

TEVILAS KEILIM UTENSILS IMMERSION

DISH DIPPING IN A MINI-MIKVEH

PRIOR TO INITIAL USE

What is the original source for *tevilas keilim*?

In *Parshas Matos (Bamidbar 31:21)* the Torah relates that following the war against Midyan, the Jewish nation was commanded to immerse all eating and cooking utensils that they had captured as spoils of war before using them. This requirement came in addition to the obligation to *kasher* these utensils with scalding water or fire to remove the penetration of non-kosher foods. Most halachic opinions concur that immersion of utensils is a Biblical obligation—*de'Oraisa*.

What is the basic definition of this *mitzvah*?

All utensils made of metal, glass, or similar material that had belonged to a non-Jew and now belong to a Jew and are used to prepare, serve, or store food and beverages must be ritually immersed before they can be used.

A utensil rented or borrowed from a non-Jew does not require *tevila*.

What is the reason for this *mitzvah*?

This commandment is a *chok* (supra-rational decree of Hashem). However, the following rationale was provided: Ritual immersion serves to purify the utensils from the spiritual impurity of non-Jewish ownership and to induct them into the sanctity of the Jewish nation. It is comparable to a convert's immersion in a *mikveh*.

In *Likkutei Sichos* the Rebbe explains at length that according to *peshat* (the literal meaning) there is another reason (that also fits well with the halachic rationale) for immersing utensils prior to initial use: to purge the utensils of the potential for non-kosher contamination.

To clarify: A utensil, that was owned by a non-Jew but not used by him, nevertheless was subject to potential contamination via non-kosher food during that time. Ritual immersion purifies the utensil of the negative influence caused by potential contamination.

Do utensils that have never been used require immersion?

Absolutely. As explained above, the obligation to immerse applies whether or not the utensil had been used.

Is it permissible to use a utensil temporarily—just once—before immersion?

No. It is forbidden to use such a utensil even once before immersion. However, disposable utensils that are designed for one-time use may be used without immersion one time.

If one then decides to continue using the disposable utensil it is preferable that he

immerse it, but without reciting a blessing.

Do disposable aluminum pans require immersion?

A disposable aluminum pan that will be used just once does not require immersion. However, if one purchases such pans with the intention of reusing them, then according to many halachic opinions, they must be immersed without reciting a blessing before their first use. This applies regardless of whether one plans to line them with parchment paper and the like while baking, in which case the food will not come in direct contact with the pan. (There are many who are accustomed not to immerse disposable aluminum pans that they intend to use more than once. There are many *poskim* who defend the lenient practice, especially if the pans will be lined with parchment paper and the like.)

Bottles and cans that are sold with food inside them, such as coffee jars, do not require immersion for their initial use until they have been emptied of their original contents. If one then decides to continue using them for food-related purposes it is preferable that it be immersed, but without reciting a blessing.

Which type of utensils requires immersion?

All utensils used in the preparation, serving, and consumption of foods and beverages. This includes utensils used directly for eating such as cups, plates, bowls, cutlery, and the like, as well as utensils used for serving food or bringing food to the table, such as serving platters.

It also includes utensils used to cook, bake, fry, and the like—such as pots, pans, kettles, as well as their covers that come in contact with food or steam from the food.

Utensils that are used in food preparation and come in direct contact with food, such as peelers, grinders, and food processors require immersion.

Utensils that only partially prepare food, after which further major processing is required—such as a flour sieve, a raw-meat grinder, or a *shechitah* knife—should be immersed without reciting the blessing.

Utensils that do not come in contact with foods or beverages, such as bottle and can openers do not require immersion at all.

Utensils used for storage such as jars, cans, bottles, and containers that are used to store flour, sugar, and the like should be immersed without reciting a blessing. A container used to store food that is constantly wrapped while in storage, such as one that holds individually wrapped tea bags, need not be immersed. There are those who wish to be stringent and immerse them without reciting a blessing.

If one uses a storage container to serve food at the table, it requires immersion **with** a blessing like all serving utensils.

A nutcracker should be immersed without reciting a blessing.

If a utensil is made of many parts, only those parts that come in contact with food require immersion.

Does it matter what material the utensil is made of?

Introducing the laws of immersing utensils the Torah specifies six kinds of metal utensils that require immersion *mi'de'Oraisa* (on a Biblically binding basis). These are: gold, silver, copper, iron, tin and lead. In practice, every type of metal requires immersion, including stainless steel and aluminum.

Glass utensils (including Crystal, Pyrex, Duralex, and Coral) must be immersed *mi'de'Rabanan* (as per an enactment of our Sages). The law of metal was extended to glass since they resemble each other in that they can both be melted down and recycled.

