

# YOREH DEAH 95:2015<sup>1</sup>

## On the Kashrut of Dishwashers

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*The following teshuvah was approved by the CJLS on November 11, 2015 by a vote of nine in favor, four opposed, and eight abstaining (9-4-8). Voting in favor: Rabbis Pamela Barmash, Miriam Berkowitz, David Booth, Elliot Dorff, Baruch Frydman-Kohl, Jeremy Kalmanofsky, Jonathan Lubliner, Micah Peltz, Paul Plotkin. Voting against: Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Reuven Hammer, David Hoffman, Amy Levin. Abstaining: Rabbis Noah Bickart, Joshua Heller, Susan Grossman, Adam Kligfeld, Gail Labovitz, Daniel Nevins, Avram Reisner, Jay Stein.*

### Sh'ayla:

May a non-Kosher Home Dishwasher be Kasherred?

May a Home Dishwasher be Kasherred for Passover?

May a Home Dishwasher be used to wash meat and dairy dishes? Simultaneously? Consecutively?

### Teshuvah:

#### How a Dishwasher operates

This Teshuvah only deals with home dishwashers where hot and cold water enter the dishwasher separately.

A general overview of how a dishwasher operates is helpful to understanding the kashering process.<sup>2</sup>

In a home dishwasher<sup>3</sup> hot and cold water enter the tub separately. In a normal dishwashing cycle, the water is kept at a temperature of 120-140 degrees Fahrenheit. The water collects at the bottom of the tub but does not cover the dishes. A pump then circulates the water through holes in the rotating arms, which sprays the water onto the dishes. While this is being done the detergent is released into the tub and is sprayed over the dishes. Dirt from the dishes is disposed of at the bottom of the tub. Depending on the model, larger pieces of food are either ground up and sent through the drain or are collected in a filter that needs periodic cleaning.

Since the mid 1990s all dishwashers made for home use in America have a tub made of stainless steel, plastic or a hybrid combination of both. Before the 1990s, dishwashers were also made of porcelain.

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Avram Reisner and Paul Plotkin for their insights and suggestions. I especially want to thank Rabbi Plotkin for permission to use many of the definitions of Halakhic terms from his Teshuvah, "[Pizza from a Non-Kosher Establishment](#)" that was approved by the CJLS in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> A good video of the standard operation of a dishwasher can be found at <http://www.repairclinic.com/RepairHelp/Dishwasher-Repair-Help>

<sup>3</sup> This Teshuvah does not address dishwashers that fill with only cold water and then a heating element inside the dishwasher heats the water.

*The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. The individual rabbi, however, is the authority for the interpretation and application of all matters of halakhah.*

Over time, these porcelain dishwashers had a tendency to chip or crack. Therefore this Teshuvah will only concern itself with metal or plastic dishwashers.<sup>4</sup>

Recently a new type of dishwasher, a ‘drawer dishwasher’ has come onto the market. This dishwasher operates with two different drawers that can be used separately or simultaneously.<sup>5</sup>

### Halakhic Concerns

#### *Kli Rishon/Kli Sheni:*

A *kli rishon* is a vessel in which cooking is done. A *kli sheni* is a vessel into which food is placed from the original pot that was used for cooking. This is an important distinction because of the accepted principle (Shulhan Arukh YD 105:2) that a *taam* (a taste/flavor, see below) cannot be transferred in a *kli sheni*

There are at least 4 reasons to be *mekeil* (lenient) and consider the dishwasher a *kli sheni*.

1. The hot water is heated in a hot water heater (*kli rishon*), then a tube draws the water to the dishwasher, finally the water pours into the dishwasher itself.
2. The water sprayed into the dishwasher is *iruy shenifsak ha'kiluach* (pouring that is interrupted)<sup>6</sup>.
3. Any water that may gather at the bottom of the dishwasher never completely covers the dishes.
4. According to some opinions, the water never reaches the temperature of *yad soledet bo*.<sup>7</sup>

#### *B'ayin/Taam:*

Another concern is whether there are any actual pieces of foodstuffs (*b'ayin*) on the dishes or is it the *taam* (taste/flavor) that is in the dishes.

Concerning *b'ayin*, modern dishwashers are constructed so that any foodstuff is sent to the bottom of the dishwasher where the filter either disposes of it or captures it inside the filter.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Iggerot Moshe, YD 3:28-29, YD 2:46 rules that if one purchases a home containing a non-kosher porcelain dishwasher, the dishwasher may be kashered by waiting 12 months and then running a soapy cycle, 3 times. He does not permit kashering a porcelain dishwasher for Passover, OH 3:58.

<sup>5</sup> Based on discussions with Fisher-Paykel, the manufacturer of most of these types of dishwashers on the market, it is clear that both drawers are totally separate, so that each drawer can be considered a separate dishwasher.

<sup>6</sup> Rashbam cited in Tosafot, Shabbat 42b says that any *iruy* is *iruy kli sheni*. Rabbeinu Tam disagrees, but both agree that if the *iruy* is interrupted then it is considered an *iruy kli sheni*.

<sup>7</sup> There are different opinions among Posikim as to what constitutes *yad soledet bo*. Rabbi Paul Plotkin, op cit, “*Yad Soledet Bo*: This is the minimum temperature at which cooking takes place according to halakha and that taste is transferred...Authorities have offered a range of 110 to 175 F.”

