

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

May one wash or rinse cherries in a strainer under running water on *Shabbos*?

The issues:

- A) *Borair*, the *melacha* of sorting and separating good from bad
- B) Washing or rinsing fruits and vegetables
- C) Is the strainer *muktzeh*? *Kli berairah*, utensils designed for *borair*

A) *Borair*

This *melacha* forbids removing bad components from a mixture. Three conditions exist to alleviate *borair*: (i) *beyad*, using one's hands or an extension thereof, rather than a *kli berairah*, utensil made to separate; (ii) *miyad*, one needs the separated food right away, rather than ahead of time; (iii) *ochel mitoch pesoless*, removing the good from the bad, rather than the other way around.

The objective of this *melacha* is to clean the mixture by removing anything bad within it. Thus, it must be a bona fide mixture, with both components. Therefore, another leniency applies if one leaves some of the good behind with the bad. For example, one may not separate fat from meat. If some fat is left with the meat, or if some meat is left with the fat, one may prepare this ahead of time. The result will not be a complete separation, but there will still be some of the bad left with the good. If one wishes to rely on this, he must take care not to completely clean any area. The entire part where the bad is removed should be left 'mixed'. Thus, along the length of where the fat joins the meat, some fat should be left, or some meat left along the length of the fat. Some maintain that the remaining part should be somewhat substantial. If the good and bad components are not in a mixture, but are already separate, such as a large pieces of something lying together, there is no problem of *borair*. One should still not prepare this item ahead of time, if possible. However, it is permissible to remove the unwanted pieces when one wishes to serve the wanted parts. Although he is removing the bad from the good, this is not a true mixture. The same would apply if the items are neatly stacked separately.

Borair applies to items other than foodstuffs. For example, one may not sort laundry. The wanted items become the 'food' and the unwanted items, the 'junk'. The same applies to cutlery, dishes, toys, *sefarim*, and any other items that are lying in a mixture. One would need to take the wanted item only, and do so when he needs it.

If the item is a foodstuff that has its *pesoless* on the outside, such that it cannot be eaten without removing it first, its removal is considered *derech achila*, the normal way to consume the food. In this case, one may remove the *pesoless*. Thus, one may remove inedible peels and skins from fruit and nuts. Even edible peels that are normally peeled

may be removed. [Shelling nuts in bulk raises the issue of *mefarek*, a sub-*melacha* of *dash*, threshing.] Furthermore, one may remove a pit to check for bugs underneath, if this is the only way to eat the item. This would be *derech achila* for that type of fruit. However, if the pits do not need to be removed before eating, but it is considered normal to eat the fruit and spit out the pits, they may not be removed in any other way. The only way to remove them would be by taking some of the fruit with them. Even a large pit or stone is not considered separate, if it is attached to the fruit. If it is loose, it may be shaken out. This would not be considered a mixture. Similarly, stalks do not usually prevent one from eating the item. One can bite the item off the stalks. In some cases, such as with a bunch of fruits like grapes, removing the fruit is possible. This would be considered taking the good from the bad, leaving behind the stalks. In others, such as a single fruit like a pear, removing the stalk is *borair pesoless*. A similar issue arises with regard to bones in meat, chicken or fish. Even removing the meat from the bones, which is *ochel mitoch pesoless*, has its rules. If one is eating anyhow with a knife and fork, his knife is considered an extension of his hand. However, ahead of time, one should not use a knife. Some poskim maintain that removing bones is acceptable as *derech achila*. In cases of emergency, one might be able to rely on this view, under Rabbinic guidance.

A mixture of solids and liquids is also a candidate for *borair*. Thus, if one wishes to strain a soup, filter tea and the like, he runs into *borair* issues. The Talmud forbids pouring unfiltered wine through a *meshameress*, cheesecloth. It is also forbidden to place the cloth over a barrel, making a 'tent'. However, if there is wine sediment already there in the cheesecloth, one may pour water through it to separate the wine from its sediments. The water is indeed being used to separate the wine. Nonetheless, it is not considered a way to do *borair* activity. The normal way is to pour the mixture through the filter. Here, the wine will indeed be separated, but mixes immediately with the water and filters out as a separate entity. The poskim permit running relatively clear water through a sand filter. Although it mixes right before it goes through, it entered the filter clear, and leaves the same way. In this case, the water was not considered a mixture. The impurities are considered minute. If the impurities are larger, such as worms in water, one may place a cloth over his mouth or over the part of the cup he drinks from. This is *derech achila*, rather than *derech berairah*. He is simply preventing the junk from entering his mouth.

Sifting flour is forbidden under a similar *melacha*, *meraked*. Although it separates the larger or smaller unwanted pieces, it is listed as a separate category of *melacha*, since in the construction of the *Mishkan* they were separate categories. The *melachos* re modeled on the activities done in constructing the *Mishkan*. [See Shabbos 73b-74b 137b 139b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC:319:1-4 6-7 9-10 12-16, commentaries. Chazon Ish OC:53. Tzitz Eliezer XIV:46. Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 3:58.]

B) washing or rinsing fruit and vegetables

One can be in violation of *borair* if he did something to cause the *berairah* automatically, if this is the way it is usually done. The typical example is through water. One fills a container with water and the item that needs to be sorted. The Talmud uses examples of a type of bean used as fodder, mixed with stalks and other junk. The wanted part would

float to the top and the unwanted part would sink, or vice-versa. Based on this, the poskim discuss washing fruit and vegetables to remove their dirt. For example, they might be caked with soil or dried foliage stuck to them. The water is being used to separate the soil or other matter. Since the water is considered a *borair* medium, it is like a *kli berairah*, utensil designed to sort. It would be forbidden even *miyad*, right before eating.

