

## Kneading (*Lash*)

### What is the labor of Kneading?

The labor of Kneading is in a sense the opposite of the labor of Grinding, and of the labors of Threshing, Winnowing, Selecting, and Sifting. All those labors separate different materials from one another. Threshing, Winnowing, and Sifting separate wheat from different types of waste; and Grinding crumbles the wheat into small particles. By contrast, Kneading is a labor that joins. It joins various components and transforms them into a single entity. As we will see, there is a dispute between the *tanna'im* with regard to the precise definition of the labor.

The labor of Kneading applies to the creation of dough from flour and water, and to other materials as well. For example, kneading water and soil is also prohibited by Torah law as a subcategory of Kneading (**Rambam** 8:16, based on **Gemara** 18a).

It is not only the kneading that is prohibited by Torah law. Rolling out dough with a rolling pin is also prohibited, because it is a component of the kneading process (**Yerushalmi** 7:2).

The **Gemara** (155b) cites a tannaitic dispute with regard to the question: For what action is one liable due to Kneading?

If one person places flour and one person places water into it, the latter is liable; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda says: One is liable only when he kneads it.

According to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, merely placing water into flour is sufficient to establish liability for Kneading, while according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda, one is liable only if he kneads the flour and water and they become dough.

What is the basis of their dispute? The dispute may relate to the essence of the labor of Kneading. According to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the essence of the labor is the actual mixing of the two materials, while according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda, the essence of the labor

is that the two materials become a single entity. That is the way that the *Eglei Tal* (*Lash* 9:13) explained the dispute.

In terms of the *halakha*, the *Rishonim*, and in their wake the *Shulḥan Arukh* and the *Rema* (321:16), disagreed. In practice, placing water into flour without kneading is prohibited for both Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Ashkenazi authorities are generally of the opinion that it is prohibited by Torah law, while the Sephardi authorities lean toward the opinion that the matter is prohibited by rabbinic law. Even the Ashkenazi authorities rely on the lenient opinion in certain cases (pp. 1027–1031).

## Primary category and subcategory

PRIMARY CATEGORY: Mixing water with flour or another food (and transforming them into a kneaded item).

SUBCATEGORY: Kneading water and soil (**Rambam** 8:16).

## Where was Kneading performed in the Tabernacle?

In the Tabernacle, the ground dyes were kneaded in water before they were cooked.

## Practical ramifications of the labor of Kneading

### Is it permitted to pour water into a sandbox?

It is permitted for children to play in a sandbox, provided that they carefully avoid violation of the prohibition of Digging a hole, since the sand is designated for play and is therefore not *muktze*. **It is prohibited for them to pour water on the sand** even if they do not knead the mixture, since according to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi doing so would violate the prohibition of Kneading by Torah law, and according to Rabbi Yossi, it would violate the prohibition of Kneading by rabbinic law (p. 1032).

### Is it permitted to ritually wash one's hands over sand?

A very common ramification of this *halakha* is when a person is in the outdoors and wants to **ritually wash their hands over sand or soil** (in a situation where there is no prohibition of Sowing or Plowing), or when a person is in a field and needs to urinate. Since the one who performs these actions does not intend to knead, the *Aḥaronim* disagree about whether it is permitted or prohibited. Therefore, one should try to avoid urinating on sand or on softly packed dirt, but if there is a need (e.g., if there is no other convenient place to do so), one may be lenient. In any case, it is permitted to wash one's hands or to urinate on hard earth.

Similarly, one may wash his hands over a rock even if the water will then flow onto sand or onto plants that are not his (**Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**). Even if there is a little sand on the rock there is no problem, since the mixture remains a liquid and there is actually no mixture at all. It is also permitted to wash one's hands into a sink whose pipe leads to sand or plants, provided that the one washing does not benefit from the irrigation and has no interest in it (pp. 1032–1035).

### The central principle in the *halakhot* of Kneading: Three levels of mixture

There are three levels of mixture in terms of consistency:

1. **Dough-like mixture** – A mixture that cannot be poured from one vessel to another, for example, dough, pudding, mashed potatoes from a mix, or cereal with a thick consistency. It is **prohibited by Torah law to prepare** a mixture of that kind.
2. **Runny mixture** – A mixture that can be poured from one vessel to another, for example, cereal with a runny consistency. It is **prohibited by rabbinic law to prepare** a mixture of that kind.
3. **Completely liquid mixture** – A mixture that is not doughy at all; rather it is a **genuinely liquid item**, for example, coffee, chocolate milk, or any similar drink made from powder. This

is not considered a mixture; it is a drink, and **preparing it is permitted** (*Hazon Ish* 58:9).

