

סימן שב

- 1) What does מלבן mean? Is that the same as כיבוס?

מלבן is one of the מלאכות ל"ט and is defined by **Rashi** (1) as the rinsing of a sheep's wool in the river. The **רמב"ם** (2) adds that כיבוס is the תולדה - extension of מלבן and includes the laundering of all types of fabrics.

- 2) In the middle of the Shabbos meal, your *frum* friend opens a bottle of seltzer, which explodes and *shpritzes* everywhere. Hundreds of little droplets land on your brand-new suit jacket that is hanging on the back of your chair. You are about to shake it off when he yells "Shabbos! You can't do that!" Is he right?

The S"A *passkins* in 'סעיה א' that shaking off dew from a new, black garment is forbidden if the droplets bother you to the point that you would not wear the garment in that state. The reason is that in such a situation, shaking off the garment rises to the level of כיבוס.

- 3) A year later, you are at a *simcha* with all your buddies and the same thing happens, but your suit is now a year old. Are you allowed to shake it off?

In such a situation, the S"A as explained by the שו"ע הרב (3) permits, but according to the ביה"ל/ערה"ש/שש"כ's explanation of the S"A, it depends on whether the droplets bother you. If they do, you are not allowed to shake them off.

- 4) True story: One Shabbos morning, a newly engaged yeshiva boy is on his way to meet his כלה in her house. As he passes by a construction site, a brick falls, kicking up dirt and getting his jacket and hat all dusty. Is he allowed to dust them off?

According to the S"A, [as is quoted by the ילקוט יוסף (6)], the yeshiva boy can shake off his hat and jacket, because shaking off dust that settles on a garment is not considered כיבוס. The **Rama** as explained by the שו"ע הרב would prohibit only if three criteria are met: the suit is black, it is new, and the dust bothers you. The *passkin* ביה"ל/ערה"ש/שש"כ that the only criterion that matters is whether the dust bothers you. Therefore, if the dust bothers him, he is not allowed to brush it off even if the suit is old and light colored. However, the משנ"ב writes that asking a non-Jew to brush it off is permitted since the S"A allows and כבוד הבריות applies.

- 5) Mazel tov! The yeshiva boy got married and it is now his first Shabbos hosting guests together with his new wife. She is carefully preparing the cake before the guests arrive but as she attempts to open the bag of confectionary sugar, the bag tears open and the sugar flies everywhere. Her black sheitel is now white. Is she allowed to shake off the sugar from her *sheitel*?

A *sheitel* is considered a garment rather than part of the body and is therefore subject to the מחלוקת quoted in the previous question. According to the S”A, it would be permitted, while according to *Rama* it would be prohibited because it is black, new and she cares about it. However, in such a situation you can ask a non-Jew to shake it off, as the משנ”ב writes. The מסגרת השולחן (9) adds that in a situation where no non-Jew is present and she is so embarrassed that she would not leave the house, she is allowed to rely on the S”A and brush it off herself.

- 6) It’s 11:00PM on Friday night and an Israeli soldier just came back to the base from a mission in Gaza. He wants to brush off his army pants before he davens קבלת שבת. Is he allowed to?

According to the S”A, it is permitted because dusting off garments is always allowed. According to the *Rama* (as explained by ביה”ל/ערה”ש/שש”כ) dusting garments is prohibited if the dust bothers you. However, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (8) explains that “מקפיד עליי” – “it bothers you” is defined as whether it would bother you during the week to the point where you would refrain from wearing it. Therefore, since the soldier would be comfortable walking around with dusty army pants during the week, he is allowed to dust them off לכבוד שבת.

- 7) Mazel tov! You are at your cousin’s Shabbos Sheva Brachos and you notice the חתן has some dust on his jacket. Are you allowed to brush it off for him?

The S”A permits because shaking off dust is always permitted. The *Rama* would prohibit if both you and the חתן are מקפיד not to have dust on your jackets. The ביה”ל ד”ה והוא is uncertain of the halacha if either you or the חתן does not mind.

