The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן תנ"א סעיף ט"ז

Overview

Siman 451 Seif 16:

A mortar requires hagalah. If it is so large that it cannot be immersed in a pot one should fill it with boiling water and then place in the pot a hot rock so that the water will boil over the sides and in this case it is considered comparable to hagalah in a kli rishon. Some authorities are stringent and require libun for a mortar but minimal libun, i.e. that straw would ignite from the outside, is sufficient. If the mortar is made of wood it should be peeled out of concern for holes before hagalah.

- It doesn't matter whether the mortar is made from wood, stone or metal. It was common for them to grind sharp foods together with bread crumbs. (M.B. 86)
- If it is small and can fit in a larger pot one should not rely on the method of hagalah described in Shulchan Aruch since there are Poskim who contend that this method constitutes irui rather kli rishon. (M.B. 87)
- Poskim write that when the concern is limited to prohibited foods rather than sharp foods hagalah is certainly sufficient. (M.B. 89)
- Technically, hagalah is sufficient but the custom is to do libun but when libun is not possible hagalah is sufficient. (M.B. 90)
- Later authorities write that small mortars used only for spices may be kashered with hagalah since there is a small concern that some chometz got into the mortar. In the event that the mortar was not kashered and the spices from the mortar were already put into a food one may be lenient and this is especially true if the mortar was not benyomo. This discussion is limited to when there is only a concern for chometz but if one is certain there is chometz one may certainly not be lenient. (M.B. 90)

Halacha Highlight

Mortars and sharp foods

Shulchan Aruch Siman 451 Seif 16

מדוכה מתרת בהגעלה

A mortar may be kashered with hagalah

Shulchan Aruch rules that it is acceptable for one to kasher a mortar with hagalah. The discussion here relates to a mortar used to grind sharp foods with chometz. Shulchan Aruch's position is consistent with his ruling below (סעי' כ"ב) that hagalah is sufficient for kashering a utensil that contains sourdough for an extended period of time (מ"ב ס"ק פ"ו). Rema records authorities who maintain that libun is required to kasher a mortar used to grind sharp foods and chometz and that position would also rule that the bowl that contains sourdough for an extended period of time must also be kashered with libun rather than hagalah (מ"ב ס"ק פ"ט). Rema reports that the custom is to kasher a mortar with libun. Mishnah Berurah explains that technically halacha follows the first opinion and when necessary it is sufficient to do hagalah, however, the custom is to kasher with libun when that is possible (מ"ב סק"צ).

Mishnah Berurah in the name of Magen Avrohom writes that cutting a sharp food with a fleishig knife and then grinding that sharp food in a mortar renders that mortar fleishig. This indicates that a sharp food can absorb taste from a knife and then impart that taste into another utensil when cut in that second utensil (מ"ב סק"צ). Pri Megadim (א"א ס"ק ל"א) asserts that this stringency is limited to where the sharp food is ground into very small pieces that are comparable to flour. If the sharp food is merely cut into small pieces it will not impart the fleishig taste into the utensil. Many authorities disagree and assert that the sharp food will not be able to impart the fleishig taste it absorbed from the knife into another utensil without a liquid medium. Although l'chatchila one should be stringent in accordance with Mishnah Berurah's position in cases of necessity there is room for leniency (פסקי תשובות אות מ"א הע' 209).

Stories to Share

The Heated Stone

ש"ע תנ"א,ט"ז : "משים בה מים רותחים ומכניס בתוכה אבן רותחת..."

Kashering marble counter tops is not such an easy task. As we find on today's amud regarding kashering a vessel which cannot fit into a pot for hagalah, one must pour boiling water from a kli rishon and put a hot stone on it to maintain the temperature. The same is true when it comes to kashering countertops.

But not everyone is comfortable handling such a stone. One woman wondered whether she could just use her electric hand-held kettle. Wouldn't pouring water from such an implement count like boiling water with a hot stone added? She also wondered why she should be required to also cover the countertops. Wasn't doing hagalah enough?

When she asked a local rabbi, he said that he doubted it that she could use an electric kettle, but was not sure. He also didn't know whether one who did a proper hagalah was truly required to also cover the countertops.

When these questions reached Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach he ruled decisively. "One who wishes to kasher marble countertops may use water boiled in an electric kettle that has the metal heating element inside it. Although he is also required to place a hot stone on the water, the metal element in the kettle counts as though the water has been treated with the hot stone. Although it is true that doing this type of hagalah kashers the counters and this should be sufficient, the custom is to also cover the countertops, and we should follow this custom. In my own home we do hagalah with water from such a kettle and then cover the countertops with metal covers."

הליכות שלמה, פסח, נ"א-נ"ב