YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**LAWS OF SHABBAT: COOKING**

**By Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon**

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Dedicated in memory of   
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**Shiur #19**

**Chapter XIX) Initial Placement**

**Prohibition**

As we have seen in previous *shiurim*, even when the food is defined as cooked and the stove is swept or sprinkled, one is not allowed to put a dish back on the fire, unless the matter is considered to be a continuation of the previous *shehiya*. From here, one may conclude that the initial placement of the dish on the fire on Shabbat is totally forbidden, because even a dish that was on the fire on Shabbat and then taken off and placed on the ground may not be returned to the fire. All the more so, a dish that was not on the fire at the beginning of Shabbat may not be placed on the fire on Shabbat, even if we are talking about a swept and sprinkled stove.[[1]](#footnote-1) This is what the Rema (253:5) writes.

**Heating Food**

How may one heat food on Shabbat?

As we have seen, the prohibition of placing a dish on the fire ab initio on Shabbat springs from the issue of *mechzi ke-mevashel* (the appearance of *bishul*). Therefore, the Sages allow heating food on Shabbat in different cases in which the matter does not look like *bishul*, as we shall see below.

**Uncooked Food**

We should stress again that the different allowances for heating food on Shabbat relate only to food considered cooked. If the food is not cooked, it is forbidden to heat it at all (if it could reach a scalding temperature, known as *yad soledet bo*). Therefore, one should first ascertain that there is no problem of a prohibition of cooking — in other words, that the dish is either **dry and fully cooked,** or that it is **liquid** that has **not fully cooled** (according to the Rema) or that has **not gone below** *yad soledet bo* (according to the Shulchan Arukh). Only after we confirm that the prohibition of cooking is not applicable may we examine how to solve the rabbinical problem of *mechzi ke-mevashel*.

**Proximity to the Fire**

One possibility of heating cooked food on Shabbat is by putting it **next to the fire.** This is the simple meaning of the Gemara (40b), which allows heating by the fire. The Rosh (3:10) explains that since the food is placed at a distance from the flame, one will not come to stoke. On the other hand, the Rashba (40b, s.v. *Mevi adam*) justifies the allowance because this is not *derekh* *bishul*. This is what the Shulchan Arukh rules (318:15): one may heat cooked items by a torch, even if it is scalding. Similarly, one may **put cooked food near the wall of the stove.**[[2]](#footnote-2)

**The Second-Story Solution**

An additional allowance for heating food on Shabbat is the “second-story solution,” putting one pot atop another. This rule does not appear in the Talmud, but many Rishonim mention it. The Beit Yosef (253, s.v. *Katav Ha-Ran*) cites the words of the Rashba (40b, s.v. *Mevi*), who allows putting *infanda* (empanadas) on top of a pot of *cholent* on Shabbat, since this is not *derekh* *bishul*. From here it arises that one is allowed to heat on Shabbat using a pot on top of a pot, and there is no problem of *mechzi ke-mevashel*.

On the other hand, the Beit Yosef (253, s.v. *Katuv Be-hagahot*) cites the view of the Hagahot Mordekhai (80a), who says that one who is concerned that a dish on the stove is getting too hot may remove the dish and put it on top of an inverted pot, but one must be careful to avoid setting it on the ground; if one fails to hold it the whole time, one may not put the dish on top of the inverted pot. The Hagahot Mordekhai requires one to maintain the conditions of *hachazara* regardless, even though the person does not leave the dish on the stove itself, but on top of an empty pot that is on the stove. This indicates that according to him, it is forbidden to put ab initio a pot on top of an empty pot, and therefore, in his view, putting a pot on top of a pot is not a solution for heating food ab initio on Shabbat.

**The Contradiction**

If so, apparently there is a dispute before us as to whether one may heat food on Shabbat in a pot on top of a pot: the Rashba allows it, while the Hagahot Mordekhai forbids it. However, the Shulchan Arukh (253:3) cites the words of the Hagahot Mordekhai, who prohibits; then, two paragraphs later, he cites the permissive view of the Rashba!

Can we resolve the words of the Shulchan Arukh? The Acharonim argue about this, and we will briefly cite two answers:

1. The Magen Avraham (318:26) resolves this in the following way: we must distinguish between a **liquid** and a **solid**. Essentially, there is no prohibition to put foods on top of a pot on Shabbat, and therefore one may put a solid in a pot on top of a pot. However, when it comes to a liquid, the Shulchan Arukh believes that even if it is hot, and there is no problem of *bishul*, one may not put it in a pot on top of a pot, because **there is a decree lest one put it there while it is cold.** However, the Magen Avraham himself disputes this stringency of the Shulchan Arukh, and he writes that one may heat even a **fluid** item in a pot on top of a pot if the item is **somewhat warm**.
2. The Peri Megadim (*Eshel Avraham* 253:33) posits that one should differentiate between an empty and a full pot: one is allowed to put a dish ab initio on top of a full pot, but it is forbidden to put it on top of an empty pot.[[3]](#footnote-3)

What is the reason for this distinction? One may explain that a full pot absorbs most of the heat of the fire, so that the first pot does not grow warm from the fire but rather from the lower pot, while the empty pot does not absorb so much heat, so that the pot on it is heated directly from the heat of the fire.

