

TEVILLAS KEILIM: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PART 2

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: Do small electric appliances that come into contact with food, such as a hot-water urn or a small grill, require tevilah?

Discussion: Yes, they require tevilah and a blessing before the immersion.

Rav M. Feinstein^[1] was of the opinion that the part of the appliance which houses the electrical element and does not come into contact with food, is considered a separate "vessel" and does not require immersion. Other contemporary poskim, however, do not agree with this approach and require that the entire appliance be immersed at one time^[2]. [In order not to damage the appliance, it should be thoroughly dried (a blow drier is most effective for getting rid of any moisture) and not used for seventy-two hours after immersion. Our experience has been that if these instructions are followed, the immersion will not damage the appliances mentioned above^[3].]

Although some poskim have suggested that no electrical appliances need to be immersed because they can operate only if plugged in, rendering them "attached to the wall" and no longer in the category of "movable utensils^[4]", this approach was not accepted by the vast majority of poskim and one should not rely on this leniency alone^[5].

Question: May a customer at a Jewish-owned store [which features a mikveh on the premises] immerse dishes that he has selected before he pays for them?

Discussion: Some poskim rule that he may not do so. This is because until the dishes are legally his, they are not yet considered keilei seudah, meal utensils. As long as they remain the property of the store, these dishes are keilei sechorah, utensils designated for commerce, not meal utensils. Therefore, neither the store owner nor the customer may immerse the dishes until the purchase is completed^[6]. B'diavad, if the dishes were already immersed, the tevilah should be repeated without a blessing^[7].

Rav M. Feinstein, however, is quoted^[8] as ruling that once the customer has agreed to the purchase, the utensil may be immersed even if it has not yet been paid for. Although legally the dishes are not his, still we consider them keilei seudah based on his intention and decision to buy them.

Question: When giving a gift, may the giver immerse the utensil before presenting it or must it be immersed by the recipient?

Discussion: Although this issue is not directly discussed in Shulchan Aruch or its commentators, Rav

S.Z. Auerbach[9] and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv[10] derive from the halachah stated in yesterday's Discussion that a gift-giver may not immerse a utensil that he plans to give as a gift. They explain that a utensil which is designated as a gift is not considered a keili seudah, since its primary purpose is to be given as a gift, not to be used as an eating utensil. It is thus exempt from tevilah at this time. B'diavad, if the tevilah was made by the gift-giver, the recipient should repeat the tevilah without a blessing[11].

Question: Is it permitted (for a private person or a kosher establishment) to send food to another person in a utensil which has not been immersed?

Discussion: It is not recommended. As soon as the utensil starts being filled with food by the giver, it becomes a keili seudah and the requirement of tevilah applies. When the recipient receives the utensil, it is questionable whether or not he may partake of the food which it contains since he will then be eating from a utensil which was not immersed. He should transfer the food to another utensil before eating it.

Question: Does lining a utensil with aluminum foil or saran wrap, etc., so that the food does not touch the utensil at all, exempt the utensil from tevilah?

Discussion: Lining a utensil with aluminum foil or any other lining does not exempt it from tevilah, even if the lining completely blocks the food from touching the utensil[12].

Question: If, mistakenly, a utensil was immersed on Shabbos or Yom Tov, may it be used?

Discussion: Yes, it may. The prohibition to immerse utensils on Shabbos and Yom Tov is not unilateral; there are many Rishonim who permit one to do so. Although l'chatchilah we rule stringently, b'diavad, utensils which were immersed on Shabbos or Yom Tov may be used[13].

Question: Some people have a custom of immersing utensils three times. Does this custom have a valid source?

Discussion: No.

Question: If a utensil is too large to fit into the mikveh, may it be immersed part by part?

Discussion: Absolutely not. The entire utensil, inside and outside, must be underwater at the same time[14]. This includes:

1. the handle which is connected to the utensil[15].
 2. parts of the utensil that do not touch food.
 3. parts of the utensil or handles that are made from material which is exempt from tevilah[16].
- While the cover of a pot or frying pan requires tevilah even though it does not come into direct contact with food[17], it does not need to be immersed together with the pot itself, since it is considered as a separate utensil.

Covers or lids of utensils which do not come into contact with food and are used for storage only, e.g., cookie jar lids or cake plate domes, are exempt from tevilah altogether[18].

Question: If the entire utensil must be submerged underwater at the same time, how, practically speaking, can water reach an area of the utensil which is being tightly gripped during the immersion?

