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PARSHA

ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Mattos-Maasei ✍️ Rabbi Shimon Zehnwirth

## Having an Impact

*"...But when you entered, you defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination." (Yirmiyahu 2:7)*

The dedication day of the first Beis HaMikdash was a day of ecstatic joy and inspiration for the Jewish people. Yet, regarding that very same day, the Gemara (Nidah 70b) applies the *pasuk* (Yirmiyahu 32:31), "For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and of My fury from the day that they built it until today." Why? On that day, the Gemara explains, Shlomo HaMelech married Pharaoh's daughter. In another Gemara (Shabbos 56b), Chazal teach us that on that same day the angel Gavriel placed a reed in the sea, around which mud gathered and grew to become the place where Rome was later founded. On the very day that the Jewish people celebrated the construction of the Beis HaMikdash, the seeds of its future destruction were sown.

We know that Shlomo's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter was in accordance with *halacha*. She converted properly (Yevamos 76a) and as the Gemara in Shabbos (ibid.) states, "Whoever says Shlomo sinned is mistaken." The Radak (Melachim I 11:1) explains that Pharaoh's daughter did not have any negative influence on Shlomo at the time of their marriage. Only some forty years later, in his old age, when he married many other foreign women, did any misdeed occur. (Even then, Shlomo himself did not sin; but since Shlomo, in the weakness of his old age, did not stop these women from worshipping idolatry, he is held responsible – at his great spiritual level and according to the Torah's lofty standards – as if he transgressed himself.)

This was a day of historic spiritual accomplishment, the consecration of the earthly abode of the *Shechina*, with unimaginable holiness and joy. It was the first of seven days of celebration, which included Yom Kippur, and superseded the fasting

of that sacred day. In fact a Heavenly voice proclaimed to the people, who were concerned about having eaten on Yom Kippur: "You are all destined for the World-to-Come!" How could a slight misjudgment on Shlomo's part, which was not an actual sin and only became a negative force more than three decades later, have turned this incredible day into one of Divine "anger and fury?" A small error in an overwhelming sea of *kedusha* and *simcha* for the Beis HaMikdash – how could that have laid the foundations for its destruction and all the bitter suffering of our centuries-long exile, which has included pogroms, Inquisitions, Holocaust, terror and bloodshed?

The leaders of Klal Yisrael are not merely ceremonial figureheads. They are the heart and soul of our nation. We look to them for guidance, instruction and inspiration, not only from their teaching, but more importantly, from their example. Their acts of righteousness uplift and ennoble our entire people, but their indiscretions can wreak national spiritual destruction, reflected in physical terms, that may affect generations to come.

While few of us are leaders on a national level, we can all have an impact on other Jews in our own positions of leadership: on our families, our employees and even our neighbors. People are influenced by the example we set, and we can raise them, or lower them, with our seemingly "small" actions. May we appreciate the power and the responsibility we have, and affect our fellow Jews in a positive way that will bring them closer to Hashem, and ultimately, closer to the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our days.

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# HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

## Tevil as Keilim

*Rabbi Pesach Gottesman*

In this week's Parsha we find the requirement of Tevilas Keilim, immersion in a kosher mikvah, prior to usage, of all vessels/utensils used for food that were acquired from non-Jews. The Talmud Yerushalmi at the end of Avodah Zarah explains that this tevila removes the tumah from the keilim and brings it to Kedushas Yisroel. Rav Shmshon Refoel Hirsch explains why this immersion is necessary specifically for vessels used for food. Through this immersion, we demonstrate a sanctification of our entire lives by elevating the mundane act of consuming food to an act of holiness. For this reason, M'doraisa, one is only obligated to immerse metal keilim, which epitomize the highest accomplishment of mankind. The tevila is an act of purity to separate us from the secular attitude that the purpose of materialism is to simply fulfill animalistic desires.

The types of keilim requiring tevila (which materials, disposables, etc.) have been discussed in a past issue of Halacha Encounters (Matos 5767); here we will review the halachos of keilim prior to tevila, as well as the procedure for tevila.

