

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

May a grill pan used for meat, then cleaned well but not *kashered*, be used for fish?

The issues:

A) Fish and meat – *sakanah*, danger

B) *Ta'am ke'ikar and balua*, absorbed flavor

A) *Fish and meat*

The Talmud describes items that are considered unsafe for various reasons. The most obvious are foods that might have poisons in them, such as foods bitten by poisonous animals. Contaminated foods that might cause other sicknesses are also included.

The Talmud debates roasting two foods together, in the same oven and in proximity. The issue is whether we are concerned for *raicha*, the fumes from one spreading to the other. If one of them is forbidden, such as a forbidden type of meat, it can impart its flavor to the other. The same would apply if the mixture becomes forbidden. Thus, meat and dairy items separately are permissible. When mixed, the mixture is forbidden. Could the two be baked in close proximity? In accordance with the stringent approach, the Talmud forbids eating meat and fish that were roasted together. The reason for this is that it was known to be the cause of illnesses. Specifically, these were *raicha* and *davar acher*. *Raicha* (as a sickness) refers to bad breath or gas, and could reflect Talmudic medical term for bacteria, which had not been identified scientifically, but was observed as a malady associated with bad breath. It could also refer to some kind of serious stomach ailment or indigestion. *Davar acher* is taken to mean *tzara'as*, leprosy. This physical malady is usually associated with a spiritual shortcoming. Therefore, one may not eat the two foods together. One should wash his hands and mouth between the two foods.

We are not familiar with many maladies mentioned in the Talmud. Due to Hashem's kindness, these sicknesses have become less common. In addition, some unsafe practices become so prevalent that 'Hashem protects fools'. Furthermore, some point out that the physical malady is also a symptom of a spiritual malady that goes with it. Thus even if the physical malady has no current manifestation, one may not endanger his spirituality. Nonetheless, the poskim cite a principle called *nishtanu hatevaim*, nature has changed. Judaism does not believe in evolution as opposed to creation. However, the poskim cite observed evidence of changes that are assumed to have been made by Hashem, sometimes to 'protect the fools'. Thus some poskim say that it is a good idea to clean the mouth after eating fish before eating meat, but the actual malady is not known nowadays.

Mitzvos associated with danger include the *mitzvah* to guard one's health, to prevent hazards in the home – a positive and negative *mitzvah*, not to stand by while someone is in danger, the more so oneself, not to injure oneself and to love others like oneself, the

more so oneself. All of these are Scriptural *mitzvos*. Most of all, the Torah is given to us to live by, and not to die by. This is the basis for danger to one's life overriding any other *mitzvah*. It certainly requires us to avoid danger when it does not conflict with a *mitzvah*. [See Psachim 76b. Sh Ar OC 173:2 (MA 1) YD 95:1 (TZ 3) 116:2-3, TZ 2, Pischei Teshuva 3 etc., Darkei Teshuva 27.]

B) Taam ke'ikar; balua

When food is cooked in a utensil, particularly metal and earthenware, flavor is absorbed into the walls of the utensil. This is called *belia*, swallowing. This extract will be imparted to the next food cooked in the same utensil. If a food is forbidden, its flavor extract is also forbidden, known as *taam keikar*. Thus, if the first food was forbidden, and the second food was permitted, the *taam* of the first food forbids the second food. If the extract is undetectable, the second food is not forbidden. We assume that one part in sixty is neutralized. It is assumed that all the *taam* available is absorbed, and that the walls of the utensil can be saturated with it. Thus, under normal circumstances, to neutralize forbidden *taam*, one must have sixty times the volume of the walls in the second batch of food. Most medium to heavy utensils do not have this capacity.

The utensil may not be used for permissible food until it is cleansed. To cleanse all traces of forbidden flavor, one must purge it in the same way it was absorbed, known as *kebol'o kach polto*. This is determined by the normal use of the utensil. A utensil used cold will absorb if the forbidden food was left to soak into the utensil for at least twenty-four hours. To purge this, the utensil is soaked in cold water for this time period, and the process is repeated three times. A utensil used to cook with a liquid medium absorbs through the heat and the liquid. It is *kashered* by *hag'alah*, boiling the flavor out of the walls. A utensil used with no liquid medium, must be heated more directly.

There are two forms of this heating, or *libun*: *libun chamur*, strong heat such that the top layer of the utensil becomes red hot and appears to be ready to peel off; *libun kal*, moderate heating, to the point that straw (or tissue paper) would begin to char when touching any part of the surface. These are not considered purging methods, but more like a destroying method. The *taam* is not removed but destroyed in place. If the utensil was in direct contact with both the food and the fire at the time of absorption, *libun chamur* is required. Where the utensil had direct contact with the food, but indirect contact with the fire, *libun kal* is sufficient.

When *hag'alah* is done, the surface of the utensil must be clean, so that the water can penetrate the walls and will not reabsorb some new flavor from the residue, imparting it back to the utensil. For *libun*, the fire will burn the residue along with the flavor. For *libun kal*, unless one is able to apply the heat directly to where the residue is, it is advisable to clean the surface well. The residue should be burned up like the flavor, but there is always a chance that it will survive where flavor would be destroyed.

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 ma-

terial 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*. *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.

