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 #14: Continuation of Last Week’s Discussion of**

**Stirring, and the Rules of Covering a Pot on the Fire**

**HALAKHIC RULING**

**Uncooked Food**

The Shulchan Arukh (OC 318:18) states:

If a stewpot or a cauldron is removed seething from the fire, one may not remove from it with a spoon if it is not fully cooked, because one will stir (*meigis*), and there is an issue of *bishul*. However, if it is fully cooked, it is permissible.

From his words, it arises that the stirring (*hagasa*) of a dish **that is not fully cooked** is forbidden **by Torah law** even if it is has been removed from the fire, and even removing the food from the pot with a spoon is forbidden. His language i implies that even the prohibition to remove with the spoon in this case is **from the Torah** (“and there is an issue of *bishul*”); however, the Mishna Berura (*Shaar Ha-tziyun*, 137) explains that only stirring is biblically forbidden, while removing with the spoon is forbidden **only rabbinically**, following the view of the Maggid Mishneh.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Fully Cooked Dish on the Fire**

Concerning **fully cooked** food, the Shulchan Arukh allows **removing food with a spoon** from a pot **off the fire**, but he does not explain whether this is allowed while it is on the fire, or whether there is a distinction between removing food with the spoon and actual *hagasa*. As we recall, the view of the Kol Bo is that *hagasa* of a pot is **biblically** forbidden, even if the food is fully cooked. From the words of the Shulchan Arukh, as we have said, it is difficult to know whether he is concerned about the view of the Kol Bo; however, from his words as the Beit Yosef (end ch. 321, s.v. *Ve-khatav Ha-Rambam*), it appears that he is concerned about this, and this is what other authorities write, that one should be stringent and avoid *hagasa* of a pot on the fire, even if the food in it is fully cooked.[[2]](#footnote-2)

However, the authorities argue whether one is allowed to remove with a spoon from a cooked food on the fire. The Mishna Berura (318:113) writes at the beginning that it is allowed, following the Maggid Mishneh, but he adds that the Eliya Rabba concludes that one should be stringent about this, following the Kol Bo (see *Shaar Ha-tziyun*, 136). The Chayei Adam (20:9) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (OC, Vol. IV, 74, *bishul*, 8-9) both wrote that one should not remove with a spoon from the dish on the fire, even if it is fully cooked, since we are concerned about the view of the Kol Bo, that *hagasa* of this food is biblically forbidden. Thus, one should be stringent even about taking food out with the spoon, which involves *hagasa*.

However, many Acharonim are lenient about this. Thus, for example, the Eglei Tal (*Ofeh* 17) writes that we are not concerned about the view of the Kol Bo that *hagasa* of a cooked food is biblically forbidden, and we forbid *hagasa* of a dish such as this only rabbinically, due to the concern of *mechzi ke-mevashel* (the appearance of *bishul*), and therefore one need not be stringent about removal with a spoon.

In terms of practical halakha, the Chazon Ish writes (37:15):

Since the view of the Ramban… the Rashba, the Rosh, and the Ran is that after it is fully cooked, there is no issue of *bishul* and no issue of *meigis*, and the Maggid Mishneh explains the view of the Rambam this way as well, one may be lenient about the matter. However, in actual *hagasa* at the time that it is on the fire, it is appropriate to distinguish, since in the view of the Rambam it is a biblical labor, just as the Kol Bo explains. In any case, to take it with a spoon is only rabbinical… so one may rely on the rest of the authorities to be lenient even when it is on the fire, just as the Raavad has written.

The Mishna Berura writes to be stringent about a spoon as long as it is on the fire, even when it is fully cooked. It appears that if one wants to leave the pot on a stove that is not swept [i.e., not covered], so that if he takes it off, he will not be allowed to put it back, and there is no solution but to take it with a spoon, one may be lenient.

**Halakha**

In other words, by the letter of the law, we should be lenient and allow removal with a spoon from a cooked dish on the fire, since most Rishonim allow even actual *hagasa*;[[3]](#footnote-3) since removal with a spoon is forbidden only rabbinically, one should be lenient. However, practically, since the Mishna Berura forbids, one should be lenient only in a case of need. What defines “a case of need”?

