

**Wembley Synagogue**

מטות

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Mattot 5768

What's the Sidra about?

First Aliyah: This section discusses the laws of verbal vows. A person who obligates him or herself with a vow is required to fulfill the vow. Under certain circumstances, a husband or father can annul vows made by his wife and daughter. **Second Aliyah:** The Israelites are commanded to exact revenge from the Midianites for their part in seducing Jewish men to sin (described in the end of the Torah reading of Balak, Numbers 25). A 12,000-strong army of Israelites, led by Phinehas, waged battle against Midian. All adult Midianite males were killed, along with Balaam and Midian's five kings. The women, children, and battle spoils are brought back to the Israelite encampment. **Third Aliyah:** Moses is enraged that the Midianite females were spared. "They were the primary culprits; the ones who seduced the Israelites and brought about the plague which killed so many!" Moses exclaimed. All the males and all women who possibly could have been involved in the campaign of seduction were killed. The soldiers are then instructed how to purify themselves from the ritual impurity they contracted from contact with corpses in the course of battle. They are also told how to kosher the food utensils which were among the spoils. **Fourth Aliyah:** The spoils of the war were evenly divided between the soldiers and the greater community. From the portion of the spoils given to the soldiers, a tithe of 1/500 was given to Elazar the High Priest. **Fifth Aliyah:** From the other portion of the spoils, the half divided amongst the rest of the Israelites, 1/50 was given to the Levites. The army officers count the soldiers who returned from battle, and determine that not a single man was lost in the war. To show gratitude to G-d for this miracle, the officers donate to the Tabernacle all the gold jewelry which they personally plundered from the Midianites. **Sixth Aliyah:** The tribes of Reuben and Gad owned lots of cattle. Seeing that the eastern bank of the Jordan -- the lands of Sichon and Og which they had just conquered -- had abundant pasture, they asked Moses if they could remain and settle on the eastern bank. Moses angrily responds that they are following in the footsteps of the spies who were fearful of the Canaanites, did not want to enter the land of Israel, and discouraged the entire nation from doing so. The Reubenites and Gaddites respond that they will leave their cattle and families behind in fortified cities, and all their men will proceed into Israel with their brethren and lead them in the conquest of the land. Only after all the land has been conquered and settled would they return to the other side of the Jordan. **Seventh Aliyah:** Moses accepts the offer of the Reubenites and Gaddites, and informs Joshua and Elazar the High Priest of the agreement. These two tribes, along with half of the tribe of Manasseh settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan, and conquer many of the areas wherein they encountered opposition.

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָבִיא בְּאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בַמַּיִם - *Everything that will not come in fire you shall pass through water*
(31:23)

TEVILAS KEILIM- IMMERSING NEW UTENSILS

From the verse quoted above, the Talmud (1) derives that utensils which are bought from a non-Jew, even if they are brand new, require immersion in a kosher mikveh. Just as a convert requires an immersion, symbolizing his conversion from non-Jew to Jew, so too, utensils require immersion when being transferred from the ownership of a non-Jew to a Jew (2). The vast majority of the Rishonim hold that this is a Biblical command (3). What follows is a basic review of which types of utensils require immersion. The final rulings on whether a utensil requires immersion or not can be grouped into three categories:

1. Utensils that definitely require immersion and the blessing of Al tevilas keilim (4) 2. Utensils which--for one reason or another--may require immersion and the blessing is not recited 3. Utensils which do not require immersion at all. The halachos concerning which type of utensils require immersion are based on two criteria: 1. The material from which the utensil is made 2. The purpose for which the utensil is made and how it is used. Let us review each of these.

THE MATERIAL FROM WHICH THE UTENSIL IS MADE

There is one basic rule to follow: The Torah itself mentions only six types of metal utensils (5) as requiring immersion. The Talmud, however, says that all utensils made out of material which "when broken can be melted down and reformulated (6)" are considered like metal utensils and require immersion. The Talmud specifically mentions glass as being the type of dish that can be "reformulated" upon breaking (7).

UTENSILS WHICH DEFINITELY REQUIRE IMMERSION WITH A BLESSING: Any type of metal, including brass, steel and aluminum. Disposable aluminum pans which are used and thrown away do not require immersion. If they are going to be used more than once, most poskim require them to be immersed [even before using it the first time] (8), while others allow them to be used two or three times and then discarded (9). Any type of glass (10). Pyrex, Duralex and Corelle are all considered a form of glass (11).

UTENSILS WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE IMMERSION AT ALL: Wood (12). Stoneware (13). Boneware, ivory (14). Plastic, melmac, rubber, nylon (15). Non-glazed earthenware (flower-pot dull finish) (16). Paper, styrofoam.

