



Hagalah: A Koshering Process

Min Hatorah, not all utensils which become non-kosher by absorbing the taste of non-kosher food can be purged, or koshered. For instance, it is impossible to purge "taste" from earthenware. Once an earthenware utensil is rendered non-kosher, it must be shattered and thrown away. On the other hand, metal vessels can be purged of their absorbed taste through a procedure called *hagalah*, purging. The *halachos* of *hagalah* are complicated, and what follows is merely an outline of its basic principles. [Unless otherwise noted, the following *halachos* apply to the Pesach koshering process as well.] Our discussion here refers only to the process of *hagalah*, not to be confused with other types of koshering such as *libun kal* and *libun chamur*, which have different rules altogether.

Which materials can be koshered by hagalah?

Utensils made from any type of metal,¹ stone,² wood,³ bone,⁴ leather,⁵ or natural rubber⁶ may be koshered by *hagalah*.

Earthenware,⁷ china, porcelain,⁸ glassware⁹ and paper¹⁰ utensils cannot be koshered by *hagalah*.¹¹

The *poskim* differ as to whether *hagalah* applies to utensils made out of the following materials: Plastic, melmac, nylon, corningware, corelle, pyrex, duralex, enamel, formica, teflon and silverstone.¹² When possible, these utensils should not be koshered by *hagalah*. In cases of absolute necessity or great financial loss, there are *poskim* who permit these items to be koshered. A *rav* must be consulted.

¹ Gold, silver, copper, steel, aluminum, etc.

² *O.C.* 451:8. However, what is known today as "stoneware" is not made from stone. It cannot be koshered; *ha-Mesivta*, 1998, pg. 424.

³ *O.C.* 451:8.

⁴ *Rama*, 451:8. See *Mishnah Berurah* 57 who rules that utensils fashioned out of a horn may not be koshered, since they may get ruined during the *hagalah* process.

⁵ *Peri Megadim*, *M.Z.*, end of *O.C.* 451.

⁶ *Igros Moshe*, *O.C.* 2:92.

⁷ *O.C.* 451:1.

⁸ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:163.

⁹ *Rama*, *O.C.* 451:26, regarding Pesach. Year-round, some *poskim* hold that glass never becomes non-kosher; see *Igros Moshe*, *O.C.* 5:32.

¹⁰ *Peri Megadim*, *O.C.* 451 quoted in *Kaf ha-Chayim* 451:126.

¹¹ In certain cases some of these types of utensils may be koshered if 12 months have elapsed since they were last used. This can be done only under the supervision of a *rav*, since there are several factors involved.

¹² There are basically 3 groups of opinions in the *poskim* regarding koshering these materials: Some allow them to be koshered from non-kosher to kosher but not for Pesach; others allow them to be koshered for Pesach as well, while others do not allow koshering them at all. If at all possible, therefore, koshering these items by *hagalah* is not recommended. In extenuating circumstances, however, a *rav* has leeway to permit koshering these materials. It is important to mention to the *rav* the manner in which these utensils were rendered non-kosher, since many *poskim* allow these materials to be koshered if they were not in direct contact with fire.



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Any utensil which may get ruined during the *hagalah* process may not be koshered, since we are concerned that its owner will not kosher the utensil properly for fear of damaging it.¹³ If one koshered such a utensil anyway, it should not be used.¹⁴ However, if it was used, the food that was placed or cooked in it does not become forbidden to eat.¹⁵

Which utensils can be koshered by *hagalah*?

A utensil becomes non-kosher (or meat or dairy) if it comes into contact with a non-kosher food item in one of the following ways:¹⁶

Direct fire: A utensil which is placed directly on the fire with no liquid or minimal oil, butter or shortening added (such as baking pans or parts of a barbecue grill), cannot be koshered by *hagalah*.¹⁷ A frying pan,¹⁸ too, should preferably not be koshered by *hagalah*.

Indirect fire: A utensil which contains liquid and is placed directly on the fire (such as a pot used for cooking on a range or a spoon used for stirring food in a pot on a burner) can be koshered by *hagalah*.

