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Kashering a Kitchen for Pesach – 2 | Parshas Vayikra 5783

292

Some Rules of Bliyos and Hagalah

Some Rules

1. Last issue (291), we gave a short introduction with some rules of hagalah. We will repeat the rules necessary for the current issue along with some additional principles on the topic.
2. **Hagalah.** We mentioned (ibid., par. 3) that hagalah is necessary for matter absorbed [i.e., "bliyos"] through the medium of water. Such matter is also expelled through hagalah in boiling water. However, hagalah does not work for intact matter.
3. **Libun.** Libun is necessary for matter absorbed directly from food without the medium of water. Hagalah does not work for this; libun is required to burn out the bliyos. Libun also works for intact matter (ibid., par. 5).
4. **Libun stone.** Something that absorbed matter poured from a kli rishon can be kashered by pouring an unbroken stream of hot water from a kli rishon (ibid., par. 6). If a kli rishon absorbed bliyos but it is too big to put into a pot of boiling water, it can be kashered through irui kli rishon together with a libun stone, which prevents the water from cooling down by the time it comes into contact with the utensil being kashered (ibid., par. 7).

Levels of Hagalah

5. **Kli rishon.** If chometz food was cooked in a pot over a fire, the pot has kli rishon bliyos. Since the pot's walls are also hot, the food does not cool down easily; accordingly, hagalah also needs to be done in a kli rishon (ש"י"ע סי' תנ"א ס"ה). The same is true for a spoon used for stirring or pouring, a ladle, and the like, which are placed into a pot over a fire.
6. **Kli sheini.** If chometz food was cooked and then placed onto a cold dish, the dish received kli sheini bliyos. Since the walls and base of the dish were cold, the food inside cools down quicker; accordingly, kashering it in a kli sheini suffices. Similarly, cutlery used on a plate at the table can be kashered in a kli sheini.
7. **Irui kli rishon.** If liquid chometz was poured in an unbroken stream from a pot that was on the fire into a dish or tray, the dish received bliyos through irui, which are only absorbed in the outermost layer. The kashrus method is also through irui, which causes the outermost layer to expel absorbed matter (ש"י"ע שם).

Chumra of a "Davar Gush" [Solid Piece of Food]

8. The poskim argue about a davar gush heated in a kli rishon over a fire – e.g., a piece of lokshen kugel – then placed on a cold dish: once it is sitting on the kli sheini dish, is it considered a hot item in a kli sheini, or does it still have the status of a kli rishon?
9. **Like a kli rishon.** Some hold that only a hot liquid in a kli sheini gets the status of a kli sheini since it spreads to the walls of the dish and loses its heat quickly. However, a solid item that stands alone and does not spread to the dish's walls maintains its kli rishon-level heat as long as it is yad soledes bo (איסור והיתר הארוך כלל). (לו אות ז, ועל מש"כ בשו"ת חוקי חיים ח"א י"ד סי' מה באריכות יש"ש חולין פז אות מד, איסור והיתר הארוך כלל).
10. This has ramifications for hilchos bishul on Shabbos, e.g., whether one may add pepper to a davar gush on a kli sheini (סקמ"ה). According to this, one should make sure that a pickle does not touch a hot slice of Yerushalmi kugel even on a kli sheini dish. Whether or not a davar gush can cook or cause the transfer of bliyos also has ramifications for hilchos basar b'chalav (מנחת יעקב כלל ס"א סקמ"ה).
11. **Like a kli sheini.** However, many poskim argue with this chumra. They hold that a davar gush on a cold dish is like a kli sheini. Hence, strictly speaking, it does not cook or cause the transfer of bliyos (דרכי' דרכי' משה י"ד סי' קה סק"ד, רמ"א סי' קה ס"ג, סי' צד ס"ז).
12. **In practice.** Some poskim are machmir in this area (ש"ך סי' ק"ה סק"ח) and in hilchos bishul on Shabbos (מג"א ה"י), at least l'chatchilah (שער' שער' וצ"ח סי' ק"ה סק"ח). B'dieved, though, one may be meikel.