Vegetables can be washed in two ways. They could be steeped in water, so that the water removes the junk and it either falls away or floats, or they can be washed under running water. The poskim debate whether washing under running water is considered *borair*. In one view, this is not *borair*, but washing. A proof is cited where the Talmud discusses washing dishes on *Shabbos*. One may wash them in the evening for use in the morning, and in the morning for use in the afternoon, but not in the afternoon for use after *Shabbos*. Clearly, the dishes have *pesoless* on them, yet they may be washed off. The other view maintains that even under a flow of water there is an issue of *borair*. The dishes are different. Washing them does not permanently improve their status. Washing the soil off potatoes permanently improves them.

Rinsing fruit and vegetables is also discussed. The fruit could theoretically be eaten without being rinsed. However, it is normal to rinse them from traces of impurities, such as pesticides or germs from handling. The poskim maintain that since the impurities are not visible, this is not a case of *borair*. Indeed, some point out that it is *derech achila*. For this reason, some are wary of rinsing them ahead of time. Many poskim suggest that one who wishes to wash fruit under running water, or even rinse it, should do so before *Shabbos*, if possible. However, in the case of certain types of fruit, including cherries, the added moisture is known to speed up decay. Therefore, one would wish to rinse them close to the time of eating them.

Assuming that one may rinse the cherries, may they be placed in a colander or sieve while they are rinsed. This will make it easier to rinse a larger amount, without having to hold them in one's hands under the faucet. Since there are holes, the water is not acting as a separator, although the *pesoless* on the cherries is invisible, and even in a bowl it would not be *borair*. The problem is that the strainer is usually used for *borair*. It seems to be a *kli berairah* that should be forbidden to use. On the other hand, there is no *berairah* taking place. It is true that the water would seem to be mixed with the cherries momentarily, then be filtered out of them. However, we showed in the last section that one can pour water onto sediments that will mix with the wine in them, then immediately filter through the cloth. This case is at least as good as that case.

The poskim discuss throwing debris into a sink with a strainer in the bottom. The strainer will allow smaller debris out, while restraining the larger bits. The purpose is to prevent the larger pieces from clogging the drain. The answer is based on the idea that the bits going through the strainer are practically negligible. The water running through the bits and then getting strained is permitted, based on the aforementioned ruling about the wine sediments. Our case should be no worse. [See Refs to section A. Shabbos 118a 140a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 319:8-10 (MB 29 33 Dirshu) 323:6, commentaries. Igros Moshe OC:I:125 OC:II:74:borair:4.]

C) The strainer

If the strainer is usually used to strain noodles and the like, it is clearly a *kli borair*. Accordingly, it should be considered *muktzeh* anyhow, and maybe one may not use it in the manner being discussed. The Talmud actually discusses something very similar. One may not sift straw with a *kevarah*, coarse sieve. This would be done to prepare fodder for animals. This is regular *meraked*, sifting, which is similar to *borair*, as we mentioned earlier. However, one may transport the straw in a *kevarah* and fill the feeding trough. The reason is that the possibility of some of the straw being sifted is a *davar she'aino miskaven*, untended consequence. Provided that this result was not inevitable, the Talmud debates whether it is permitted. We follow the lenient view. Therefore, one may move the straw, claiming that he has no intention to sift it. He may even use the item that is usually used to sift it. The Talmud says that this does not follow a minority view that holds that one may not touch a *kevarah* on *Shabbos*. Accordingly, there seems to be no issue with using the strainer in our case.

The reasoning for this is that there are various types or categories of *muktzeh*. This category is called *kli shemelachto le'isur*, a utensil meant to be used for an activity forbidden on *Shabbos*. It may not be moved about on *Shabbos* for no purpose, or for its own protection. However, it may be moved *letzorech gufo*, to use itself in a permissible way, and *letzorech mekomo*, to free its space. Thus, a hammer usually meant for pounding nails can be moved and used to crack a nut. In the case of the straw, the kevara is being used in a permissible way, to move straw rather than to sift it. Similarly, in our case, the strainer is being used in a way that involves no *melacha*, but serves as a convenience.

There is one more consideration. The poskim say that one may use a *kli shemelachto le'isur*, *letzorech gufo*, only if one has no available equivalent *kli shemelachto leheter*, totally permissible utensil. In our case, it could be argued, one could leave to cherries directly in the sink and rinse them. Accordingly, perhaps one should not use the sieve. However, the reason one prefers a sieve is to keep the cherries cleaner. For this, there is indeed no other permissible utensil. Using a bowl would require *borair* to drain of the last bits of water. A sieve is in fact *halachically* preferred. [See Refs to other sections. *Shabbos* 122b-123a 140a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 308:3 324:1, commentaries.]

In conclusion, the sieve may be used to rinse cherries.

On the parsha ... *The man who I shall choose, his staff will blossom ... A staff for one prince, a staff for one prince, for their fathers' houses, twelve staffs, and the staff of Aharon in the midst of their staffs ... The staff of Aharon blossomed ... Moshe brought out all of the staffs from before Hashem to all the Children of Israel, and they saw and they took them, each took his own staff. [17:20-24]* The staffs were being used as a sign which of the princes would be the chosen one. Thus, they were being used for *berairah*. They were initially all mixed together so no-one would claim that Aharon's blossomed due to its proximity to the *Shechina* [see *Rashi*]. Perhaps another reason was so that it would truly be a mixture, from which one would be selected.

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