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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel on Tuesday & Thursday nights (To listen: www.kimizion.org/shiur/shut.html). On the Air presents a sample each week.

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Eating from vessels which have not been immersed

Q: Is it permissible to eat at someone's house where the food is kosher, but the vessels have not been immersed in the mikveh?

A: This is a problem, since it is forbidden to eat from vessels which were not immersed unless they are plastic. Therefore, sometimes we cannot eat at other people's houses. But what should one do if it is his parent's house – not go there? In such situations when eating there is a necessity, we can combine four reasons in order to be lenient.

1. There is a lone opinion that the obligation to immerse utensils and vessels is not on the guest but on the host. This is a lone opinion and we do not follow it, but we are combining various reasons to be lenient here.

2. Some explains that there is an obligation to immerse the vessels, but there is no prohibition against using un-immersed vessels. This is similar to the obligation to put up a mezuzah. Some explain that there is an obligation to affix a mezuzah, but there is no prohibition to sleep in a room without a mezuzah. Obviously, in the meantime, I transgress the positive mitzvah of affixing a mezuzah every moment I do not. The same in our case, I transgress the positive mitzvah of immersing the vessels as long as I have not done so, but it does not prevent me from using them in the meantime. We do not rely on this, even in pressure filled circumstances, but again we are combining reasons.

3. It is forbidden for me to use an un-immersed vessel, so what should I do? Remove the food. I can remove the food from the plate with a spoon and it does not matter where I put it, in an immersed plate or in my mouth. This obviously works if I have tea in an un-immersed cup and I am removing the tea into my mouth, but it does not work if I am removing the food from an un-immersed plate with an un-immersed spoon. In our case, this does not help us, but we still have the first two reasons.

4. "Kavod Ha-Beriyot" – people's honor (dignity): The obligation to immerse metal is a Torah mitzvah and the obligation to immerse glass is a Rabbinic mitzvah. In certain cases, Rabbinic mitzvot can be overlooked for the sake of "Kavod Ha-Beriyot" (Berachot 18-19), such as a person eating at his parent's house. If he does not eat, they will be insulted and hurt. But they put me in this situation? It is like a person offering me a cigarette on Shabbat and he will be insulted if I do not smoke it?! I am insulting you, you are insulting yourself. True, but we only apply this principle for Rabbinic mitzvot, i.e. for glass but not metal. Most people do not eat on metal, although silverware is often metal, so this will not always help us.

Nonetheless, combining these four reasons will permit a person to eat at his parent's house in a pressing circumstance if the food is kosher, but the vessels have not been immersed in the mikveh. Obviously, it would be best if you could immerse all of their utensils and vessels. And if you only use plastic, the problem will be solved. But what about "Kavod Ha-Beriyot"? In such situations, you can say: "My Rabbi says I have to act this way." The person will not be offended, since he can interpret it to mean that perhaps my Rabbi says this and his Rabbi says otherwise. "My Rabbi says that when I eat at other people's house, I have to eat off of plastic."

Saying "amen" in a restroom

Q: If someone hears a blessing and he is in the restroom, should he say "amen"?

A: No, we do not say "amen" in the restroom, and also not in the shower.

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