

SHELLED EGG, PEELED ONION, OR PEELED GARLIC CLOVE LEFT OVERNIGHT

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Several Biblical injunctions are derived from the warning to "beware for your souls," including the Biblical prohibition of placing oneself in any type of life-threatening situation[1], e.g., walking dangerously near the edge of a roof, exposing oneself to a disease, etc. In addition to such obviously dangerous acts, our Sages warned against other dangers which are not understood today, such as the well-known injunction against eating meat and fish together. Although we cannot define the resultant danger in terms of medical science, we accept and adhere faithfully to our Sages' warning that eating fish and meat together is a danger[2].

Another practice involving food which our Sages considered dangerous is eating a shelled egg, peeled onion, or peeled garlic clove[3] that was left overnight. Although this practice is less widespread than the universally accepted restriction against eating meat and fish together, the Talmud[4] maintains that a ruach ra'ah, literally a "bad spirit" or a "spirit of impurity," rests upon these three foods when peeled and left overnight, similar to the "spirit of impurity" that rests on one's hands during nighttime sleep. One who eats these foods after they were left overnight, states the Talmud, endangers his life. Moreover, he will be judged by the Heavenly Court as a person who took his own life[5]. In view of the severity of both the offense and the punishment, it is difficult to understand why certain communities do not comply with this restriction. How can they ignore such frightening consequences?

There is a basic difference, however, between the two prohibitions mentioned above. The prohibition against eating meat and fish together is quoted by the Shulchan Aruch as practical Halachah[6]. All Jews—without exception—are obligated to follow the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch, whether scientifically understood or not. The prohibition against eating the three peeled foods, however, is omitted by many of the Rishonim[7] and the Shulchan Aruch, probably because they held that the particular "spirit of impurity" in question was no longer prevalent in their times[8]. Thus, in many communities this practice is not followed, and, indeed, many people have never heard of it.

But in many other communities the practice is in force, to one degree or another. While omitted by the Shulchan Aruch, the warning against eating these three peeled foods is cited by some Rishonim[9], and recorded as practical Halachah by several of the later authorities, among them the Peri Chadash, Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav[10], Aruch ha-Shulchan[11] and Ben Ish Chai.

Must everyone observe this prohibition?

Whoever comes from a family that adheres strictly to this custom should definitely continue to do so, since it has a Talmudic source and is surely not less valid than any other well-founded custom. The poskim differ as to whether or not one who never followed this practice is required to adopt it. Some rule that the practice is mandatory[12], others recommend adopting it[13], while others do not require following it at all[14].

The prohibition applies even when the peeled food items were wrapped, sealed, and stored in a closed pot or container, or were placed in a refrigerator[15]. It also makes no difference whether or not the peeled items were whole, cut up into large or small pieces, crushed or diced[16].

The prohibition applies only when...

- The entire egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled. If even a minuscule part of it was left unpeeled, or even if the root hairs on top of the onion or garlic remain, the food is not considered to be "peeled" and the prohibition does not apply[17].
- The egg, onion, or garlic clove was kept separate from any other food. It is permitted, however, to mix them together with other ingredients such as vegetables, tuna fish, vinegar, oil or mayonnaise, and leave them overnight[18]. Even adding a large amount of salt or sugar to the peeled food items is sufficient to permit them to be left overnight[19].
- The egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled with the intent of using it immediately and it was then left overnight, or if it was peeled in order to be used the next day. If, however, it was shelled or peeled with the express intent of being frozen and used at a later date (as many large companies or bakeries do), it is permitted[20].
- Dried egg, onion or garlic powder does not fall into the category of "shelled" and is permitted[21].
- The egg, onion, or garlic clove is uncooked. When it is cooked, roasted, or fried, several poskim hold that it may be left overnight[22].
- The egg, onion or garlic is left the entire night. If it is left for only part of the night, it is permitted[23].

B'diavad, if these items were shelled or peeled and left overnight, what can be done?

- Some poskim hold that b'diavad, one does not have to be stringent and the peeled foods should not be thrown away[24]. Many other poskim, however, hold that even b'diavad these items should not be eaten[25].
- Some poskim hold that cooking or soaking the peeled items in vinegar removes the "spirit of impurity" from them and they may then be eaten[26]. Other poskim do not mention this leniency.
- Washing the peeled foods does not alter their status—they still may not be eaten[27].