1. **When the stove is not swept**, so that if one removes the pot from the fire, he may not put it back (we will discuss this more in a future *shiur*), the Chazon Ish allows removing food with a spoon without taking the pot off the fire.
2. The Responsa Az Nidberu (Vol. V, ch. 13) writes that the same applies when the pot is **heavy**: one may remove food with a spoon without taking the pot off the fire.

Similarly, the Responsa Rav Pe’alim (Vol. III, OC, ch. 44) rules that preferably one should avoid removing food with a spoon from a pot on the fire, and only for the sake of a mitzva should one be lenient. However, some Sefardic authorities are lenient about this ab initio, since the Beit Yosef cites the lenient view of the Maggid Mishneh and does not cite a dissenting view. This is how Rav Ovadya Yosef (*Kol Sinai*, 5731, p. 265) and Tefilla Le-Moshe (Vol. I, ch. 37) rule.

**Fully Cooked Dish off the Fire**

The dispute of the Acharonim relates to a dish on the fire. Once it has been **removed**, the Shulchan Arukh explicitly allows removing food from it with a spoon, and the Acharonim write, according to his view, that even actual *hagasa* is allowed (Mishna Berura 318:115). However, the Rema (318:18) follows in the footsteps of the Mahari Weil, that ab initio one should be stringent even as regards removing food with a spoon:

Preferably, one should be careful about a pot in any case.

According to this, *hagasa* — even by removing food with a spoon — is forbidden even if a dish is fully cooked and off the fire. The implication is that **one may not stick a spoon in a pot;** rather, one must pour the food into another bowl, and only from there would one be allowed to remove the food with a spoon (or stir it). This requirement is astoundingly stringent. The Mishna Berura (117) writes:

See the Acharonim: our custom is not to be stringent about this, for in truth the essence is as we have written initially, that once it is fully cooked, even *hagasa* is allowed. One who wishes to be stringent should do so only concerning actual *hagasa*, but one should not be stringent about removing food with a spoon if it is fully cooked and off the fire.

According to him, even the punctilious should refrain from actual *hagasa* and should not extend the stringency to removing food with a spoon.

If so, **ab initio one may remove food with a spoon** from a fully cooked dish off the fire. **By the letter of the law, stirring is also permissible;** however, one who wants to be stringent may opt not to stir (but only as regards stirring and not when it comes to removing food with a spoon).

**Conclusion**

**To summarize**, one should not stir or serve from a dish that is not fully cooked. Similarly, one should not stir a dish on the fire, even if it is fully cooked. As for removing food from a cooked dish, Sefardim may be lenient and remove food from the pot, even if it is on the fire. (This is the view of Rav Ovadya, though some are stringent.) On the other hand, Ashkenazim cannot remove food with a spoon when the pot is on the fire; they must take it off and then take the food out (by the letter of the law, they may even stir the dish then). Indeed, when there is a need, e.g., when the pot is heavy, Ashkenazim may also remove food with a spoon from a pot on the fire, on the condition that the food is fully cooked (according to the Chazon Ish).

**Dry Pieces**

We should note that the prohibition of stirring exists only when the dish is a mixture (like a soup), but there is no prohibition to remove pieces of *schnitzel* or *kugel* from a pan on the fire, because this does not “stir” the remaining food (Rav S.Z. Auerbach, Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, cited in *Meor Ha-Shabbat*, Vol. II, p. 340).

**Stirring Boiling Water**

Is there a prohibition of *hagasa* of boiling water? The Avnei Nezer (OC, ch. 59) cites the Gaon of Kutno (Rav Yisrael Yehoshua Trunk, author of *Yeshuot Malko*), who rules that **there is no prohibition of *hagasa* of boiling water**, and this is also the ruling of Rav Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, OC, Vol. IV, *Bishul* 14). That’s because the water is agitated by the very boiling, so ***hagasa* is neither beneficial nor efficacious,** and therefore there is no prohibition. Indeed, the Ketzot Ha-shulchan (ch. 124; *Baddei Ha-shulchan*, 10) disputes this and believes that there is a prohibition of stirring boiling water. In fact, it appears that one **may be lenient and remove water with a ladle** even when the pot is on the fire (because many allow this even for food), but it is worth being stringent **and one should avoid actually stirring it.**[[4]](#footnote-4)

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| **Halakha: *Hagasa* and Removing Food with a Spoon** | | | |
| **Fully cooked off the fire** | **Fully cooked on the fire** | **Not fully cooked** |  |
| Permitted (one who wants to be stringent may be stringent) | Forbidden (some say biblically, some rabbinically) | Biblically forbidden | **Stirring** |
| Permitted (no reason to be stringent) | According to the Sefardim, this is allowed (though some are stringent). According to Ashkenazim, this is rabbinically forbidden, but one may be lenient in a case of need. | Rabbinically forbidden | **Removing Food with the Spoon** |

**COVERING A POT — ACCELERATING *BISHUL***

May one cover a pot containing food that is not fully cooked?

