

## Rinsing dirt off fruit

The **mishna** (140a) states:

One may not soak vetch, and may not rub it.

**Rashi** explains:

One may not soak vetch – inundate it with water in a vessel in order to select the waste; and may not rub it – by hand to remove the waste, as this is Selecting.

Vetch is a type of grain, typically designated for animals. The mishna teaches that when vetch is mixed with dust, dirt, and the like, it is prohibited to inundate it with water in a vessel in order to select the waste, and one may not rub it by hand and remove the waste from it, due to the prohibition of Selecting. The *Shulḥan Arukh* rules accordingly (319:8):

One may not soak vetch, that is, to inundate it with water in a vessel in order to remove the waste, and one may not rub it by hand to remove the waste, as this is tantamount to Selecting.

The mishna states that soaking vetch in water is prohibited even if it is done just prior to eating. What is the reason for this?

It is selecting **the waste from the food**.

Selecting by means of water is **like selecting with a vessel**.

If it is considered selecting with a vessel, perhaps there are cases where soaking food in water would be permitted, as there are circumstances where selecting with a vessel is permitted, e.g., if the selecting could be performed manually, in which case the utensil does not facilitate selecting, but merely keeps one's hands clean. In any case,

It is prohibited to soak vetch in water so that the waste will float

Soaking in water is considered selecting waste from food

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would not be violated, at least according to the opinion of the *Mishna Berura* who ruled that it is permitted to remove waste with some food (see above, p. 834), and on the other hand, the few other remnants will not directly have a negative effect on the Sabbatical Year remnants.

the *Aḥaronim* apparently adopt the first opinion, that this is selecting waste from food (see *Peri Megadim*, *Mishbetzot Zahav* 319:5).

If so, one may not  
rinse dirt off fruit  
and vegetables

According to the above reasoning, **it is prohibited to rinse dirt off fruit and vegetables**, even if one plans to eat them immediately. This is also the conclusion in the *Mishna Berura* (319:29):

The same is true regarding potatoes and the like. It is prohibited to pour water on them to remove dust and dirt from them.

It is likewise written that the *Hazon Ish* prohibited rinsing fruit and vegetables even for immediate consumption, as cited in *Ayil Meshulash* (15:3):

Some permit holding produce and rinsing it under the faucet to eat it immediately, but *Aḥaronim* rule that even this is prohibited, because it is selecting waste from food. I heard the same attributed to the *Hazon Ish*, that it is prohibited to rinse it under the faucet.

Rinsing produce is  
part of the process  
of eating

Ostensibly, there is reason to permit rinsing fruit. It was stated above (pp. 841–842) that peeling produce is permitted even if the peel is not edible, provided it is done just before eating, because there is no alternative to access the fruit. If so, it should be permitted to remove dirt from the produce just before eating, as there is no alternative to access it.

However, there is room to distinguish between the cases: The peel is an organic part of the fruit whose removal is part of the process of eating the fruit. Dirt is external waste (*Ayil Meshulash* ad loc., note 12). Yet there is room to reject this distinction. Produce is typically covered with dirt; if so, what is the difference between external waste and organic waste? Both prevent access to the fruit, and removal of both is part of the process of eating.

Several proofs that  
rinsing produce is  
permitted

Furthermore, there are several proofs that it is permitted to remove external dirt (as explained by **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**, cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 48). One proof is from the *Gemara* (118a):

The Sages taught: Bowls from which one ate in the evening, it is permitted to rinse them to eat from them in the morning; in the

morning, it is permitted to rinse them to eat from them at noon; at noon, it is permitted to rinse them to eat from them in the afternoon. From the afternoon on, one may no longer rinse them. However, cups, ladles, and flasks, it is permitted to rinse them all day because there is no fixed time for drinking.

