The Laws of *Bishul* (Shiur #4)

Placing Food Near the Heat Source and Returning Food to the Heat Source on Shabbat

Shiur # 16

In the previous Shiurim we learned about the details of *bishul* after *bishul*. We learned that there is no *bishul* after *bishul* for dry foods once the food has reached a certain level of cooking; we also discussed the issues surrounding *bishul* after *bishul* for liquids; and *bishul* after baking and grilling.

In this Shiur we will discuss whether food may be heated up according to Rabbanan guidelines, even when there is no concern that there may be an *issur d’Oraita* of *bishul*.

Placing Cooked Food on the Fire on Shabbat

In Shiur 13 we discussed the *issur d’Rabbanan* against putting food in a place where it could eventually reach *yad soledet*. In that context we saw the following Gemara:

In that Shiur we saw a discussion about whether food may be placed near a heat source on Shabbat. The Rishonim learn from the above Gemara that, even in a situation where the prohibition of *bishul* does not apply (such as where the food already underwent *bishul*), and irrespective of the problem of placing food in an area where it can reach *yad soledet*, there is a *issur d’Rabbanan* against placing food directly on the fire:

This is also the Ran’s opinion. The Rosh forbids this for a different reason:

The Rosh points out that there appears to be a contradiction between the two *beraitot*. One *beraita* states that it is permitted to place water next to a fire, while the other one forbids placing cooked food on a Kirah (a type of oven).

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The Rosh explains that if it would be permitted to put food directly on the fire, then people might inadvertently stoke the coals in order to strengthen the fire, which would be an *issur d’Oraita* of *havarah*, kindling. This is also Tosafot’s opinion (Shabbat 38b “Pinah”).

We therefore see that there are two reasons given by the Rishonim for the *issur d’Rabbanan* against placing food directly on the fire, even if there is no issue of *bishul*:

Rashba and Ran: It is forbidden due to the appearance of *bishul*.

Rosh and Tosafot: It is forbidden due to the concern that one might stoke the coals.

In the first Shiur of the *bishul* series, we learned that it is forbidden to effect *bishul* if the food was not fully cooked before Shabbat. In the next Shiur we learned that it is forbidden to heat up cold liquids on Shabbat, even if they had previously been fully cooked, because there is *bishul after bishul* for liquids.

Now we are learning that even fully cooked dry foods may not be heated up directly on a fire, only next to one. This is an *issur d’Rabbanan* for one of two reasons: the appearance of *bishul*, or the concern that one will stoke the coals.

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**The Rabbis’ Concern**

**Does this halacha also apply to food that was recently on the fire, briefly removed, and now one wants to return it to the fire?** Such a situation is referred to as *chazara*.

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**The Rabbis’ Concern**

**Does this halacha also apply to food that was recently on the fire, briefly removed, and now one wants to return it to the fire?** Such a situation is referred to as *chazara*. 
This Mishna opens with the laws of shehiya, placing cooking food on an oven before Shabbat so that it will continue cooking on Shabbat. We will discuss these Halachot at length once we conclude the laws of bishul.

The end of the Mishna brings a disagreement about the permissibility of returning food to the fire, chazara, on Shabbat. According to Beit Hillel, who the halacha follows, it is permitted to return food if the conditions of the beginning of the Mishna are met (either that the oven was burning straw, which does not produce coal, or it was burning coal, but it was removed or covered over).

Why is it forbidden to return food to a fire that has exposed coals? We find different opinions in the Rishonim that correspond with our discussion above:

This is the same Rashba we saw above. He explains that both placing food on a fire on Shabbat and returning food to a fire on Shabbat are forbidden because it gives the impression that one is cooking. However, his wording implies that even though the two acts are both forbidden for the same reason, the extent of the prohibition is slightly different. In a situation where one wants to put food that was not recently on the fire, onto the fire, then one must be stringent and only place the food near the fire. In a situation where the food was recently on the fire, and one wants to return it, it is permitted as long as the coals are removed or covered.

Note that the above Rashi also explains that it is forbidden to return food because of the appearance of cooking. Other Rishonim, however, give a different explanation:

According to Rashi and the Rashba, returning food to the fire is prohibited because it gives the appearance of cooking.

