



# The Proper Form to Immerse Utensils- Part 1

## What constitutes a kosher *mikvah* for utensils?

The Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* 75b compares the immersion of a woman for family purity to immersing utensils. Many early authorities (*Tosfot* *ibid*; *Sma*"k 199) understand this comparison to mean that only a *mikvah* with a volume of 40 *se'ah* (approx. 333 Liters according to the most lenient opinion) of rain water is considered kosher to immerse utensils, just as is required for a woman's immersion. However, the *Tur* (YD 120) brings a different opinion that there is no need to be so stringent, and a smaller *mikvah* of rain water should be sufficient to immerse utensils. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 120:2) and later authorities (see *Aruch Hashulchan* YD 120:10) agree with the majority opinion that in order to immerse utensils, a *mikvah* of a minimum of 40 *se'ah* is required. Many communities have a special *mikvah* adjacent to their main *mikvah* for immersing utensils. Utensils

may also be immersed in a women's *mikvah*. Regarding immersing utensils in a lake, sea or ocean, it is generally permitted to immerse in such bodies of water. (See *Beit Yosef* and *Shulchan Aruch* YD 201:5.) However, other factors need to be considered when immersing utensils in a natural body of water, and therefore a competent halachic authority should be consulted. (See *Responsa Chatam Sofer* YD 202; *Yabia Omer* YD 8:18.)

## Total immersion

Another comparison between family purity and *tevilat kelim* is found in a ruling by the *Chochmat Adam* (73:15). Just as a person must be completely submerged under water in order for the immersion to be kosher, so too utensils must be fully submerged. In addition, one is not allowed to immerse parts of the body separately. The *Chochmat Adam* rules that since our Sages compare a woman's immersion to *tevilat keilim*, a utensil must also be immersed all at once. Immersing part of a utensil and then flipping it around does not qualify as kosher immersion. The

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*Chochmat Adam's* ruling is accepted by later *poskim* (*Ben Ish Chai* vol. 2, *Matot*; *Halichot Olam* vol. 7, p.253).

In many *mikvaot* with deep water, it is common to find plastic baskets next to the *mikvah* for ease of immersion. These baskets may be used as long as multiple utensils are not stacked one on top of the other in a manner that will not allow water to enter all areas of the utensils.

### Removing stickers and residue

In the laws of family purity, a woman is not allowed to immerse with anything that comes between her body and the water. Similarly, when immersing utensils, all stickers, labels and tags must be removed before immersion. If it is difficult to remove the residue from the stickers, one should use hot water or chemicals to remove it completely. If, after serious cleaning, minor residue is still left on the utensil, the *Shulchan Aruch* (120:13) rules that it may be immersed. In a case where the utensil was immersed with stickers, immersion should be repeated after the stickers

have been completely removed (*Sefer HaKashrut* p.117; *Sefer Tevilat Keilim* 5:3.) When repeating immersion, the *bracha* should be recited a second time. (*Sefer Tevilat Keilim* p.72 cites this ruling in the name of Rav Yitzchak Yaacov Weiss and Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner.)

In a case where a utensil has been used prior to immersion and has residue of burnt food or fats stuck on it, the utensil must be completely cleaned before immersion (*Ben Yisrael L'Amim* 12:16). However, rust or discoloration that has no substance and cannot be removed does not affect the immersion of a utensil (*Darchoi Teshuva* 120:100). ■

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