The Gemara permits washing dishes on Shabbat if needed for Shabbat, and the *Shulḥan Arukh* (323:6) rules accordingly. These vessels have external dirt on them, and yet it is permitted to remove it.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, the Gemara (114b) permits *kenivat yarak* on Yom Kippur in the late afternoon. What is *kenivat yarak*? Various interpretations are suggested by *Rishonim*. The Ramban (ad loc.) maintains that it means rinsing vegetables:

From the passage in the Yerushalmi, it is clear that the *kenivat yarak* discussed here is simply rinsing, and we learned likewise in the *Tosefta*. If the reference was to actual *keniva*, i.e., cutting and trimming, it would be Selecting, and one would be liable even if the vegetables were already detached from the ground, as it is performed to put it aside.

The Rashba (ad loc.), too, explains along these lines. According to this opinion, washing fruit and vegetables is permitted on Shabbat.

Another proof is from the *halakha* of washing uncooked meat on Shabbat. The *Shulḥan Arukh* permits eating uncooked meat on Shabbat (318:2):

42. It should be noted that equating washing fruit and washing dishes leads to the conclusion that it is permitted to wash fruit even for later consumption, as the Gemara permits washing dishes for the next meal. *Aḥaronim* generally do not rule leniently in this regard, as they permit washing fruit only for immediate consumption. Indeed, there are other reasons to differentiate between washing dishes and washing fruit, e.g., standard use of dishes leads to their getting dirty; therefore, washing them is characterized as cleaning, not Selecting (see *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 7, citing Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

With regard to one who slaughters meat for an ill person on Shabbat, whether he fell ill the previous day or on Shabbat, it is permitted for the healthy to eat from it uncooked on Shabbat.

The proof here relates to the prohibition of consuming blood, as it is prohibited to eat uncooked meat unless the blood has been thoroughly rinsed from it. The *Mishna Berura* indeed writes that it is prohibited to salt the meat on Shabbat, but one must rinse it (318:10):

Uncooked on Shabbat – but without salting, as it is prohibited to salt on Shabbat, but rinsing is required due to the blood that is present.

Ostensibly, rinsing the blood off meat is comparable to rinsing dirt off produce. Nevertheless, it is permitted.

*Aḥaronim*: It is permitted to wash dirt off fruit

On the basis of these sources, several *Aḥaronim* permit rinsing dirt off fruit and vegetables, provided that one does so just prior to eating. This the ruling of the *Ketzot HaShulḥan* (125; *Badei HaShulḥan* 16; 146; *Badei HaShulḥan* 50, note 10), Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, *Orah Hayim* 4:125), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 48), Rav Eliashiv (cited in *Ayil Meshulash* 15, note 10),<sup>43</sup> among other authorities.

According to these *Aḥaronim*, the question arises: What is the difference between soaking vetch in water, which is prohibited by the mishna, and rinsing fruit, which they rule is permitted?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach: The leniency applies only to dirt attached to the produce

According to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 48), Rav Zilber (*Az Nidberu*, vol. 1, 17–18) and others, the relevant distinction is between dirt that is **mixed** with food and dirt that **adheres** to it. Dirt or dust that is **attached to the fruit** is like a peel, and removing it for immediate consumption is not classified as Selecting, but rather, as **part of the process of eating**, like peeling. The mishna, in contrast, is referring

43. However, he writes that one should wash them before Shabbat *lekhatḥila*, probably in order to satisfy the requirements of the ruling of the *Hazon Ish*.

to vetch that has dirt and dust **mixed** with it. Its status is like that of any other mixture; therefore, removal of waste is an **act of Selecting**. This is also the ruling in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (3:21):

Fruit or vegetables that are **mixed** with any kind of waste to the extent that most people would not eat them, it is prohibited to place them in water so that the waste will fall off or rise above. Similarly, it is prohibited to rinse the waste with a stream of water, because this also constitutes separating waste from food. Rather, one should prepare and rinse produce before Shabbat.

However, if the dirt is **attached** to the produce, or if there is dust or pesticides etc. on them, it is permitted to remove them by pouring water on them, but one should do so only just before eating the fruit.

