320:56 and *SS"K* 11:38.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Simon* 320:20.

Is there a difference between a paper napkin and a material one?

Yes there is because a paper napkin is discarded subsequent to its use and therefore its coloring is not called dyeing. One only dyes items that are intended for later use whereas paper napkins are soiled not dyed.⁶

What if I only have cloth napkins and I cannot rinse my hands or lips?

The *Mishna Berura* writes⁷ that others disagree and say that wiping soiled hands on a napkin is not called **צובע** rather it is something known as **דרך לכלוך** – soiling – and is not subject to the restrictions of **צובע**. Therefore when one is in a situation where there is no other option one may rely on this opinion and wipe one's hands and face even on a cloth napkin.

Chag HaShavuot

The *Midrash* says that *Hashem* offered the Torah to the nations who after hearing what it entailed 'declined' the offer. One nation was told that the Torah prohibits stealing and another was told that it prohibits murder. The question is that all nations of the world must keep the 7 Noachide laws which include the prohibitions of stealing and murder, what difference does it make if they refused the Torah?

The answer in brief is that the 7 Noachide laws are merely a means to keep civilization in check whereas the same *mitzvos* given to the Jews as part of the 613 *mitzvos* are commandments to be considerate of the fellow person.

⁶ SS"K 14:19.

⁷ M"B *simon* 320:59.

For example, embarrassing someone is a division of murder, as *Chazal* tell us that one's blood drains from the face, similar to murder. This is only included in the 613 mitzvos and not in the Noachide laws. Job (איוב) had four doors to his tent enabling guests to enter without having to bother going around to another entrance, just as Avraham Avinu had constructed his tent. Nevertheless he was told that he had only half of Avraham's merits. That is because Avraham would search for guests whereas Job would wait for them to come. That is the difference; Avraham looked to improve another's welfare whereas Job did that which was necessary and not more. We must therefore, as R' Yona of Gironi puts it, investigate as to where can we improve another's welfare and not just merely wait for a needy hand to pass our doorstep. That is the beauty of our Torah. Chag Sameach.

Food For Thought

Is a woman permitted to apply makeup or remove it on Shabbos?

Is a girl permitted to eat a red ice-lolly on Shabbos when after all it paints her lips red?

Is removing a stain from one's body a problem of erasing (מוחק)?

May one use a toilet freshener that colors the water on Shabbos?

Answers coming next week.

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com.

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.