According to Rabbeinu Tam and the Baal Hamaor, returning food to the fire is prohibited because of the concern that one will come to stoke the coals.

To summarize so far:

It is permitted to return cooking food (referred to as chazara) to the place where it was recently cooking if the coals are removed or covered.

It is permitted to place fully cooked food (even food that was stored in the refrigerator) near a fire, but not directly on the fire.

The first condition that Chazal instituted about returning food to the fire is that the coals are removed or covered over (this is all assuming that the food is dry and already fully cooked, otherwise there could be a much more serious issue of violating bishul d’Oraita). Later on (Daf 38b), the Gemara mentions other conditions that need to be met in order to permit returning food to the fire, which we will discuss in the next shiur. In this shiur we will further discuss these first two conditions and the

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relationship between them; what is considered removing and covering the coals and what is considered “next to the fire.”

The Parameters of “Coals that are Removed or Covered”

We saw in the above Mishna that it is permitted to return food to the fire if the coals are removed or covered, so that the heat that radiates from them is minimized.

Are other methods of removing the degree of the heat source acceptable, particularly in the modern world where there are typically other ways to reduce the heat source?

**Harchavot – Are we concerned about stoking coals in a gas oven?**

Rav Moshe Feinstein writes:

The Mishna says that removal of coal from the ovens would not suffice. Rav Feinstein explains that in those kinds of ovens, this was a usual practice, considering the tremendous heat those ovens maintained. This shows that the parameters of “removal or covering” depend on whether they are done specifically for Shabbat, or is it possible that they are done for other reasons.

Having defined that, we will explore how the Poskim apply the Mishna’s examples to our modern world. We will define what is considered removing or covering the heat source and what is considered “next to the fire.”

“Fire” that cannot be Increased Beyond a Certain Point

The prohibition against returning food to the fire was instituted in a time when cooking was done with coals, which could be stoked in order to increase their heat. Our modern stoves, however, cannot be heated above a certain temperature. Does the prohibition still exist in such a situation?

Meaning, this is a general prohibition, even in situations that differ from the original situation of coals.

Using a Metal Covering (a “Blech”)

One might think that the idea of a Blech, a metal sheet that covers the flame of a stove, is a modern invention. In fact, it has its roots in the Rishonim:

Meaning, this is a general prohibition, even in situations that differ from the original situation of coals.
The Mordechai is discussing a situation where one needs to distance his food from the flame, and one therefore wants to take the cooking food off, put an empty pot on top of the flame, and then put the cooking food back. In order for this to be permitted one needs to fulfill the conditions of chazara, namely, the coals must be removed or covered. Covering the flame with an empty pot has two benefits; it distances the food from the flame, and it covers the flame, thereby fulfilling the condition of chazara.

Most Rishonim understand that it is similarly permitted to cover the flame with a metal sheet.

Rav Feinstein explained earlier that a flame is considered “covered” only if it is not customary to lower the temperature that way. Meaning, it is not sufficient to turn the knob of the gas (וסת הגז), since that is something that is normally done while cooking. It is not normal, however, to cover the flame with a sheet of metal, and that is therefore a Halachically acceptable way of covering the flame.

The Chazon Ish, however, disagrees with this approach, and explains the difference between an empty pot and a sheet of metal:

The Chazon Ish explains that an empty pot is effective, because it has two benefits:
1) It is not a typical way of cooking.
2) The pot significantly minimizes the heat from the flame. He therefore suggests that a Blech does not sufficiently minimize the heat and is therefore not an acceptable method of covering the flame, and is viewed instead as merely a cover to the stove.

Rav Wosner explains why he does not accept the Chazon Ish’s position:

The Chazon Ish is correct that the cover of a stove is not considered a proper cover of the flame, but that is because nothing unusual is being done to the flame. A blech, however, is not usually used for cooking, and it is therefore considered a proper cover. The Chazon Ish holds that a proper cover must (1) cause the cooking to be done in an unusual way and (2) significantly minimize the heat from the flame. The Shevet Halevi holds that it is sufficient for the flame to be covered in an unusual way.
It is possible that these two perspectives relate to different ways of understanding the above Mordechai. The Shulchan Aruch Harav (Kuntrus Acharon, siman 253 sif katan 10) writes that the Mordechai’s leniency refers to placing the pot of food into an empty pot. Meaning, the empty pot is in an upright position, and the pot of food is placed inside. If so, only the width of the bottom of the empty pot, which is comparable to a metal sheet, separates the pot of food from the flame. The Chazon Ish, in contrast, seems to understand that the empty pot is inverted, in which case there is significant distance between the pot of food and the flame.

