

Machshirei Ochel Nefesh

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It is well known that the preparation of food is allowed on Yom-Tov. This is, in fact, established within the text of the Torah itself (ז"ב ט"שמות י):

וּבַיּוֹם הַרְאִישׁוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה

בְּהֵם אֲךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ הוּא לְבַדּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם:

You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day (of Pesach), and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you (Exodus 12:16).

This means that all manner of מלאכה (labour or work) which would typically be prohibited on שבת (Shabbat), like cooking food, kneading dough, etc. would be permitted on Yom-Tov.

The question is how many degrees of separation from the preparation of food is still considered food prep. For example, while finely chopping food is definitely considered נפש אוכל and permitted on Yom-Tov, despite its Shabbat prohibition, is sharpening a knife also covered by this exemption? We call this facilitating food preparation נפש אוכל מכשירי.

In truth, this was an argument found in the Talmud (ביצה כח):

דרש רב חסדא ואיתימא רב יוסף אחד סכין שנפגמה ואחד שפוד שנרצם ואחד גריפת תנור וכירים ביום טוב באנו למחלוקת ק אמר "ט דת"ט לשבת אלא אוכל נפש בלבד ר' יהודה מתיר אף מכשירי אוכל נפש מ"ר יהודה ורבנן דתניא אין בין יו ק הא כתיב "קרא (שמות יב, טו) הוא לבדו יעשה לכם הוא ולא מכשיריו ור' יהודה אמר קרא לכם לכם לכל צרכיכם ות לכם אמר לך ההוא לכם ולא לנכרים ואידך נמי הא כתיב הוא אמר לך כתיב הוא וכתוב לכם ולא קשיא כאן במכשירין ט"ט כאן במכשירין שאי אפשר לעשותן מערב יו"ש אפשר לעשותן מערב יו

Rav Hisda taught, and some say it was Rav Yosef who taught: A knife that became nicked on a Festival, a roasting skewer [shappud] that was crushed on a Festival and its point broke off, and the sweeping of the coals in an oven and a stove on a Festival to prepare them for baking, with regard to all of these we have arrived at the dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and the Rabbis. As it is taught in a Baraita: The difference between a Festival and Shabbat is only with regard to the preparation of food. Rabbi Yehuda permits even actions that facilitate preparation of food on a Festival. The Gemara explains: What is the reason of the first Tanna for prohibiting actions that facilitate food preparation? The verse states: "Save that which every person must eat, that alone may be done for you" (Exodus 12:16), from which it may be inferred: "That" may be done on a Festival, but not actions that facilitate it. And Rabbi Yehuda adduces proof for his view from the fact that the verse states: "For you," indicating: For you, for all your needs, and that which facilitates food preparation is also a need. The Gemara asks: And according to the first Tanna, is it not written: "for you"? What does he learn from this phrase? The Gemara answers: That Tanna could have said to you that that phrase comes to teach: For you, but

not for gentiles. The Gemara asks: **And according to the other Tanna, Rabbi Yehuda, too, isn't it written: "That,"** which indicates a limitation? The Gemara explains that Rabbi Yehuda could have said to you: The limiting word **"that" is written, and the expansive phrase "for you,"** indicating all your needs, **is written as well, but this is not difficult, and no contradiction is involved.** One can say that **here, it is referring to actions that facilitate food preparation that can be performed on the eve of the Festival;** the Torah prohibits these on a Festival. **There, it is referring to actions that facilitate food preparation that cannot be performed on the eve of the Festival.** The latter may be performed even on the Festival itself, as they too are part of the preparation of food, similar to cooking. (Beitzah 28b)

The implication from a previous page of the Talmud is that the Halacha follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda and facilitating food preparation נפש אוכל is permitted:

ל רבא לרב חסדא דרשינג משמך הלכה כרבי יהודה אמר ליה יהא רעוא דכל כי הגי מילי מעלייתא תדרשון משמאי"א

Rava said to Rav Hisda: We teach in your name that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. He said to him: May it be God's will that you teach in my name all outstanding matters like this. In other words, Rav Hisda was pleased that this teaching was attributed to him, as he too agreed with it.

Seemingly, this discussion should conclude as the Shulchan Aruch (Rabbi Yosef Karo C16th), Arba'ah Turim (Jacob ben Asher C14th.), Rosh (Asher ben Yechiel C13th), and Smag (Rabbi Moses ben Jacob of Coucy C13th.) all decide following Rabbi Yehuda's lenient opinion (ע"ש (ה'א"תצ).

כל מלאכה האסורה בשבת אסורה ביום טוב חוץ ממלאכת אוכל נפש וחוץ מהוצאה והבערה וכן מכשירי אוכל נפש שלא הי' אפשר לעשותם מאתמול

All work that is forbidden on Shabbos is prohibited on Yom Tov, except for work of preparing food, and except for carrying and igniting, and also tasks facilitating food preparation that were not able to be done the day before. (Shulchan Aruch 495:1)

We also see from various cases mentioned in the Talmud that, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the Halacha would be lenient. Three notable examples would be: 1) Sharpening a knife (ibid) 2) extinguishing a fire to prevent the pot from becoming smoky (22a) and 3) extinguishing a light for a wife and husband to be intimate (ibid) as intimacy is considered an extension of נפש אוכל as it is a similar bodily need.

