PESAH: Preparing our kitchen for Pesah. Part 1: “Invisible Hamets”

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Today, we return to the subject: “Hamets”. During Pesah, we do not use the same utensils or the same dishes we use throughout the year for Hamets. Why? Because although the utensils in which we cook, might be completely clean, without any visible remaining food, the pores and the surface of these utensils absorb the flavor of the foods cooked in them. Thus, if for example I cook meat in a pot, and then in the same pot, after I clean it, I boil eggs, the eggs will absorb some of the taste of the meat. Likewise, when we cook something in utensils used for cooking Hamets, some Hamets flavor will be reabsorbed in the food we prepare for or during Pesah.

It is customary, therefore (and it is the most recommended) having a set of dishes, plates and utensils to be used exclusively for Pesah.

Now, when this is not possible, we can use for Pesah the same utensils we have used throughout the year for cooking or serving Hamets food, after they go through a process known as hag’ala, (a kind of sterilization) to remove residual Hamets that may be absorbed within the walls and pores of these utensils.

Before making the Hag’ala we need to make sure that those utensils are thoroughly cleaned of any visible of Hamets (□□□ □□□□). The Hag’ala then would eject the invisible Hamets (□□□□) absorbed in the walls of the utensil. Eliminating these absorbed particles will take place under the same conditions the absorption of these substances occurred (□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□). The pores of a metallic surface open up when exposed to heat, and that is when absorption occurs. And the expulsion of these particles would also occur by exposing these utensils to heat.

Examples of hag’ala:

Metal: Metal cutlery such as forks, spoons or knives, must be first cleaned of all visible residue of Hamets. Then, they must be immersed in a pot of boiling water. Then we wash them

with cold water, and thus, they may be used for Pesah. Hot water opens the metal pores, allowing the ejection of any absorbed Hamets. The cold water closes the pores again.

Utensils used in cold: Since absorption only takes place at high temperatures, if a utensil was used during the rest of the year to prepare or serve cold food, it can be used during Pesah after cleaning it thoroughly from any visible rest of Hamets. And you will not need to subject it to the Hag'ala process.

Glass: According to the Sephardic tradition, glassware, cups, plates, etc, used throughout the year for Hamets, should be washed thoroughly and then can be used for Pesah without having to submit them to Hag'ala. Why? Because glass is sterile, it does not absorb (does not get impregnated with) any food substance through its pores, and therefore there is no Hamets to remove from its walls. This applies even for those glass utensils that have been used at high temperatures to cook or to serve hot Hamets food.

Notice that this Halakha is very different for the Ashkenazi custom. Some Ashkenazi rabbis as Rama think that since glass is made from sand, glass utensils should be regarded as clay utensils, which are not susceptible to Hag'ala, and therefore cannot be used on Pesah (see below). Other Ashkenazi Rabbis are more flexible, and allow an Hag'ala process for glassware.**Please refer to the rabbi of your community.**

Clay utensils, pottery and porcelain (Kele Heres): If these items were used for Hamets they cannot be used for Pesah, because they are not susceptible to Hag'ala. Why? Because the Rabbis of the Talmud considered that clay utensils (there was no porcelain then) eliminate the substances absorbed on their walls in an erratic (= not consistent) way. That is, sometimes it would expel an absorbed flavor, sometimes it will not. And so, they are not susceptible to Hag'ala, and cannot be used for Pesah. Contemporary rabbis believe that regular porcelain utensils should be considered of the same category as clay utensils. (There are other considerations to take into account, for example, if these utensils were used for cooking or for serving food; the temperature of the food served; if the china was not used for a long time; if it is common porcelain or glass coated , etc, etc.).

In all these cases and in cases that have not been explained

here, please consult with your community Rabbi for a final verdict.

In the coming days BH we will explain how to make Kasher for Pesah the kitchen (oven, dishwasher, etc).