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# PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Mattos-Masei ✍️ Rabbi Baruch Klagsbrun

## Some Things Never Change

It is often said in the name of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter that it is easier to master all of the Talmud than it is to overcome one bad middah (trait). One cannot assume that his middos will automatically improve over the course of his life or that his bad habits will fade over time. An incident in this week's parsha serves to remind us of this lesson, but we must return to Sefer Beraishis to truly appreciate it.

The first time we meet Lavan is when Eliezer arrives in Charan to find a wife for Yitzchok. In Beraishis, (perek 24, posuk 29), the Torah tells us that Lavan ran out to greet Eliezer. Rashi explains the reason for his excitement- he saw the jewelry that his sister Rivka had been presented with. Thus, in our very first encounter with Lavan the Torah tells us about the Middah that typified Lavan- he was one who coveted money.

Later on, we once again find Lavan running, this time to greet Yaakov upon his arrival. There as well, Rashi points out that Lavan was not so much interested in meeting his nephew, as he was in knowing what monetary gifts Yaakov had brought with him. Lavan thoroughly frisked and searched Yaakov's very body seeking the gold and jewels that he assumed were there. A quick computation tells us that 97 years had passed between these two incidents. (Rivka waited 20 years before Yaakov was born. Yaakov was 63 at the time of the Brachos, and he spent 14 years in Yeshivas Shem V'Aiver before traveling to Charan.) Lavan himself was probably over 110 years old, but he remained the same Lavan. The driving force in his life was the desire to acquire wealth.

Over the next twenty years, this continues to be the theme behind all of Lavan's actions. He even resorts to dishonest means to achieve at his goals. Besides switching Rachel with Leah, Lavan also changes the contract he has with Yaakov 100 times in six years- an average of once every three weeks. However, Hakadosh Boruch Hu protects Yaakov Avinu who leaves Lavan's house as a very wealthy man. On his way back to Be'er Sheva, Lavan chases after Yaakov and accuses him of being a thief. The Torah describes how Lavan proceeds to search all of Yaakov's belongings and finds nothing to claim as his own. When Yaakov challenges Lavan on this point, Lavan responds by saying 'the daughters are mine, the sons are mine, the sheep is mine, and everything that you see is mine'. Once again, Lavan portrays his greediness and selfishness.

In Parshas Balak, Lavan makes a re-appearance. Chazal in Masechta Sanhedrin 105, identify Bilaam as being Lavan. (See also Targum Yonasan on Bamidbar, perek 22 posuk 5). In his conversations with Balak and his messengers, Bilaam/Lavan makes the assertion two times that Balak should be willing to pay him "a house full of gold and silver". Rashi points out that this again represents the middah of coveting money. Incredibly, almost 300 years have passed since our last encounter with Lavan, and yet he remains the same person with the same bad tendencies.

In this week's parsha, the Bnei Yisroel avenge themselves of the Midyanim, whose daughters had been the tools used to tempt the Yidden to sin thereby causing the death of 24,000 people. Killed also in this war was Bilaam/Lavan. Why was Bilaam present in Midyan at the time, as opposed to being home in Aram? While Bilaam had failed in his attempts to curse the Bnei Yisroel, it had been his idea to cause the Yidden to behave immorally. Having caused the death of at least some yidden, he felt he deserved some form of payment, and therefore he came back to Midyan to claim his reward. To the very end, Lavan's desire for wealth took hold of him until he did indeed receive his just rewards.

Do you see what happens to someone who doesn't work on overcoming his bad middos?

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# HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

## Tevil as Keilim

*Rabbi David Greenberg*

In this week's Parsha, we are introduced to the requirement to purify all metal vessels used for food that are manufactured by or acquired from a non-Jew. When the Jews brought back the spoils of Midyan they were instructed, "Only the gold, silver, copper... that which was in contact with fire should pass through fire... and all that doesn't come in fire you shall pass through water." (31:22-23) This purification includes koshering any vessel that was used to cook non-kosher food by some form of heat and sanctifying all food utensils even if brand new, by immersing them in a mikveh. This last act elevates the vessel to the proper level of holiness necessary for Jewish ownership. In this article we will discuss some of the laws of Tevilas Keilim.