### Use of Keilim Before Tevilas

Before tevila, a kli may not be used for food **even once**. Lining a kli, such as a pan with aluminum foil, will not negate the fact that the pan is being used. Therefore, Lechatchila one should not eat at the home of someone who does not toivel his keilim. If someone finds himself in an unavoidable situation and cannot refuse the food being offered to him, many poskim allow him to eat the food from a plate. They posit that merely removing food from a dish or glass is not considered using it. Other poskim offer additional reasons to permit usage of forks or spoons as well. Greater leniency is possible when the food does not actually require the dish to hold it, as in the case of cookies and cake (see Sefer Tevilas Keilim ch 3, note 19).

### Avoiding Tevilas

In some cases it is very difficult or even impossible to toivel certain keilim. In addition, someone may find himself in a situation where a mikvah is not available. Nonetheless, poskim offer different solutions to permit using these keilim. For example, if one renders a kli unusable in a manner which then necessitates repair by a professional (such as disconnecting the element from an institutional coffee machine), and then has the kli repaired by a Jew, it is now considered to be a vessel made by a Jew. Another solution is to transfer ownership of the kli to a goy and then to borrow it from him. However, many poskim contend that this is only a temporary solution (see Sefer Tevilas Keilim ch 6, note 2). If one has not yet taken ownership of the kli, it may be used as long as he is mindful not to take ownership until the item is toiveled.

### Giving Presents

One who is giving a dish requiring tevila as a present should not immerse it. Dishes which are only owned in order to give or sell to others are classified as "klei sechora" (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 120,8 and Taz ibid) and are exempt from tevila. The poskim state that tevila is ineffective for keilim which are exempt from tevila. A common dilemma arises when one wishes to give a candy dish with candies as a present to a Baal Simcha for a kiddish. Although many poskim allow food to be removed from a dish which has not been toiveled, lechatchila one should not rely on that opin-

ion. Some poskim suggest that ownership could be transferred to the recipient by giving the kli to a third person (who is not a member of his household) who will acquire the dish on his behalf. The dish can then be toiveled for the new owner (see however Tevilas Keilim ch.8, note 9). Another solution is to place the candies in strong cupcake holders so that the dish is not serving the purpose of holding candies (heard from R' Dovid Zucker).

### The Procedure for Tevilas

Care must be taken to ensure that there are no chatzitzos (separations) which might prevent the mikvah water from touching the kli. Therefore, prior to tevila, all label stickers and dirt must be removed. If one is not makpid about a particular chatzitzo (meaning that the owner and most people don't mind if the object remains there, and would not bother to remove it), it is not considered a chatzitzo and does not have to be removed. Consequently, one may leave the label on a bottle, or a sticker that advertises the brand of expensive crystal. One should remove all leftover glue one is makpid about (a solvent such as rubber cement thinner or nail polish remover will expedite this job). Often a wife will be more particular about the cleanliness of pots, and hakpada would depend on her. A kli previously owned and used by a goy should be kashered before tevila.

### Bracha

A bracha must be recited before tevila of most keilim. Exceptions, such as disposables and items which might have been made by a Jew, are discussed in length in a previous Halacha Encounters. Although some poskim encourage one to stand when the bracha is said, sitting is permitted. The kli should be held in the right hand, ready for tevila. If there are showers in the room of the mikvah, or close enough that steam from them could reach the mikvah, the room has a halachic status of "merchatz" (a bathhouse), and the bracha should be made outside (even if the room is empty). It should be noted that not all mikvaos used for tevilas anashim are suitable for tevilas keilim.

If one is toiveling many keilim, he should not speak or unnecessarily delay while immersing them. One may interrupt the process for matters pertaining to the tevila, such as asking an assistant to pass more dishes. If one recites the bracha, and then receives an additional, unanticipated item for tevila, one must repeat the bracha.

### Holding the Kli

When toiveling one must hold the kli in a loose manner so as to allow water to surround the entire kli. If the kli is heavy, and is liable to fall, one could pass the kli from one hand to his other hand, which is under the water. If the kli must be held tightly with both hands, one could wet his hands before taking the kli. The water on his hands is then considered to have a chibur (connection) to the mikvah water.

### Who May Toivel

Because the tevila of keilim does not require kavana (intention), it may be done by anyone, even a child or goy. However, because these people are not trusted to toivel properly, a Jewish man or woman (over the age of Bar or Bas Mitzvah) must be present at the tevila to observe the tevila in order to ensure that the tevila is being done in accordance with halacha. Additionally, when a goy toivels, a Jew should make the bracha, keeping in mind all the keilim, and toivel at least one kli.

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