- 8) You are sitting in shul on Shabbos morning when your friend whispers to you, “how was the cholent last night?” and points to your shirt. You look down and see 2 kernels of dried barley on your shirt. Are you allowed to scratch them off?

The S”A in סעיף א' *passkins* that shaking off dust from a garment is permissible, and in סעיף ז' he adds that removing dirt is permissible as long as you do not forcibly scrub the fabric. Therefore, according to the S”A, you are allowed to use your fingernail or the

back of a knife to remove the cholent kernel and any remaining stain. The *Rama* in סעיף א' *passkins* that you are not allowed to shake off dust from your garment, and the שעה"צ א"א סקמ"א explains that the *Rama* would only agree with the S"A and allow the removal of mud if a stain remains on the garment after removing the mud. The שש"כ (11) explains that even the *Rama* would allow removing that remaining stain if it does not bother you and you would walk out of the house with the stain there. Therefore, removing the kernels is permitted and removing the remaining stain on the garment is only permitted if it does not bother you (just like the *halacha* with dust on your garment). Everyone agrees though that you are not allowed to scrub the garment, and only using your fingernail or folding the garment in the way explained in סעיף ז' is permitted.

- 9) It is pouring rain on the way to shul, so you begin to run but accidentally step in a puddle. When you enter shul, are you allowed to wipe off the mud? What if you only noticed the mud after it dried? Are you allowed to peel it off?

With regards to wet mud, the *halacha* would be as mentioned in the previous question. With regards to dry mud, the S"A adds that some say brushing away dried mud is forbidden because of טוחן – the mud crumbles into smaller pieces. The שש"כ (12) *passkins* like this opinion. Therefore, if there is dried mud on your garment, you are not allowed to remove it if it will crumble in the process (this applies even if the mud does not bother you at all). The ילקוט יוסף (13) *passkins* like the first opinion in the S"A that removing dry mud is permitted even if it will be crushed, because you are not intending to crush it.

- 10) You are jumping around with your baby when he spits up on your shirt and shoe. Are you allowed to pour water on your shirt/shoe? Can you scrub it off?

Pouring water on a shirt to clean it is an איסור דאורייתא of מלבן since soaking is one of the three steps of laundering, see שש"כ (14). However, the S"A in סעיף ט' *passkins* that soaking leather is permitted because the water does not penetrate the leather. Therefore, you are allowed to pour water on your leather shoes to get the mud off, but you should be careful that the water does not fall on your shoelaces, which are made of fabric.

- 11) True story: When you wake up on Shabbos morning, you see that your kids have pasted chewed gum all over your plastic tablecloth. "This is more fun than playdough!" they say. Are you allowed to scrub the gum off with some water?

Although plastic tablecloths do not absorb moisture and you should be allowed to scrub them with water, **Rav Moshe** (17) the שש"כ and ילקוט יוסף *passkin* that scrubbing them is forbidden. The reason is because plastic is a new material and scrubbing could be an

איסור דאורייתא. Therefore, you should not scrub the tablecloth with water, but you may pour water on it. In other words, plastic has the *halachic* status of leather. The אור לציון argues and allows the scrubbing of plastic.

- 12) Your wife asks you to clean the dishes, but you refuse. “The dishwashing gloves are dirty and washing the dishes will clean them, it’s *ליבון*!” Are you right or are you just trying to avoid cleaning the dishes?

Rav Moshe (17) *passkins* that scrubbing plastic to clean it is forbidden, but soaking them in water or pouring water on it is permitted. Therefore, you are not allowed to scrub the gloves clean, but soaking them or pouring water on them is permitted. The **ארחות שבת** (19) adds that you are allowed to wash dishes with the gloves even if in the process of cleaning the dishes you will scrub the gloves, because your intention is not to clean the gloves.

- 13) After the Friday night meal of your Shabbos Sheva Brachos, you remove your contact lenses and place them in lens solution when you hear your wife shriek “Ahh! Didn’t you learn in Yeshiva? I learned in seminary that you are not allowed to soak lenses on Shabbos, it’s *מלבן*!” Is she right?

