

BROKEN EYGLASSES ON SHABBOS

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It is not an uncommon occurrence for one's eyeglasses to break before or during Shabbos. What are the halachic ramifications when this occurs? Is there anything that one may do to fix the glasses? May one move or use the glasses? In this article, we will discuss two of the more common situations, where a lens came out of the frame, or one or both temple pieces became detached. Let us explore the background necessary to decide the halacha in these cases.

The Talmud (Shabbos 47a) teaches that one who forcefully places the legs of a bed into their sockets on Shabbos is obligated to bring a sin offering, for he has performed a *melacha* (forbidden act of labor) on Shabbos. This type of attaching parts is called *tekia*, or forceful joining. Rashi (ibid. s.v. *yiska*) understands the *melacha* to be *makeh bipatish* ("the final hammer blow," which generally entails completing an item's functionality), while the Ramban (Shabbos 102b) and the Rashba (ibid.) state that one has performed the *melacha* of *boneh* (building).

The Talmud (ibid.) cites a dispute between the Tana Kama (anonymous first opinion) and Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel regarding whether one may loosely attach the aforementioned parts. This type of attachment is called *rafui*, loose joining. The Ran (ibid. dapei haRif 21b s.v. *ditania*) explains that even according to Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, who rules leniently, it is prohibited to connect the parts of the bed in a tight fashion, even without applying force; this type of attachment is called *hiduk*, or firm attachment. This is Rabbinically forbidden lest one come to *tekia*, forceful attachment of the parts, and transgress the *diOrayso* prohibition. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel and the Tanna Kama disagree as to whether a similar Rabbinic prohibition exists for even loose attachment.

The halachic authorities explain that *tekia* can refer either to banging nails into two parts to connect them, as well as forcing one item to another very tightly (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:13; Chayei Adam

Hilchos shabbos 42:5). There is a discussion regarding two parts of a vessel which screw together (such as contemporary broom sticks and heads.) Some authorities say that this would not entail a *diOrayso* prohibition, while others view such an attachment as a *diOrayso* prohibition (see Taz Orach Chaim 313:7; Magen Avraham ibid.:12; Mishna Berura ibid.:45; Sha'ar Hatziun ibid.:32.) Attachment through external screws, however, would be prohibited *midiOrayso* according to all opinions, as this is an attachment equal to, if not stronger than, attaching with nails (Rabbi Ezriel Auerbach, cited in Binyan Shabbos 1 Miluim 5:2; Shevus Yitzchak Boneh 4, fn. 13).

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 313:6) rules that one may loosely connect parts of an item, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel. However, even this is only permitted when the normal construction of the item is loose. When the normal construction of an item entails *tekia*, even assembling the item loosely would be prohibited. The Magen Avraham (308:34) states that if the user of the item is accustomed to having it loosely attached, he may connect it loosely on Shabbos, even though most people use that item with *tekia*.

Contemporary authorities apply these rulings to the case of broken glasses. In the case where a temple piece came off, one may not reattach it, even loosely. If a lens came out of an eyeglasses frame that utilizes screws (as is common with metal frames), one may not reinsert the lens in its frame, even loosely. In these cases, we are concerned that one may tighten the screw and transgress the *diOrayso* prohibition of *tekia*. (In such a case the lens, frames and screws would be *muktzah*; see discussion below.) If the frame does not utilize screws (as is common with a plastic frame), it would depend. If the lens can only be reinserted with force, doing so would constitute *tekia* and would be prohibited. However, if the lenses can be inserted and removed easily, one may reinsert the lens. This is

because in this case, it is not possible to transgress the *diOrayso* prohibition, for no *tekia* is possible (Tzitz Eliezer 9:28:9; Binyan Shabbos 23:5. See Binyan Shabbos 6:5 citing Magen Avraham Orach Chaim 313:9). Even in the case of a lens that is normally attached tightly by screws or tight plastic frames, if the frame is bent out of shape and the lens cannot be fitted tightly without professional help, one may reinsert the lens loosely, as we are not concerned that one will bring the glasses to a professional on Shabbos. (Toldos Shmuel Mitzvah 32:54:3).

Let us now examine the *muktzah* status of broken glasses. If glasses are broken beyond use, they lose their status of a usable vessel and are *muktzah*; they therefore cannot be moved (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 308:6).

There is another *muktzah* issue that arises with broken glasses. The Talmud (Shabbos 138b) teaches that the leg of an oven which came off on Shabbos is given a *muktzah* status and may not be moved, for the Sages were concerned that one may come to fix it through *tekia*.

The Terumas Hadeshen (71) discusses a case where the leg of a bench came off on Shabbos. Would it be permitted to move the bench and rest the side missing the leg on another item to use it in its broken state? The Terumas Hadeshen is undecided if this case is comparable to the oven leg which came off, or if a distinction can be made since there is no way to support the oven and use it in its usual way, while the bench can be used normally by supporting it on something else. The Terumas Hadeshen concludes that one should preferably be stringent. While the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 313:8) cites the Terumas Hadeshen as one opinion and does not issue a definitive ruling, the Rema (Orach Chaim 308:16) rules in accordance with the Terumas Hadeshen. The Rema adds that if one had used the bench while it is being supported before Shabbos, it may be moved and used on Shabbos. We are not concerned that one will repair the broken leg on Shabbos, since he has shown his readiness to use the bench in its current state. The Mishna Berura (Orach Chaim 308:69), citing the Taz, says that a bench whose leg broke would not be subject to the prohibition against its use if the leg is no

longer usable or lost. We are only concerned that one may reinsert the leg into its place, not that one would make a new leg on Shabbos.

Based on this, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Shalmei Yehuda 4:13) says that in the case of broken glasses, whenever there is concern with the possibility of *tekia*, the glasses and its parts are *muktzah*. However, if any of the parts of the glasses necessary for assembly are missing, broken, or entail the work of a professional to fix, they are not *muktzah*. Therefore, in all the cases mentioned earlier where we do not allow fixing the glasses, the parts of the glasses are *muktzah* as well. However, if the lens or temple piece broke but the screws are missing or one has worn the glasses in its current state before Shabbos, the glasses are not *muktzah* (Toldos Shmuel *ibid.*; Az Nidbiru 8:33:4; Shalmei Yehuda 2:13). In the case of detached temple pieces whose screws are missing (thus removing the concern of *tekia*), one may attach the temple pieces with safety pins, but not with a metal wire or the like (Shulchan Shlomo, Shabbos 2:314 fn. 11:2).

If only one temple piece was detached from the glasses, some authorities (Az Nidbiru *ibid.*) are lenient and say the glasses are not *muktzah*, for they are still usable and can be worn in a semi-normal fashion without reattaching the temple piece, and there is not a concern that one will reattach the temple piece. Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (cited in Shalmei Yehuda 4:13, *yesod* 5) are stringent. If one used the glasses without the temple piece before Shabbos, one may certainly be lenient, based on the principle cited earlier above that this now becomes the normal form of usage.

One may move *muktzah* glasses with his foot or other body part other than the hands (Mishna Berura 308:13) in order to protect them from further breakage or loss. Alternatively, one should consult a halachic authority as to whether a non-Jew may be asked to move the glasses.

In conclusion, there are numerous scenarios of broken eyeglasses, and the halacha can vary greatly depending on the circumstances. In these types of complex situations, one should consult with a halachic authority.