

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

May sponges used for dairy and for meat utensils be microwaved together, to sterilize them? May they be microwaved one after the other in the same oven?

The issues:

- A) *Basar bechalav* (*vechalav*), prohibitions of mixing milk and meat
- B) *Kli rishon*; *yad soledes bo*, level of heat required for absorption of flavor
- C) *Taam pagum*, detrimental flavor; *Taam shaini*, indirect flavor
- D) *Derech bishul*, what constitutes 'cooking'?

A) *Basar Bechalav*

The Torah repeats the *mitzvah* forbidding meat and milk three times. The terminology forbids cooking a kid goat in its mother's milk. The repetition indicates *mitzvos* forbidding cooking, eating and benefiting from the concoction. The term 'cook' limits the Scriptural prohibitions of eating and benefiting to mixtures that were cooked together.

Both of these foods are permissible. When they are mixed together they get transformed into a new forbidden item. Other forbidden foods, such as carcass or blood, are forbidden in their own right. When mixed with or added to permissible foods (in proportions of one part to fifty-nine or less) they impart their forbidden flavor or particles to the mixture, thus forbidding the whole mixture. This mixing can be accomplished whether they are cooked, soaked, salted or the particles are joined in any way. *Basar bechalav* does not become the forbidden food unless it is actually cooked together. Nonetheless, all types of mixtures are forbidden Rabbinically, and one may not even eat them at the same meal. The prevailing practice is to wait six hours, the period usually between meals, after eating meat before eating dairy foods.

The *ta'am*, flavor of the two mixing, is what causes the prohibition. This is why the prohibition only applies when the proportion is one to fifty-nine or less. At a more disparate proportion, the smaller part of flavor is *bateil*, neutralized or overwhelmed. Flavor coming directly from the food forbidden or isolated flavor forbids the mixture. Thus, if the flavor was *balu'a*, absorbed into a utensil, then imparted into the other food, it is also forbidden. Therefore, a pot used for milk may not be used for meat and vice versa.

A neutral food that has meat or milk *ta'am* in it may not be cooked together with the other type. If they are cooked together, the *ta'am rishon* forbids the mixture. If the *balu'a* flavor from a pot was cooked into a neutral food, this secondary flavor does not forbid a mixture (see below). However, certain things are still forbidden or practiced stringently.

In our case, the sponges could have pieces of *b'ain*, physical material, trapped inside. Such small pieces of meat or of cheese cause problems when they are mixed, and certainly if they are 'cooked' together. If there are no particles of *b'ain*, the way they

cause each other problems is by transferring *taam*. This requires a higher level of mixing. They must either be 'cooked' together, in which case it could form a Scriptural prohibition, or they could be soaked or 'pickled' together, forming a Rabbinical prohibition.

Using the sponge after it was compromised in this way would be forbidden under the following circumstances: If the flavors were such that the sponge became *balua* with a forbidden mixture, it could not be used with hot water at all. If there were particles inside it, it could not be used, lest the particles come into food or adhere to utensils. If there are no particles, if used with cold water, it would not cause problems. However, allowing its use only cold could lead to confusion and invite mistakes. [See Chulin 103b- 107b-114b, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. YD 87:1 etc. (-97), commentaries.]

B) *Kli rishon; Yad soledes bo*

Balua is absorbed through soaking for twenty four hours, or through heat. In practice, this is unlikely in the case of a sponge. 'Hot' must be enough to cook. This requires a minimum temperature and a *kli rishon*, direct heat source. The minimum temperature is *yad soledes bo*, hot enough that the hand would be pulled away from it on contact. The Talmud says this is hot enough to scald the skin of a baby's stomach. Cooking, by definition, converts the state of a raw item. Water does not change its state in any measurable way when cooked. It does change in the way that it can affect another item. The lowest temperature at which this is observed is the scalding effect on the most tender skin. It is highly questionable whether people use water at this temperature to wash utensils.

