



# Rabbi Yisroel Moshe Guttentag

Rabbinic Coordinator, KF Kosher; Federation Shailatext

The author can be contacted at [rabbi.guttentag@federation.org.uk](mailto:rabbi.guttentag@federation.org.uk)



FEDERATION



## SHABBOS KETTLES THE TECHNICAL AND HALACHIC STORY

### Halachah

#### PART 1: WHAT MAKES THEM TICK?

**FedTech, the Federation Beis Din's department for Shabbos compliance, was launched last year; its focus – domestic ovens, fridges and freezers. Since its launch, we have received countless requests for assistance with a wide variety of shailas relating to the use of technology in Halocho. Shabbos kettles have featured high on the list of Frequently Asked Questions.**

Responding to the need, FedTech have undertaken research into some of the appliances commonly available here in the UK. This week, we launch a new series of articles which will shed some light on how Shabbos kettles work and the halachic principles which underpin their use.

**I have noticed that the red light on my urn goes on and off intermittently. How does the urn operate?**

An urn, like other kettles uses a heating element to heat the water. Unlike your weekday kettle which heats the water until it has boiled and then switches itself off, the urn continues to heat the water over an extended period of time; yet, it must also ensure that it does not boil dry. This balance is achieved by operating the heating element in on/off cycles. There are two ways in which these heating cycles can be controlled:

**Simmerstat** – When using a simmerstat, the lengths of the cycles are determined by the setting which the user has chosen and will repeat in a uniform manner. A dial is provided to controls these timings. Changes to the heat of the water will not affect the length of the heating cycles, as all control of the heating elements is purely time-based.

**Thermostat** – The length of the heating cycles will be determined by the heat of the water at any specific time. The thermostat reacts when the temperature dips below the tolerance level set by the user, and the heating element will be activated. When the desired temperature has been achieved, the heating element ceases to operate. It is unlikely that the heating cycles will be accurately predictable in their length and frequency.

**My urn's light seems to be lit all the time. How is it controlled?**

Some urns are not controlled by on/off cycles. Instead, the amount of power used by the heating element is regulated to control the heat of the water.

In some cases, the kettle will have a dial. The dial is turned to high to boil the water and then turned down to a level that will maintain the temperature of the water. This manual control of the temperature can be inconvenient, and users will generally prefer an urn which automatically regulates its own temperature.

This automation can be achieved by providing two heating elements – a high-

powered boiling element and a lower-power maintenance element. A thermostat is set to operate the high-powered element only when the water is particularly cold.

When the water is cold, the urn's thermostat will instruct both heating elements to operate. Once the water has reached boiling point, the main heating element is switched off. The low-power heating element will continue to operate and maintain the temperature of the water. It is rare for the high-powered heating element to trigger on once the urn it has been initially boiled. The lower-powered heating element will generally suffice to keep the water hot for a long time. The frequency of these occasions when the kettle boils itself will vary depending on the kettles design. In some kettles, the water will boil very rarely – in fact as rarely as every few days. In other cases, this will take place a few times a day.

**How can I tell if my urn is thermostatically controlled or if it uses a simmerstat?**

Our experience has demonstrated that an appliance's paperwork does not necessarily provide an accurate indication of its method of operation. Even discussions with sales teams or customer services may not yield results.

**Read next week's article which will provide a fuller understanding of the halachic principles behind the Shabbos use of an urn which is controlled by a thermostat.**

**SHAILATEXT**  
TEXT 07403 939 613

**PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL RESPONSE TO SHAILOS ON ANY TOPIC WITHIN FOUR WORKING HOURS**

Wherever possible it is preferable to take shailos to your own rov who knows you personally. ShailaText is not intended to be used as substitute for a rov but L'zakos es horabim. For more information visit [federation.org.uk/shailatext/](http://federation.org.uk/shailatext/)

To sponsor a day/week/month of Shailatext, please email [Batsheva.pels@federation.org.uk](mailto:Batsheva.pels@federation.org.uk)



FEDERATION

This week's Shailatext is

לע"נ שמעון בן שרגא ז"ל

### A Quick Vort: Ma'ayanah shel Torah BY YISROEL AVROHOM KAYE

The pasuk says (Devorim 32:2) "May my teaching drip like the rain, may my utterance flow like the dew, like storm winds upon vegetation and like raindrops upon grass". The Ma'ayanah Shel Torah brings a saying from Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l "True the mouth is said to be as far away from the heart as the heaven is from earth but we all know that when rain drops down from heaven it causes things to grow on earth". He adds a pasuk from Yeshayahu (55:10-11) from the Haftorah of a Taanis Tzibbur "For just as the rain and snow descend from heaven and will not return there, rather it waters the earth and causes it to produce and sprout and gives seed to the sower and food to the eater. So shall be My word that emanates from My mouth, it will not return to Me unfulfilled unless it will have accomplished what I desired and brought success where I sent it."

Such is the impact of the mouth on the heart.