13. **Contact between davar gush and dish.** The chumra of the poskim who hold that a davar gush has the status of a kli rishon while it is on the dish and yad soledes bo (above, 9) applies to things that subsequently touch the davar gush. However, the poskim discuss the interaction and bliyah strength of the actual placing of the davar gush onto the dish – is this also considered a kli rishon, which causes bliyos to penetrate through the entire dish, or is it only like irui kli rishon, which only causes bliyos in the outermost layer, based on the principle 'תתאה גבר' [a halachic rule stating that when something hot is placed on something cold or vice versa, the bottom item is stronger]. See below (24), where we write that this has ramifications on whether or not it is necessary to do irui kli rishon with a libun stone when kashering a countertop.
14. There is an opinion that the chumra of a davar gush also applies to the actual placing onto the dish. Hence, it causes bliyos to penetrate through the entire dish. We do not apply the rule of תתאה גבר, and irui kli rishon is not enough to extract the bliyos from the dish (מהרי"י וי"ל סי' קצ"ג).
15. However, most poskim argue. They hold that even if we give a davar gush the chumra of a kli rishon, it is not worse than irui kli rishon, which only causes the transfer of bliyos in the outermost layer with the interaction of the kli. Thus, the dish that a davar gush was placed on does not need anything more than irui kli rishon to extract the bliyos from its outermost layer, in line with the halacha of תתאה גבר; it does not need to be kashered in a kli rishon (סתימת שו"ע ורמ"א סי' תנ"א ס"כ, ח"י אדם כלל קכ"ה ס"כ, חק יעקב סי' סקנ"ה, יד יהודה יו"ד סי' צ"ד סקל"ז, חו"ד סי' צ"א סק"ה, מקור חיים סי' תמ"ז סק"ז).

Majority of Its Use

16. When it comes to determining the type and level of kashering a utensil requires – hagalah vs. libun (above, 1-2); kli rishon vs. irui kli rishon vs. kli sheini (5-7) – the Rishonim argue whether we follow the majority of the utensil's use or whether we are concerned for an occasional form of use. An example is a dish or cup that is primarily used as a kli sheini or with cold substances but is sometimes used to heat food over a fire.
17. **Majority use.** Some say we follow the majority of a utensil's use, and it is kashered accordingly, e.g., in a kli sheini or by rinsing (רמב"ן ע"ז) דף ע"ו ע"א ד"ה רב אשי, ר"ן פסחים דף ח' ע"א ד"ה אבל, ב"י סי' תנ"א ס"ו בשם הר"י"ף (והרמב"ם) if it has not absorbed chometz through its occasional form of use within the past 24 hours (מ"ב סי' תנ"א סקמ"ז). This is how the Mechaber rules (ש"י"ע שם ס"ו).
18. **Occasional use.** Others say we are machmir and also follow the occasional form of a utensil's use (וכן) רב"ד ע"ז דף ע"ו, רמב"ם סי' תס"ד, וכן) (ש"י"ע רש"ב"א ח"א) ["חומרא דפסח"] (ש"י"ע רש"ב"א ח"א). This is how the Rama rules (שם). Nevertheless, if one kashered something based on its primary use and then used it, even the Rama agrees that b'dieved the food is mutar (שם). If one has no utensil other than one which was mostly used with cold items, that is considered a b'dieved situation, so it is enough to rinse it (חזו"א) (א"ח"ח סי' קכ"ב סק"ג ד"ה ולפיכך וד"ה ואמנם).

Kashering Countertops

Countertops

19. Every kitchen has work surfaces for cooking and baking. In Eretz Yisroel, they are usually made of marble, so they are referred to by the general term "shayish" even though they are sometimes made of stone, granite, quartz, cast stone, or synthetic materials such as Corian. Countertops in chutz la'aretz are sometimes made of stone or marble, but are mostly made of wood covered with Formica. Counters in industrial kitchens are usually made of stainless steel.

20. **Usage.** Nowadays, chometz food at a temperature of yad soledes bo is not usually placed directly on the counter; it is usually placed in a dish. Boiling hot pots are also not usually placed directly on the counter such that they transfer bliyos; they are placed onto something else. Thus, bliyos with kli rishon-level heat do not usually enter countertops. However, it does sometimes happen that a piece of chometz is placed directly on the counter or hot chometz spills from a kli rishon onto a counter. Thus, it is likely that a counter has bliyos from irui kli rishon. Hence, it must be determined how to kasher these surfaces for Pesach use.