There are two types of contact lenses, hard and soft. The **ארחות שבת** (20) *passkins* that scrubbing and soaking hard lenses with contact lens solution is permitted, because the prohibition of scrubbing plastic applies only regarding soft plastic. The **ארחות שבת** (21) *passkins* that soaking soft lenses in contact lens solution is prohibited for one of two reasons. The first is that soft lenses may be *halachically* considered a garment (since they absorb a lot of water). The second is that even if they are *halachically* considered like leather, soaking leather is only permitted in water and not in cleaning agents. **Rav Singler** and **Rav Sternbuch** (22) allow you to soak soft lenses in contact lens solution based on the אבני נזר who writes that the prohibition of *מלבן* only applies when the cleansing is visible, i.e., you see the dirt removed. Since lenses always look clean, you are allowed to soak them in contact lens solution because your main intention is to preserve their moisture and not to clean them. However, if they dried up or if they are visibly dirty, you are not allowed to soak them in solution because of מתקן מנא – you are fixing the lenses. Everyone agrees that scrubbing soft lenses is prohibited.

- 14) You are eating at your *frum* friend’s house for Shabbos lunch. You wash your hands before eating the challah and immediately grab the towel to dry them. Your friend looks at you in shock. “What are you doing? You need to shake the water off of your hands before drying them. If not, it’s *מלבן*!” You are thinking to yourself, what in the world is he talking about?

The S”A and *Rama* in **ט' סעיף ט'** allow you to wet a towel in the process of drying your hands either because the towel is clean (S”A/ר"י) and slightly wetting clean garments is permitted, or because you are dirtying the towel in the process of drying your hands (*Rama*/ת"ר). However, in **י' סעיף י'** the S”A quotes a third opinion (the יראים) who holds that wetting a garment is forbidden even if in the process you are dirtying it. The S”A writes that it is “good” to follow this approach. The **ילקוט יוסף** (23) *passkins* מְעִיקֵר הַדִּין to follow the S”A in **ט' סעיף ט'**, and the **משנ"ב סקמ"ה** *passkins* like the *Rama*.

- 15) You want to bathe your baby on Yom-Tov, but whenever you sit him in the bath, he slips and slides. Your smart wife gives you a small towel and tells you “place this on the bottom of the bath and he won’t slip.” You look at her in bewilderment. “Didn’t you go to seminary? Soaking a towel is forbidden!” What does your smart wife respond?

She tells you that the **ביה"ל ד"ה דלא** writes that there is no prohibition of **כיבוס** because the towel is clean (S”A) or because the towel is getting dirty during the bath, i.e., it is **דרך לכלוך** (*Rama*). Also, although Chazal forbade completely soaking a garment lest you come to wring it out, for the sake of a **חולה** (which includes a **קטן**), they were not **גוזר**.

- 16) You are in Dubai for Shabbos and there are COVID disinfecting spray tunnels – tunnels that people walk through to get sprayed with disinfecting spray. Are you allowed to walk through one on Shabbos?

According to the S”A in **ט' סעיף ט'**, you are allowed to walk through the disinfecting tunnel if your clothing is clean (since there is no prohibition of **כיבוס** by slightly wetting clean clothing). According to the *Rama* who forbids slightly wetting clean clothing, it would seem to be prohibited, unless we consider the wetting of your clothing in such a manner to be **דרך לכלוך** (since you do not want to get wet). However, even if this is not considered wetting your clothing **בדרך לכלוך**, the **שש"כ** (24) allows soaking clothing of a patient who is ill with a contagious disease, but only soaking it in disinfecting agents and not in detergents or bleach. Therefore, someone who was exposed to COVID, such as a doctor or nurse, would be allowed to walk through one of these tunnels, but it is questionable whether someone who just wants to be extra clean could walk through (because maybe the **שש"כ** only allows wetting the contaminated clothing of a verified patient).

- 17) You are having a lot of guests for Friday night and Shabbos day. After the meal, you are washing all the dishes and your wife is drying them. She asks you, “how am I allowed to dry the dishes if I am soaking this towel? Isn’t that **מלבן**?”