This distinction is bolstered by the opinion of **Rabbeinu Ḥananel** (74a) that the prohibition of Selecting does not apply at all to food and waste that are attached, but only to food and waste that are actually mixed.<sup>44</sup>

*Ketzot HaShulḥan* (125, *Badei HaShulḥan* 16) suggests an alternative distinction between rinsing fruit and soaking vetch:

The *Mishna Berura* wrote . . . “Potatoes and the like; it is prohibited to pour water on them to remove dust and dirt from them.” This means placing potatoes in a receptacle and adding much water in a vessel so that the dust would float on the surface of the water, or descend to the bottom. However, if one takes the potatoes in his hand and rinses them and washes them in water, it is obvious that this is not categorized as Selecting, but it is like removing the peel of a fruit, which is permitted just prior to eating . . . as it is not at all similar to Selecting.

*Ketzot HaShulḥan*:  
It is permitted to  
rinse but not to  
soak

44. Indeed, Rabbeinu Ḥananel (ad loc.) writes that removing the dirt covering the fruit is not under the rubric of the prohibition of Selecting, but rather, of the labor of Threshing.

In his opinion, the relevant distinction is between **soaking** and **washing**. The mishna prohibits **soaking** vetch in water, as this results in the waste floating, which is the typical manner of selecting, which is prohibited.<sup>45</sup> However, **rinsing** fruit under a stream of water is not the typical manner of selecting, and is comparable to removing a peel, which is permitted for immediate consumption. A similar distinction is mentioned in *Iggerot Moshe* (*Orah Hayim* 1:125).<sup>46</sup>

*Hazon Ish* is stringent even with regard to rinsing and even when the dirt is attached

It is permitted to soak or wash dirt that does not bother most people

As stated, the *Hazon Ish* disagreed with these distinctions, and rules that it is prohibited to rinse fruit and vegetables even if the dirt is attached to them, and even if one rinses them under a stream of water and eats them immediately (see *Ayil Meshulash* 15, note 13). In his opinion, the only way to eat fruit and vegetables that have dirt on them on Shabbat is to rinse them before Shabbat.

In contrast to the above, if there is no visible dirt on fruit and vegetables, but people typically wash them for the sake of hygiene

45. Although the *mishna* states that it is also prohibited to rub vetch by hand (and the *Shulhan Arukh* rules accordingly), it is possible that this is referring to one who rubs the waste attached to the vetch and then selects the waste from the food (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 53), or to one who rubs the vetch in water and then the water causes the waste to float (*Eglei Tal*, Borer 16). Likewise, it should be noted that according to the *Yerushalmi* (20:3), the prohibition to rub vetch is not due to Selecting but due to **Threshing**, a labor that does not apply to washing produce, as threshing is by definition an act performed in the field, while produce is washed at home (see pp. 705–708).

46. However, there is a significant difference between the opinions of *Ketzot HaShulhan* and *Iggerot Moshe*. According to *Ketzot HaShulhan* (146, *Badei HaShulhan* 50, note 10), distinguishing between rinsing and soaking is a stringency: Even when the dirt on the produce prevents it from being eaten and it is like a peel, it is permitted to remove it only by rinsing, not soaking, as soaking is always considered the typical manner of selecting. In contrast, *Iggerot Moshe* holds that this distinction is a leniency: Even when the concept of “part of the process of eating” is **inapplicable**, e.g., the dirt does not prevent eating it, or one wishes to eat the produce later, rinsing the produce is permitted, as rinsing is an act of cleaning and is not as an act of Selecting. Nevertheless, *Iggerot Moshe* does not rely on this reasoning in issuing his practical halakhic ruling. That is why it is stated below that there is room for leniency only if it can be defined as “part of the process of eating.”

and health, e.g., to remove pesticides, it is permitted to rinse them or soak them in water even according to the *Hazon Ish* (*Ayil Meshulash* ad loc., note 22; *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 54). This is the ruling in *Responsa Shevet HaLevi* as well (*Responsa* vol. 1, 52:2):

With regard to what you asked, whether it is permitted to rinse grapes on Shabbat to remove dirt... I am accustomed to rule that if the rinsing is due only to the contemporary standard of cleanliness, and there is no actual waste preventing consumption, there is no question that it is permitted to rinse them. However, if there is actual waste, which is quite common, it is like the vetch and potatoes to which the *Mishna Berura* referred, and it is prohibited.