**Biblical Prohibition**

As we have seen, it may be that stirring is forbidden not because it accelerates the cooking, but because it adds a new facet. However,we should stress that according to all views, **there is a prohibition to perform actions that accelerate the cooking process.** For example, the Shulchan Arukh (254:4) rules that one should be careful not to put a cover back on a pot containing raw produce, “for this hastens the completion of its cooking on Shabbat.” Furthermore, he rules (257:4) that it is forbidden to add a cover to a dish that is not fully cooked, “for this addition causes it to be cooked.”

This indicates that one must avoid actions of **accelerating cooking.** This is what the Me’iri writes (73a, s.v. *Ha-zoreia*), noting that these acts are biblically prohibited:

Whatever hastens baking or cooking, such as mixing and stirring in a pot or putting the lid on the pot, makes one liable for cooking.

This is also what the Mishna Berura writes concerning *hagasa* (318:114).

**Adding Heat**

As we have said, for the same reason, there is a prohibition to cover an uncooked dish. In a similar way, it is also forbidden **to remove water from an urn** containing water that has not yet reached its boiling point, as this act accelerates the boiling of the rest of the water. Similarly, it is forbidden **to move a pot to a warmer place** on the hot plate if the food in the pot is not fully cooked.

**Rav Auerbach**

In light of this, Rav S.Z. Auerbach forbids (*Minchat Shelomo*, Vol. I, ch. 6) **covering a pot containing uncooked bones**:

What about the neck, wings and legs of young poultry and the soft bones of chickens? Normally, during the week, only the meat is eaten and the bones are thrown away. However, when it is on the fire a long while, as for the *cholent* on Shabbat, even the bones themselves become soft; indeed, for the daytime meal, many eat them together with the meat on them, and they have a good, superior taste…

Thus, in my humble opinion, it appears obvious that it is certainly forbidden to replace the pot on Friday night or early the next morning, if it contains bones such as these…

Now, it is presented in the book *Shemirat Shabbat* with the language “One should be strict,” but this is because it seems like an innovation, and most people are not careful about it…

In any case, I conceded to [the author] that it was a mistake to write only “One should be strict”; on the contrary, specifically because many stumble in this, it is worthwhile to stress the prohibition here.

**Rav Moshe Feinstein**

On the other hand, Rav Moshe Feinstein (OC, Vol. IV, ch. 76-77) is lenient:

When the pot contains something that is not food [like bones], and the cooking is for eating, it does not make sense that it will be considered cooking for the minority who eat bones…

This is not comparable to skin that has been thoroughly cooked, because even if it is not ready to be eaten, in any case one is certainly liable for the cooking, since at the end of the cooking process, everyone eats it…

However, concerning soft bones such as a neck and the like, which the majority do not eat even after they have been thoroughly cooked, certainly one may say that the [minority] view is nullified, and we will not consider it food because of this, for then it makes sense that there is no liability for the mere enhancement of cooking.

Therefore, I have written that if these bones are softened and actually ready for eating, this is certainly forbidden. However, it does not exist in reality; what does exist in reality, namely the cartilage and small bones at the edge of the wings, needs no further cooking. Those [bones] for which excessive cooking is required, such as the vertebrae of the neck, are eaten only by a small minority of people, so those items are not considered food.

In his view, the uncooked part of the bones is not considered food by most people, and therefore even if a small minority does eat it, this view is nullified by the other, majority view, and there is no prohibition of *bishul* for this.

**Halakha**

Since the Acharonim argue, if one wants to cover the pot, one should be concerned **that the bones may become cooked.** However, when one believes that the bones are cooked but is not sure about it, it appears that one may be lenient and place the lid on the pot, since it is possible to enlist for this purpose the view of Rav Feinstein, who allows covering in any case.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Translated by Rav Yoseif Bloch

**May one cover a pot on Shabbat?**

Fully cooked, but there are bones that are not fully cooked

Not fully cooked

Preferably, one should be stringent, but when there is a doubt if the bones are fully cooked, one may be lenient.