Kashering a Countertop

21. **Usage type or majority use.** We cited (above, 17-18) the machlokes about whether we follow the majority of a utensil's use or even an occasional form of use. We must assess countertops and kitchen surfaces based on these rules. According to the Mechaber, it should really be enough to rinse countertops, in line with the majority of their use, and to make sure they have not absorbed chometz through an occasional form of use within the past 24 hours (17). According to the Rama, we must kasher countertops with boiling water due to their occasional form of use.

22. **Countertop's use.** However, the poskim say that the Mechaber only follows the majority use if the occasional use is totally different than the main use, e.g., cups that are usually used for cold liquids but are occasionally used for hot liquids. However, counters are used in a particular way, i.e., for hot foods and pots – just bliyos are not usually transferred to the countertop itself. The occasional spill or the like is viewed as part of the main form of use, not as an occasional form of use. Thus, even though that is only the minority form of use, since it is the main form of use, everyone – even the Mechaber – agrees the countertop must be kashered in accordance with its occasional use (ס' מגילת ספר בשר בחלב נספחים עמ' רנ"ב, בית דוד פסח פ"ג הל"א 8).

23. That is why the Mechaber rules (ש"ע ס"כ) that *shulchanos* – which are like today's countertops – and boxes that hold [hot סקייג] food throughout the year are kashered by pouring boiling water on top because liquid from the pot sometimes spills onto them. In other words, he holds they must be kashered through irui kli rishon even though that is only an occasional "usage." The explanation is the same as above: since the primary use of countertops where hot food is prepared on is with hot food and pots, the fact that it is only on occasion that hot food spills or is placed directly on the countertop does not mean that it is considered an occasional form of use. An occasional form of use must be totally different than the main form of use; here, it is the same form of use, so it requires the surface to be kashered as if it is the primary use. Thus, irui kli rishon is required to kasher it.

24. **Is a libun stone necessary?** We cited above (9) the chumra of treating a davar gush as a kli rishon. That being said, we also cited a machlokes whether a davar gush placed onto a surface transfers bliyos through the whole thing (14). If it does, one would need to do irui kli rishon together with a libun stone to extract the bliyos, just like in a kli rishon. However, we mentioned (15) that most poskim hold that even those who are machmir to treat a davar gush like a kli rishon will agree that when it comes in contact with a dish or a countertop, it only causes the transfer of bliyos in the outermost layer. According to this, all that is needed to kasher a countertop is irui kli rishon, which extracts bliyos from the outermost layer. A libun stone would be unnecessary.

25. **In practice.** By not differentiating, the poskim imply that irui kli rishon – without a libun stone – is enough to kasher a countertop (ש"ע ורמ"א ס' תנ"א ס"כ). Most poskim follow this (ש"ע ורמ"א ס' תנ"א ס"כ). However, some cite the machmir opinion (דעת) and say that l'chatchilah one should take his opinion into account. B'dieved, though, irui alone works (מ"ב שם ס"ק ק"ד).

26. Most countertops today will get ruined through kashering with a libun stone. The manufacturers warn that placing hot pots onto the counter could cause it to crack. That being the case, even if one used a libun stone, perhaps it does not help, as we are worried he did not do it properly because he does not want the counter to crack. We find this concept regarding utensils made of animal horn or the like. Because of this, it is considered b'dieved, so one may rely on the majority of poskim, who hold one does not need a libun stone, especially considering it is a chumra upon a chumra.

Countertops That Can Be Kashered

27. **Stone countertop.** All forms of stone can be kashered through hagalah (ש"ע ס' תנ"א ס"ח). However, sometimes there are seams, indents, or cracks in the countertop that cannot be ascertained to be completely clean, in which case hagalah does not help. These spots would need libun – since libun is not possible, hagalah is not a viable option.