The reason for this is that rinsing fruit and vegetables of this type is not a prerequisite for eating them, as people would generally be willing to eat them without rinsing. This issue is comparable to a case cited below (pp. 912–915), that it is permitted to filter clear water even with a vessel, as most people would drink the water without filtering. Therefore, doing so is not significant preparation. It is also possible that it is all considered a single kind.<sup>47</sup> This washing is ostensibly permitted even if one does not want to eat the produce immediately. *Iggerot Moshe* agrees (ad loc.).

How can one decide between these opinions? In order to reach a practical halakhic ruling, one must first determine whether Selecting by soaking in water is prohibited by Torah law or by rabbinic law. On the one hand, it appears to be a Torah prohibition, as it is selecting waste from food, perhaps even performed with a vessel, the water. On the other hand, one could contend that selecting with water is not the typical manner of selecting, and if so, it could be tantamount to removing a peel or washing dishes, as explained.

Is it a Torah prohibition or a rabbinic prohibition?

47. *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (ad loc.) mentions an additional reason to permit this: Since the dirt is not at all discernible, perhaps it is not considered Selecting. Consequently, it is permitted to rinse the produce even if the individual in question is very particular and would never eat produce that was not rinsed.



**Rashi** (on the mishna), writes that rubbing vetch by hand “is Selecting.” It appears that his opinion is that it is a Torah prohibition of Selecting. In contrast, the *Tur* and *Shulḥan Arukh* (319:8) write that “it is **like** Selecting.” This implies that it is not a full-fledged labor, but only tantamount to Selecting. The *Peri Megadim* (*Mishbetzot Zahav* 319:5) is uncertain as to whether this constitutes a Torah prohibition. The *Beur Halakha* (ad loc., s.v. *dehava lei*) is uncertain and is inclined to be stringent:

Rashi’s formulation here is “as this is Selecting.” See the *Peri Megadim*, who is uncertain as to whether one incurs liability to bring a sin offering for this. In my humble opinion . . . this, too, is a full-fledged labor by Torah law, and this is the conclusion drawn from the Yerushalmi in *Beitza* (1:10) as well.

In contrast, the *Shevitat HaShabbat* (*Borer*, *Be’er Reḥovot* 50) writes that it is prohibited only by rabbinic law:

It appears that it is prohibited only by rabbinic law, because the person should have prepared on the previous day. This is not the case regarding dishes that became dirty on Shabbat and one needs them for that day; therefore, the Sages did not issue a decree in that case.

This also appears to be the conclusion of the *Eglei Tal* (*Borer* 16) and the *Leviyat Hen* (52).

It is difficult to determine conclusively whether this is a question of Torah law or of rabbinic law, but one can factor the opinion that the prohibition here is only by rabbinic law with other mitigating factors, especially since many of those who rule stringently are uncertain whether the prohibition here is by Torah law, whereas those who rule stringently determined that the prohibition is by rabbinic law.

**In practice**, if there are **pesticides** or some other **undetectable** substance on the fruit or vegetables, and people can eat them without rinsing, there is room for leniency and one may wash them in the standard manner, even for later consumption, and even soak them in soapy water and the like if it is necessary to remove the pesticides.

Halakhic ruling:  
Soaking and  
washing fruit



When **actual dirt is attached to the fruit**, it appears that there is room for leniency and one may **rinse it under the faucet for immediate consumption** or just prior to the meal; however, one may not soak it. One thereby combines the opinion that removing dirt attached to a fruit is like removing a peel, with the opinion that rinsing under a stream of water is not considered an act of Selecting.

