

## SURVEY OF RECENT HALAKHIC PERIODICAL LITERATURE

### LANOLIN

Lanolin is the purified form of a secretion that forms a grease or wax-like coating on the fleece of sheep. It is generally obtained by scouring raw wool in a soap solution and centrifuging the solution in order to recover the grease. The grease is then refined, bleached, deodorized and dried. Lanolin and its derivatives are most commonly used as emollients and emulsifiers in cosmetic and pharmaceutical preparations but, at times, lanolin is also employed in the manufacture of chewing gum and possibly as an additive designed to serve as an emulsifier in the manufacture of other food products.

Although sheep are kosher animals, a question arises with regard to the *kashrut* of lanolin by virtue of the fact that it is secreted by the animal prior to slaughter. To this writer's knowledge, the sole discussion of the *kashrut* of lanolin that has appeared in rabbinic literature is that of R. Yehoshu'a Moshe Aronzon, *Yeshu'at Mosheh*, II, no. 81. Rabbi Aronzon's chief concern is that lanolin is derived from what he categorizes as drops or globules of fat secreted by the animal. The Gemara, *Bekhorot* 6b, explicitly describes fat removed from a living animal as a form of "flesh from a living animal" which is prohibited by biblical law. Accordingly, were lanolin a form of fat, it would be forbidden for this reason. In point of fact, this description of the nature of lanolin is inaccurate. The error, however, is readily understandable since the material from which lanolin is derived is commonly referred to as "wool

fat."<sup>1</sup> The material from which lanolin is derived is actually a lipid excretion of the sheep's skin.<sup>2</sup> The material is produced in the sebaceous gland embedded in the basal layer of the epidermis.<sup>3</sup> Contraction of the arrector muscle compresses an attachment at the base of each lobe of the sebaceous gland and squeezes the glandular secretion onto the fiber.<sup>4</sup> Halakhically, the secretion must be regarded as a form of "yotse," i.e., an excretion or emission, of a forbidden substance. The excretion of a forbidden substance is, generally speaking, also forbidden, although such prohibition is less severe than the prohibition associated with the forbidden substance itself.<sup>5</sup> The status of lanolin as the excretion of a forbidden substance is also addressed in Rabbi Aronzon's discussion, but it is apparently his understanding that lanolin is a derivative of the fat of the animal that leads him to the conclusions that he formulates. Rabbi Aronzon permits the use of lanolin in detergents and cleaning agents for utensils utilized in the manufacture and preparation of food only if the lanolin has been rendered unfit for consumption by beast or man (*nifsal me-akhilat kelev*) but somewhat equivocally comments that the use of lanolin as a food additive requires further evaluation.

However, a proper understanding of the nature of lanolin yields an entirely different conclusion. Milk secreted by the mammary glands of kosher species is permitted despite the fact that it is emitted by an entity which is itself forbidden, i.e., a living animal which has

as yet not been rendered permissible for food by means of ritual slaughter. The Gemara, *Bekhorot* 6b, adduces a series of biblical verses in demonstrating that milk is, in effect, an exception to the prohibition against *yotse*, i.e., the excretion or emission of forbidden substances. The milk of non-kosher species is, however, forbidden because it is secreted by an animal which is itself non-kosher.

The status of other substances secreted by living kosher animals is the subject of dispute. The status of such substances is rooted in a controversy concerning the permissibility of "milk-water" (*mei halav*). As described by *Bet Yosef*, *Yoreh De'ah* 81, "milk-water" is the residual liquid obtained by first boiling those components of milk which remain after the milk itself has been turned into cheese and then skimming off the solids which rise to the top. *Tur Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 81, records two opposing views regarding the *kashrut* of this liquid: R. Eliezer forbids *mei halav* on the grounds that only milk is explicitly permitted by Scripture and hence milk alone is exempted from the prohibition against eating foodstuffs which are emitted by non-kosher substances. Rabbenu Simchah permits *mei halav* on the grounds that, with the dispensation for consumption of milk, *mei halav* becomes permitted as well. It is the latter opinion that is regarded as authoritative by *Tur Shulhan Arukh*.