UTENSILS WHICH MAY REQUIRE IMMERSION WITHOUT A BLESSING: Earthenware which has been lined or coated with lead (17). Heavily glazed earthenware (18). Porcelain or porcelain enamel. Most of today's china dishes are included in this category. There are some poskim who maintain that these dishes do not require immersion at all (19). One may conduct himself in accordance with this view and many people have such a custom (20). Other poskim disagree and hold that china should be immersed without a blessing (21). In many places, this has become customary (22). Corningware (23)--follows the same rule as porcelain. **THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE UTENSIL IS MADE** The basic rule to follow: The Talmud states that only *klei seudah*, utensils used for a meal, are obligated in immersion. This includes all utensils which have direct contact with food--either during its preparation (24) or at meal time. Since the status of some items as *klei seudah* may be undetermined or in dispute, we will list different kinds of utensils--some that definitely require immersion, others which clearly do not, and those whose status is questionable and thus require immersion without reciting a blessing. Bottle or can openers do not need immersion (25). Stove racks [and a *blech*] on which pots are normally placed do not need immersion. If it is common that food is directly placed on it, like a grill or a toaster oven rack, then the rack is required to be immersed and a blessing recited (26). Vegetable bins and refrigerator racks, even if the food touches them directly, do not need immersion (27). A serving tray used to bring plates to the table is exempt from immersion. If food is placed directly on the tray, it requires immersion with a blessing (28). A nut cracker requires immersion. Some poskim require a blessing as well (29), while others rule that a blessing should not be made (30). A fruit and vegetable peeler requires immersion (31). If the peeler is used exclusively for raw, non-edible food, like a potato peeler which is used for nothing else, many poskim hold that no immersion is required (32). An arts and crafts knife does not need immersion, even if the knife is occasionally utilized for food preparation (33). Jars, bottles or metal boxes which are used to store food but are never brought to the table, require immersion without a blessing. If they are brought to the table, then they require immersion with a blessing (34). Any utensil which is normally used for wrapped food only, does not require immersion. If its normal usage is without any wrapping, it must be immersed even if the food placed into it is wrapped (35). Some poskim do not require immersion for a toaster (36). Many others require immersion with a blessing (37).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Many people mistakenly believe that utensils may be used one time before being immersed. This is wrong, and it has absolutely no basis in Halachah.

FOOTNOTES

1 Avodah Zarah 75b. 2 Ritva *ibid.* quoting the Ramban, based on Yerushalmi. 3 See *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 34 for a complete list. 4 Our custom is to recite this text whether immersing one utensil or many--Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 120:22; Teharas Yisroel 9; Kochavei Yitzchak 1:10-6; Mibeis Levi (Nissan 5753, pg. 49). 5 Gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead. 6 Based on the interpretation of Rashi. 7 For a more detailed explanation see Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 120:25 and Emes l'Ya'akov al ha-Torah and to Shabbos 15b. 8 Chelkas Yaakov 3:115; Minchas Yitzchak 5:32; Mibeis Levi (Nissan 5753, pg. 47). 9 Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:23. 10 Y.D. 120:1. The poskim agree that glass utensils are only Rabbinically obligated. A blessing is nevertheless recited--as in all Rabbinical mitzvos--see Chochmas Adam 73:1. 11 Harav M. Heinemann (Kashrus Kurrents vol. XV #3). There is also some metal mixed in them--Tzitz Eliezer 8:26. 12 Y.D. 120:6. 13 Rambam Hilchos Ma'acholos Asuros 17:6. 14 Several poskim quoted in *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 232. A minority opinion requires them to be immersed--see Darkei Teshuvah 14. 15 This is the view of most poskim, see Chelkas Ya'akov 2:163; Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:60; Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in l'Torah v'Horah'ah, vol. 1, pg. 11, vol. 2, pg. 20 and pg. 42); Tzitz Eliezer 7:37; Be'er Moshe 2:52; Yabia Omer 4:8. A minority opinion holds that plastic dishes should be immersed without a blessing--see Minchas Yitzchak 3:76-78; Sheorim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 37:4 This is the custom in German congregations. See (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14) where Harav Y.Y. Weiss rules that a yeshiva may be lenient with this stringency. 16 Chochmas Adam 73:1. 17 Rama Y.D. 120:1. See Darkei Teshuvah 28 that even if they are lined with lead on both the outside and inside, no blessing is said. 18 See Darkei Teshuvah 19 who quotes several views on this issue. 19 Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 120:2; Shalmas Chaim 1:13; Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in l'Torah v'Horah'ah, vol. 2, pg. 20). 20 Yabia Omer 4:8. 21 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 37:3 and Masgres ha-Shulchan. 22 Melamed Le'ohil Y.D. 47; Aruch ha-Shulchan 120:29; Darkei Teshuvah 12. 23 Harav M. Heinemann (Kashrus Kurrents vol. XV #3). 24 Some poskim hold that only utensils which are used in the final stage of food preparation require immersion, e.g., a pot, but not utensils which are used in the earlier stages, e.g., a cookie cutter. 25 Shach Y.D. 120:11. Even if the can opener touches the food it does not require immersion--Harav S. Vosner (quoted in *Tevilas Keilim* pg. 233). 26 Y.D. 120:4 and Pri Chodosh 12. 27 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 196). See also Be'er Moshe 4:99. 28 *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 213. 29 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 220). 30 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Ohalei Yeshurun, pg. 46). Shevet ha-Levi 6:245-4 questions if a can opener requires immersion altogether. 31 *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 221. 32 Avnei Yashfei 1:146 based on Aruch ha-Shulchan 35-36. Same halachah applies to a pocket knife, etc. 33 Darkei Teshuvah 45 quoting Pri Chodosh; Aruch ha-Shulchan 40-45. See *Tevilas Keilim*, pg. 52. 34 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in *Tevilas Keilim* pg. 197); Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Ohalei Yeshurun pg. 45). 35 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in *Tevilas Keilim* pg. 55). 36 Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:24. 37 See *Tevilas Keilim* pg. 208.

שבת שלום!
Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 9.56pm