Heat contact: Utensils which come into direct contact with hot, non-kosher food, such as a plate onto which hot non-kosher food is placed, a fork with which it is eaten, or a cup into which it is poured, etc. These utensils may be koshered by *hagalah*. Included in this category are dairy dishes which were inadvertently washed together with meat dishes or vice versa.

Cold Contact: Utensils which come in direct contact with cold non-kosher food must be thoroughly washed with cold water.¹⁹ *Hagalah* is not required. If the non-kosher food was a liquid and it remained in the utensil for a period of 24 hours or more, however, *hagalah* is required.²⁰

Cold "Sharp" Contact: In the case of a cold but "sharp" non-kosher solid food that was cut with a knife,²¹ the knife requires *hagalah*.²²

¹³ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:23 and 57.

¹⁴ See *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 451:20 who maintains that once done it may be used, but other *poskim* imply that even *b'diavad* the *hagalah* should not be relied upon.

¹⁵ *Peri Megadim* 451:19.

¹⁶ There are also other issues which need to be explored before declaring a utensil non-kosher, such as the type of food, the amount of food, the degree of heat, etc. All the facts must be presented to a *rav* for a decision.

¹⁷ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:27.

¹⁸ Rama, *O.C.* 451:11 and *Mishnah Berurah* 67 and *Bejur Halachah*.

¹⁹ *Y.D.* 121:1.

²⁰ *O.C.* 451:21.

²¹ *Mishnah Berurah* 447:86.

²² There are conflicting opinions concerning vinegar, etc., that was in a utensil longer than 18 minutes; see *Tiferes Yisrael*, *Pesachim* 2:4 and *Mishnah Berurah* 447:42 and 71; 451:124. A *rav* should be consulted.



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Whenever a utensil needs to be koshered, its cover²³ and handles²⁴ need to be koshered as well.

How does one prepare a utensil for *hagalah*?

Hagalah purges the “taste” of non-kosher food which is absorbed into the walls of the utensil, but has no effect on actual food, residue or dirt which may be on the surface of the utensil. Accordingly, it is imperative that before the *hagalah* process begins, the utensil be scrubbed clean of any actual residue or dirt. Rust spots,²⁵ too, must be removed, since it is possible that particles of food are trapped between the rust and the utensil. One need not be concerned with rust stains, however, since no food particles can be trapped there.²⁶

Because of this prerequisite, there are several utensils which should not be koshered by *hagalah* since they cannot be cleaned properly and thoroughly:²⁷ Utensils which have crevices or cracks where food may be trapped, a pot that has a cover which is attached by hinges,²⁸ a mixer, food processor, blender,²⁹ thermos bottle,³⁰ sieve, strainer,³¹ grater, grinder, rolling pin, kneading boards,³² and anything else which cannot be scrubbed thoroughly and cleaned in every spot where food may possibly be trapped. If *hagalah* is performed on a utensil which was not completely cleaned, it is not valid even *b'diavad* and the *hagalah* process must be repeated.

Handles and covers must be cleaned as well as the utensils themselves. Any handle which is attached with screws should be removed and the area cleaned from food that may possibly be trapped before *hagalah* takes place. If the space between the handles and the utensil cannot be cleaned, the vessel may not undergo *hagalah*.³³

Our custom (based on several halachic factors) does not allow a utensil to be koshered by *hagalah* if it was used for non-kosher food within the previous 24 hours.³⁴ *B'diavad*, or in a

²³ *O.C.* 451:14, since the cover is rendered non-kosher through steam, etc.

²⁴ *O.C.* 451:12. Even the *poskim* who object to koshering plastic by *hagalah* will agree that plastic handles may be koshered; see *Shearim Metzuyanim b'Halachah* 116:10.

²⁵ We are primarily concerned with rust spots inside the utensil. Rust spots on the outside of the utensil which rarely come into contact with food need not be removed; see *Mishnah Berurah* 451:43.

²⁶ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:22.

²⁷ See *O.C.* 451:3 and *Mishnah Berurah* 22.

²⁸ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:44.

²⁹ Rama, *O.C.* 451:18. See *Mishnah Berurah* 102 that these utensils pose other problems as well.