1. Berachos 32b; Rambam, Hilchos Rotzei'ach, 11:4; C.M. 427:5.
2. Pesachim 76b. See The Daily Halachah Discussion, pgs. 124-130.
3. Some people are stringent with radishes also, but this stringency has no apparent source.
4. Niddah 17a.
5. Rashi, ibid. as explained by Aruch l'Ner.
6. O.C. 173 and Y.D. 116:2.
7. Such as the Rif, Rambam, and Tur.
8. Explanation offered by Teshuvos Peri ha-Sadeh 3:61-2 and others, based on Yam Shel Shelomo (Chullin, Kol ha-Basar 31) and Tosafos, Yoma 77b, who state that ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent in our midst. See also Hagoas Mordechai (Shabbos, ha-Motzi Yayin) quoting Maharam mi-Rottenburg.
9. See Tosafos, Shabbos 141a, Tosafos, Beitzah 14a, Rosh, Beitzah 1:21, Semak 171, Leket Yosher, Y.D. pg. 6, who all record this prohibition.
10. Hilchos Shemiras ha-Guf 7.
11. Y.D. 116:22.
12. Teshuvos Beis Shelomo, Y.D. 189, quoted in Darchei Teshuvah 116:74; Maharsham 4:148 (see also Da'as Torah, O.C. 513:6); Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31, in addition to all the authorities mentioned above who quote this warning as practical Halachah. See also Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 513:13 quoting Misgeres Zahav 99:1.
13. Chafetz Chayim (Likutei Halachos, Niddah 17a, Ein Mishpat 7); Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:20; Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh 3:1); Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7.
14. Teshuvos Yad Meir 19, quoted in Darchei Teshuvah 116:74, based on the previously mentioned argument that nowadays, this ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent. In addition, all the other poskim who do not mention this warning, including later authorities such as the Chochmas Adam, Pischei Teshuvah and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, must be included in this category.
15. Niddah 17a; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav (Shemiras ha-Guf 7).
16. Based on Tosafos, Shabbos 141a.
17. Niddah 17a (see Ya'avetz and Aruch l'Ner); Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, ibid.
18. Semak 171; Zivchei Tzedek 61, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 504:1 and Y.D. 116:92; Ben Ish Chai (Pinchas 2:14); Chazon Ish (quoted in Shemiras Haguf v'ha-Nefesh 3:5 and in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:209); Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7; mi-Beis Levi 3:46.

19. Minchas Yitzchak 6:75; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31; Doleh u'Mashkeh, pg. 364. [But mixing peeled eggs and peeled onions or garlic together is not permitted; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 33.]
20. Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:20. Other poskim, however, do not mention this leniency.
21. Darchei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Degel Efrayim 28; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 2:7; Shevet ha-Levi 6:111. [According to the previously mentioned Igros Moshe, this would also be permitted. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Yashiv Moshe, pg. 159) as permitting onion powder when mixed with other ingredients. See also Doleh u'Mashkeh, pg. 364.]
22. Darchei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Beis Shelomo, Y.D. 189; Aderes (Kuntres Over Orach 4); Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:209); Shevet ha-Levi 3:169. [A minority opinion holds that the prohibition applies to cooked, roasted and fried peeled items as well; see Minchas Yitzchak 4:108 and Yabia Omer 2:7 quoting several poskim, and some people are stringent about this.]
23. Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31 is unsure of this halachah, but he states that it is not customary to be stringent when these items were peeled and left for only part of the night.
24. Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:210). Yaskil Avdi 8:14-4 allows these items to be used for a Shabbos meal. See also Sdei Chemed (Lamed 41:31) and Minchas Yitzchak 2:68 and 9:28.
25. Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 116:10; Shem Aryeh, Y.D. 56; Chelkas Yaakov 4:12; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31 (who warns about severe stomach ailments that could result from being lax with this prohibition) and all the poskim mentioned above who quote this practice and do not differentiate between l'chatchilah and b'diavad.
26. Kaf ha-Chayim 116:93.
27. Artzos ha-Chayim, O.C. 4:32; Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 31.

Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2011 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and **Torah.org**.

Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com