

Weekly Shiur from Maran HaRishon LeTzion HaGaon Rabbi David Yosef shlit"a, Motzaei Shabbat Parashat Vayera 5787, Shiur #374

English

Parashat Chayei Sarah

Using an Electric Hotplate on Shabbat

Topics of the Shiur:

Strengthening the Unity of *Am Yisrael* | Using an Electric Plata on Shabbat | *Kirah Gerufah* and *Ketumah* | The Conditions for Returning Food to the Plata | The Measure of *Yad Soledet Bo* | Heating Dry and Liquid Food on Shabbat | Why Sedom Was Destroyed | The Laws of Sedom in Our Day

From the Opening Remarks of HaGaon Rabbi Yechiel Berda shlit"a, Head of the Bet Midrash Halachah Berurah, Givat Ze'ev:

...Anyone who sees this responsum, written in *Yabia Omer* (vol. 4, *O.C.* 34), cannot help but be amazed by the tremendous genius in it, by its depth and analysis. It is something without parallel, impossible for an ordinary mind to contain. A person often asks himself how one can reach such a level, and how he can draw closer to it according to his own abilities. I want to mention one point from my perspective, something I also learned from my father-in-law, Maran HaRishon LeTzion shlit"a.

Many people have aspirations but are not sufficiently convinced that they can achieve them. A person may want to reach greater heights in learning, but if he lacks true belief that he is capable of it, that stops him. Maran Rabbi Ovadia zt"l always had this tremendous aspiration to magnify Torah, and the belief that he could truly bring about great revolutions in the world. Alongside this, he also always knew that it is not enough just to think about things; one must always act, planning every single step of how to move forward.

I was once at a birthday celebration held for my father-in-law, Maran shlit"a, and I saw that the Rav seemed somewhat lost in thought. Afterward I tried to find out why, and he told me, "I am trying to think how I can make even better use of all the time I have left, as best I can..." Indeed, I have heard this from him on other occasions: at every stage of life, a person must stop and think things over. Life changes; it does not stay on the same track all the time. How do we manage to get as far as we can, as well as we can, with our own abilities?

This is the merit the Rav had to establish this wonderful place, the Bet Midrash Yechaveh Daat, in which all of us have had, and continue to have, the merit to grow. Maran shlit"a and his son, Rabbi Ovadia shlit"a, are expanding the place and developing it. *Yehi ratzon* that the Rav merit to magnify and glorify Torah and to illuminate the entire world, as he does with Torah and halachah. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit to bring the *Geulah* closer, speedily in our days, amen.

Shiur of Maran HaRishon LeTzion shlit"a:

Increasing the Honor of Heaven

A great *yashar koach* to my son-in-law, the outstanding Gaon, Rabbi Yechiel Berda shlit"a. As long as I have known him, he has been a *talmid chacham* who sits and toils in Torah day and night, spreading Torah and giving shiurim to both *avrechim* and *ba'alei batim*. He is, *Baruch Hashem*, a wonderful analyst and very broadly learned. Since his marriage he has been engaged in the in-depth study of halachah, thoroughly clarifying the different opinions. I greatly enjoy every time he is with me for Shabbat; we clarify *sugyot* together, *kazeh re'eh vekadesh*. May he continue to rise ever higher, from strength to strength, spreading his wellsprings outward and magnifying and glorifying Torah, Amen, *ken yehi ratzon*.

Rabbotai, we have been through several very difficult weeks. We cannot ignore what we went through during these weeks. Sadly, we know how much *lashon hara* there was here, how much gossip, how much public humiliation and how much *machloket*. It is especially painful to see how among us, those who tremble at the word of Hashem and keep Torah and mitzvot, severe Torah prohibitions suddenly became an ideology: people literally take severe prohibitions and turn them into a mitzvah. At times there is truly a feeling that everything is permitted.

Baruch Hashem, we are past all of that. What remains is that everyone sits and gives their commentary, interpreting what will be and who will do what, and so on. That is not our role; "Hashem will do what is good in His eyes." It is written (*Mishlei* 21:1): "The heart of a king is in the hand of Hashem." If the heart of a king is in the hand of Hashem, how much more so is the heart of small-time politicians in the hand of Hashem... We pray and hope that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will make things good for *Am Yisrael*, with Hashem's help.

We must know: we are here in Eretz Yisrael, and we are all brothers. We are Jews. Although there are a great many Jews in the country who, sadly (the majority), do not keep Torah and mitzvot, they are still our brothers. We hear the discourse of hatred, but we will not take part in it! We will speak of love and brotherhood, peace, companionship and friendship!