Wooden, earthenware, stone, and paper utensils do not require immersion unless they are coated with metal or glass. Generally, a utensil that has a coating made from a material that requires immersion should be immersed without reciting a blessing. By contrast, if the entire surface (interior and exterior) is coated with metal (in contrast to glass), not merely for aesthetic appeal, it should be immersed with a blessing.

Utensils made from a combination of materials, some of which require immersion while others do not, should be immersed without reciting a blessing. However, if a utensil's chief function is accomplished via a material that requires immersion, and the utensil would be useless without this material, and this material also comes in direct contact with food—then it should be immersed with a blessing.

For example, an electric kettle may be made entirely of plastic, but the element that directly heats the water is made of metal. The kettle requires immersion with a blessing.

Metal utensils with handles fashioned from a material that does not require immersion must be fully immersed with a blessing—the entire utensil with its handles, all at once.

Plastic, nylon, and silicone tools do not require immersion according to the majority of halachic opinions. Some people are stringent and immerse them nevertheless, but without reciting a blessing. Metal utensils with a Teflon coating should be immersed without a blessing.

According to custom, porcelain utensils are immersed without reciting a blessing.

Is there an issue with immersing an item that does not require immersion?

Yes. An item that does not require immersion at all—according to all opinions—must not be immersed because doing so might lead one to inadvertently recite a blessing in vain.

Do electrical appliances require immersion?

Yes—even if there is a risk of damage to the appliance by immersing it. However, one may be lenient and immerse only the part of the appliance that directly receives the food or liquids without immersing the electrical cord. Nevertheless, the section of cord in immediate proximity to the appliance requires immersion along with the actual appliance. It is advisable to wait a considerable length of time (forty-eight hours or longer, if necessary) before using the appliance, so that it has time to fully dry before using it.

If there is concern over damage to the appliance it can be taken to a Jewish technician who can disassemble the appliance—so that it is no longer considered an appliance—and then reassemble it. The appliance will then be considered the product of Jewish manufacture and will not require immersion. For this method to be halachically valid, only a professional technician may dismantle and reconstruct the appliance. It is insufficient for the expert to simply remove and reattach the electrical cord.

Some suggest making an arrangement with a non-Jew, whereby the appliance is given to the non-Jew as a gift and then borrowed in return from him. In that case, the appliance technically remains the property of a non-Jew and does not require immersion. However, this method should not be employed because in actuality the appliance will constantly remain exclusively with the Jew.

A bread toaster is an example of an appliance that will most likely be damaged by immersion. There is room for leniency in such a case—it can be used without immersion as long as its electrical cord remains constantly plugged into an electrical outlet. Even in such a case, it is worthwhile taking a stringent approach and having the appliance dissembled and reconstructed by a Jewish technician, so that it will be considered manufactured by a Jew.

How do intervening substances impact the immersion?

Every part of a utensil requiring immersion must come in direct contact with the water. Any substance that will act as a barrier to prevent complete contact with the water must be removed from the utensil prior to immersion. Examples of such substances are rust, residual glue, labels and adhesives.

If the substance is found on a minor portion of the utensil, to the extent that most people (including the actual owner) would simply ignore it, the immersion will be valid even if it was not removed.

Valuable labels that the owner specifically desires to leave attached to the utensil, such as quality brand names that raise the utensil's value, may be left attached even during immersion, provided they cover only a minor area of the utensil.

One should not hold the utensil during its immersion, because his hands will prevent the waters from fully contacting every area of the utensil. If he must keep a hold of the utensil, he should hold it very loosely.

Another option is to change the position of one's hands from one part of the utensil to another while the utensil is underwater. This way, at least for the brief moment it takes to switch position, the water will be in contact with the entire utensil.

Another suggestion is to put one hand into the water and then, with the first hand still underwater, lower the second hand that is holding the utensil into the water, so that it comes to rest on the first hand.

What is the halachic status of food placed in a utensil that was not immersed?

The food is permissible to be eaten. However, it should not be eaten while it remains in

that utensil. It should be transferred and eaten from a non-problematic utensil.

One who eats at the home of someone who does not yet observe the *mitzvos* must assume that his host has not immersed any utensils that require immersion. As a result, even if for whatever reason *kashrus* is not a concern, he should nevertheless avoid eating directly from—or with—his host's utensils.

What if there is a doubt regarding the necessity of immersion?

If there is a doubt as to whether a particular utensil requires immersion, one should immerse it without reciting a blessing.

The manufacturers of many products in the USA are Jewish. Do American products require immersion?