### Materials That Require Tevila

According to the Torah, only metal vessels require Tevila. The Rabbinis included glass vessels due to the similar property of glass and metal both being able to be melted down and recycled. Correlle and Pyrex are made out of heat resistant glass and therefore require tevila. Vessels made from other materials, such as wood, pottery and styrofoam do not require tevila. Nevertheless, some have the custom to toivel glazed pottery, china and porcelain dishes without a bracha. There is a dispute about whether one must toivel hard plastic, and the consensus of most poskim is that it is not necessary. Nevertheless if a metal utensil (such as a pot) has a plastic handle, the entire utensil must be toiveled.

### Types of Utensils That Require Tevila

Only vessels which come into direct contact with the food (kli seuda) require tevila. This includes utensils used for eating, preparing, cooking or serving food. Vessels and utensils of food where the food still requires further preparation may not require tevila. For example, cookie cutters, rolling pins and dough hooks. Nevertheless, one should toivel these vessels without reciting a bracha. Vessels that function only as storage receptacles like canisters of sugar and flour, technically do not require tevila. Even so, one should toivel them without a bracha. Utensils that do not come into direct contact with the food itself need not be toiveled. This includes the following: corkscrews, can openers and gas range grates. If only some of the components of a utensil or appliance come into direct contact with the food and they are removable, only those components need to be toiveled. Some examples are toaster oven racks and mixer attachments.

Electrical appliances such as urns and hot water pumps require tevila. Although normally one must immerse the entire vessel, partially immersing the appliance until the water reaches the wired compartment is sufficient. The reason for this is that the appliance may be viewed as two separate components, the container of the

food which requires tevilah and the heating compartment which does not require tevilah because it has no contact with the food. (IGM Y.D. 57) Nevertheless, toiveling the entire utensil will in the majority of cases cause no damage, as long as one allows ample time for the vessel to dry before attempting to use it.

### Disposable Containers

Glass soda bottles and juice containers that are bought from the store need not be emptied immediately in order to toivel them. However, if one wishes to reuse them, many poskim are of the opinion that they must be toiveled first without a bracha. HaGaon R' Moshe Feinstein however, held that one need not toivel them, and many rely on his psak. (IGM YD 2:40) Disposable aluminum pans are likewise under dispute as to whether they can be used once or even reused without tevila. One should consult their own Rav in regard to this issue.

### Circumstances of Obligation

One is obligated to toivel any utensil manufactured by a gentile, even if it is bought from a Jewish store. Likewise, if the item was manufactured by a Jew and is bought from a gentile, one is required in tevilah. A Jewish shopkeeper is exempt from tevila because he didn't buy the utensils for culinary use, rather he purchased them as merchandise. When buying in a Jewish store one may assume that all the merchandise was produced by gentiles unless there is some evidence to the contrary i.e. it was made in Israel. When in a doubtful situation, one should toivel without a bracha.

### The Procedure

One must make certain that there are no substances separating the vessel from the water (chatzitzos). Any stickers or attachments which the owner wants to remain on the vessel (and are normally left there) are considered part of the vessel and do not constitute a problem. If after scrubbing there is still a minute amount of food or grime attached to the utensils, yet if the owner is not concerned with it, then it will not be considered a chatzitza.

One must make certain to completely immerse the vessel all at once. The hands of the immerser should be loose around the item to allow water to flow all around, or one may use a perforated basket. When the utensil has a narrow opening, one must immerse it slowly to avoid air pockets and be sure that the utensil has been completely filled with water. When toiveling one vessel one recites the bracha, "Al tevilos keli", and when toiveling many vessels, one says "Al tevilas keilim." A pot with a cover is considered one vessel. When reciting one bracha on multiple items, one should be careful not to speak until he has completed toiveling all the items.

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