A Shabbat Plata

It is forbidden to use an electric hot plate (Plata) for two reasons:

1) There is significant concern that one will unwittingly plug it in on Shabbat.
2) The entire Plata heats up and is therefore considered the same as a fire.

The second reason recalls the Chazon Ish: that something is only considered an adequate cover if it significantly reduces the fire’s heat. Later, however, Rav Hadaya changes his mind:

Rav Hadaya explains that a Plata has two benefits:

1) The heating elements are completely inaccessible.
2) It is specifically designed for use on Shabbat, and therefore serves as a reminder that one must not violate Shabbat while heating food.

As Rav Hadaya writes, the use of the Plata is universally accepted.
Shiur #16 – Placing Food near the Heat Source and Returning Food to the Heat Source on Shabbat

Note the disparity between the question and the answer.
The question is: Is a Plata is equivalent to covering the coals (or perhaps not, since the cover is part of the object used to heat the food).

while the answer explains that a Plata is equivalent to heating food without any coals, as there is nothing in a Plata that can be “stoked.”

To summarize the issue of covering or removing coals:
Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that “coals” are only considered “covered” if the covering is not typical of the cooking process. Therefore, even if one lowers the knob** to the lowest setting, the flame is not considered “covered,” since doing so is typical of the cooking process.

The Poskim discuss several contemporary suggestions for “covering the coals:”

I. One might suggest that if the stove is on the highest possible heat then there is no concern that one will “stoke the coals” (i.e.-adjust the heat with the knob), since it is impossible to increase the heat. Still, Rav Moshe Feinstein rejects this suggestion by arguing that the Rabbis instituted a general prohibition.

II. A Blech: The Mordechai writes that one is permitted to cover the fire with an empty pot and put the pot of food on top. The Kaf Hachaim and Rav Moshe Feinstein write that a metal sheet, a Blech, is also an acceptable way to cover the fire, as the Blech also distances the food from the fire. The Chazon Ish argues that a metal sheet is only considered a cover for the stove, and a Blech is therefore not an effective way of covering the fire. The Chazon Ish explains that the Mordechai permits returning food onto an empty pot because an empty pot both significantly diminishes the heat from the fire and is also an unusual way of heating food. Rav Wosner writes that we do not consider a Blech a cover for the stove, since it is designed specifically for Shabbat. (It is possible that they are arguing about the Mordechai’s intention: is he discussing placing the pot of food into an empty pot or on top of an inverted one?)

III. A Plata: Rav Hadaya initially writes that there are two reasons to be stringent:: 1) there is the concern that one will plug the Plata in on Shabbat, and 2) the Plata itself is a heat source and therefore cannot also serve as a cover. Later, however, Rav Hadaya is lenient for two reasons: 1) a Plata provides no access at all to the heat source, and 2) it is designed specifically for Shabbat. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank writes that there is no comparison between the original situation of coals and a non-adjustable Plata, and therefore no reason to forbid. Rav Shlomo
Zalman Auerbach is lenient because a Plata is not adjustable, and because it is designed to heat up food and not to cook.

At the beginning of the Shiur we explained that food that was not cooking before Shabbat may only be heated near the fire, while food that was cooking before Shabbat may be returned to the fire as long as the coals are covered or removed. Until now we have discussed the Halachot of covering or removing the coals, and we will now discuss what is considered “next to the fire.”

**On Top of a Pot**

The Rashba rules that placing food on top of a pot of food cooking on the fire is comparable to placing food near the fire.