When dirt is **mixed with the produce**, e.g., grapes or berries with waste in their midst, it is prohibited to rinse them on Shabbat, as perhaps only dirt attached to the produce is equivalent to a peel, not dirt mixed with fruit. It is permitted to remove each grape or berry individually, food from the waste, for immediate consumption, in accordance with the standard principles of the prohibition of Selecting.



Rinsing produce: There is room for leniency for immediate consumption even if there is actual dirt on it.

If one purchases standard lettuce and wants to clean the insects from it, one must soak it for three minutes in water with a bit of dishwasher soap, rub each leaf on both sides, and then rinse it under a faucet. Sometimes there are instructions to perform some of these actions even for hydroponically-grown lettuce. Is it permitted to do so on Shabbat?



Soaking lettuce in water with soap: There is room for leniency in the case of lettuce grown without insects.

If there is dust, dirt, or sand on the lettuce that can be separated by soaking, it is clear that soaking is prohibited. In that case, one should rinse the leaves in water just before the meal, as explained above, to remove the dirt and clean the lettuce.

When the lettuce is clean, the soaking is only to loosen the insects' hold on the leaf, as a substance is secreted from their legs that enables them to hold on to the leaf, and fat-removing soap loosens that hold. Consequently, it is permitted to soak the lettuce, as the water does not separate any waste; it merely loosens the insects' grasp. Afterward,

Washing lettuce to remove insects

It is prohibited to soak dusty and dirty lettuce in water

It is permitted to soak clean lettuce if there is little chance of finding insects

it is permitted to remove the insects with a stream of water from the faucet, as explained with regard to dirt attached to fruit.

However, this is permitted only if one does not kill the insects, as it is prohibited to kill creatures on Shabbat (see **Rambam** 11:2; *Mishna Berura* 316:41 and *Beur Halakha* ad loc.; *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3:36). In practice, since standard lettuce presumably contains insects that will die, it is prohibited to soak it in soapy water. Nevertheless, in the case of hydroponically-grown lettuce, soaking it in soapy water is merely a precaution, and there may be no insects there. Therefore, there is room for leniency and one may clean it on Shabbat.<sup>48</sup>

Removing insects  
from the lettuce

Likewise, it is permitted to examine a lettuce leaf under light, and upon finding an insect, remove it along with an uninfested part of the leaf. If the insect is large, it is fundamentally permitted to remove it alone, as it is separate from the lettuce.<sup>49</sup> It is also permitted to remove the moldy upper leaves and leave the rest of the leaves, as this is tantamount to removing a peel (*Beur Halakha* 319:1, s.v. *min he'alim*).

Summary

**IN CONCLUSION, it is permitted to soak produce in order to remove undiscernible pesticides provided that the produce is otherwise edible. It is prohibited to soak produce to remove actual dirt that is attached to it, but it is permitted to rinse it in a stream of water**

48. In this case, it may be that there are no insects; even if there are insects, they might already be dead. Similarly, while killing some insects on Shabbat is prohibited by Torah law, killing others is prohibited only by rabbinic law (see *Mishna Berura* 316:41, *Beur Halakha* there). Since the intent is not to kill them, but to remove them, this is a double uncertainty in a case of inevitable outcome [*pesik reisha*]; moreover, it may even be prohibited by rabbinic law. Therefore, it appears appropriate to permit it. As stated, this rests on the assumption that the lettuce appears clean, so that soaking it will not cause separation of dirt and the like.

49. This is the opinion of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata*, 3:36, note 100. However, Rav Auerbach added that, nevertheless, it is preferable to be stringent and to remove the insect with some of the leaf, as perhaps moving the insect alone is problematic in terms of the prohibition of *muktze*.

just before consumption. If dirt is mixed **with individual berries**, it is preferable to rinse them before Shabbat. It is permitted to soak hydroponically-grown lettuce in soapy water when it is not mixed with dirt, and it is permitted to remove an insect from lettuce with a small part of the leaf. However, it is prohibited to kill insects on Shabbat, and therefore, one may not soak standard lettuce in soapy water, as it presumably contains insects, and doing so will kill them.