I hear people talking about *mishtamtim* (draft dodgers) and *mesharetim* (those who serve). We can use these very words regarding our holy Torah. Who are the ones who "serve" the Torah? Those who follow the holy Torah and the mitzvot, who sit and engage in Torah day and night, who magnify and spread Torah, which is the purpose of this world. It was for this reason that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created His world: for the sake of the Torah. Conversely, one who does not learn Torah and does not keep mitzvot is dodging the Torah and the mitzvot. This is how we should look at things. But since non-religious people would not understand what we want from them if we spoke this way, what remains for us is to speak in friendship, to guard our tongues, and not to be dragged after provocations and unbecoming talk. We will try to draw closer to the common denominator. We will explain to everyone that the common denominator of all of us here in Eretz Yisrael is our holy Torah. We are here because it is written in the Torah that Eretz Yisrael is ours. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* promised it to Avraham Avinu and repeated the promise several times, then to Yitzchak and Yaakov as well, and afterward He brought us to Eretz Yisrael. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave us the Torah so that we would keep it in Eretz Yisrael, and we have special mitzvot that apply only to Eretz Yisrael. All of our strength comes from our holy Torah. This is what we must explain, while striving to increase love and brotherhood, peace and companionship. With Hashem's help, may we merit that all *sinat chinam* be removed from our midst, and may we merit to magnify the Name of Heaven and increase the honor of Heaven, Amen, *ken yehi ratzon*.

A Plata Without Buttons

Today I want to address a halachic question. I do not intend to engage in *pilpul*, raising questions and resolving them, but rather to state the foundations of the opinions of the poskim and the halachic conclusion regarding the use of an electric plata (hotplate) on Shabbat.

The plata is an invention of recent generations, following the invention of electricity, since which the entire subject of heating food on Shabbat has changed. A person who places food on a plata on Friday, and on Shabbat takes it out and eats it, may do so. There is also no concern here regarding *shehiyah* (leaving food on a heat source into Shabbat). Whoever studies the laws of *shehiyah* in *Halachah Berurah* (vol. 14, *Siman* 253) will see that I wrote at length there that a plata poses no concern of *shehiyah*. I am speaking about an ordinary plata, as commonly found in homes, on which people do not usually cook but mainly keep food warm. It has no buttons and it has a constant temperature.

The law is entirely different for new platas that have buttons, and especially for today's platas whose heating elements are not covered with sheet metal. A plata with a constant temperature and no buttons, however, is like the plata of former times, and one may eat on Shabbat from food that is heated on it.

Some 50 years ago or more, my father, Maran zt"l, had a radio program every Friday called *Pinat HaHalachah* (The Halachah Corner). It lasted between 5 and 10 minutes and was broadcast at around 4 o'clock. There were *gedolei Yisrael* who would turn on the radio at that hour to hear *Pinat HaHalachah*. For years I had the merit of sitting beside my father and helping him prepare the material, and at times he sent me to deliver *Pinat HaHalachah* on the radio in his place.

On one occasion my father, Maran zt"l, addressed the subject of using an electric plata on Shabbat, and he wrote about it in *Yechaveh Daat* (2:45). The responsum he wrote there is fairly short. He cites the main opinions regarding the contradiction in the *Shulchan Aruch* and explains the matter. His conclusion is that one may take dry food out of the refrigerator and heat it on a plata: for example rice, cooked potatoes, cooked meat or cooked fish, meaning anything that is fully cooked and dry, that is, without gravy, or whose gravy is very thick and dense, as I discussed in previous shiurim. All of these he permitted heating on the plata. He repeated this many years later as well, when he wrote *Chazon Ovadia* on the laws of Shabbat, adding some details, but overall the content is similar to what he wrote in *Yechaveh Daat*. There is a *sugya* in tractate *Shabbat* (38b) about returning food to the heat, and the Gemara states several conditions. As I said, there is a contradiction in the *Shulchan Aruch*, and much ink has been spilled over it: *gedolei Yisrael* have written about it throughout the generations, and there are several opinions on the subject. Whoever studies the responsum in *Yechaveh Daat* is left with some questions, since there are matters he did not fully clarify in that responsum.

The Opinions of the Poskim on Heating Food on a Plata on Shabbat

Many years ago I wrote on this subject, and about 15 years ago I sat on it for many weeks and wrote a very long responsum, dozens of pages, which was printed in *Halachah Berurah* (318, *Otzerot Yosef* 10). I began by clarifying the *sugyot* in the Gemara and the *Rishonim*, and how the *Rishonim* understood the words of the Gemara. Then I moved on to the later poskim, the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rama*, and to the explanations of the poskim regarding their opinions. I gathered all the opinions and clarified each one: its reasons, its proofs and its logic. Ultimately, my conclusion is that according to the custom of the Sepharadim one may certainly be lenient, even *lechatchilah* (from the outset), and take a cold food and heat it on an electric plata, as my father, Maran zt"l, wrote.