Rabbeinu Yerucham writes that there are different opinions regarding whether placing food on top of a pot of cooking water is comparable to placing food near the fire, and permitted (assuming that the food is fully cooked and dry), like the Rashba, or whether it is comparable to placing it on the fire itself and therefore forbidden. Rabbeinu Yerucham’s inclination is to be lenient, like the Rashba. What is the Shuchan Aruch’s opinion?
In this *sif*, the Shulchan Aruch cites the Mordechai’s ruling, which we saw above. The Mordechai, however, rules that an empty pot can be considered a cover for the fire, and therefore permits *returning* cooking food to the fire, but it seemingly is not considered “next to the fire” which would have permitted even putting food there that was not cooking previously.

In * siman 318* there is also a surprising *sif*:

שלאחר עץ או חותם חיות הלבן שהב שימן שית פיעך

ish מפרשים דאורי יושב על מקום על גבי קידוד טומנה, אפלו כל החותם על האש שרי. ויהי

The Shulchan Aruch cites two opinions that seem to be the same as the two opinions cited by Rabbeinu Yerucham, and for which the Shulchan Aruch ruled leniently.

However, the Shulchan Aruch does not decide between the two opinions here!

To summarize the various rulings of the Shulchan Aruch:

In * siman 253 sif 3*, the Shulchan Aruch brings the ruling of the Mordechai that permits returning cooking food to the fire when an empty pot separates the fire from the pot of food.

In *sif 5* of that *siman*, the Shulchan Aruch permits placing food that was not cooking before Shabbat, on top of a pot of food that is cooking. This implies that when there is a pot of food that is cooking, placing another pot on that pot is comparable to placing food “near the fire.”

In * siman 318 sif 8*, the Shulchan Aruch brings two different opinions about placing food on top of a pot of hot water, and he rules leniently. There too he is discussing placing cooked, dry food that was not cooking before Shabbat on top of the pot. Meaning, such a situation is considered only “near the fire” and is therefore permitted.

In the same *siman*, in *sif 7*, the Shulchan Aruch brings the same two opinions that he brought in *sif 8* and does not rule between them.

What, then, is the Shulchan Aruch’s position?

1. Dagul Merevava – depends on whether it is a normal cooking method

The Ran suggests that it may be permitted to heat up food directly on a fire (on a Kirah) if that food is never cooked directly on such a fire, since it is therefore clear that one is merely warming up the food and not cooking it. This implies that it is permitted to warm up foods “next to the fire,” because there is not an appearance of cooking. The Ran therefore explains that some foods may be warmed up on the fire if there is no appearance of cooking. The Dagul Merevava (the glosses of the Nodeh Biyehuda on the Shulchan Aruch) uses this approach to explain the Shulchan Aruch’s position:

דגול מרבבה סימן רביי על המגן אברהם ס”ק לג

It argues with this approach, since he suggests that this explanation of the Ran was not accepted:

בייאור הלכה סימן רביי תשע”ד י”ז יוחנן

The Biur Halacha argues with this approach, since he suggests that this explanation of the Ran was not accepted:

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Firstly, the Poskim do not accept this understanding of the Ran, and it is therefore difficult to suggest that this is the Shulchan Aruch’s opinion. Secondly, even the Dagul Merevava believes that this explanation will not resolve all of the issues in the Shulchan Aruch, and in order to explain the Shulchan Aruch in siman 318 the Dagul Merevava cites the Magen Avraham:

2. **Magen Avraham – It Depends if the Food is Dry or Liquid**

The Magen Avraham distinguishes between dry grilled foods and cooked foods that have liquid. It is permitted to place dry food on top of a pot of food on the fire. However, if the food has liquid it is forbidden out of concern that one may come to violate bishul after bishul.

The Magen Avraham himself rules leniently, not according to his explanation of the Shulchan Aruch:

The Magen Avraham explains that one may place even food with liquid on top of a pot of cooking food (as long as the liquid is still warm). The Magen Avraham explains that the Shulchan Aruch permits placing food on top of a pot of cooking food as long as the top food is dry, while food with liquid may only be returned to the fire if the conditions of *chazara* apply. The Magen Avraham himself, however, believes that placing any kind of food on top of a pot of cooking food is always considered placing it “near the fire” and therefore permitted (assuming there is no problem of bishul after bishul).

