

Singer-Jordan Edition
Mattos
 & Massey

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The laws of *kasbering* are many and confusing, and learned from this week's *parsha*. Thanks to Midian, we're still in exile. Bilaam sent them in, and their impact went far beyond Shittim, causing the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe to choose the land east of the Jordan river. And unfortunately and clearly unbeknownst to them at the time, it cost them and every Jew since then, the final stage of redemption.

Because, by choosing not to settle in *Eretz Yisroel*, they reduced the magical number of 600,000 necessary to annihilate the *Sitra Achra* and begin the Messianic Era. Had that many men between the ages of twenty and sixty settled on the west side of the Jordan, evil would have been destroyed forever, and *Yemos HaMosbiach* would have begun at that time.

Revenge against Midian in this week's *parsha* therefore was more historic than it might seem. And unlike with respect to the annihilation of Amalek, we were allowed to take spoils of war, which we did. Among the many things taken were cooking implements, and that created the need to talk *kasbrus*, specifically the *kasbering* of *treif* pots, pans, dishes, etc.

Obviously, everything had to be thoroughly washed and cleaned. That took care of all the *mamasbos*, the traces of food that stuck to the vessels. For the average person, that would have seemed like enough. What else *could* there be to worry about? *Bliyos*. Absorptions. Molecules of food that can, under the right conditions, become absorbed into the walls of a pot, a roasting spit, or a knife, etc. And even though such vessels may seem impervious to everything, especially today given the materials and methods used to make them, *halachbically*, nothing is. With enough heat, *bliyos* of what is being cooked will split away from the main food and become absorbed in the walls of the cooking instrument.

That's how a pot, etc., can become *milchbig* (dairy) or *fleishbig* (meat) and remain that way even after the food has been removed and the pot has been cleaned. It's the *bliyos* that were absorbed that do that, and they will remain in the walls of the pot until one of two things happen. Either the pot remains unused for 24 hours, or something is done, like *kasbering*, to draw out the *bliyos* and make the pot *pareve*

again.

Why 24 hours? Because Tradition teaches that *bliyos* can only remain detached from their source for 24 hours before they lose their taste, and *kasbrus* is a large part about taste. This works in two ways, because *bliyos* are something the rest of the world would not consider to be something to worry about in terms of *kasbrus*. On the other hand, they would call something food even though it has lost all taste. *Kasbrus* does not.

This means, technically-speaking, that any pot that sits a full 24 hours without being used and clean of all food automatically becomes *pareve* once again and, indeed, that is the Torah law. The rabbis however have declared that such a pot remains *milchig* or *fleishig* forever until properly *kasbered*. People make mistakes, especially with *kasbrus*, so many *halachic* fences have been put in place to keep people a safe distance from breaking Torah law.

However because many laws of *kasbrus* are rabbinic in origin, it leaves room for leniencies in emergency situations. No one can pick and choose which rabbinic laws to keep or ignore, but a competent *halachic* authority can decide in what situations they may or may not apply. This is usually based upon precedents from earlier generations.

The other way to *kasber* something is prescribed in this week's *parsha*. Since heat is usually the main culprit in causing *bliyos* to enter vessels, heat has to be used to rectify the situation as well. How much heat is used to *kasber* will depend upon how it was used to make something *treif* in the first place, or to make it *milchig* or *fleishig*. The stronger the heat, the deeper the *bliyos* enter the vessel and likewise, leave it.

That is part of the technical laws of *Kasbrus*. There is *mussar* in this as well because, like *bliyos* of food, we get absorbed into the "walls" of exile as well. Depending upon the heat (passion) that was used to cause this, that is how deep a Jew can be absorbed into exile, and that is how much heat (anti-Semitism) will be needed to extract the *bliyos*.

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* went down to Egypt, he did not convince everyone of his mission right away. Only a few people joined him, the rest holding out until they too became convinced of his Godly mission. After a few more plagues, some more joined the group, and then a few more.

But even still, after all of that and eight plagues, four-fifths of the Jewish people in Egypt at that time were still not onboard, and died in the Plague of Darkness instead of going out. That was twelve million Jews altogether who had become absorbed into the Egyptian lifestyle and refused to be extracted! "Rava says: It will be likewise in the Messianic Era" (*Sanbedrin* 111a.). No wonder Heaven is turning up the heat, and the Diaspora is becoming less and less hospitable.

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