

the Torah and Talmud do not specify *kashering* at sea level, it does not seem to depend on the temperature. Accordingly, a pressure cooker would also work. On the other hand, water heated by solar panels or microwaves do not qualify. However, contemporary poskim allow it to be used to *kasher* utensils that absorbed their *balua* through such media. Thus, *kebol'o kach polto* applies to water, but it seems to have additional qualities.

Usually, *kashering* is done to utensils that absorbed flavor at the same altitude. This conforms with *kebol'o kach polto*. However, the Torah refers to utensils taken as booty in a war. It does not specify that they must have absorbed their *ta'am* at the same altitude. The boiling action of the water, or its process, is sufficient to *kasher*. If we could take the argument that a high altitude does not affect the ability to purge a step further, it could purge *balua* from a lower altitude as well. Once water reaches the point at which it boils, is cooked, or can turn to steam and bubble, it attains the specific properties needed to *kasher* anything. In addition, we could use the opinion that if it is done before *Pesach* it is called permissible *balua*. Also, if the water can not remove the *balua* from the lower altitude, perhaps we may assume that *balua* can not be removed when the utensil is used on *Pesach* at this altitude. (The question would then be, could the utensil *kashered* at the higher altitude be used afterwards at the lower altitude?) [See Psachim 30a-b 76a-b, Avoda Zara 66b 75b-76b, Zevachim 96b 97a, Chulin 8a 97-99 108a, Poskim. Tur, Sh Ar OC 451-452, YD 98 99 121 122, commentaries. Maadanei Shmuel 116:39. Darkei Teshuva 121:16. Igros Moshe YD:I:60 II:31 41. Moadim Uzmanim 281. Hakashrus 3:22-24.]

On the Parsha ... Earthen vessels in which [the sin offering] is cooked shall be broken. If it is cooked in copper vessels, they shall be cleansed with water. [6:21] To extract their *balua*. But earthen vessels never lose their *balua*. [Rashi] The idea of *balua* and its removal is universal. Yet the Torah attaches this concept to the sin offering. Some sinners can be so ingrained in their ways that their only remedy is to break their spirit. Lesser sinners can be purged, by correcting their ways with milder methods, such as Torah study. [Kli Yakar]

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HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

Someone moved from a low altitude location to a higher altitude. They would like to *kasher* some *chameitz* utensils that they brought with. At high altitudes water boils at a lower temperature. If something was used for *chameitz* at sea level, may it be *kashered* at a high altitude? Does it need to be left in the boiling water for a longer period, and will this help?

The issues:

- A) *Ta'am Ke'ikar*, *Balua*, how utensils absorb forbidden flavor
- B) *Kashering*, removing the forbidden flavor
- C) *Kebol'o kach polto*, absorbing and imparting flavor, the purging process

balua. However, the utensil must still be *kashered*. The standard *kashering* process involves boiling water. If this water is insufficient to neutralize it, it reabsorbs the *balua*, and then imparts it back. Therefore, before *kashering*, one should wait twenty-four hours, assuring the absence of forbidding *ta'am*.

Ta'am can be removed in two ways. It can be taken out of where it has become lodged, by boiling, or it can be destroyed by burning. The first method is called *hag'alah*, and the second, *libun*. These are actually a Scriptural concept, referred to when the Jews captured utensils as spoils of the war with Midian. In fact, this is one of the Talmudic sources for *ta'am ke'ikar*.

Earthen utensils absorb easily, but do not impart all of the *balua*. They can not be *kashered* by *hag'alah*. *Libun* would work for practically anything. Once the *ta'am* is burned, it no longer exists. However, there is concern that one might be wary of using a high enough heat due to the fragility of the utensil. Therefore, the only valid method is *hachzaras kivshonos*, returning the utensils to the same kilns in which they were fired originally. One doing this is clearly not concerned whether they crack. Materials like plastics that were used hot can not be *kashered*. They have properties similar to earthenware, but can not be baked at high temperatures. However, if they were not used with direct heat, they can sometimes be *kashered* in the same way that they were used. Some utensils absorb without a heat medium, but by soaking cold. This can be *kashered* by soaking cold for twenty-four hours, then emptying and re-soaking three times.