This also appears to be the position of Rav Dovid Ortenberg (the Rav of Berditchev and prominent Rav of the Boyaner Chassidut from the 19th and early 20th century):

The Magen Avraham focuses on the apparent contradiction between *sif* 7 and *sif* 8, while other Poskim do not seem concerned by this:

Most of the Poskim understand that there is no contradiction in the Shulchan Aruch and the Shulchan Aruch is lenient in all cases, even though he is only explicitly lenient in *sif*8.

3. **Pri Megadim: It Depends on whether the Pot is Full or Empty**

The Pri Megadim explains that one may place even food with liquid on top of a pot of cooking food (as long as the liquid is still warm). The Pri Megadim explains that the Shulchan Aruch permits placing food on top of a pot of cooking food as long as the top food is dry, while food with liquid may only be returned to the fire if the conditions of *chazara* apply. The Pri Megadim himself, however, believes that placing any kind of food on top of a pot of cooking food is always considered placing it “near the fire” and therefore permitted (assuming there is no problem of bishul after bishul).

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Most of the Poskim understand that there is no contradiction in the Shulchan Aruch and the Shulchan Aruch is lenient in all cases, even though he is only explicitly lenient in *sif*8.
The Pri Megadim distinguishes between placing food on top of an empty pot and on top of a pot full of cooking food. An empty pot of food is merely considered like a cover, in which case it is permitted to put food on top only if the conditions of chazara are fulfilled. However, if there is a pot of food cooking, it is not merely considered a cover, but a successful means of distancing another pot of food from the fire, as this is not a normal way to cook food. (Perhaps we also hold that the food on top is being heated by the pot below and not directly by the fire). Therefore, it is permitted to put any cooked food on top of a pot of cooking food, just like it is permitted to put any cooked food next to a fire.

The Tosefet Shabbat (siman 253 sif Katan 42) and Mishna Berura rule like the Pri Megadim:

The Implications of this Dispute for a Plata

Rav Abba Shaul explains that a Plata is considered a covered fire, and it is therefore permitted to return cooking food to a Plata, but not to put food on it from the refrigera

Rav Ovadiah’s premise is that a Plata has the status of an empty pot. He therefore concludes:

Since the Pri Megadim and Mishna Berura rule stringently and forbid placing food on an empty pot, one must also be stringent and not put food on a Plata (if the conditions of chazara aren’t fulfilled), but he continues:

Meaning, a Plata is considered an empty pot.

According to those who rule like the Pri Megadim, it is therefore forbidden to put any type of food directly on the Plata if the conditions of chazara are not fulfilled.

According to those who rule like the Magen Avraham, in regard to dry food, we can view the Plata as having the status as “near the fire,” and one may therefore permit heating dry cooked foods even if
they came from the refrigerator. (It is worth remembering that Rav Ovadiah considers foods that are mostly solid as dry).

He later brings a leniency even for those who follow the Pri Megadim:

Meaning, even according to the Pri Megadim, an empty pot is considered a cover for the fire and can therefore only be used for chazara, only if the empty pot’s function is to reduce the fire’s heat. If, however, the empty pot serves as an unusual way to warm up the food, then we view the food on the empty pot on the Plata, as being merely “near the fire” and it is permitted to heat up food, even from the refrigerator, in such a manner.

The footnotes to the Shevet Halevi also permit heating up food on an empty pot on a Blech. This is due in part to the position of the Tehilla L’David, who rules like the Magen Avraham:

Summary
The Rishonim learn from the Gemara in Shabbat (40b) that even if there is no issue of bishul itself, it is forbidden to place food directly on the fire, and it is permitted to heat up food only “near the fire.” The Rishonim offer two explanations for this:
Rashba: Due to the appearance of bishul.
Rosh: Due to the concern that one may stoke the coals.

In addition, it is permitted to place cooked food that is not warm near the fire, but not on the fire.
In this shiur we discussed the rules of removing or covering the coals and of placing food near the fire. We will discuss other conditions for returning food to the fire in the next shiur.
The Parameters of “Removed or Covered.”

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that “coals” are only considered “covered” if the covering is not typical of the cooking process. Therefore, even if one lowers the knob ** to the lowest setting, one cannot view the flame as being “covered,” since this is typical of the cooking process.