There is no problem of **כיבוס** since the towel is clean (S”A) or because the towel is getting wet **בדרך לכלוך** (*Rama*). Furthermore, even if your towel is getting fully saturated, the

משנ"ב סקנ"ט explains that Chazal were not גוזר that you might come to squeeze out the water since you do not mind that the towel is wet (that is its purpose). However, the משנ"ב סק"ס writes (based on the S"A י"ב סעיף י"ב) that drying a narrow cup is forbidden because you will definitely squeeze out some water from the towel, transgressing סחיטה. In other words, although Chazal were not גוזר that you might come to wring out the garment, wringing it out intentionally is forbidden. Therefore, if the towel is completely saturated, you are no longer allowed to dry dishes with it because you will certainly wring out some water.

- 18) You are not sure what to answer so you say, "if the towel is getting wet, maybe just use one of my undershirts." Is that allowed?

Although there might not be a problem of כיבוס if the undershirt is clean (S"A) and it is absorbing the water בדרך לכלוך (Rama), you are still not allowed to use your undershirt for two reasons. First, Chazal were גוזר in this case that you might wring it out (since you care about your undershirt) and second, you are being מביטל כלי מהיכנו.

- 19) You are spending a Shabbos in your old Yeshiva in ארץ ישראל and after leaving the bathroom and washing your hands, you eye the communal towel that is hanging by the sinks. You can't even imagine the number of germs on that thing, but you are brave enough to dry your hands. As you get close, you realize that it is extremely wet because the entire Yeshiva has dried their hands on it. Are you allowed to dry your hands on it also?

Drying your hands on such a towel is forbidden since some water might get squeezed out in the process. This is similar to drying a champagne glass with a towel, which is forbidden lest some water leave the towel.

- 20) You are having a Shabbos meal reunion with all of your *chevra* from Yeshiva – the *divrei Torah* and *zemiros* are amazing. You ask your old friend 'Shloimie the *shlemiel*' to pass the pitcher of water. Big mistake! It goes flying, landing on you, the tablecloth and the floor. Your friend runs in with a towel and is about to clean the floor when everyone yells "Hey! Shabbos! You can't just wipe it up." What is the proper way to clean up a spilled mess?

Cleaning a spill off of a hard surface is permitted if done gently and the towel does not get fully saturated. If done with force or if the towel gets fully saturated, we are concerned that you will be causing some of the liquid absorbed in the towel to be wrung out. [There is no problem of כיבוס on the towel because it is clean or the liquid is going on

it בדרך לכלוך, and there is no problem of שמא יסחוט (when it's not completely saturated) because you do not mind towels getting wet.]

- 21) While everyone is arguing, you grab your napkin to soak up the wet tablecloth. “Gevalt! Shabbos? What are you thinking?” yells a friend. What is the proper way to clean a mess from the tablecloth? Is there a difference between a spill on a hard surface and table cloth?

The פסקי תשובות (30) writes that only cleaning the excess spill that has not been absorbed in the tablecloth is permitted. However, pressing the towel down on the tablecloth with any amount of force is prohibited because you are wringing out the liquid from the tablecloth.

- 22) You had enough of all the commotion so you get up to go to the kitchen when your *frum* friend yells “AHH! Don’t move! Your socks are fully saturated, walking in them is סחיטה!” What do you do?

The ארזות שבת (34) *passkins* that if your socks get wet while walking home you are allowed to continue walking with them, but when you get home it is best to remove them. Therefore, in the above case, if you do not have a change of socks you are allowed to keep them on. The reason is because there is no prohibition of מפרק since the squeezed-out water either goes to waste or gets reabsorbed in the sock. There is also no prohibition of כיבוס since the water is reabsorbed in the sock and this is not לייבון – the normal way of laundering.

- 23) You take your shoes and socks off and are about to walk towards the kitchen when again you hear, “AHH Don’t move! Actually, everyone freeze! The carpet is wet and when we step on it, we are violating סחיטה!” What should everyone do?

It is best to avoid walking in that area, but if this is not feasible, it is permitted based on the reasoning given in the previous answer.