28. **Cast marble.** There is a type of cast marble made from marble powder plus adhering and stabilizing agents. Although it looks almost like regular marble, since it is made from a combined mixture, it is not like regular stone, and we do not know if it can be kashered through hagalah. There is also a type of synthetic marble that cannot be kashered (ק' הכשרת משטחי שיש אות ט').

29. Some are concerned about this l'chatchilah and hold it can only be kashered with a libun stone (above, 24), but since people want to protect their countertops from cracking, they do not actually use a libun stone. Because of all the reasons kashering alone might not work for a countertop, some people avoid relying solely on kashering a countertop. Instead, they kasher it through irui kli rishon without a libun stone, and then also cover the counter so that Pesach foods do not touch the countertop itself (see below, 31).

How to Kasher a Countertop

30. When doing hagalah by pouring boiling water, there are several things one must make sure to do: 1) Clean and scrub with a harsh cleaning agent every bit of intact chometz, particularly in corners, seams, and cracks; 2) Do not use the countertop for hot chometz for 24 hours before kashering it; 3) Dry the countertop before doing hagalah so that the hot water does not cool down before it achieves hagalah (מ"ב סק"ב); 4) Pour boiling water in an unbroken stream directly from a utensil that sat over a fire or from an electric kettle; 5) Ensure the water reaches the entire surface requiring hagalah through the force of pouring, not by flowing (בית דוד פ"ד אות ג'). When one is pouring quickly, he does not need to dry off the countertop between each pouring in every spot.

Covering Countertops

Cover the Countertops

31. It is standard to cover countertops or the entire surface used for Pesach foods due to the above concerns (27-29). However, we do not rely on covering alone; we kasher these surfaces by pouring boiling water from a kli rishon and then also cover them (הגרש"א, הלכות 51). If the countertops will be covered, they certainly do not need to be kashered with a libun stone.

32. **Covering alone isn't enough.** Even though we cover kitchen work surfaces, we do not rely on that alone; we also kasher them beforehand. There are multiple reasons for this, as we will explain:

33. **Might tear.** A thin covering placed over a counter, e.g., a thin layer of aluminum foil or adhesive contact paper, will often tear during Pesach. It can also get slit when cutting things with a knife directly on it. In such cases, it is very easy to encounter chometz bliyos. Thus, one should make sure to only use a thick covering, e.g., thick aluminum foil, a sheet of wood or PVC, corrugated plastic sheeting, Styrofoam, or the like.

34. **Moisture might get underneath.** Another common concern is that over Pesach, water or moisture might seep under the cover, especially in the sink area. Water can also get under the cover if it tears. If there is a substantial amount of moisture present for 24 hours, there is a concern that the cover will receive bliyos from the counter based on the rule of *כבוש כמבושל*. Although many poskim hold that a bit of moisture does not create the conditions for *כבוש*, some are concerned that even a bit of moisture does constitute *כבישה*. Because of the seriousness of Pesach, one should take this into account (מ"ר בעל קנה בשם ש"י פסח פ"ד אות ח"י). Kashering the counter before covering it solves this issue, as it removes all chometz bliyos.

35. **Putting a very hot pot on aluminum foil.** There is another problem with covering a counter with even a thick layer of aluminum foil. When a very hot pot of Pesach food is placed straight onto the foil-covered counter, there is no issue if it is completely dry under the foil and between the foil and the pot, as bliyos do not transfer without liquid. However, if the counter was a bit wet under the foil – which cannot be known until the foil is removed after Pesach – and it was also wet between the foil and the pot, the bliyos can transfer from the counter to the foil and from the foil to the pot. This is especially true according to the poskim who hold we do not say *תתאה גבר* with a davar gush, and the bliyos go all the way through (see above, 14).

36. Thus, if one did not do hagalah before covering the counter, hot pots and other hot items should not be placed directly onto the foil. Something, e.g., a trivet, should be placed in between.

37. **Two coverings.** One can also put two coverings over the counter: a thick covering with some height, e.g., corrugated plastic sheeting or Styrofoam, as the first one so that even if there is moisture underneath, it will not come up; and another covering, e.g., aluminum foil, on top. Then, a hot pot may l'chatchilah be placed on top and the bliyos will not reach it (מ"ר בעל קנה בשם ש"ם). If one does this, he certainly does not need to do hagalah first.