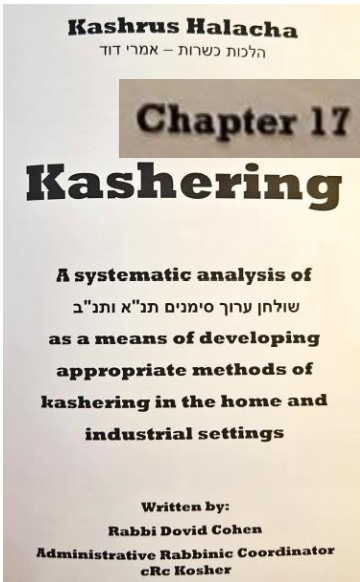


The Art of Halacha

Kashering Keilim – Libun 2 – What is Libun? & the 2 types of Libun Kal Rabbi Yisroel Isaacs



Two types of libun kal

As noted, *Rema* is allowing for leniency based on the opinion of *Hago'os Maimonios* that this form of *kashering* is actually *libun*. *Rema* refers to this lenient form of *libun* as “*libun kal*” (lite *libun*) (in contrast to “full *libun*” referred to as *libun gamur*), and we will see that that term “*libun kal*” is also used to describe a similar method of *kashering* that replaces *hag'alah*. While both are referred to by the same name (*libun kal*) and the required temperature is even described using the same words, “*kash nisraf*”, in truth these two forms of *kashering* are not identical.⁸

מבואר מהפרי מגדים (משבצות זהב סוף סימן תנב 'דיני וסדר הגעלה בקצרה) וז"ל, ליבון הוא המעולה מכל, ויש בו שלשה מינים, המין הא', מלבנו עד שיסיר קליפתו או ניצוצות נתזין הימנו וכו', המין הב', ליבון שאם קש נשרף עליו, וזה הוה רק כהגעלה כבסימן תנ"א סעיף ד' בהגה וכו', והמין השלישי, ליבון שנתחמם עד שיד סולדת בו מב' עבריו ומכל מקום אין קש נשרף בו, זה הוה רק כהגעלה וגרע מיניה קצת, דאלו בקש נשרף מהני אף לכלי ראשון ששימשו על האש והעלה רתיחות, וליבון חימום שיד סולדת בו לא מהני רק בכלי שני, עכ"ל. וכן המשנ"ב כתב בסמתמא מלבנו

We have seen that according to *Hago'os Maimonios* the requirement for *libun* is that the utensil be heated to the point that straw would burn on the other side of the pan. This ruling is taken literally (and will be described in more detail below), but the same is not true of *libun* which is performed in place of *hag'alah*. That is because that *kashering* is described as being completed when the utensil reaches *yad soledes bo* on the “other side”, and the *Rishonim* merely state that the *shiur* of *kash nisraf* is the test that the utensil has reached that temperature.⁹ In other words, *yad soledes bo* could theoretically be measured by touching your hand to the utensil to see if your hand (*yad*) pulls back (*soledes*) from the heat. Therefore, a common way to measure was to put a piece of straw on the utensil to see if it burns. Thus, when *libun kal* is performed in place of *hag'alah*, the utensil must be *yad soledes bo* (with *kash nisraf* being hotter than the required temperature), but when *libun kal* is performed in place of *libun gamur*, a true *kash nisraf* is required.¹⁰

Rav Heineman explained that this interpretation – that *libun* entails heating the utensil until it is red hot – can be inferred from the word “*libun*”, whose literal translation is “whitening”. This refers to the fact that when metal is heated sufficiently, it emits electromagnetic radiation which we see as a change in color, first red, then orange, yellow, and eventually white. As it is almost impossible to heat a utensil until it turns white without melting it, we understand that *Chazal* intended that we should heat the metal until the “whitening” process begins. This means that the utensil does not have to actually become white hot, rather, it must begin becoming white, i.e., red hot. Based on this explanation, he said that the utensil does not have to turn cherry red, but rather as soon as it exhibits any redness,⁵ *libun* has been completed.⁶

⁸ The chief metallurgist at a steel company which produces cRc certified products reported that the temperature at which metal turns red depends on the level of “redness” one is seeking, as follows:

- °F Color
- 752 Red heat visible in the dark
- 885 Red heat visible in the twilight
- 975 Red heat visible in the daylight
- 1077 Red heat visible in the sunlight
- 1292 Dark red
- 1492 Dull cherry-red
- 1652 Cherry-red
- 1832 Bright cherry-red

Thus, it appears that the difference of opinion noted in the text may revolve around the issue whether the redness of the metal must be visible even in the daytime or even just in the dark (see the earlier text).