However, Bei’ur Halakha (253:3, s.v. *Ve-yizaher*) cites the words of the Peri Megadim, and from his words it appears that the distinction is more significant. An empty pot has no significance on its own, but it comes to serve the stove, as it were, and it makes it a swept and sprinkled stove. Naturally, the pot is subordinate to the stove and considered a part of it, and the dish that is put on it is considered to be put on the stove itself. On the other hand, a full pot does not serve the stove and it is not subordinate to it, and therefore the dish placed on it is not considered to be placed on a stove.

In a somewhat different way, one may explain that the question is whether the heat source is designed for the dish that is placed upon it. When the lower pot is empty, the heat is effective only for the upper pot, and we may say that the fire is dedicated for this pot (but there happens to be a pot between them). On the other hand, when the lower pot is full, the fire is dedicated to the lower pot, and the upper pot becomes warm **only in an ancillary manner. Since the fire is not designed for the upper pot, there is no problem of the appearance of *bishul*.** For this reason, there is no prohibition to heat by a torch, because it is designed for purposes other than cooking, and the heating is ancillary.

**Halakha**

Thus, according to the Magen Avraham, one who wants to heat cooked food on Shabbat may put an **empty pot** on the fire and put the dish upon it, while according to the Peri Megadim there is no allowance to act in this way, and one may put a dish only on **a full pot** that is already on the fire, and this appears to be the ruling of the Bei’ur Halakha.

**Direct Heating**

An additional ramification of this dispute relates to whether one may put a cooked food **directly on a *plata***: according to the Magen Avraham, it is logical to allow this, for there is a separation between the heating element and the pot. According to the Peri Megadim, one should forbid this, since the intervening metal is similar to an empty pot, because **it is nullified by the heating element** and considered part of the heating element, and **the heat is dedicated to the dish,** and the dish does not become warm in an ancillary manner.

Halakhically, Rav Ovadya Yosef (*Yechaveh Daat*, Vol. II, ch. 45) allows putting a dish directly on a *plata* on Shabbat, since he believes one may rely on the view of the Magen Avraham. However, as we have seen, the Bei’ur Halakha rules like the view of the Peri Megadim, and according to this, apparently, one cannot allow putting a dish directly on the *plata*.

**Halakha**

However, there are those who allow this for a different reason: since the *plata* is uniquely designed for Shabbat and not used on weekdays, there is no problem of *mechzi ke-mevashel* (Tefilla Le-Moshe, Vol. I, ch. 32; *Yalkut Yosef* 253:9).[[4]](#footnote-4) However, according to many authorities, one may not be lenient about this; after all, it is not customary to cook on a swept or sprinkled stove, but one is still not permitted to put a dish upon it ab initio.[[5]](#footnote-5) This is also what Rav Auerbach writes: ab initio, one should not put food directly on the *plata* (see Maor Ha-Shabbat, Vol. II, p. 543; *Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilkhata*, ch. 1, n. 72), and this is the view of Rav Elyashiv (*Shevut Yitzchak*, ch. 8), and this is what is appropriate to do ab initio. However, those who are lenient and put it directly on the *plata* have upon whom to rely.

How, if so, may one heat food on Shabbat?

Some observe a stringent standard, putting a pot of water on the *plata* and then putting a pot of food on top of that on Shabbat, or on top of another pot that is put on the *plata* on Friday. In their view, putting an empty vessel on a *plata* is not effective, in light of the above-mentioned view of the Peri Megadim and Bei’ur Halakha.

**Heating on an Empty Vessel on a *Plata***

However, Rav Auerbach (*Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilkhata*, ch. 1, n. 112, *Tikkunim U-milluim* *ad loc.*) claims that one may not heat food on an inverted pot on the fire, and similarly one should not heat it directly on the *plata*. However, when the two things come together, in other words, **when one puts an inverted pot on a *plata*,** one may heat food upon it. In his view, we are stringent about an empty pot only **when it covers an open fire;** in this case the pot makes the stove swept, so that **it serves the stove and is considered a part of it,** and naturally one who puts a food upon it is considered to be placing it upon the stove itself, so the act violates *mechzi ke-mevashel*. However, **when the fire is already covered** or one is using a *plata*, **the pot does not serve the stove** and is not considered part of it; the pot’s presence serves only to alter the regular *derekh* *bishul*, and therefore there is no prohibition to put food on top of the pot. Simply put, this act does not look like cooking.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This is also what the Shevet Ha-Levi writes (Vol. I, ch. 91):

Behold, the Peri Megadim has written the reason for the matter: why for an empty pot does the Shulchan Arukh allow one only to return it, but not to place it there initially?

