Fork, Spoons, Knifes & the Melacha of Borer

“How can I make a salad quickly?”, pondered Mrs. Mandlen, five minutes before her guests were scheduled to arrive for the Shabbos seuda. “No problem, I’ll just make a “cucumber-peas” salad. It’s quick, I’ll simply peel and slice the cucumbers, take out the peas from the peas & carrots dish, and mix it up.”

Does Mrs. Mendlen need to be aware of anything to avoid doing the melacha of borer?

Devar Halacha Reviewed by HoRav Malinowitz

One is permitted to use a knife to peel fruits and vegetables, whether the shell is edible or non-edible. However, this should be done for immediate usage.

One should not use a fork, spoon, knife or any other kli to improve the selection process (i.e. when selecting peas from a mixture of peas and carrots, one should not use a spoon to select more peas at one time than he would ordinarily be able to by hand).

Mekor Halacha

The Chaza''l derived from a Braisa that it is prohibited m’deoraisa to do borer (selection) using a special instrument whose purpose is to facilitate sorting / selecting (e.g. a sieve). This is true even if one selects ochel from p’soles for immediate usage².

Cont. on page 2
Halacha Challenge

It is further stated in the Gemora that if one uses a kli (to facilitate the selection) which was not built as a tool for selecting or sorting (e.g., a fork), even though he is not violating a Torah law, he is, however, violating a Rabbinic g’reiza. Chaza”l prohibited using even such kelim to do a selection, since the action resembles the melacha of borer.

On the other hand, we see that sometimes implementing such instruments for a purpose of borer is in fact permitted in halacha. For example, based on Gemora Yerushalmi, we derive the following halacha: It is prohibited to peel off a shell of a garlic clove or an onion (due to the melacha of borer) if it is done for a non-immediate usage of the vegetable. However for immediate usage, peeling off such shells is permitted. The Magen Avraham rules that apples and similar food items (i.e., with an edible skin) are included in this halacha. Since for immediate usage it is permitted to peel an apple, and on a practical level one needs to use a knife to peel off a shell from an apple, we see that a knife does not create an issue with the melacha of borer.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l explains that Chaza”l prohibited using such instruments (i.e., forks, spoons, etc.) in a scenario where they are used to assist a person in the actual selection process (e.g., if one will select more items at a time with a spoon than if he will do it by hand). However, provided that one is selecting ochel from p’soles (or removing a shell) for immediate usage, one is permitted to use these kelim if he merely needs to reach an item that he needs to select, or if he doesn’t want to get his hand dirty, or for other similar reasons. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l further explains that when a knife is used to peel off a shell, in essence the knife simply performs the cutting and doesn’t facilitate a better selection. As such, it is permitted to use a knife to peel a vegetable or a fruit for immediate usage.

Wonders of Creation

Golden Poison Frog

The Golden Poison Frog, also known as the Golden Frog, is a poison dart frog endemic to the Pacific coast of Colombia. In the wild this frog is a social animal, living in groups of up to 6 individuals; however, in captivity specimens can live in much larger groups. This frog is often considered innocuous due to their small size and bright colors, but wild frogs are lethally toxic, and may be the most poisonous of any living animal.

Its skin is densely coated in alkaloid poison, one of a number of poisons common to dart frogs batrachotoxins, which prevents nerves from transmitting impulses, leaving the muscles in an inactive state of contraction. This can lead to heart failure or fibrillation. Some native people use this poison to hunt by coating darts with the frog's poison. Alkaloid batrachotoxins can be stored by frogs for years after the frog is deprived of a food-based source, and such toxins do not readily deteriorate, even when transferred to another surface.

The golden poison frog is not venomous, but poisonous: venomous animals and plants do not have a delivery method for the toxin, such as fangs or spines, while poisonous animals and plants do not have a delivery method and rely on transference of the toxin. Like most poison dart frogs, it uses this poison to hunt by coating darts with the frog’s poison. Alkaloid batrachotoxins can be stored by frogs for years after the frog is deprived of a food-based source, and such toxins do not readily deteriorate, even when transferred to another surface.

Solve a Riddle

Riddle

Sometimes the most significant one comes first. For example, a Cohen gets the first aliya. Sometimes it comes last. For example, Euphrates—the most significant of the four major rivers—is the last mentioned in parshas Bereishis. Where in the Torah does the most significant one come exactly in the middle?

Answer to last issue’s riddle:

Who are their pals? Chanuka dreidles. What's leaping from 300 to 80? Chanuka dreidles have a ⤼ to represent the word שער instead of ש for שער. The gematria of שער is 300; the gematria of שער is 80.