

EYEGASSES THAT BREAK ON SHABBOS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Before we establish if and how broken eyeglasses can be fixed on Shabbos, let us list the halachic violations that may be incurred when doing so. Our discussion covers the two most common mishaps - a temple (earpiece) breaking off from a frame, and a lens popping out of a frame. There are three areas of concern:

1. It is Biblically forbidden to firmly attach two objects on Shabbos and Yom Tov, either because of Boneh or Tikun Mana, a form of Makeh b'Patish[1]. It makes no difference whether the objects are fitted into each other tightly or screwed into each other tightly. [Even though a minority view holds that the Biblical prohibition applies only when the items are forced together but not when they are merely screwed into each other[2], in practice we should follow the stringent view(3).] Accordingly, it is strictly forbidden to screw a temple onto a frame on Shabbos and on Yom Tov[4].
2. Even inserting the screw into the hinge without tightening it is forbidden, since the normal tendency is to tighten the screw, and one can easily forget himself and inadvertently tighten it automatically after inserting it[5]. This Rabbinic prohibition is called shema yitka, which literally means, "liable to be firmly attached." The decree of shema yitka applies only on Shabbos, not on Yom Tov, since the Rabbis felt it would cause undue hardship and interfere with simchas Yom Tov[6].
3. As an added precaution, the Rabbis forbade handling the detached objects by rendering them muktzeh. The case which the Shulchan Aruch[7] discusses involves a kirah, a four-legged stove, whose leg (or legs) became detached. The halachah is that both the base and the detached legs may not be moved, since one may easily forget and reattach the legs to the stove, thus violating a Biblical prohibition. Since this Rabbinic prohibition originated with the case of a stove, it became known as gezeiras kirah, "the decree concerning the stove[8]."
4. In the following cases gezeiras kirah does not apply:
 - If the leg is broken or missing and can no longer be re-attached. In such a case the stove is not muktzeh, since we no longer fear that the detached parts will be re-attached[9].
 - If the leg was detached before Shabbos and the stove was being used even though it was missing a leg[10].
 - On Yom Tov[11].

As mentioned above, the Shulchan Aruch uses a stove as his case in point. The Rama adds that the same rules apply to a bench whose legs became detached. Most latter-day poskim^[12] agree that all similar objects are included in this Rabbinic prohibition^[13]. It follows, therefore, that the halachos concerning a temple which becomes detached from its frame will be similar to the cases of the stove and the bench mentioned above.

Based on these principles, we can now answer the following questions:

Q: Can the temple be screwed back onto the frame?

A: Strictly forbidden, according to all views.

Q: Can the screw be inserted into the hinge without tightening it?

A: No. The prohibition of shema yitka applies. On Yom Tov, however, it is permitted.

Q: May one wear the glasses while only one temple is attached?

A: On Yom Tov, yes. On Shabbos, however, it depends: If the detached temple or screw is lost, it is permitted to wear the frames minus the temple, since gezeiras kirah does not apply. If the detached temple and screw are accessible, the frames become muktzeh. If, however, it is acceptable to be seen in glasses that have a missing temple, the glasses may be worn^[14]. If it would be embarrassing to be seen in such glasses, gezeiras kirah applies and the frames are muktzeh^[15].

If the temple broke off before Shabbos and the glasses were already worn in their broken state, all poskim agree that it is permitted to wear them on Shabbos, regardless of whether the other temple or screw is missing or not^[16].

Q: Can the temple be attached to the frames using a wire or a pin?

A: If the original screw, or a replacement, is available, then the frames, temple, and screw are muktzeh, based on gezeiras kirah. Consequently, they may not be moved at all on Shabbos^[17].

If the screw is lost and no replacement is available, then gezeiras kirah does not apply. It is permitted to attach the temple to the frames using a safety pin, provided that it will be removed after Shabbos. [The poskim, however, do not permit attaching the temple to the frames using a wire or a needle, even if the wire or needle is not firmly tightened around the frame⁽¹⁸⁾.]

On Yom Tov, since shema yitka and gezeiras kirah do not apply, it would be permitted to attach the temple using a pin or wire [as stated above], regardless of whether or not the screw is lost.

Q: There are frames (usually plastic ones) that hold the lens in place merely by exerting pressure on the lens; there is no screw involved. What can be done if a lens pops out of such frames?

A: If the lens pops out because the pressure on it has slackened (e.g., the frame expanded slightly

due to wear and tear), then it may be reinserted[19]. If, however, the lens is knocked out forcibly and would have to be forced back in, then the poskim differ in their opinions. Some are stringent and forbid re-inserting it on the grounds of tikun keli[20], while others do not consider this an instance of tikun keli since the lens can be re-inserted with minimal pressure[21].

Q: What can be done if the frames break in half?

A: Nothing. Since they can no longer be worn, the frames are severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any reason.

[1] Mishnah Berurah 308:37.

[2] Taz, O.C. 313:7. See Minchas Yitzchak 4:122-21.

[3] Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 313:32, based on the view of the Magen Avraham. [See also Binyan Shabbos, Boneh, 2nd edition, pg. 309, who quotes Rav E. Auerbach's view that the lenient opinion was referring to objects which - although screwed into each other - can still be adjusted or turned, but not to tightly connected objects like a temple attached to frames.]

[4] Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 519:12.

[5] Rama, O.C. 313:6. Chazon Ish O.C. 50:10, however, disagrees and permits loosely inserting the screw without tightening it. In his opinion, shema yitka only applies when the pieces are tightly fitted together.

[6] Mishnah Berurah 519:9; Hilchos ha-Moadim 13, note 4; Binyan Shabbos, Boneh, 2nd edition, pgs. 63-65.

[7] O.C. 308:16. See also 313:8.

[8] See Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 308:47, Tehillah l'David 308:22 and Shulchan Shlomo 308:44-3, 4, who debate if gezeiras kirah renders the item severe or light muktzeh.

[9] Mishnah Berurah 308:69.

[10] Rama, 308:16.

[11] Since gezeiras kirah only applies if shema yitka applies as well.

[12] Ketzos ha-Shulchan 109:10; Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 86); Knei Bosesem 1:19.

[13] A minority view maintains that gezeiras kirah applies only to the two cases specifically mentioned in the original sources: a stove and a bench. This is the opinion of Imrei Yosher 1:102, Chelek Levi O.C. 101, and Beis Yisrael, 12, quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 9:28-9.

[14] Rav M. Feinstein (Sefer Tiltulei Shabbos, pg. 148); Az Nidberu 8:33.

[15] Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pgs. 85-86.)

[16] Rama, O.C. 308:16.

[17] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 2, pg. 600).

[18] Rav S.Z. Auerbach, *ibid.*; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Shalmei Yehudah 4:50); Knei Bosesem 1:19.

[19] Rav Y. S. Elyashiv (Shalmei Yeudah, pg. 88); Az Nidberu 8:33; B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 6:123.

[20] Rav Y. S. Elyashiv, *ibid.*; Sheraga ha-Meir 3:43; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15:79; Binyan Shabbos, 2nd edition, Makeh B'patish, pg. 168. According to this opinion, the frames and the lenses would now be muktzeh, due to gezeiras kirah.

[21] Tzitz Eliezer 9:28-9; Az Nidberu 8:33.

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Rabbi Neustadt is Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights. He may be reached at 216-321-4635 or at jsgross@core.com.