- 24) It’s time for a להיים! But as ‘Shloimie the *shlemiel*’ passes you the bottle of whiskey, it spills on the floor. “No worries!” says the host. “Let’s soak up the whiskey with a towel, we’ll have a *Melava Malka* after Shabbos, and during the *Melava Malka* we’ll squeeze out the towel and have some shots.” Is this allowed?

This is forbidden lest you come to wring it out on Shabbos, see פסקי תשובות (30).

- 25) After everything settles down and the fish course is done, you go to the kitchen to help wash the small plates. Your friend tells you, “I have life hack – I use a regular sponge on Shabbos by filling up the sink with water and scrubbing the dishes under the water.” Is this allowed?

Theoretically, this should be permitted -- there is no problem of כיבוס since the sponge is getting dirty and there is no prohibition of מפרק since the water leaving the sponge is not noticeable and gets reabsorbed by the sponge (just like the socks). Yet, the שש"כ (31) forbids washing the dishes in this manner lest you come to remove the sponge from the water and squeeze out the absorbed water.

- 26) After the soup, one of your friends is summoned to change his baby’s diaper. As he takes out the baby wipes from the diaper bag, the room goes dead silent. Everyone is giving him the death stare until you muster up the strength and say “I can’t believe I went to Yeshiva with someone who uses baby wipes!” Are you allowed to use baby wipes on Shabbos?

The use of baby wipes is a hotly debated topic amongst modern-day *posskim*. See notes for details and ask your LOR for his *pssak*.

- 27) At dessert you are *chapping* a *schmooze* with ‘Shloimie the *shlemiel*’ and you notice he still has a tag on his tie. He says, “I bought a new tie for our reunion. Look, it was only \$10, but I forgot to take it off before Shabbos.” Is he allowed to take it off?

The שש"כ (41) *passkins* that removing a plastic tag on Shabbos is permitted and not considered "מכה בפטיש" since the garment was already completed and the tag was only added afterwards.

- 28) True story: During קבלת שבת of your *Aufruf*, your friend whispers in your ear: “The vents at the back of your jacket are closed, you forgot to undo the string.” You then look at your sleeve and see that the company brand and logo is still sewn on. Are you allowed to remove either of these?

The S”A in סעיף ב' *passkins* that removing lint balls (that bother you) from a new garment is forbidden because of מכה בפטיש. Based on this, the שש"כ (40) *passkins* that removing the thread on the vents of your suit or a sewn-on tag is prohibited because of מכה בפטיש. The פסקי תשובות (42) explains that the prohibition of מכה בפטיש applies even if the garment was wearable before the final act (such as is with the sewn vents).

29) A few months ago, you bought a brand-new suit from a store in *Geula*. The problem is that the suit is beginning to create pills (those small balls of fabric). Are you allowed to remove them on Shabbos?

The **פסקי תשובות** (42) writes that **מכה מפטיש** applies to older clothing, but fixing clothing that usually get ruined and can still be used in their “ruined form” is permitted because you are not “finishing the garment”, but rather removing the imperfection. Therefore, **Rabbi Ribiat** in the **ט"ט מלאכות** books allows removing pills from an old sweater because you are only preserving it and not “finishing it” (and the S”A that forbids removing pills was referring to the pills left over from the initial sewing where their removal is considered the completion of the garment).

30) Are you allowed to fold your **טלית** on Shabbos?

The S”A in **ג' סעיף** *passkins* that folding clothing is only permitted if 5 criteria are met. These criteria are not met when folding a **טלית** and the **משנ"ב סקי"ג** *passkins* that you are not allowed to fold a **טלית** on Shabbos. However, the S”A quotes another opinion that folding a garment not on its crease is permitted and the **משנ"ב** writes that this is the **הלכה**, though some are careful not to fold at all on Shabbos. Despite this ruling, some fold their **טלית** even on the crease, and the **ערה"ש** and **ילקוט יוסף** write that they rely on the opinion of the **כלבו** who says that the folding of our garments today is permitted even on the crease. The logic is that our folding of clothing today is less significant than that of earlier times, where it was meant to remove creases and perfect the garment.