

Kneading with items that do not bind together

There are substances whose particles bind together to form a uniform compound, like dough, when mixed with water. Examples of such substances are flour, dirt, and sand, and they are known as items that can be kneaded (*bar gibbul*). There are other substances whose particles do not bind together when mixed with water, even after they are kneaded; rather, the particles remain somewhat separate.⁷ These are

7. See the **Rambam's Commentary on the Mishna** (*Oholot* 2:2): “Their particles are somewhat detached, and kneading them does not cause them to bind into one compound.”

known as substances that cannot be kneaded (*lav bar gibbul*), since they do not bind into a single entity. The **Gemara** (18a) classifies ashes as a material that cannot be kneaded, because kneading ashes with water does not produce a uniform compound.⁸

The Gemara mentions two opposite perspectives with regard to the application of Kneading to substances that do not bind together. On the one hand, **Abaye** (18a) raises the possibility that the *halakha* is more stringent with regard to these items:

The dispute among the *Amora'im* and *Rishonim*

Abaye said to him: And perhaps Rabbi Yossi stated [that actual kneading is required in order to be liable] only in the case of flour, which can be kneaded; but ink, which cannot be kneaded, say that one will be liable [just for soaking the dyes in water].

In other words, Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda holds that one who mixes flour and water is liable only for kneading them together, as discussed above. According to Abaye this is true only with regard to ingredients that can be kneaded together to produce a uniform, dough-like substance. But in the case of ingredients that do not bind together, even Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda agrees that one becomes liable for Kneading by simply adding water, since they cannot be kneaded into a uniform compound product. This implies that the *halakha* with regard to an item that cannot be kneaded is **more stringent** than the *halakha* with regard to an item that can be kneaded.

The Gemara elsewhere presents an opposite perspective. The **Gemara** (155b) discusses pouring water into bran (coarse grain material comprising the outer husk of the grain, used for animal feed), which

8. The *Shevitat HaShabbat* (Lash, Introduction, 4) writes that even if one mixes such a material with a sticky substance such as honey so that it produces a single mass in which all the particles of ash are attached, the ashes maintain their status as a material that cannot be kneaded. This is because the definition of a material that can be kneaded is a material that absorbs liquid so that its particles soften and bind together, such as flour, which is turned into dough. If the particles do not soften and bind together, then even if each particle is stuck to the liquid so that there is one mass, it is not considered a material that can be kneaded.

cannot be kneaded. The Gemara concludes that according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda this is **permitted**, as stated explicitly in a *baraita*:

One may not place water into bran; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda says: One may place water into bran.

Several *Rishonim* (*Ritva* ad loc.; *Maggid Mishne* 8:16) explain that since bran does not bind into dough, **kneading it is permitted by Torah law**, though it is prohibited due to a rabbinic decree. Consequently, Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda holds that **it is permitted to merely place water into bran without kneading it**. The Sages prohibited pouring water onto another ingredient due to the concern that one may knead them together. They issued this decree only when actual kneading would violate a prohibition by Torah law. They did not issue this decree when no prohibition by Torah law would be violated even if one does ultimately knead the ingredients together. According to this explanation, the *halakha* with regard to a substance that cannot be kneaded is **more lenient** than the *halakha* with regard to a substance that can be kneaded.

In light of the opposing perspectives cited in the Gemara, the *Rishonim* disagreed about what the practical *halakha* is in this matter. The **Rambam** (8:16; 21:33) implies that Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda holds that pouring water onto an ingredient that cannot be kneaded, such as ashes or bran, is **permitted**. This is also implied by the straightforward reading of **Rashi** (Beitza 32b s.v. *vekitma*) and the **Rif** (Beitza 18a in the pages of the Rif).⁹ On the other hand, **Tosafot** (18a s.v. *aval*), the **Rosh** (Beitza 4:9), the **Raavad** (8:16), the **Rashba** (18a), the **Meiri** (18a), and others rule in accordance with the opinion of Abaye, that placing water onto an ingredient that cannot be kneaded is **prohibited by Torah law** even according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda.¹⁰ In their opinion, the Gemara cited a more lenient ruling with

9. Yet, see the **Ran** (Beitza 18a in Rif, s.v. *vehu detzairei*), who understands Rashi and the Rif in a different manner.

10. This is how the opinion of *Tosafot* and other *Rishonim* is explained in

regard to bran only because it is different from ashes and it can be kneaded to some degree.¹¹

Practically, the *Shulḥan Arukh* (324:3) permits placing water onto bran, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda (and subsequently cites the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi who prohibits this, as mentioned above). Yet, he does not explain the reason for this leniency or the halakhic ruling with regard to a substance that is clearly incapable of being kneaded, such as ashes. Nonetheless, from the statement of the *Shulḥan Arukh* (321:14) with regard to flour made from unripe grain that was dried in an oven, it appears that he rules in accordance with the opinion of the **Rambam** that kneading an item that does not bind into a uniform compound is prohibited by rabbinic law. This is how several *Aḥaronim* understood the *Shulḥan Arukh* (*Magen Avraham* 321:18–19; *Shulḥan Arukh HaRav* 321:16).

The halakhic ruling

The *Mishna Berura* (321:52) cites both opinions with regard to a substance that cannot be kneaded, and does not issue a definitive ruling. His comments in other contexts (*Beur Halakha* 324:3 s.v. *ein*; *Mishna Berura* 324:11, with regard to chaff) implies that he is concerned for the stringent opinion that holds that placing water onto a substance that cannot be kneaded is prohibited by Torah law.

Later (pp. 1057–1062), we will see that this dispute has ramifications with regard to kneading in an unusual manner. Nonetheless, this entire discussion is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda. According to the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi

the *Beur Halakha* (324:3 s.v. *ein*). The *Ḥazon Ish* (56:3) disagrees and holds that according to these *Rishonim* there is no difference between items that can be kneaded and those that cannot; either way, according to Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda, Kneading is prohibited by Torah law, and merely adding water without kneading is prohibited by rabbinic law. This is the practical ruling of the *Ḥazon Ish* himself.

11. Adding water to ingredients that can be kneaded is prohibited by rabbinic law; apparently, in this case the Sages were lenient and allowed one to pour water onto bran because it is necessary in order to feed animals on Shabbat, as will be explained below (p. 1060).

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all agree that it is prohibited by Torah law to place water onto a substance even if it does not bind together. Consequently, the *Mishna Berura* (321:10–11) writes that according to the Ashkenazi practice to be stringent in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, one may not place water onto flour, bran, ashes, or any substance. Nevertheless, in a situation of need the *Mishna Berura* (ad loc.), based upon the *Ḥayei Adam* (19:1), permits one to instruct a **non-Jew** to place water onto bran and then mix them together in an unusual manner, as we will see below.¹²