Libun itself has two levels, *libun chamur* and *libun kal*. *Libun chamur* means that the utensil is heated to the point that it could actually begin to shed some of its surface material. *Libun kal* is heated to the point that straw would singe when touching it. Each of these is used, depending on how strongly the flavor was absorbed. Sometimes *libun kal* is used as a substitute for *hag'alah*, and in cases where it is more convenient.

There is a discussion on *kashering* from meat to dairy. *Hetaira bala*, the *balua* was not forbidden, but one wishes to remove it to permit the counterpart flavor. The Talmud discusses this idea with regard to the flavor of *korban* meat. After a time limit the meat becomes *nosar*, overdue, and is forbidden. For many *korbanos*, this is two days after the slaughtering. If the meat was cooked, the flavor in the pot could become *nosar*. Since every day new *korban* meat is cooked, one could say that each day *kashers* the previous day's flavor before it becomes *nosar*. This idea is used to lighten the severity of the *balua* and to allow for a weaker form of *kashering* than the way it was absorbed. There is a major debate on whether *chameitz* absorbed before *Pesach* can be called *hetaira bal*. It is not forbidden before *Pesach*. In this way it resembles meat or dairy. However, meat or dairy need to be mixed, or they remain permissible forever. *Chameitz* becomes forbidden automatically. *Nosar* takes on a new *halachic* status. *Chameitz* is the same all through.

C) *Kebol'o kach polto*

A utensil is *kashered* consistent with its normal use. *Kebol'o kach polto* means that one extracts the flavor in the same way that it was absorbed. In some cases, extracting is not possible. The only way to remove it is to destroy it. This is where *libun* comes into play. Most *hag'alah* involves a *kli rishon*, a pot used in the cooking stage of the food preparation process. Foods cooked in a pot are absorbed through the medium of a boiling liquid. They are thus extracted through this method of *kashering*. The utensil is suspend-

ed in boiling water for the time it takes to loosen and remove the flavor. If it can not be suspended inside a big pot, other methods are used. These include filling it and causing it to overflow, especially using a heated rock or metal, or *libun kal*.

If a utensil was used with hot food though not over the flame, the same *hag'alah* is done. If a utensil is used with food roasted dry, *hag'alah* will not be effective. When a utensil was used with direct fire, *libun chamur* is required. In some other instances, such as indirect heat, *libun kal* is enough. If the food was poured from a *kli rishon* into a *kli sheini*, second utensil, it absorbed the *ta'am* this way. It can be extracted by pouring boiling water on it. Utensils used with no heat or very low warmth do not require *kashering*. Flavor can only be imparted through heat, or by soaking for twenty-four hours. The method for those utensils has been discussed.

A frying pan poses an interesting question. When used with some grease to prevent sticking, it resembles dry roasting. Deep frying is like cooking with a liquid medium. It is sometimes used both ways. Furthermore, frying in oil is hotter than cooking with water. Does *kashering* with water help? In such instances *libun kal* might be recommended.

In the language of the Torah, water is used to *kasher*. The poskim debate using other liquids. The consensus follows those who forbid using them. In some pressing situations, the other opinion is taken into account. The poskim debate adding ash or detergents to water. Evidently, according to the prevailing practice, only hot water works. The water must be bubbling in a rolling boil. Bubbles begin to form before it reaches boiling point, but only at boiling point are they seen all through the water. The issue of *kashering* using *zaia*, steam, which is hotter than water but is not liquid, is hotly debated. Many poskim permit using steam to boil water for *kashering*, such as with pipes or steam jackets. For certain applications, where the only *balua* came through steam, such as in a microwave oven, poskim are more comfortable with using *zaia*.

In our case, if we apply the rule of *kebol'o kach polto* rigorously, the water used to *kasher* must be as hot as the liquid at the time of absorption. Why is it that boiling water has the properties needed for *kashering*. Is the temperature critical? Is it the bubbles, or is it the immersion or absorption of the water? Does water enter the walls and push the *ta'am* out, absorb the *ta'am*, mix with it, replace it with neutral *ta'am*, or attract *ta'am*?

