

Kashering a Microwave Oven for Pesah

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This paper was adopted on February 23, 1983 by a vote of 10-1-2. Members voting in favor: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Isidoro Aizenberg, Ben Zion Bokser, David M. Feldman, Morris Feldman, Wolfe Kelman, David H. Lincoln, Mayer E. Rabinowitz, Israel N. Silverman, Henry A. Sosland and Alan J. Yuter. Voting in opposition: Rabbi Salamon Faber. Members abstaining: Rabbis David Novak and Morris M. Shapiro.

SHE'ELAH

How can one kasher a microwave oven for Passover use?

TESHUVAH

There is a basic principle which is applied to kashering utensils for Passover -- *kevoleo kakh poleto* (as the vessel absorbs so does it rid itself of what is absorbed) (*Pesahim* 30b). Thus, utensils used for cooking may be kashered by boiling water. Glassware may be soaked in water for a period of time, while utensils used for broiling over an open fire must be heated until they are red-hot. Ovens are thoroughly cleansed and then heated until they are red-hot.

However, a microwave oven does not fit into any of the conventional categories. Though it is called an oven, it is in reality a protective box whose function it is to safeguard people from the harmful effects of radiation. The box is made of steel and coated with a non-porous and therefore non-absorbent plastic. The inside surface of the microwave oven, unlike that of the conventional oven, remains cool during the cooking process. Only in the spot where the utensil containing the food is placed does the surface become somewhat warm, because it absorbs some of the heat from the utensil as the food cooks.

Hence, the traditional method of cleansing an oven through *libbun* would not be necessary in the case of a microwave oven. Instead, the principle of *kevoleo kakh poleto* would suggest a method of kashering a microwave oven that would involve a thorough cleansing of the interior. However, to

differentiate Pesah kashering from ordinary cleaning, it is additionally recommended that a bowl containing water be placed in the microwave oven and the microwave oven be turned on so that the water will boil, and steam can reach all interior parts of the microwave oven.

Note: Before voting on this paper, it was amended to exclude its application to microwave ovens with a browning element.