Utensils purchased directly from a factory that is jointly owned by a Jew and a non-Jew require immersion but without reciting a blessing. (Some *poskim* do require a blessing in such a case.)

If the factory is Jewishly owned but the workers are non-Jewish, its products require immersion but without reciting a blessing.

If there is doubt as to whether the factory owners are Jewish, the utensils require immersion. Furthermore, if it is not possible to clarify the nature of the factory's ownership a blessing must be recited over the immersion, because the majority of factories are owned by non-Jews. (According to some opinions a blessing is not recited in this case.)

It is important to note that even if a product was manufactured by a Jew, if it has since been sold to a non-Jewish outlet, store, or the like, it acquired the influence of non-Jewish ownership. Regardless of the product's origins, one who now purchases the product from a non-Jewish source must immerse it with a blessing.

What type of *mikveh* is good for immersing utensils?

Not every men's *mikveh* is kosher for immersing utensils. As described earlier, the obligation to immerse utensils acquired from a non-Jewish source is of Biblical origin - *de'Oraisa*. In that case, the *mikveh* must likewise meet the Biblical definitions of a kosher *mikveh*.

The construction of such a *mikveh* requires the oversight of experts in the laws of *mikveh*, with continual oversight for the duration of its operation to ensure that it does not become invalid in some way. One who wishes to immerse utensils in a *mikveh* located within a store should first ascertain that the *mikveh* was recently examined by expert *rabbanim*.

It should be noted that the *mikveh* located in the store adjacent to the offices of the Badatz was constructed under the guidance of expert *rabbanim*, through the efforts of the *rabbanim* of the Badatz. It is kosher to the highest standards.

The outdoor *keilim* mikvah on Kingston Avenue between Crown and Carroll was also renovated under the guidance of the *rabbanim* of the Badatz.

Please note that these locations have been updated for Pesach 5783. The status of any mikvah should be confirmed periodically to ensure that it is still in good repair halachically.

Can anyone perform the immersion?

Any male or female over the age of *bar* or *bas mitzvah* may perform the immersion, provided they are *shomer* Shabbos.

Some are stringent and only allow individuals who are halachically considered having entered adulthood to immerse utensils that require immersion *mi'de'Oraisa*.

A child may perform the immersion as long as an adult stands next to him and can vouch for the child having conducted a valid immersion. Theoretically, even if a utensil is immersed properly of its own accord, without human intervention, the immersion is valid.

Therefore, if one sends a minor to immerse utensils he must receive an adult's report that the immersion was valid. For example, he may send a cell phone with the child so that an adult present at the *keilim mikveh* may call the parent and report on the validity of the immersion.

One may rely on a child's immersion of utensils that require immersion *mi'deRabanan* (although some opinions are stringent even in this case).

What exactly does the immersion process involve?

The first step is to fully pay for the purchase of the utensil. If the purchase has not been fully completed, the immersion is invalid because the utensil has not yet passed from the vendor's ownership to the buyer's ownership.

If a utensil requires *hagalah* for purposes of *kashrus*, that step must be conducted prior to immersion.

The utensil must then be prepared for immersion by removing any substance that could intervene between the utensil's surface and the waters of the *mikveh*.

The utensil is then held in the right hand (a left-handed person holds it in his left hand) and a blessing is recited—provided that the utensil requires immersion with a blessing according to the rules explained above.

The blessing for immersing a single item is: *Baruch Atta ... asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav ve-tzivanu al tevilas keili* (“...who sanctified us with His commandments and instructed us regarding the immersion of a utensil”). For multiple items the final word is replaced by the plural—*keilim* (“...of utensils”).

It is best to immerse an item that does not require a blessing together with one that does require a blessing. This way the blessing recited on the latter can include the former. The item that requires immersion with a blessing should be immersed first, immediately after the blessing.

The entire utensil must be immersed at once, not first one part of the utensil and then the

rest of it. Some are accustomed to immersing each item three times.

One should not speak from the moment he recites the blessing until after immersing the last of his items that require immersion.

An item that is comprised of distinct parts, such as a meat grinder, should be immersed fully assembled, as if it were to be used for its intended function, even if some of its parts do not require immersion altogether. It should not be immersed in parts. Nevertheless, if it was immersed in separated parts, the immersion remains valid. Under pressing circumstances, it may be immersed in parts to begin with. In such a case, care should be taken to ensure that it is *entirely* separated into parts. Needless to say, if the each part of a utensil or appliance is intended to be used separately, then each part should be immersed separately.

Utensils may be immersed while resting inside a basket, net, or the like that has many holes. The basket or net should be shaken back and forth while underwater so that the water reaches every part of the utensil. More than one utensil may be placed alongside each other in such a basket, as long as they are not stacked on top of each other.