A *kli rishon* is a utensil that is directly heated with the food inside it. This includes a pot on the stove and after it is removed but still boiling hot. *Iruy kli rishon*, pouring directly from a *kli rishon*, is capable of cooking a thin layer on the surface of a cold food in a *kli shaini*, second utensil. Thus, if one pours boiling milk directly from the pan onto meat, the top layer of meat is forbidden. If the *iruy* hits a surface and then continues flowing, the poskim debate whether it loses its heat enough to prevent cooking. If the flow is broken, there is no 'cooking'.

The faucet is not on a flame. It is connected through pipes to the boiler. Some consider the entire system a *kli rishon*. Assuming that the water in the faucet is *yad soledes bo*, it can cause *bli'a* through *iruy*. Though it is not actual milk or meat, it could serve as a medium. Debris on a utensil in the direct line of the hot water will be surface-cooked. If a sponge is used with the utensil, it could theoretically become meaty. If a dairy sponge is used in this manner with a meaty dish, it could, theoretically, forbid the utensil as well. Practically, the water is unlikely to be hot enough. In addition, the hot water must connect both types of food in a direct unbroken flow, which is also unlikely. Furthermore, some consider the second, surface flow a break, reducing the 'cooking' heat. Some do not consider the faucet a *kli rishon*. [See Shabbos 40a-42b Psachim 30b 75b-76b Chulin 8a 108a etc, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 318:9-10 YD 91:4 92:1-2 8 105:1-3, commentaries.]

C) *Taam pagum; nosain taam lifegam; nosain taam bar nosain taam*

When forbidden food becomes inedible, it may be consumed as though it were dirt. Based on this, if the food is still edible but imparts an unpleasant taste, it cannot forbid other food by its *taam*. Flavor can only effect its prohibition by complimenting the mixture. A detrimental flavor is permitted.

Balua flavor loses its complimentary quality after being separated from any hot material food for twenty four hours. Thus, if it was absorbed in the walls of a utensil that was empty for this period, or if the utensil was only used cold during this period, it is *pagum*. [A wet sponge could be considered soaking. There is some controversy about soaking for twenty four hours. Though this should cause a mixture to merge its flavors, some point out that it could only work for actual food matter. *Balua* loses its forbidden status at the moment that it would cause the mixture to mingle!] Accordingly, whether *balua* has become *pagum* is determined by the utensil's most recent use for hot food.

In our case, the sponges could become forbidden through absorbing flavor from one another. Let us say that the meaty sponge has meaty flavor in it. If it absorbs some dairy flavor, it has a new mixed flavor of the two. If the absorbed mixture is totally rotten, it loses any identity as a prohibited taste or food product. If one of the original flavors was good, but the other had gone somewhat bad, the bad component cannot effect the *issur*.

Dish soap is usually so bitter that one would not eat it. Thus, *taam* in a sponge is *pagum* before it gets there, if detergents were used every time. The presence of soap can also spoil the complimentary *taam* in the sponge. This need not require cooking or heat.

Taam shaini, or *nosain taam bar nosain taam*, in short, *natbarnat*, means *taam* that was twice removed from the food source before entering the second food. It refers to a neutral food that absorbed flavor from a meat utensil. If it is mixed with milk, the *taam* is too weak to have any forbidding effect. However, if the two flavors are mixed using a neutral medium, according to many poskim, most of this does not apply. Thus, if one put clean meat and dairy utensils into hot water together, the two flavors could both enter the water. The water becomes forbidden, and then enters the utensils. The flavors could also pass through the water into the opposing utensils, mixing the two flavors in the walls. *Taam shaini*, only helps when the flavor is being transferred in two separate processes. In this case it happens at the same time. This could pose a problem in our case, where the sponges are both put into the microwave together. However, if they are put in the oven consecutively, this would not be an issue. [See Chulin 112b-113a Avoda Zara 36a 65a-69a 75b-76a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar YD 93:1 94 95:1-4 122, commentaries.]