…but this is because an empty pot serves the stove, so using it is like putting food on the stove, while putting it on top of a pot of food is like putting it on top of the pot, not on top of the stove… Indeed, this is really quite simple: this applies only when the empty pot sits on the fire…

Regarding this, one may claim that it is nullified by the stove, but when a great plate is on top of the stove, and on this plate he puts an empty pot (which does not match the size of the stove and the like at all), it is very obviously a separate item, disconnected from the stove. It is certainly logical that it should be like a pot: one may put a pot on the empty pot if the top pot contains something already cooked and hot…

**Conclusion**

To summarize, some authorities are lenient about putting a fully cooked, dry food directly on the *plata* on Shabbat, and this is the view of Rav Ovadya Yosef; however, in the view of Rav Auerbach and Rav Elyashiv, one should not put such food directly on the *plata*, and this is how one should act ab initio (even though those who are lenient about a fully cooked, dry food have upon whom to rely).[[7]](#footnote-7)

If so, in order to heat dry (fully cooked) food on Shabbat, it is best to put an inverted pan on the *plata* (and one may acquire a pan as big as the oven, or even of the size to cover the range) and put the food on it. (Practically, if one arranges the food in this way a couple of hours before the meal, the food does become very hot.)

**Electric Urn**

In parallel, one may also put a pot with fully cooked food **on top of an electric urn**, because the urn is like a full pot on the fire; thus, it is permissible, as we have said, to put dishes on top of it. However, one must be careful not to put a dish of meat directly on the urn, lest the urn acquire the status of a meat dish (particularly if dairy dishes are also put on it, or if one uses the water in it for making coffee with milk and the like). Rather, one should put the food in a vessel on the urn and put aluminum foil between the lid of the urn and the bottom of the vessel (due to the concern of moisture between the lid and the bottom of the vessel, particularly vapors coming from the urn). Similarly, if one wants to kasher the urn for Passover, one should not put challa directly on top of it; rather, the challa should be placed on top of aluminum foil. This will allow one to kasher the lid by putting it in boiling water (rather than being required to blowtorch it, which is generally impossible with a lid).

**Radiator**

In *Iggerot Moshe* (34)**, Rav Feinstein writes** that it is permissible to put cooked food **on top of a radiator**, since it is designed to heat the home, not to heat food, and therefore there’s no problem of *mechzi ke-mevashel*.

Apparently, however, beyond the question of *mechzi ke-mevashel*, there is an additional problem of heating on a radiator: it is the concern lest a person come to turn up the heat for the sake of the food; in other words, there is a concern of stoking. Nevertheless, it appears that since one is not eager to alter the heating of the entire house for the sake of the food, there is no place for a true concern of stoking in this context.

Translated by Rav Yoseif Bloch

**Rashba:** Yes, if the bottom pot contains food.

May one heat food with a pot on top of a pot?

In these two views, one may heat the food on an electric urn, which is considered a full pot. However, one must be careful about laws of meat and dairy and avoid leaving meat directly on the urn; rather, one should place the meat in a pot and put aluminum foil between the urn cover and the pot.

**Hagahot Mordekhai:** No.

**Magen Avraham:** One may heat it in a pot on top of a pot (even an empty pot), and the **Shulchan Arukh** forbids a liquid only.

**Peri Megadim:** It is forbidden to heat in a pot on top of a pot if the extra pot is empty, but it is allowed if the pot is full.

**Contradiction!?**

OC 253:3

OC 253:5

Near the fire

**How may one heat cooked food on Shabbat?**

This is how **Rav Ovadya Yosef** rules. Some are lenient for a different reason: there is no intent to cook on the *plata/blech*, and there is no problem of *mechzi ke-mevashel*.

According to the **Peri Megadim**, one is forbidden to heat on an empty pot, because it serves the stove and is considered part of it; rather, one must use a full pot, which stands on its own; according to this, one cannot heat directly on the *plata/blech*, because the covering of the *plata/blech* serves the heating element and is considered part of it.

This law depends on the understanding of a pot on top of a pot.

It is also permissible to heat directly on the radiator, since people are not accustomed to cook on it, and one is not preoccupied with the temperature.

