

## A slotted spoon

It would appear that it should be prohibited to use a slotted spoon on Shabbat, as this is clearly **straining with a utensil**. Is this spoon comparable to a **sieve and sifter**, whose use is prohibited by the Torah, or is it comparable to a **tray and a plate**,<sup>7</sup> items not designated specifically for selecting, whose use is prohibited only by rabbinic law?

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7. Rav Yosef, in the Gemara (74a), distinguishes among three forms of Selecting: By hand, which is permitted; with a tray or a plate, which is prohibited by rabbinic law; and with a sifter and a sieve, which is prohibited by Torah law.

On the one hand, a slotted spoon is designated for **Selecting**; therefore its status should be equivalent to that of an actual filter. On the other hand, it is used also for removing food, and perhaps the fact that it strains is merely an added convenience. In other words, while this implement is used for selecting too, it might have more significant uses. Rav Ben Tziyon Abba Shaul, in his work *Or LeTziyon* (vol. 2, 31:10), writes that the status of this utensil is like that of a **tray and a plate** and therefore is prohibited only by rabbinic law, and his opinion is reasonable.

Using a slotted spoon is **Selecting** by rabbinic law



It is preferable to refrain from using a slotted spoon.

Either way, it is prohibited to use a slotted spoon, at least by rabbinic law. However, the *Or LeTziyon* writes that there is room for leniency in this regard (ad loc.):

*Or LeTziyon*: It is permitted to use a slotted spoon

**QUESTION:** Is it permitted to remove food from a soup pot with a ladle with holes through which the liquid is strained, or is this prohibited due to **Selecting**?

**ANSWER:** It is permitted to remove food with this ladle even though the soup is strained through the holes, provided that the person intends to eat it immediately. In any case, one who is stringent in this regard is praiseworthy.

In a note he clarifies:

Although it would appear that this should be prohibited by rabbinic law when performed with a utensil, as it is comparable to using a tray or plate... one may take into consideration the opinion that there is no **Selecting** from liquids, and even according to the opinion that there is **Selecting** from liquids, this is not prohibited by Torah law, as it is comparable to a tray and a plate, which are prohibited only by rabbinic law, which are not utensils designated for **Selecting**, and a ladle is likewise not designated specifically for **Selecting**; therefore, it should be permitted here.

According to the *Or LeTziyon*, it is permitted to use a slotted spoon to remove a solid from a liquid, as one may take into account

the opinion that **there is no Selecting from liquids**, meaning, a solid item and the liquid it is in are not considered mixed, and consequently separating them is not classified as Selecting (*Baer Heitev* 319:2, citing *Maharitz*).<sup>8</sup>

Another reason for leniency in the case of a slotted spoon

The *Shevitat HaShabbat* (*Meraked, Be'er Rehovot* 26) also permits use of a slotted spoon in order to remove vegetables from soup and the like. This is in keeping with his opinion cited above (p. 916) that since many people eat the soup and vegetables together, the status of this mixture is like that of **clear water**, which it is permitted to filter.

Practical *halakha*: One should be stringent and refrain from using a slotted spoon

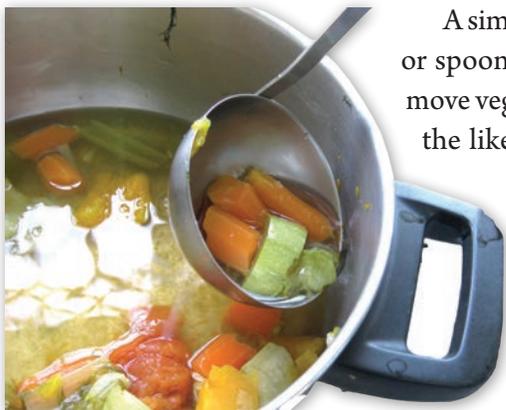
Nevertheless, this reasoning is not incontrovertible. It was mentioned above that **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** rejects this novel opinion of the *Shevitat HaShabbat*, and it is also difficult to base a *halakha* on the opinion that there is no Selecting from liquids. Therefore, in practice one should be stringent and refrain from using a slotted spoon on Shabbat.