**Rav Feinstein:** Covering is allowed, because the bones are not considered food.

**Rav Auerbach:** Covering is prohibited, because it accelerates their *bishul*.

Forbidden — there is a biblical issue of accelerating *bishul*.

1. Ex post facto, if one stirs a dish that is not fully cooked, according to the Peri Megadim (*Eshel Avraham* 253:32) the food is forbidden, just like any food that is cooked in violation of Shabbat. However, the Bei’ur Halakha (318:18, s.v. *She-nimtza meigis*) writes that if the food was cooked to the level of *ma’akhal ben Derusai*, one should allow it, since ex post facto one may rely on Rishonim who believe in the rule of *ein bishul* *achar* *bishul* as long as something has been cooked to the level of *ma’akhal ben Derusai*, and even if we say that according to them there is a rabbinical prohibition inherent in this, according to the Gra (318:1, s.v. *O she-asa*) one should be lenient about the product of an inadvertent violation of a rabbinical ban on Shabbat. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is what the Mishna Berura (318:113) indicates, discussing removing food with a spoon, not actual *hagasa* (see Mishna Berura 321:79), and this is what the Chazon Ish (37:15) writes: one should be concerned about the view of the Kol Bo. Other Acharonim (Chayei Adam, *Iggerot Moshe*, Rav Pe’alim, et al.) are stringent about removing food with a spoon, and certainly about actual *hagasa*. Even the Acharonim who are inclined to be lenient about removing food with a spoon (Eglei Tal, Rav Ovadya) do not allow actual *hagasa*. However, the Tefilla Le-Moshe writes (Vol. I, ch. 37) that even according to the Kol Bo, *hagasa* of a cooked dish on the fire is not forbidden biblically, but only rabbinically, because it “has the appearance of cooking” (following the view of Eglei Tal cited below), and therefore when the pot is not on the fire but on the **hot plate**, a place where we are not accustomed to cook, it may be that his intent is to be lenient about *hagasa*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In addition, the Rishonim (Ramban, Rashba, et al. 18b) are lenient that after one has stirred the food even once, it is permissible to continue stirring even a dish that is not fully cooked, because there is no *hagasa achar hagasa*, and generally people stir food at least once before Shabbat. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We should analyze whether one may remove with a spoon from **a soup composed of broth and vegetables,** in which stirring has more effect. Regardless, in a case of need, one may be lenient about this, as we are lenient about every fully cooked food. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As for **covering a cooked dish on the fire**, the Shevitat Ha-Shabbat (*Mevashel* 26; *Be’er Rechovot,* 81) writes that one should forbid covering the pot sitting on the fire **even when the food in it is cooked,** because the Gemara in *Chullin* (108b) indicates that the covering of the pot causes the food to be blended and the taste to be spread throughout it, just as *hagasa* does (see Rashi ad loc., s.v. *Nier*). Since we are stringent about *hagasa*, following the view of the Kol Bo, one should not stir the food on the fire even if it is fully cooked, and one should be stringent about covering it as well. Rav Neuwirth (*Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilkhata*, ch. 1, n. 94) writes that it is good to be stringent about this.

   However, it appears that **one may be lenient by the letter of the law,** because even *hagasa* of a food that is fully cooked on the fire is permissible according to the view of most Rishonim; even though we are stringent about this, following the view of Kol Bo**,** it is difficult to extend this stringency to the cover as well. This is the view of the Ketzot Ha-shulchan (ch. 124; *Baddei Ha-shulchan*, n. 10), Rav S.Z. Auerbach, and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (cited in *Meor Ha-Shabbat*, Vol. II, p. 312). Similarly, generally the person who covers the pot is interested in maintaining the temperature, not stirring, so any consequent blending would be considered **an unintentional act,** and even if we say that this is a *pesik reisha*, — i.e., that it will inevitably cause some blending — it appears that this blending is so meaningless that one should not forbid it if the person does not intend it*.* (This idea, that one should not be liable for *pesik reisha* when the matter is not significant for most people, is cited in another context by Kehillot Yaakov, ch. 2; see *Meor Ha-Shabbat*, Vol. II, p. 261.) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)