The problem arises in that all of the aforementioned cases, the Shulchan Aruch decides against the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda:

ד א"ואין מכבין הבקעת אפי' כדי שלא יתעשן הבית או הקדירה או כדי לשמש מטתו: תקי

ט"פ שהוא יכול לפשטו בידו אין מתקנין אותו: תק"שפוד שנרצף אע

The only case the Shulchan Aruch decides following Rabbi Yehuda's lenient opinion is with regards to shovelling out coal from the floor of the oven to make enough room to place a pot of food and thereby extinguishing the flames.

How can we explain this glaring contradiction in the Shulchan Aruch? How can he decide the Halacha to be according to Rabbi Yehuda, only to decide against him in most situations?

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829–1908), in his work, the Aruch Hashulchan explains as follows. The Talmud itself is not clear if the Halacha follows Rabbi Yehuda's opinion. Despite all that we have read until now, the Gemara states (זכ):

ואמר אביי הוה קאימנא קמיה דמר והוה קא מעבר סכינא אשפתא דרחיא ואמרי ליה לחדדה קא בעי מר או להעביר שמנוניתה ואמר לי להעביר שמנוניתה וחזיתי לדעתיה: דלחדדה קא עביד וקסבר הלכה ואין מורין כן

Abaye said: I was standing before my Master and teacher, Rabba, and he was running a knife over the edge of a millstone on a Festival. And I said to him: Does the Master wish to sharpen it, or is he doing this in order to remove its fat? And he said to me: To remove its fat. And I perceived his intention, that he did so in order to sharpen it, but he holds: This is the halakha, but a public ruling is not issued to that effect. (Beitzah 28b)

The Gemara appears to be ambivalent or unsure. That, however, is an untenable and unsatisfactory conclusion. It is so unacceptable that the Rambam himself provides a novel interpretation that undoes any contradiction.

He writes (משנה תורה, הלכות שביבת יום טוב א' ה):

אָבֵל לִישׁוֹן וְאוֹפִין וְשׁוֹחֲטִין וּמְבַשְׁלִין בְּיוֹם טוֹב. שְׂאֵם עֵשָׂה אֵלָיו מִבְּעָרֵב יֵשׁ בְּקֶדֶד הַפֶּסֶד אוֹ חֲסָרוֹן טַעַם. שְׂאֵין לֶחֶם חֵם אוֹ תְּבַשִּׁיל שְׂבִישׁוֹל הַיּוֹם כְּלֶחֶם שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר וּכְתִבְשִׁיל שְׂנֹתְבִישׁוֹל מֵאֱמָשׁ. וְלֹא בָּשָׂר שֶׁנֶּגְשַׁחַט הַיּוֹם כְּבָשָׂר שֶׁנֶּגְשַׁחַט מֵאֱמָשׁ. וְכֵן כֵּל כִּיּוֹצֵא בְּאֵלוֹ. וְכֵן מְכִשִּׁירֵי אֶבֶל נִכְשׁ שֵׁשׁ בְּהֶן חֲסָרוֹן אִם נַעֲשׂוּ מִבְּעָרֵב עוֹשִׂין אוֹתָן בְּיוֹם טוֹב. כְּגוֹן שְׂחִיקַת תְּבַלִּין וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּהֶן

But we may knead, bake, slaughter and cook on a festival. For if one did these from the eve of the holiday, there is a loss or a lack [in the] taste with it. As bread that was baked yesterday or food that was cooked yesterday is not the same as hot bread or as a food that he cooked today. And likewise, anything that is similar to these. And also, may we do [work] on a holiday that facilitates one to prepare the food of [any] person, about which there will be a lack if they are done from the eve—such as pounding spices, and that which is similar to them (Mishneh Torah Yom-Tov 1:8).

The Rambam, similar to the Shulchan Aruch, decides in most cases of facilitating food preparation, מכשירי אוכל נפש, against the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda except for shovelling out coal from the floor of the oven to make room to place food to cook. In the above quote in the Rambam, where he states that the Halacha follows Rabbi Yehuda, he contextualises it כְּגוֹן שְׂחִיקַת תְּבַלִּין וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּהֶן (such as pounding spices, and that which is similar to them). This means that facilitating food preparation, מכשירי אוכל נפש would only be permitted if it is similar to grinding spices, i.e. directly connecting to the food itself.

Spices, while still not consumable after grinding, are themselves eaten after being added to food. So, the grinding, while not food prep itself, is being performed on a consumable item. Likewise with shovelling out the coal. The purpose is to prevent the coals from singeing the food. The preparation, while not being performed on the food itself, will have a more direct connection to the food.

This is not the case with regards to sharpening a knife. This preparation here is being performed on the blade. The quality of the knife is being affected, which will then go to better prepare food. However, this act is not altering or modifying the food itself.

Thus, according to the Shulchan Aruch, as well as the Rambam, kneading dough, cooking, baking, etc., would all be permitted as examples of **אוכל נפש**, food prep.

Activities that are a preparation for the preparation of food, **מכשירי אוכל נפש**, like fixing a roasting spit, shortening one that is too long, or sharpening a dulled knife, while necessary for making a meal, are tasks that are separated from food quality by an additional degree. One is affecting the quality of a cooking implement, which will then go on to prepare the food. However, the sharpening or shortening itself will not affect food quality.

In situations where the preparation, while not being performed on the food itself, but, will still affect the quality of the food, such as removing coal to prevent burning the dish, or the grinding of spices (Halacha does not consider spices the food itself) would still be permitted.

Thus we see that while the Shulchan Aruch decided the Halacha like Rabbi Yehuda, this is not a *carte-blanc* to allow any sort of facilitation of food preparation (**מכשירי אוכל נפש**). Only in specific situations where the task can be seen to be directly related to food preparation would Rabbi Yehuda's leniency be allowed.