The Poskim discuss several contemporary suggestions for “covering the coals”:

1. One might suggest that if the stove is on the highest possible heat then there is no concern that one will “stoke the coals” (i.e.-adjust the heat with the knob), since it is impossible to increase the heat. Still, Rav Moshe Feinstein rejects this suggestion by arguing that the Rabbis instituted a general prohibition.

2. A Blech: The Mordechai writes that one is permitted to cover the fire with an empty pot and place the pot of food on top. The Kaf Hachaim and Rav Moshe Feinstein write that a metal sheet, a Blech, is also an acceptable way to cover the fire, as the Blech also distances the food from the fire. The Chazon Ish argues that a metal sheet is merely considered a cover to the stove, and a Blech is therefore not an effective way of covering the fire. The Chazon Ish explains that the Mordechai permits returning food to the top of an empty pot, since an empty pot both significantly diminishes the heat from the fire and is also an unusual way of heating food. Rav Wosner writes that we do not view a Blech as being merely a cover to the stove, since it is specifically designed to cover the fire on Shabbat. (It is possible that they are arguing about the Mordechai’s intention - is he referring to placing the pot of food into an empty pot, or on top of an inverted one?)

3. A Plata: Rav Hadaya initially writes that there are two reasons to be stringent; there is the concern that one will plug the Plata in on Shabbat, and the Plata itself is the source of the heat and therefore cannot also serve as a cover. Later, however, he is lenient for two reasons: there is no access to the heat source of a Plata, and it is designed specifically for Shabbat. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank writes that coals and a non-adjustable Plata are not comparable heat sources and there is therefore no reason to forbid.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is lenient because a Plata is not adjustable, and because it is designed to heat up food and not to cook.

The Parameters of “Near the Fire” – On Top of a Pot

The Gemara in Shabbat (51b) brings a beraita that permits placing a pot of water on top of a cooking pot of water or a pot of food on top of a cooking pot of food. The Rashba writes that such an act is defined as being “near the fire” and is always permitted.

Rabbeinu Yerucham, however, brings that this is a matter of dispute. The Shulchan Aruch in siman 318 sif 8 brings the two opinions from Rabbeinu Yerucham, and rules leniently in accordance with the Rashba. In siman 253 sif 5 he writes something similar.

In contrast, in siman 318 sif 7 he brings two opinions regarding a parallel issue and does not decide between them. Similarly, in siman 253 sif 3, he permits returning food onto an empty pot only if the conditions of chazara are fulfilled, implying that, otherwise, doing so would be forbidden.

We learned three different understandings of the Shulchan Aruch:

1. Dagul Merevava: He explains, based on the Ran, that anytime one is warming up food in a way that is unusual for that food to be warmed up, then it is defined as “near the fire” and permitted. Therefore, siman 253 sif 3 is discussing a food that is normally cooked on top of a pot, and therefore only chazara is permitted, while sif 5 is discussing a food for which cooking in such a manner is unusual, and it is therefore permitted.

He writes that, in order to explain the contradiction in siman 318, one must refer to the Magen Avraham:
2. Magen Avraham: A dry (cooked) food may always be heated on top of a pot, while a food with liquid may be heated on a pot only if the conditions of chazara are fulfilled.

3. Pri Megadim: An empty pot is viewed as a cover for the fire, and therefore only chazara is permitted. A pot full of food creates a situation of “near the fire,” and food may therefore be heated up in such a manner under any circumstance. His view is accepted by the Biur Halacha. Rav Ovadia defines a Plata as a fire with an empty pot covering it. He therefore writes: According to those who follow the Pri Megadim, only chazara is permitted. According to those who follow the Magen Avraham (such as Rav Ovadia himself), dry food may be heated up on a Plata under any circumstance. It is brought in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach that even the Pri Megadim views an empty pot as merely a cover only if the purpose of the pot is only to prevent the fire from burning the food. However, if the purpose of the empty pot is to heat up the food in an unusual manner, then it has the status of “near the fire.” One may therefore heat up food on a Plata that has an empty pot on top.

In the previous Shiurim we discussed which foods may be warmed up on Shabbat in regard to bishul. In this Shiur, we discussed the issurei d’Rabbanan against heating foods on the fire on Shabbat. Next Shiur we will conclude with additional conditions that are required in order to permit returning food to the fire.