The nature of Rabbenu Simchah's reasoning is not immediately clear. Does he regard "milk-water" as simply a component of milk which is an explicitly permitted substance? If so, substances other than milk that are secreted by living animals remain forbidden. Or does he concede to R. Eliezer that "milk-water" is not milk, but nevertheless maintain that "milk" serves as a paradigm and that, in permitting the milk of kosher species, Scripture has entirely exempted from the prohibition of *yotse* any and all substances derived from living kosher animals?

It seems evident that *Bet Yosef*, *loc. cit.*, s.v. *halev behemah*, understands

Rabbenu Simchah's ruling as reflecting the latter analysis, i.e., as permitting *all* secretions of living kosher animals. *Tur Shulhan Arukh* rules that the urine of non-kosher species is a forbidden substance but that the urine of a kosher species is not a forbidden substance. *Bet Yosef* finds this entirely compatible with the position of Rabbenu Simchah who permits "milk-water." *Bet Yosef's* statement is cogent only if it is regarded as predicated upon the assumption that Rabbenu Simchah regards all substances secreted by kosher animals to be permissible.<sup>6</sup>

Noting a further problem, Rabbi Aronzon points out that, even if it is regarded as kosher, lanolin may contain an admixture of blood and hence its use may be prohibited because the blood cannot be extracted from the lanolin. In support of that position he cites a controversy recorded by Rosh, *Berakhot* 6:24, regarding the *kashrut* of musk: "Some say that musk is the 'sweat of an animal,' but it is more correct [to say] that it is a specific animal that has a hump in its throat<sup>7</sup> and [that] first there is collected therein a type of blood and then it turns into musk. R. Zekhariah ha-Levi forbade it to be eaten because of fear of [an admixture of] blood, while Rabbenu Yonah explained that it is possible to advance a reason for permitting [musk] by declaring that it is *pirsha be-alma* (i.e., merely a nonedible derivative rather than a foodstuff)." Rabbi Aronzon's concern is based upon his assumption that lanolin is a form of animal fat and, as noted by *Shakh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 75:8, all fat is presumed to contain blood and requires soaking and salting for its removal. Thus, unless lanolin is regarded as *pirsha be-alma*, it would be forbidden because of the blood that it must be presumed to contain. However, since blood is present only in the flesh of an animal, there no such presumption with regard to liquids secreted by an animal, e.g., urine. Hence, if it is recognized that lanolin is a glandular secretion, it would be entirely

permissible. Although musk is also a liquid secretion, it is apparently recovered by drying and pulverizing the gland in which it is produced; hence, it is entirely possible for blood to enter the recovered product. This is not the case with regard to lanolin. It should also be noted that many latter-day authorities rule that musk is permissible on the grounds that any blood that may have been present has been rendered mere *pirsha*.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, as Rabbi Aronzon notes, there is reason to assume that even those authorities who forbid the use of musk in food products would permit the use of lanolin as a food additive. *Magen Avraham, Orah Hayyim* 116:3, forbids the use of musk, but nevertheless concedes that were the secretion to be "mere dust" before being made into musk it would be permissible; his sole problem is that this fact is unknown. The principle established by *Magen Avraham* is, however, clear: a substance is not forbidden as *yotse* unless it is edible at the time it is secreted; a secreted substance that is inedible at the time of its secretion, or becomes inedible thereafter, remains permissible even if its nature is such that it will develop naturally into, or be used in conjunction with, a proper foodstuff.<sup>9</sup> Thus, a bird born of an egg laid by a *terefah* is kosher; the egg, itself the *yotse* of a forbidden substance, becomes putrid before the embryo develops.