D) Derech bishul

In our case, the presumption is that the particles and flavors absorbed in the sponges will be heated in the microwave. Apart from the resultant problem with the sponges, the act of turning on the microwave raises the issue of cooking, an act forbidden in its own right. However, to qualify as a forbidden activity, it must comply with the specifications in the Torah. The Talmud says that the Torah only includes *derech bishul*, the normal manner of cooking. *Bishul* applies to Torah law in three instances: *Shabbos*, *korban Pesach* and *basar bechalav*. One who cooked on *Shabbos* in an unconventional manner is not liable for violating *melacha*. *Korban Pesach* may not be *mevushal*, but must be roasted. One who ate it *mevushal* violated a negative *mitzvah*, and neglected a positive *mitzvah*. If it was cooked unconventionally, he did not violate the negative *mitzvah*. The Talmud discusses smoked meat and dairy, and does not come to a conclusion. Some poskim also debate whether frying is included in the Scriptural definition. We shall cite an unconventional manner discussed by the Talmud in relation to *Shabbos* and *korban Pesach*

– *chama*, the sun, and *chamei Teverya*, the hot springs of Tiberias. Cooking by the sun is both unpredictable and uncontrollable. *Toldos or*, heat produced indirectly from an original fire, is considered *bishul* on *Shabbos*. *Toldos chamah* is forbidden Rabbinically, to prevent its confusion with *toldos or*. *Chamei Teverya* is reliable, and relatively controllable, but its heat does not originate with a man-made fire. In one view, the fact that it is heated by a fire in the depths of Earth, as opposed to the sun, forbids it. While we do not follow this view, it could be relevant to microwaving.

While smoking food is *bishul* on *Shabbos*, for *basar vechalav* it is unresolved. *Chamei Teverya* is not even *bishul* on *Shabbos*, at least Scripturally. Therefore, some say that *chamei Teverya* is not even Rabbinically considered *bishul* for *basar vechalav*. Some consider microwave cooking *toldos chama*, because there is no original fire to create the heat. This means that for *basar vechalav* it has the status of *chamei Teverya*. However, some suggest that the concept of *derech bishul* is predicated on what people would normally use for cooking, based on reliability and controllability. Accordingly, microwave cooking might be forbidden. This would mean that the act of placing the sponges together in the microwave might involve *bishul* of the two flavors together. In reality, the poskim debate whether cooking isolated *taam* of the two involves Scriptural *bishul*. In addition, the two sponges are not actually cooked together. Rather, they are left in the same oven. In a microwave, the separate foods do not share heat. Each item is heated separately by the microwaves. The only issue would be the steam or the indirect heat radiated from the foods, or in our case, the sponges. This would be akin to heat from a *kli shaini*, or at best, *iruy* with a broken flow, since there is no actual *kli rishon*. [See *Shabbos* 38b-39a *Psachim* 41a *Yer. Nedarim* 6:1 *Chulin* 8a 113a (Chasam Sofer), Poskim. Rmbm., Maach. As. 9:6, commentaries. *Tur Sh Ar OC* 318:MA10 etc. *YD* 87:1 6, commentaries. *Noda Biyehuda* II:YD:43. *Eglei Tal*, *Bishul* 43-44. *Igros Moshe* OCIII:52. *Hakashrus* 1:49-50, notes. *HalochoScope* II:3 IV:15 VIII:2.]

In conclusion, the sponges should have no *b'ain* in them. If they were used with detergent or they were not used hot for twenty-four hours, one may microwave them in the same oven. It is permitted to sterilize them consecutively even if they are not *pagum*.

On the Parsha ... [Avraham] took butter and milk and the calf .. and placed it before them .. and they ate. [18:8] The angels mixed meat and dairy, demonstrating that they were not the ones who were to be given the Torah. [See *Daas Zekainim*] The violations that arise here are Rabbinical. Why is this chosen to show the merit of Israel, who would observe it, as opposed to angels? *Basar vechalav* is a *chok*, statute defying logic. Two permissible foods, when mixed, are forbidden. The Rabbis extend this to forbid putting them on the same table, or eating dairy after meat, for the logical reason of prevention. This is perhaps the best example of the extent of Rabbinical authority. Angels would observe the *chok* as is, being the word of Hashem. They would not approve of Rabbinical extensions. Therefore, they would not be able to appreciate the essence of this *mitzvah*, symbolic of the entire Torah and Rabbinical law.

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