The use of a slotted spoon raises an additional problem: Even if the spoon is not classified as a utensil, or at any rate is not a utensil with which Selecting is prohibited by Torah law, it must be determined whether using a slotted spoon to remove vegetables from soup, and the like, is considered selecting food from waste. On the one hand, if it is the vegetables that one wants, when inserting the spoon into the soup and lifting them, that is removing food from waste. On the other hand, when waiting for the soup to drip through the holes in the spoon, the person is causing separation of waste from food.<sup>9</sup>

8. See above, in the chapter on Selecting, p. 834, note 1.

How is it determined which is the item being selected?

9. The *Or LeTziyon* (ad loc.) is lenient in this regard, as he writes that if the vessel with the food is in one's hand, and the waste separates from it on its own, it is considered selecting food from waste. The reason is that **the item that is in the person's hand is considered the selected item**. The same emerges from the ruling of the *Shulhan Arukh HaRav* (*Piskei HaSiddur, Hilkheta Rabbeta LeShabbeta*) that if a fly fell into one's cup it is permitted to tilt the cup and pour out the liquid until the fly falls out. This is because the person is holding the cup with the drink, not the fly, and therefore it is considered separating food from waste, rather than the opposite.



It is prohibited to press a ladle against the side of a vessel to remove the soup.

Pressing a ladle against the side of a vessel

A similar problem arises when pressing a ladle or spoon against the side of a bowl or pot to remove vegetables or noodles without the soup, and the like. *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* states (3, note 159, citing *Tikunim UMiluim* ad loc.) that **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** is uncertain whether that is considered selecting with a utensil:

And I heard from the Gaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach... that he is uncertain, as perhaps one must make certain to refrain from drawing the noodles in the spoon near the sides of the bowl so the soup in the spoon will spill from it, as the spoon together with the bowl **are considered a utensil**, and it is prohibited to do so even if the person intends to eat both.

However, the *Magen Avraham* (319:15) and the *Mishna Berura* (319:55) dispute this conclusion. They write that it is permitted to take a vessel in which there is a mixture of a small amount of wine and sediment and pour the wine into another vessel, provided that one drinks the wine immediately. According to their opinion, although one is holding the vessel with the waste, i.e., the sediment, and the food, i.e., the wine, emerges on its own, it is considered selecting food from waste, not waste from food. Evidently, they maintain that the determining factor is not what the person is holding; rather, it is which component of the mixture remains in place and which component emerges, as the **kind that emerges from the mixture is considered the selected item**. According to this opinion, if one holds a slotted spoon with vegetables in it above the soup so that the soup falls back into the pot, the person has selected waste from food, as the vegetables remain in place and the soup emerges.

Nevertheless, there is room for leniency for another reason. One could say that most of the liquid is separated at the moment that one lifts the slotted spoon, which is an act of selecting food from waste. After that, while waiting for the extra liquid to drip out, the basic intent is typically not to select, but to avoid having the soup droplets dirty the surrounding area while moving the spoon. Consequently, perhaps this is not considered selecting waste from food (see *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3:54).

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## SIFTING

Ostensibly, even if this action is not considered Selecting with a utensil, it would still be prohibited because it causes the selecting of **waste from food**. However, if there is clear liquid in the upper part of the ladle, it is permitted to pour it into the pot, since it is not in a mixture with the vegetables or the noodles.<sup>10</sup>

How is it permitted  
to remove  
vegetables or  
liquid from soup?

Therefore, **one who seeks to remove specific vegetables from soup**, especially if the person wants them without liquid, should take an **ordinary spoon or fork** and first remove **the food from the waste**. Likewise, it is permitted to insert an ordinary spoon or ladle into **the upper portion of the liquid** and remove only liquid, as this would be selecting food from waste, and the person is not using the sides of the vessel.

Practical *halakha*

**IN CONCLUSION, it is preferable to refrain from using a slotted spoon** due to concern about Selecting, although one who does so has authorities upon whom to rely. In any case, one must make certain not to hold the spoon in the air for the soup to drip. Likewise, one should not press even an unslotted ladle against the sides of a pot to remove the liquids, as he is thereby separating waste from food, and is perhaps also selecting with a vessel. When possible, it is preferable to remove the vegetables with an ordinary spoon or fork, as in this manner they can be removed without liquid. Similarly, it is permitted to insert a ladle into the upper portion of liquid so the liquid alone will enter the ladle.