<sup>8</sup> “Consumer Reports”, in its November, 2014 issue, recommends NOT rinsing dishes before they are placed in the Dishwasher. They claim that it is both a waste of water and not necessary because modern dishwashers do a very effective job of removing pieces of food and sending them out of the dishwasher tub.

Concerning *taam*, the normative Halakha is that by waiting 24 hours (*ben yomo*<sup>9</sup>) any *taam* is made *pagum* (unfit as food). In addition, we have an added leniency since the Shulhan Arukh (YD 95:4) rules that soap in the dishwasher will render the *taam* as *pagum*.<sup>10</sup>

Another Halakhic issue is whether the *taam* comes from a non-kosher source or a kosher one. If it is from a kosher source then the concept of *notain taam bar notain taam de'heteira*<sup>11</sup> applies. This means that no prohibited *taam* is transferred from one vessel to another vessel. If, however, the *taam* is from a non-kosher source then the *taam* is *de'issura* and is transferred.

Having dealt with how a dishwasher works and the Halakhic issues involved, we can now deal with our questions.

### May a non-Kosher Home Dishwasher be Kasherred? May a Home Dishwasher be Kasherred for Passover?

Metal and Plastic are both materials that, if they can withstand the heat necessary for kashering, may be kasherred.<sup>12</sup> Dishwashers come in contact with food particles through hot water, so they should be kasherred with hot water (*hag'alah*). While the generally accepted principle is that *hag'alah* (kashering by water) requires boiling water (212 F), this is not necessarily true. The Mishnah Berurah (Shaar Hatziyun 451:196) says that the rule of *kevol'o kach polto*<sup>13</sup> means that each utensil is kasherred with water that is as hot as the water that it uses.

Therefore, by thoroughly cleaning the dishwasher, then waiting 24 hours and running it at its highest temperature, metal and plastic dishwashers can be kasherred from non-kosher to kosher and from hametz to Passover.

### May a Home Dishwasher be used to wash meat and dairy dishes? Simultaneously? Consecutively?

Since we consider a dishwasher a *kli sheni*, we do not concern ourselves with cooking. Furthermore, as we said above, the foodstuffs are removed from the tub of the dishwasher. Finally, the *taam* is *de'heteira*.

The one concern we have is the racks where the dishes are placed. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, in his Teshuvah permits using a dishwasher for meat and dairy but requires that the racks be changed. However, we can rely on the principle of *noten taam li'fgam* that after 24 hours (*ben yomo*), the *taam* is *pagum*<sup>14</sup> and the additional safeguard (*b'dieved*), that the soap also makes the *taam pagum*, and therefore we do not require separate racks.

<sup>9</sup> Shulhan Arukh YD 103. Rabbi Paul Plotkin, op. cit., "According to halakha, taste which is absorbed into the walls of the pot remains fresh for 24 hours. After that time, the taste is considered distasteful (*pagum*) and can no longer render food subsequently cooked in the pot as prohibited."

<sup>10</sup> The Taz and the Shakh (YD 95, 21) say there is no valid basis for this ruling.

<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Paul Plotkin, op. cit., "*Notain Taam bar Notain Taam De'heteira*, refers to the infusion of permissible taste into a vessel followed by that taste being infused into another food. When the taste of the permitted food is cooked into a vessel and subsequently discharged into another food the secondary taste is not capable of producing a prohibited entity."

<sup>12</sup> Rav Henkin (*Am HaTorah*, Cycle 1, Volume 10, page 5), *Tzitz Eliezer* (4:6:3) and *Minchas Yitzchok* (3:67) are all authorities who permit the *kashering* of plastic.

<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Paul Plotkin, op cit, "This means that the way in which something is absorbed is the way in which it is expelled."

<sup>14</sup> See Footnote 9, above.

Psak:

1. Dishwashers made for residential use, whether metal or plastic may be kashered from treife to kosher and from hametz to Passover. The procedure is as follows:
  - The dishwasher should be thoroughly cleaned paying special attention to the filter and the silverware rack.
  - The dishwasher should not be used for 24 hours.
  - The dishwasher should be run one time at the highest temperature with soap in the soap dispenser and in the main dishwasher.
2. The dishwasher may be used to wash meat and dairy dishes consecutively. While we do not require new racks, we do require waiting 24 hours between using the dishwasher for meat and dairy dishes.<sup>15</sup> However, if for some reason the dishwasher was used without the 24 hour waiting period, then *b'dieved*, we can rely on the soap rendering the *taam pagum* and the dishes are still kosher. It is strongly suggested that if there is a filter that requires manual cleaning at the bottom of the dishwasher, it be checked to assure there are no pieces of food remaining at the bottom. Also, the silverware rack must also be checked for food residue.
3. Dishwashers may not be used to wash dairy and meat dishes simultaneously.
4. With the new 'drawer dishwasher', if one designates one drawer exclusively for meat vessels and the other drawer exclusively for dairy, then the dishwasher may be used to wash both drawers simultaneously.

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<sup>15</sup> If racks are changed for meat and dairy, then there is no obligation to wait 24 hours. The dishwasher can be used immediately.