It is appropriate to be stringent following this view (even though the lenient view has upon whom to rely). However, one may ab initio heat on an inverted pan on a *plata/blech*, because the pan does not serve the heating element but rather stands on its own, similar to a full pot.

**Rav Auerbach** and **Rav Elyashiv** rule this way.

According to the **Magen Avraham**, one may heat on top of an empty pot, and according to this, one may directly heat on the *plata/blech*, since it separates between the heating element and the food.

**May one put food directly on the *plata* on Shabbat?**

It is forbidden to heat it, except in a *keli sheini*.

It is permissible to heat:

1. On top of a full pot already on the fire.
2. On an inverted vessel put on the *plata/blech*.
3. Directly on an urn or radiator.
4. Some allow putting a dish directly on a *plata/blech* (**Rav Ovadya**), but it is worth being stringent by using the previous solutions. (Even one who is lenient must put the food on the *plata* before it is turned on by a timer; this may be sufficient even for those who hold the stringent view).

It is forbidden to heat it.

According to **Rav Feinstein**, one may heat in a *keli shelishi*, and some are stringent about food items that are easily cookable (**Chazon Ish**, *Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilkhatah*).

Solid (though see our earlier *shiur* about food with sauce)

Cold

Hot (Sefardim — above *yad soledet bo*; Ashkenazim — somewhat warm)

Liquid

No.

Yes.

Is the food cooked?

**Summary: Heating Food on Shabbat**

1. However, from the words of the **Ran** (19a, Rif, s.v. *Tanu rabbanan*) it arises that there is no prohibition of initial placement upon a swept stove; see **Eglei Tal**, *Ofeh* 48:2, but this is not the place to elaborate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Gemara (37a) has some doubt whether one may put a dish next to the wall of the oven. Its conclusion is lenient; however, the Rishonim and Acharonim argue whether this relates to *shehiya* or *hachazara*, and whether one is allowed to put it next to a stove even on Shabbat itself (see **Mishna Berura** 253:15; *Shaar Ha-tziyun*, 21). According to the stringent view, it appears that placing the dish in such a way that it touches the walls of the stove, which is the place of cooking, is more stringent than putting it at some distance from the torch. In any case, the words of the **Mishna Berura** (*loc. cit.*; **Bei’ur Halakha,** s.v. *Muttar lismokh lah*) imply that he is inclined to be lenient about the proximity to the stove (even though he writes that the words of the **Rema** seem to endorse the stringent view; see **Bei’ur Halakha,** *op. cit.* 5, s.v. *Lismokh*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The **Peri Megadim** (*Eshel Avraham*, 318:26) understands that even the **Magen Avraham** would concede here; all of these things are stated only concerning a full pot, and only regarding it should we distinguish between solids and liquids, but in an empty pot, it may be that he will concede to be stringent. Yet the **Dagul Me-rvava** (on **Magen Avraham,** *ad loc.*) understands that the **Magen Avraham** is lenient about heating food on top of an empty pot, as we have written. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In *Iggerot Moshe* (35), **Rav Feinstein** allows heating food directly on a *plata* if **one cannot cook on it**; however, it is not clear whether he is talking about our *plata*, which apparently *can* bring a food to the level of being cooked. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The **Tefilla Le-Moshe** (*loc. cit.*) explains that upon a swept or sprinkled stove, one infrequently cooks, while on a *plata* one never cooks; one only warms food. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. However, according to the second view that we have mentioned in explanation of the **Peri Megadim**, one should be stringent about this as well, for in the end, the heating is for the dish one puts down now; the heating is not incidental. However, it appears that one may be lenient according to this view as well, since some are lenient about a *plata* in any case, because one does not usually cook upon it, as we have explained above; even though it is worthwhile to be stringent, when one introduces another alteration and puts an inverted pot on it, this does not look like cooking at all. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For this issue, there is no distinction between Ashkenazim and Sefardim, since the different views do not spring from a difference of opinion between the Ashkenazic and Sefardic Rishonim or between the **Shulchan Arukh** and the **Rema** and the like; rather, the dispute is among the authorities of our generation.

   However, even though we have written that it is fitting to be stringent, it is worth recalling that according to the view of Rav Ovadya and other authorities, one may be lenient, and we are talking, at the end of the day, about a rabbinical doubt. Therefore, when one’s parents or grandparents are lenient about this, one should not question this, and we may add to their custom the words of the **Rosh** (3:1) concerning the law of *shehiya* (namely, that people are lenient following the view of Chananya, even though there is reason to be stringent about it):

   Because there are many views about this issue, and the Jews are fond of the mitzva of delighting in Shabbat, they will not acquiesce to be stringent. Leave them their custom, in accordance with the authorities who follow Chananya. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)