

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Getting your Goat

July 7, 2022

Q We swim on Friday afternoons, and we hang the wet towels and clothes on the porch railing to dry. May we bring them inside on Shabbos afternoon?

A One of the applications of the *melacha* of *melabein* (scouring) is wringing out a wet cloth (*sechitah*). To ensure that one doesn't squeeze wet cloths inadvertently, Chazal forbade handling them on Shabbos (Rama O.C. 301:46).



The Mishnah Brurah says a cloth that was wet at the onset of Shabbos (at *shkiah*) and dried during Shabbos is still forbidden to move. He applies the principle of “*migu de'iskatza'i levein hashmashos, iskatza'i lechulei yoma.*” This rule dictates that an item that was *muktzeh* at the start of Shabbos remains *muktzeh* all Shabbos, even though the reason it was *muktzeh* no longer applies.

R' Moshe Feinstein rules (Igros Moshe O.C. 5:22), however, that if it is certain that the clothes will become dry on Shabbos, *migu de'iskatza'i* does not apply. Since it is known as Shabbos starts that the *muktzeh* cause will evaporate during Shabbos, the item is not characterized by its current condition. This is possible, for example, in the summer in Eretz Yisrael—during which it never rains—or anywhere the weather forecast shows no chance of rain.

But this halacha does not apply to towels. Chazal only forbade handling the sort of wet cloth that one is inclined to squeeze in order to reduce its wetness, like clothing. A towel is made to get wet; because people don't mind when it gets wet, they aren't prone to squeezing it, so wet towels aren't *muktzeh* (Mishnah Brurah 301:172).

Only significant moisture makes a garment *muktzeh*. The standard is *tofeiach al menas lehatfiach*—wet enough that something it touches can go on and wet something else (Mishnah Brurah 308:63).