Pots and containers must be immersed with their openings facing upwards or to one side, but not facing downwards, so that the water can fill them entirely. To be certain that the water has reached every part of the utensil, it should be lowered into the water slowly while held at an angle so that the water can flow and fill the entire utensil. A narrow vessel should be left in the water for some time to ensure that the water reached all parts of the vessel.

Is there an issue with immersing items that were purchased in order to give as gifts?

Yes, this is problematic. Items may not be immersed until they have entered the ownership of the end user. Therefore, the recipient of such gifts may not rely on the fact that they were immersed by the giver beforehand. One who nevertheless wishes to immerse an item on behalf of the intended recipient must first have the intention to acquire the item on behalf of the recipient and only then may he immerse it on that recipient's behalf. The recipient should obviously be informed about this *tevila*.

There is room to suggest that one who sends a utensil filled with food, as is often done with *mishlo'ach manos* that is distributed on Purim, should indeed immerse the utensil before giving it to the recipient. Since there is some doubt about this obligation, he should seek to avoid the obligation altogether by not allowing the food to directly contact the utensil. Instead, the foods should be placed in a bag before being placed in the utensil. Simply lining the utensil with baking parchment and the like is not considered a sufficient barrier between the food and the utensil in this case. The recipient will then later immerse the utensil with a blessing upon receiving the gift.

Store owners must not sell items labeled as having been immersed because immersion

performed by a vendor prior to selling the item does not absolve the buyer from the obligation to immerse that item once it falls under his ownership.

Is it necessary to immerse *chametz* utensils after Pesach because they were sold and then repurchased from a non-Jew?

In *Likkutei Sichos*, the Rebbe explains at length that this is unnecessary because although the non-Jew could technically make use of the *chametz* utensils during Pesach, it is a scenario of extreme improbability.

Where are the detailed laws of *tevilas keilim* recorded?

There are copious sources, but here are some basics:

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah, 120; *Shulchan Aruch Admur HaZaken*, 323:8, 451:70, 452:25, 159:21 (also see 161:1-7 [laws of intervening substances that apply to hand washing and bodily immersion]); *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, 37; *Tevilas Keilim* (authored by HaRav Tzvi Kohen); *Kashrus Keilim* (authored by HaRav Yisachar Chazan).

MATERIAL	NEEDS TEVILA	NEEDS BRACHA
All Metals (gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead, stainless steel, aluminum)	YES	YES
All Glass (crystal, pyrex, duralex, and corelle)	YES	YES
Wooden	NO	NO
Wooden coated with metal or glass	YES	NO*
Earthenware	NO	NO
Earthenware coated with metal or glass	YES	NO*
Enamel	YES	NO
Stoneware coated with metal or glass	YES	NO*
Paper, Styrofoam	NO	NO
Paper coated with metal or glass	YES	NO*
Metal with teflon or enamel coating	YES	NO
Porcelain	YES (as per custom)	NO
Disposable Aluminum Pans	NO	NO
Disposable Aluminum Pans intend to re-use	YES (Some are lenient)	NO
Jars bought with food inside	NO	NO
Jars bought with food inside once emptied and intend to re-use	YES	YES
Plastic, Nylon, Silicon, Rubber	NO (Some are stringent)	NO
Utensils made of mixture of required + not required	YES	NO

*) If both interior and exterior are coated with metal (in contrast to glass) and not merely for aesthetic appeal, it should be immersed with a bracha.

UTENSILS	NEEDS TEVILA	NEEDS BRACHA
Used for food preparation	YES	YES
Used for serving	YES	YES
Used for eating & drinking (cups, plates, bowls, cutlery etc)	YES	YES
Used to cook, bake, fry, etc (pots & pans, covers)	YES	YES
Peelers, food processors, grinders	YES	YES
Partially prepare food (flour sieve, raw meat grinder, schechita knife)	YES	NO
Bottle or can opener	NO	NO
Used for storage	YES	NO
Used for storage, doesn't come in contact with food because wrapped (tea bags)	NO (some are stringent)	NO
Barbeque grill	YES (only the grill)	YES
Nut Cracker	YES	NO

TYPE OF UTENSIL	NEEDS TEVILA	NEEDS BRACHA
Bought in factory jointly owned by Jew	YES	NO
Owned by Jew, non-Jewish workers	YES	NO
Doubt if factory owned by Jew	YES	YES*
Manufactured by Jew, sold by non-Jew	YES	YES
Electric Appliance	YES	YES
Plastic Electric Appliance with metal heating element	YES	NO
Even for first time use	YES	YES

*) if cannot confirm if most factories are non-Jewish. Some omit Bracha