



# Temperature for Kashering

There are two types of kashering for utensils: *hag'alah* and *libun*. *Hag'alah* refers to the use of hot water to remove flavor from a utensil, while *libun* uses the heat of a flame to remove the flavor.

The type of kashering used is based on the way in which flavor was absorbed into the utensil. The Talmud (*Avodah Zara* 75:b) calls this rule “*kebol'o kach polto*”, literally “the way it is swallowed is the way it is released.” If flavor was absorbed via hot water/liquid, then *hag'alah* would be sufficient to kasher it. However, if flavor was absorbed by means of dry heat, such as broiling or roasting, then *libun* would be required. This article discusses *hag'alah*.

## Boiling Water

It would seem logical based on the principle of *kebol'o kach polto* that not only would the method of kashering be based on the form of absorption but the temperature as well. For example, if a utensil absorbed non-kosher soup at low heat, one might assume that the hot water used in the kashering process to remove the absorbed flavor would only need to be

slightly hotter than the temperature that the soup was cooked at. However, it is clear from early authorities (see *Rabeinu Yona Hagalat Keilim* 40) and codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema* (OH 552:1) that this is not the case. In order to remove absorbed flavor from the utensil, the water must be boiling hot, even if the original absorption occurred at a lower temperature.

This concept is explained by Rav Aharon Pfeuffer in his book *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Basar Bechalav* (volume 2 appendix:1). When our Sages codified the rule of *kebol'o kach polto*, it related to the **form** of absorption such as water or fire and not the **temperature** needed to remove the flavor. In order to remove absorbed flavor, a higher temperature is needed than the temperature in which the food was cooked. The temperature of the water must be boiling in order to remove all of the flavor. It should be noted, however, that Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igrot Moshe* YD 4:36) and other *poskim* ruled that in situations of severe need, *hag'alah* may be done using water only slightly hotter than the temperature at which the food was absorbed. The OU does not rely on this leniency.

## Exact Temperature

At sea level, water boils at 212°F (100°C),



while at higher elevations water boils at lower temperatures. For example, in Denver, Colorado, water boils at about 203°F and in La Paz, Bolivia at about 190°F. Conversely, below sea level such as at the Dead Sea, water will not boil even at 212°F. The question arises regarding kashering: is *hag'alah* only based on the water's boiling point regardless of temperature, or is the temperature what causes the flavor to be removed? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Minchat Shlomo* 2:51) seems to maintain that the water's boiling point is the essential factor in *hag'alah*. According to this view, there would be no problem performing *hag'alah* at high altitudes where water boils at a lower temperature, even if the absorption of the non-kosher food occurred at sea level at a higher temperature. However, OU policy as determined by Rav Yisroel Belsky is that the temperature, and not the boiling point, is the deciding factor in kashering with *hag'alah*. Rav Belsky noted that earlier *Rabbanim* considered 190°F (88°C) to be the correct temperature to define water as boiling. Even if the bubbles are not as strong, Rav Belsky maintained that 190°F is the beginning of the boiling point. This is also the approximate temperature at which water will boil in the cities of highest elevation (e.g. Cusco, Peru - 11,152 ft., La Paz, Bolivia - 11,910 ft., and Lhasa, Tibet - 12,002 ft.).

The OU requires a minimum water temperature of 190°F in order to perform proper *hag'alah*. However, since later authorities do cite 212°F as the ideal (*Igrot Moshe* YD 2:31), the OU prefers that temperature whenever possible.

#### To summarize:

- *Hag'alah* is a form of kashering in which hot water is used to remove flavor absorbed by a utensil.
- Even though the halachic principle of kashering is that *kebol'o kach polto* (the way the flavor enters is also the way in which it is removed), the water of *hag'alah* must be boiling, even if the flavor was absorbed at a lower temperature.
- The OU does not rely on the leniency that kashering may be done at the same (lower) temperature that was used in the cooking process.
- The temperature of water for *hag'alah* should be 212°F (100°C). Rav Belsky rules that 190°F is also sufficient. ■

### Kashrut Questions in Israel?

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at  
050-200-4432