³⁰ *Mishnah Berurah* 451:120 and 156.

³¹ Rama, *O.C.* 451:18.

³² Rama, 451:16 and *Mishnah Berurah* 94. See also *Beur Halachah*.

³³ *O.C.* 451:3 and *Mishnah Berurah* 23.

³⁴ Rama, *O.C.* 452:2; *Y.D.* 121:2. Some *poskim* require that the utensil not be used at all in the previous 24 hours, even for kosher items. Accordingly, the utensil should be scrubbed clean before the 24 hours begin; see *Mishnah Berurah* 452:20 and *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 25.



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situation where it is difficult to wait 24 hours, a *rav* may permit *hagalah* even within 24 hours under certain specific conditions.³⁵

In what type of pot is the koshering done?

When koshering for Pesach, it is preferable that the vessel used for the koshering process be either brand new or kosher for Pesach. It is also permitted to use a vessel which was previously used for *chametz*, provided that 24 hours have passed since it was last used.³⁶ The custom is to kosher the vessel itself by *hagalah* before using it as a receptacle for koshering the other utensils.³⁷ After the *hagalah*, the koshering pot should be put away. If it is needed for Pesach, it should be koshered again.³⁸

When koshering from non-kosher to kosher, the non-kosher utensil should be koshered in a kosher pot.³⁹

When koshering a meat utensil which became non-kosher through contact with dairy or vice versa, the koshering pot may be either meat or dairy. Neither the utensils being koshered nor the vessel in which the koshering is being done should be used for the previous 24 hours.

The koshering process:

The following is the correct, *l'chatchilah* procedure for koshering utensils by *hagalah*:⁴⁰

A pot with clean⁴¹ water is placed on the fire and the water heated to a rolling boil. Care must be taken that the water continues to bubble throughout the koshering process. In certain cases,⁴² the *hagalah* is invalid if the water was not bubbling at the time of koshering.

The entire non-kosher utensil, including its handles, is placed inside the bubbling water. It should not be withdrawn immediately nor should it be left in too long.⁴³ A few seconds is the right amount of time for the utensil to be immersed in the bubbling water.⁴⁴

³⁵ See *Igros Moshe*, Y.D. 2:31. See also *Chazon Ish*, O.C. 122:6 and Y.D. 23:1.

³⁶ *Mishnah Berurah* 452:13. See *Hagalas Keilim*, pg. 221.

³⁷ *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 452:15.

³⁸ *Mishnah Berurah* 452:10. If the volume of the water in the koshering pot was sixty times greater than the volume of the non-kosher utensil, then the koshering pot need not undergo *hagalah*, but this is difficult to calculate.

³⁹ *Mishnah Berurah* 452:13 and *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 16-17.

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all the *halachos* are based on O.C. 452 and *Mishnah Berurah*.

⁴¹ The water should not be dirty or filled with detergents and cleaners. Even if, during the koshering process, the water becomes dirty or tainted, it should be changed before continuing with the *hagalah*.

⁴² It depends whether the utensils became non-kosher by being placed directly on the fire or by coming into contact with heat. A *rav* must be consulted.

⁴³ *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 452:28.

⁴⁴ *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 452:3.



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If a utensil is too large to be inserted all at once into the koshering pot, it may be put in part by part.⁴⁵ *L'chatchilah*, care should be taken that no part be put in twice.⁴⁶

Immediately upon removing the utensil from the koshering pot, it should be rinsed with cold water. *B'diavad*, if it is not, the *hagalah* is still valid.⁴⁷

Although halachically anyone is permitted to kosher utensils, nevertheless, since the halachos are numerous and complex, *hagalah* should not be performed without the supervision of a *talmid chacham* who is knowledgeable in this area.

No blessing is recited over the koshering process.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ O.C. 451:11. See *Hagalas Keilim*, pg. 460.

⁴⁶ *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 452:28.

⁴⁷ *Mishnah Berurah* 452:34.

⁴⁸ See *Darchoi Teshuvah*, Y.D. 121:2; *Kaf ha-Chayim*, O.C. 451:200.