Although the egg remains a potential food product even in its putrid state, the bird hatched from the egg is kosher because the egg earlier became inedible.<sup>10</sup> [This is in contradistinction to the principle governing the consumption of the forbidden substance proper, i.e., that so long as the forbidden foodstuff is designed for use in conjunction with an edible food product it remains forbidden even if the forbidden substance is itself inedible. The best example of the application of that principle is the prohibition against use of sourdough itself on Passover. Although sourdough itself cannot be eaten either by man or beast, when added to dough, it plays a highly significant role in the baking of bread. Since this is the function and purpose of sourdough it is forbidden even though it is itself totally inedible.<sup>11</sup>] Lanolin, in all likelihood, is entirely inedible when secreted as wool grease. Moreover, it should be noted, the recovery process, which most commonly consists of scouring with warm water containing soap and sodium carbonate,<sup>12</sup> presumably involves use of substances that impart a foul taste to the lanolin and thereby render it unfit for consumption. Once a product has been rendered unfit for consumption it is no longer a forbidden substance and there is no prohibition against its dilution in other food products.

## NOTES

1. See *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1966), XIII, 707.
2. E. Vernon Truter, *Wool Wax* (London, 1956), p. ix.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. See *Bekhorot* 6b and *Yoreh De'ah* 81:1. The prohibition regarding secretions is not inherent in the negative commandment forbidding the substance itself but is in the form of a separate positive commandment to abstain even from secretions of forbidden substances. Prohibitions derived from positive commandments are less severe than negative prohibitions and entail no statutory punishment.
6. See also *Levush, Yoreh De'ah* 81:5 and *Hazon Ish, Yoreh De'ah* 12:6. Rabbi Aronzon seems to believe that there is some doubt with regard to this point. Apparently he did not realize that the further comments of *Bet Yosef* seeking another rationale for the permissibility of urine are advanced in explication of the position of R. Eliezer rather than of the normative position of Rabbenu Simchah. See also *Bah, ibid.*, s.v. *u-mah-she-bi-ketav*.

7. In point of fact, musk is secreted by male animals of the species *moschus moschiferus* or musk deer, a species native to the mountains of Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia. The secretion accumulates in a pouch or musk pod situated between the anus and the sex organs. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago, 1966), XV, 1093 and Kurt Bauer and Dorothea Garbe, *Common Fragrance and Flavor Material* (Weinheim, 1985), p. 174.
8. See *Teshuvot Radbaz*, III no. 909; *Taz, Orah Hayyim* 116:2; *Eliyahu Rabbah, Orah Hayyim* 114:4; *Teshuvot Mayim Rabbim*, no. 10; and *Mishnah Berurah* 116:7. Cf., however, *Magen Avraham, Orah Hayyim* 116:3; *Levush, Yoreh De'ah* 81:1; *Pri Megadim, Eshel Avraham, Orah Hayyim* 116:3; *Teshuvot Sho'el u-Meshiv, Mahadura Kamma*, III, no. 122, s.v. *omnam*; *Teshuvot Hatam Sofer, Orah Hayyim*, no. 135; *Teshuvot Zemah Zedek, Yoreh De'ah*, no. 67, sec. 6. See also *Hazon Ish, Yoreh De'ah* 12:7.
9. See R. Moses Feinstein, *Iggerot Mosheh, Yoreh De'ah* II, no. 24, who employs this argument as one of his grounds for permitting the use of confectioner's glaze.
10. See also R. Yitzchak Zev ha-Levi Soloveitchik, *Hiddushei Rabbenu ha-Griz ha-Levi* (Jerusalem, 5732), III, *Nazir* 50a.
11. According to all authorities, foodstuff which does not ordinarily enter into the processing of other food products and itself becomes unfit for consumption even by an animal may be eaten even if the foodstuff in question is later rendered fit for human consumption. For a discussion of the circumstances under which foodstuffs which have been rendered inedible for human consumption (and which do not enter into or contribute to the processing of other food products) may be regarded as permissible substances and the various opinions concerning this matter see sources cited in *Pri Megadim, Mishbetsot Zahav, Yoreh De'ah* 1031:1, and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, II (Jerusalem, 5709), 91 as well as *Teshuvot Helkat Yo'av, Yoreh De'ah*, no. 11 and *Hazon Ish, Orah Hayyim* 116:2 and 116:7.
12. Truter, *Wool Wax*, p. 107.