Discussion: The best way to avoid this problem is not to grip the utensil at all; instead, it may be placed into another, larger utensil, a wire mesh basket or a mesh garment bag and dipped into the water[19]. Once in the water, it should be shifted around to ensure that the water covers every part of the utensil. [Another method is to loosely tie a string to the handle of the utensil and lower it into the water[20].]

If neither option is practical or workable, Shulchan Aruch[21] recommends that the utensil be held "loosely" — loosely enough to allow water to touch all areas of the utensil[22]. Sometimes, however, this solution is not practical, as a loose grip may result in the utensil being lost or broken. In addition, the Shach[23] seems to reject this solution on halachic grounds as well[24].

For a utensil that needs to be held tightly, Shulchan Aruch mentions another solution: Before immersing the utensil, one should first "wet his hand." There are a number of ways in which this suggestion can be understood:

4. Wet your hands with sink (or mikveh) water before the immersion. Then pick up the utensil, hold it tightly, and dip it into the water[25].
5. Wet your hands with mikveh water only, then pick up the utensil and, while holding it tightly, immerse it in the water[26]. (According to this view, if sink water is used to wet the hands, the utensil may not be held tightly when being immersed.)
6. Dip one of your hands in the mikveh water, and while leaving that hand in, use your free hand to transfer the utensil into the hand that is in the mikveh water. The utensil may then be held tightly during the immersion[27]. This solution seems to satisfy the opinion of most of the poskim.

1. Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:57-58.

2. See Tevilas Keilim, pg. 206 and Chelkas Binyamin, Tziyunim 120:300 quoting several sources.

3. Concerning a toaster, however, some people claim that immersion ruins it even when it is thoroughly dried. Note, however, that Rav M. Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:24) maintained that a toaster is exempt from tevilah altogether. He explained that a toaster is not a utensil which is used to prepare (or serve) food; rather it is a utensil which enhances already prepared food. Thus it is not a keili seudah. Other poskim, however, do not agree with this leniency; see Tevilas Keilim, pg. 208.

4. See Chelkas Yaakov 1:126 and 2:61, who relies on this approach concerning immersion heaters but not for electric pots. See also She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 37:7.

5. Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:57; Minchas Yitzchak 2:72; Minchas Shlomo 2:66-4; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Koveitz Teshuvos 1:3); Shevet ha-Levi 1:57-3, among others.

6. Rav Y.Y. Weiss and Rav S. Vosner (quoted in Tevilas Keilim, pg. 164), based on the Beis Yosef and Taz, Y.D. 120:10.
7. Based on Chochmas Adam 73:8, quoted by Elef ha-Magen on Mateh Efrayim 625:32.
8. Oholei Yeshurun, Tevilas Keilim 10:12.
9. Minchas Shlomo 2:66-20. See also a similar ruling in Tevilas Keilim, pg. 164, quoting Mekor Chayim, and in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:452.
10. Quoted in Halichos Chayim, vol. 2, pg. 116.
11. Rav Elyashiv (ibid.) rules that glass utensils (whose obligation in tevilah is only mi-deRabanan) do not need to be re-immersed.
12. Minchas Shlomo 2:66-5. See Chelkas Binyamin 120:34 for an explanation. [Although not directly addressed by the poskim, it seems that one would not be required to immerse a utensil which is used exclusively for wrapped foods — such as candies or cupcakes in holders.]
13. Mishnah Berurah 323:33.
14. Chochmas Adam 73:15.
15. Y.D. 120:12. But it is permitted to unscrew the handle before immersion and screw it back on afterwards without immersing it.
16. Darchei Teshuvah 120:96.
17. Rama, Y.D. 120:5.
18. Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 120:32.
19. Y.D. 201:9.
20. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 37:10.
21. Y.D. 120:2.
22. Another solution is to rotate the utensil while holding it under the water, so that the water comes into contact with every part of the utensil as it is being rotated; see Darchei Teshuvah 120:30, quoting Da'as Kedoshim.
23. See Shach, Y.D. 120:6 and 198:35.
24. Nevertheless, many poskim disagree with the Shach and permit this method; see Pri Chadash 120:8; Beiur ha-Gra 120:6; Pischei Teshuvah 120:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 120:21 and others.
25. Beiur ha-Gra 120:7.

26. Taz, Y.D. 120:4, and agreed to by Peri Chadash and Peri To'ar, quoted by Darchei Teshuvah 120:33.
27. Rama, Y.D. 120:2, as explained by Levush and Mateh Yonasan, quoted by Darchei Teshuvah 120:33. See also Sidrei Taharah, Y.D. 198:56-57.

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