In essence, these are elements of a debate about how *hag'alah* works. At issue is, since the water absorbs or mixes with the forbidden flavor, why does it not go back and forbid the pot again? In one view, the water pushes out the *balua* immediately, but the utensil constantly re-absorbs it, now mixed with the water. The water works to dilute it. A second view maintains that the utensil absorbs the water until it is saturated, then begins releasing the *balua*. In this view, it takes time. Some say that the utensil can only start releasing the *ta'am* after it stops bubbling. Until then it continues to absorb the water. Another view says that while boiling, the water does not allow any new flavor into the utensil, and removes all the old flavor. Another view maintains that utensils impart their flavor into hot water and do not absorb during this time. Some say the nature of water is to extract flavor from utensils and not to impart it. There is even a view that boiling water destroys the flavor. The basic issue is how *kebol'o kach polto* works.

What about water in a pressure cooker, that can reach boiling point at a lower temperature? What about a higher altitude, where water boils at a lower temperature? Since

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A) Ta'am ke'ikar, Balua

If a food is forbidden, its separated flavor is also forbidden. Therefore, if this flavor flavors permissible food, the food is now forbidden. This is known as *ta'am*, the flavor, *ke'ikar*, is like the (main) actual food. *Ta'am* can be transferred in two ways. One way is direct, it is imparted to the permissible food by being cooked together with it. The other way is by being cooked in a utensil that absorbs the forbidden flavor and then imparts it to a kosher food cooked in it later. This absorbed flavor is called *balua*, swallowed.

The Torah and Talmud recognize that *ta'am* can only be detected through the sense of taste, but it must be physical. However, it is not the same as the actual food. *Ta'am* can only forbid a neutral food if it is beneficial. Whereas spoiled food is forbidden until it is considered totally inedible, flavor that contributes negative taste no longer forbids kosher food. This is called *nosain ta'am lifegam*, or *ta'am pagum*. Twenty-four hours after being absorbed in the walls of the utensil, it is considered *pagum*.

It is assumed that one part of forbidden food cannot impart a trace of its flavor to sixty parts of other food. Some flavor will be transferred, but it is too little to be detected. If the proportion is greater than one sixtieth, it renders the kosher food unkosher. Thus, the amount and proportion of the flavor is measured by the amount of original forbidden food. It is assumed that a pot can absorb the volume of all the flavor of actual food cooked inside it, provided that the volume of the pot is equal or more than the volume of the food. When more food is cooked in the same pot, all of the previously absorbed flavor will come out of the walls of the pot and will be imparted to the fresh food. This assumption does not mean that it all comes out the first time other food is cooked in there. It is possible any time in the future. Each time fresh food is cooked in there it must be enough to neutralize the forbidden *balua*. If the pot is full to capacity of unkosher food, it will not absorb the equivalent of its entire capacity, but its walls will be saturated. If its walls are the equivalent in volume of ten cubic inches, this is the amount that needs to be neutralized by the next food cooked in there. Most pots do not have the capacity to hold sixty times the volume of their walls.

Accordingly, the pot may not be used until it has been *kashered*, cleansed of the unkosher flavor. Even if the maximum unkosher taste is so little that when the pot is full or half full it will be neutralized, or it is *pagum*, one may not use it. The exception to this is *kli shefa*, a large pot never used for a small amount, that happened to absorb a small amount of unkosher *balua*. Some maintain that this dispensation only works if the non-kosher *ta'am* is already *pagum*. This exception may be relied on only occasionally. The ruling itself is contested, and using the utensil involves intentionally neutralizing the *ta'am*. This is normally forbidden. Therefore, eventually, the utensil must be *kashered*.

B) Kashering

Kashering purges the forbidden *ta'am balua* in the walls of the utensil. As long as actual food is present, it will continue to impart its flavor. Therefore, the first step in *kashering* is to remove any residue of the forbidden food. Each time food is cooked in there, it becomes forbidden and, in turn, freshens the forbidden *balua*. Fresh food cooked in there after twenty-four hours does not become forbidden by it, and does not refresh the