When food is cooked openly with no utensil, there could be fumes given off. This is easy to detect by smell. If there is a smell, it comes from fumes of the food. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a *halachic* issue of flavor. While it might be true that smell must have some type of particle to it, this need not constitute *ta'am keikar*. The Talmud discusses the issue of *raicha*. At issue is the case of two foods cooked in proximity, such that the fumes could mingle. If one is forbidden, could the *raicha* forbid the other? In some cases, there is more concern for *raicha* than in others. For example, if the space in which the two items were cooked is well ventilated, the issue is mitigated. The question is whether *raicha*, which does exist, is *milsa*, something to be concerned about. The Talmud seems to debate the issue, although it is unclear whether anyone would be compelled to forbid *raicha* outright. When cooked inside a utensil, many maintain that there is no *raicha*.

The general conclusion is to restrict cooking items in such proximity. If items were cooked this way, it would depend on the nature of the flavor. Greasy flavor could be more problematic than non-greasy *ta'am* or food. Certain foods are treated very stringently, either because they impart heavy fumes, or they absorb fumes easily, or because they are particularly strict in terms of their penalty. Ideally, one should avoid cooking them in proximity at all, especially in close proximity with little ventilation. If they were already cooked this way, they are permitted. However, if there is a way to avoid relying on the laxity, one should do so. Thus, if neutral food was exposed to *raicha* of milk or meat, it should not be eaten with the opposite kind of food. It could be eaten with the same kind, avoiding reliance on the leniency.

If the fumes are steamy, the status changes somewhat to *zaia*, literally, sweat. This could be viewed as a plain water evaporation with no *ta'am* in it, neutral water with *ta'am*, or a worse form of *raicha*. As a water, it is extremely hot and can impart any flavor in it. However, it is not contained in a utensil, and has air mixed in with it. The lid of a pot often does not touch the contents, yet is considered saturated with the *ta'am* through the *zaia*. (No air is present in this case.) By the same reasoning, if it is known that *zaia* rose from forbidden food to a utensil above it, the utensil is forbidden.

The meat and fish issue is raised by the Talmud in the passage about the debate on *raicha*. The *halachic* conclusion in terms of *raicha* in general is to allow for leniency, as mentioned. However, there is a strong indication in the Talmudic passage that for the fish and meat issue we do not follow the lenient view. Thus, we would indeed forbid eating the fish or the meat, even if they were not cooked together, but in close proximity. Both of these items are assumed to be greasy, because we do not consider ourselves expert enough to decide how greasy an item should be to render it such in *halachic* terms. Both of these usually have some grease in them.

The reason that stringency seems to apply to these items can be attributed to the nature of the 'prohibition'. It is not due to a *halachic* issue, but to a physical danger. Thus, when discussing the status of meat from an animal that was not slaughtered correctly, the entire *halachic* status depends on an outside factor. It has all the physical properties of an identical piece of kosher meat. Therefore, we can apply the ideas of *bitul* and the like. *Bitul* is based on the concept that if the Torah introduced the *halachic* prohibition, the same Torah recognizes its neutralization in certain proportions. When the issue is physical, this might not work. In addition, and perhaps as part of this idea, other rules to resolve doubt do not apply in cases of danger. If one is in doubt about the kosher status of a piece of meat, one may resolve it based on chances. *Rov* means that the majority of the meat from which this was taken is kosher. Similar ideas apply when there is a mixture. If meat might be considered bitten by a snake, we do not rely on these rules. The term used for this is *chamira sakanta me'isura*, danger is more stringent than prohibition.

This leads to a general debate on the rules of *balua* with regard to fish and meat. The issue of fish and meat applies to eating the two together, even if they were not cooked together. If they were cooked together, there are particles of each in the other. One who eats either of them will be eating the two. Though it might be neutralized *halachically*, the particles are physically present. Accordingly, *bitul* should not apply here. However, the poskim cite a Talmudic reference that indirectly proves that there is no concern for *balua*. The Talmud discusses *natbarna't*. If neutral food absorbs meat flavor from a pot, may it be eaten with dairy foods? The example used by the Talmud is fish that absorbs meat flavor from a platter, or according to some, even from a pot. In citing cases of those who consumed this with milk, there is no mention of the *sakanah*. A minority contend that the Talmud does not refer to actual cooking or baking the two. Therefore, perhaps true *balua* would be viewed more stringently. In addition, many poskim maintain that this danger no longer exists. Therefore, most poskim do not restrict the use of clean meat utensils for fish. Although a grill pan is used with very high heat, the *balua* is the same as regular cooking. The poskim debate whether a modern day oven requires *libun chamur* or *libun kal*. If one decides to practice stringency in our case, he may certainly rely on *libun kal* for this meaty grill pan, even according to those who normally require *libun chamur*. [See Pesachim 30a-b 44 Avoda Zara 66b 75b-76b Zevachim 97a Chulin 97-99, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 173:2 MB (Dirshu 3 4) 451[:4-9, 13 etc.] 452:1 YD 91:4 92:7-8 93 105:2 3 4 108:1 4, commentaries.]

In conclusion, the grill pan may be used for fish, according to most poskim. If one wishes to satisfy stringent views, he may *kasher* it with *libun kal*.

On the parsha ... *My offering, My bread, for My fire, a smell for My pleasure .. [28:1] The bread .. eaten by the Kohanim, but the korban may not be eaten by any man, it is consumed by the fire and serves as a raiach nichoach .. [Targum Yonasan]* When it is burned, nothing physical remains. The fumes can be smelled by man. This smelling is not considered 'consuming'. However, for Hashem, this is the actual offering. Raicha doesn't count – but it does!

Sponsored in honor of Miriam Plotkin, whose birthday is the 20th of Tamuz.

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