## **OU KASHRUT**

BY RABBI EZRA FRIEDMAN Director, The Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education

## Cooking **Sharp foods**

S harp foods hold a unique status in the laws of kashrut and have various applications. The *Mishna* in *Masechet Avodah Zara* (2:6) rules that it is prohibited to purchase kort shel chiltit from non-Jews. *Kort shel chiltit* is asafetida, a common herb with a very strong, sharp taste. The Talmud (*Avodah Zara* 39:a) explains that since non-Jews use this strong spice in their cuisine, their non-kosher food flavor may have been absorbed during the process of preparing the spice.

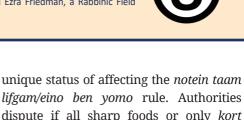
Our Sages in the Talmud (ibid) suggest that the *kort shel chiltit* made by non-Jews should be permitted if the utensils used to process it were *eino ben yomo* (not used for the last twenty-four hours). As explained in previous articles, flavor that was absorbed in a utensil can only prohibit other foods when the flavor is fresh. However, once twenty-four hours have passed, the flavor becomes *notein taam lifgam* (non-



desirable flavor) and does not prohibit the consumption of further foods cooked in the utensil. Our Sages inquired why the kort shel chiltit is prohibited even if non-Jews used their utensils for nonkosher food in the past. Now that the utensil is eino ben yomo, the spice should be permissible to eat. The answer given by the Talmud is an essential concept regarding sharp foods in halacha. The Talmud answers that since kort shel chiltit has such a strong flavor, it can turn the flavor in the utensil from eino ben yomo to ben yomo; or in simple terms it makes non-desirable flavor, desirable. Based on the answer above, the kort shel chiltit of non-Jews will always be prohibited, since no matter how much time has passed, the non-kosher flavor in the utensil will make the spice non-kosher.

Early authorities debate whether the unique rule of sharp foods reviving flavor is true with all sharp foods, or is it a specific rule regarding *kort shel chiltit*. The *Maharam (Teshuvot V'psakim 2:22)* rules that only regarding *kort shel chiltit* does distasteful flavor become viable and have halachic ramifications. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (YD 96:3) explains the logic of the *Maharam. Chiltit* or asafetida (in its fresh form) is almost inedible, has a pungent smell, and was mostly used for medicinal purposes. Thus, it has a unique

The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of Kashrut in Israel. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, a Rabbinic Field Representative for the OU is the Center's director.



classification in halacha. *Sefer HaTeruma* (60) disagrees with *Maharam*, citing many different sources in the Talmud to prove that any sharp food has the same halachic rule as *kort shel chiltit*. According to *Sefer HaTeruma*, sharp foods in our modern cuisine such as spices, onions and lemons could have an effect on milk and meat utensils, even if they are *eino ben yomo*.

The Rema writes clearly in numerous places (YD 95:2, 96:3, 122:3) that one must follow the Sefer HaTeruma's strict ruling and as such, all sharp foods can convert eino ben yomo utensils to ben yomo. Modern authorities agree with the *Rema*, and that is the normative practice of Ashkenazic Jewry (Shach YD 96:6, Aruch Hashulchan YD 96:4). Regarding the Shulchan Aruch, there seem to be contradictions in his rulings. In certain places, he cites the lenient opinion of the Maharam, while in other rulings he mentions the stringent opinion of the Sefer HaTeruma. Based on these contradictions, there is a dispute amongst later Sephardic authorities what the practice should be. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yabia Omer 8:43) is adamant that the Shulchan Aruch is lenient, while the Ben Ish Chai (Parshat Korach) maintains that the Shulchan Aruch rules stringently and that should be the accepted custom.

To summarize: Sharp foods have the

unique status of affecting the *notein taam lifgam/eino ben yomo* rule. Authorities dispute if all sharp foods or only *kort shel chiltit* are included in this category. Ashkenazim follow the strict opinion that all sharp foods are included, while Sephardi authorities are divided. The topic will be addressed further in forthcoming articles.

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