



# THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

## HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

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These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to **HaGaon HaRau Moshe Sternbuch, shlita**



Parshas Massei 5765

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In memory of R' Zohar ben R' Mordechai, 24th Tamuz.

### **Must one always use a hotplate or blech?**

As mentioned in the previous shiur, *Chazal* were concerned that one might stoke the coals on Shabbos in order to heat the food. They thus devised a method whereby people would be deterred from doing so, which nowadays is either by placing a *blech* (a cover) over the flames or by using a Shabbos hotplate.<sup>1</sup>

Hypothetically, if one would not stoke coals for certain foods or beverages, it is superfluous to place a *blech* on the flames.

### **Which foods would not need a blech or hotplate?**

All opinions agree that food that is fully cooked and *מצטמק ורע לו*, which means that it is 'hardening to its detriment', may be left on an open flame and does not require a *blech*.<sup>2</sup> The classic example is hot water. Fully cooked hot water does not cook any more when left on or near a heat source - it merely remains hot. By raising heat one will hasten evaporation, which is not usually desired. Consequently, *Chazal* did not deem it necessary in such a case to modify a heat source as one would not want to raise the heat and lose the water.

Meatloaf is another example.<sup>3</sup> After a certain point it contracts and dries up and again one would not raise the heat.

Practically this means that one would be permitted to leave a pot of fully cooked meatloaf

and water on an open flame before Shabbos, without having to keep it on a *blech* or hotplate.

### **How do you define a cooked cholent?**

A fully cooked cholent is different and usually defined as *מצטמק ויפה לו*, i.e. the more it contracts the better it tastes.

### **Does that mean that one may not leave cooked cholent on an open flame?**

Food fully cooked that improves when left on a heat source is subject to a very famous *machlokes* (halachic argument).<sup>4</sup>

**Chanania** holds that food cooked to the degree of *ma'achal ben Derosai* (food eaten by an infamous thief called *ben Derosai*) may be left on an unmodified heat source. *Ben Derosai* would not fully cook his food, because he was always on the run from the law. Chanania ruled that since food cooked to that degree is edible, there is no room to be concerned that one would stoke coals in order to hasten cooking.

**Chachamim** argue with Chanania and hold that unless food is fully cooked and hardening to its detriment it may not be left on an unmodified flame, which means that a *blech* or hotplate is required.

### **How much is ma'achal ben Derosai?**

*Rashi* holds that it is food  $\frac{1}{3}$  cooked and the *Rambam* holds that it is  $\frac{1}{2}$  cooked. *Halacha* is according to the *Rambam*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Based on *simon* 253:1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Based on *Shabbos* 37b, 4 lines from the bottom.

<sup>4</sup> *Shabbos* 36b.

## Is the halacha according to Chanania or Chachamim?

The **Shulchan Aruch** <sup>6</sup> rules in accordance with Chachamim and thus Sephardim are required to use a *blech* or hotplate, unless the food is fully cooked and מצטמק ורע לו.

The **Rama's** opinion <sup>7</sup> is complicated. The *Rama* rules like Chanania but we find a *machlokes* between the *Mishna Berura* and the *Chazon Ish*. The *Mishna Berura* <sup>8</sup> explains that the *Rama* means that one may only rely on Chanania when necessary, such as when unexpected guests arrive and food will not be fully cooked by the time Shabbos arrives. Ordinarily one must conduct oneself according to Chachamim, which means that a *blech* or hotplate must be used as most foods are not מצטמק ורע לו.

The *Chazon Ish* <sup>9</sup> interprets the *Rama* saying that one may *l'chatchila* act in accordance with Chanania.

Contemporary *poskim* rule that that for most foods a *blech* or hotplate must be used, which follows the *Mishna Berura*. However, when no *blech* is available and the food is half cooked, one may rely on the *Chazon Ish* and use the stove without a *blech*.

There are many other reasons to use a *blech* and hotplate, as will be explained *be"H* in future shiurim.

## What should one do when a *blech* or hotplate is not available?

Sephardim, who follow the rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch*, have a bigger problem, because only foods fully cooked and מצטמק ורע לו may be left on an open flame. There is another innovation that can be used in such a case, which we will discuss another time.

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<sup>5</sup> M" B 253:38.

<sup>6</sup> *Simon* 253:1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> *Bi'ur halacha* להקל לנהגו ד"ה.

<sup>9</sup> *Orach Chaim Simon* 37, pg.100, prgph 3

Ashkenazim have it easier in this case and may rely on Chanania, i.e. food half cooked may be left on an unmodified heat source.

Seeing that these *halachos* are fairly complicated, whenever one deviates from the norm (of placing food on a *blech* or hotplate), one should consult one's rav as to the correct procedure.

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## Vort on the Parsha

*Hashem* instructs Moshe Rabeinu to mark the borders of the Holy Land for the *B'nei Yisroel* (34-2). *Rashi* explains that since many *mitzvos* pertain only to Eretz Yisroel, it is imperative to know where the borders are.

Why is it not enough to know which lands were promised to the forefathers?

Rav Chizkiyahu Eliezer Kahan (*Nachalas Eliezer*) answers that our *raison d'etre* is to serve *Hashem*, as it says "and you shall serve Him" thus the relevance of the borders are to know where to keep which *mitzvos*. The *gemora* says that Moshe Rabeinu did not want to enter the land to eat its fruit. His goal was to keep the *mitzvos* pertaining only to the land of Israel.

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## Food For Thought

*May one eat food warmed without a *blech* or hotplate?*

*When does a concept of 'raw meat' come into play?*

*When may I return a pot of food to the *blech* or hotplate?*

*May I ever return a pot of food to an oven?*

Answers coming *be"H* next week.

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## Request

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**Note:** The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.