The difference between the various types of mixture is very significant halakhically, as we will see below (pp. 1040–1044).

### Preparing a runny mixture with a variation

The *Gemara* (156a) permits preparing a **runny mixture** on Shabbat if one **alters the order of adding the ingredients**: If one typically places the dry ingredients and then the liquid, one should place the liquid first; and if one typically places the liquid first, one should place the dry ingredients first. If there is no typical order, one should alter the manner of kneading (based on *Hazon Ish*).

The **authorities disagree** whether after altering the order of adding the ingredients, it is also necessary to **alter the manner of kneading**, e.g., to mix with one's finger, with horizontal and vertical movements, or by means of shaking the vessel. Many Sephardi authorities are lenient in accordance with the straightforward understanding of the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:14) that it is enough to have one variation, either the order of the placement or the manner of mixing. The Ashkenazi authorities disagree over whether altering **the order of placement** is sufficient (*Hazon Ish* 58:5, s.v. *umashma baGemara*; s.v. *ve'im*), or whether it is necessary to **alter the manner of mixing as well** (so it appears from *Rema* 321:16 and *Mishna Berura* 321:68). Even among the Sephardi authorities there are those who rule stringently (*Ben Ish Hai*, Year 2, *Mishpatim* 18).

**In terms of the halakha**, when there is no great difficulty, it is preferable to alter **both the order of placement and the manner of mixing** (as is apparent from the ruling of the *Mishna Berura*), especially because very often it is difficult to establish to any degree of certainty that the mixture is in fact batter-like. After one alters the order of placement, a minor change in the manner of mixing can suffice. For example, one who usually stirs with a spoon should stir gently with a knife, and one who usually mixes in a bottle should mix gently in a different vessel and then transfer it to the bottle. But if the

need arises, one can rely on the opinion of the *Hazon Ish*, according to which it is sufficient to alter the order of placement. With regard to a definitely runny mixture, one may also rely on the *Hazon Ish*, since in that case, the uncertainty is rabbinic in nature (pp. 1047–1050).

### **Is it permitted to prepare a dough-like mixture in an unusual manner (*beShinui*)?**

*This question depends on a tannaitic dispute: According to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (156a), merely adding the water is part of the kneading process and is prohibited by Torah law; moreover, it is not actually possible to add the water in an unusual manner, as changing the order of adding the ingredients is not a full-fledged variation and is effective only with regard to a runny mixture, where Kneading is prohibited by rabbinic law. Therefore, according to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, there is no possibility of preparing a dough-like mixture on Shabbat itself, and one must add the water before Shabbat. By contrast, according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda, there is no prohibition by Torah law in adding the water itself; rather, it is only in mixing flour and water, and that can be done in an unusual manner. Therefore, in his opinion, it is possible to permit preparation of a mixture even when it is dough-like, if one mixes the ingredients in an unusual manner. The Rishonim disagreed about whether Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda is lenient even in the case of ingredients that when kneaded form a consistent, uniform dough.*

In terms of the *halakha*, the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:16) rules in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda, but he restricts his ruling to ingredients that do not form a dough. Therefore, in his opinion, it is permitted to prepare dough if one effects a variation in the manner of kneading, e.g., horizontal and vertical movements, with one's finger, or by means of shaking the vessel, provided that the ingredients do not form a consistent, uniform dough when kneaded. By contrast, the *Rema* (321:16) and some of the Sephardi authorities rule in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, and therefore, in their opinion, it is not possible to prepare dough on

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Shabbat, even if one does so in an unusual manner, unless he adds the water before Shabbat (pp. 1057–1063).

### **In what cases is it permitted to prepare a dough-like mixture with a variation even according to Ashkenazi authorities?**

The Rema agrees that the fundamental *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi; therefore, there are instances where even Ashkenazi authorities (and the stringent Sephardi authorities) permit preparation of a dough-like mixture in an unusual manner:

1. When it was not possible to prepare it before Shabbat because it would spoil. In this case, one must alter the manner of kneading and ideally, the order of placement as well.
2. For a baby. In this case, altering the manner of kneading is sufficient.
3. In a case of need, one may be lenient if a gentile places the ingredients and a Jew kneads with a variation (*shinui*).
4. With ingredients that do not trickle, e.g., honey or jam with bread crumbs.

Even in these instances, one should take into account the opinion that even Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda was not lenient in cases involving ingredients that can be kneaded. Therefore, one may not prepare a dough-like mixture from ingredients that form a consistent, uniform dough when kneaded, unless there is no alternative (pp. 1063–1070).