As is known, there are *gedolei Yisrael* who do not agree with this. Among the Sepharadim too, HaGaon Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l was stringent on this subject. Among the Ashkenazim, on the other hand, there was in the previous generation the Admor of Sanz, a Holocaust survivor and a tremendous Gaon in Torah, sharp and broadly learned, in addition to his righteousness and his remarkable service of Hashem. In his responsa, *Divrei Yatziv*, an enormous work, he discusses the subject of the plata at length, and very interestingly, his conclusion is the same as that of my father, Maran zt"l: he too permits heating cold, dry food on a plata. According to him, this is permitted for Ashkenazim as well.

One should know that among the Ashkenazim too, according to the *Rama*, there is a difference between two cases. If one cooked food on Friday and wants to return it to the heat on Shabbat, then according to the opinion of the *Ran* (*Shabbat* 15b in *Rif*), with which the *Rama* (*O.C.* 253:2) agrees, the law in such a case is stricter. This is called *chazarah* (returning food to the heat), and it is regarding this that the Gemara says the conditions are required. But if the food sat there the entire time from Friday into Shabbat, and he takes it off and returns it on Shabbat, the *Rama* is far more lenient than the *Shulchan Aruch*. Whoever carefully studies the words of the *Bet Yosef* (*O.C.* 253) and of the *Shulchan Aruch*, which makes no such distinction, will see that Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* does not agree with the leniency of the *Ran*.

In light of the words of the *Shulchan Aruch*, we must discuss how to regard the plata. It is impossible to cover the entire subject in one shiur, so today I am stating only the main points. Whoever wants to cover the subject can find everything in my *Halachah Berurah* (end of 318), and if anyone has comments or questions on what I wrote, I will be happy to hear them. Whoever wants to study the subject in depth should know that it will not take him an hour or two; he must devote days and weeks to it, sitting and learning and analyzing the words of the poskim.

Kirah Gerufah or Ketumah

In the time of *Chazal* there was no electricity. When they wanted to heat food on Shabbat, they had a *kirah*, a cooking stove with burning coals in it, and on Erev Shabbat they would either sweep out the coals or cover them. *Gerifah* means that the *kirah* was very hot, and when the coals are swept out, the *kirah* still remains very hot, to the point that one can still cook on it a little. Foods that cook quickly can be cooked even after the coals have been removed. *Ketimah* means taking cold ash or earth and scattering it over the coals, thereby covering the burning coals. Then too the *kirah* is very hot, and one can still cook a little.

The *sugya* of the Gemara dealing with returning food to the heat on Shabbat speaks of a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah*. We see that the Gemara equates the two, *gerufah* and *ketumah*, and discusses how one may return food to such a *kirah*. There is an entire *sugya* on this with several opinions, and the *Rishonim* disagree about the conditions under which one may return food to such a *kirah*. There is a halachic dispute: according to Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 253:2) there are four conditions, and according to the *Rama* there are five.

The first condition, according to Maran the *Shulchan Aruch*, is that the food be *mevushal kol tzorko* (fully cooked), and the *Rama* also agrees to this condition. This means completely cooked, not half-cooked and not merely edible: "completely cooked" by the standard of someone who wants well-cooked food, with no shortcuts. Without this condition there is a Torah prohibition of cooking.

The second condition is that the *kirah* be *gerufah* or *ketumah*. On the *kirah* of their time one could leave food for a long time and it would stay hot or even cook further, but when we are speaking of cooked food, we know that *ein bishul achar bishul bayavesh* (there is no cooking after cooking with dry food). These are the two conditions on which Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rama* agree.

The Prohibition of Heating Cooked Food on Shabbat

There are two opinions among the *Rishonim* as to why it is forbidden to heat cooked food on the fire, and they are also very important for the subject of the plata. The *Rosh* explains that if the *kirah* is not *gerufah* or *ketumah* and the food sits on the fire, then even if it is completely cooked, the person will want to speed up the heating of the food, and there is a concern of *shema yechateh begechalim* (lest he stir the coals), that is, that he will do something to fan and strengthen the fire. *Rashba* (*Shabbat* 40b) holds that the reason is different: the concern is that he appears to be cooking. That is, even though the food is cooked, since people do not know what is inside the pot, when he places it on the fire he looks as though he is cooking: *mechzei kimevashel*.

According to both of these opinions, for cooked food placed on the fire the prohibition is only *de'rabbanan*, as we see in the Gemara, since the food is already cooked and *ein bishul achar bishul*. It is a decree of the Sages: according to the *Rosh*, lest he come to the Torah prohibition of stirring the coals, and according to *Rashba*, because it looks like cooking. These two conditions are agreed upon, and they apply to the plata and to all cases: that the food not be on an open flame but on a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah*, as in the time of the Gemara, and that the food be *mevushal kol tzorko*.

Four Conditions in the Shulchan Aruch

According to the conclusion of the *sugya*, as Maran the *Bet Yosef* understood it, there are two more conditions. The third is that he not have placed it on the ground: that is, when he took the pot off the *kirah*, he did not set it down on the ground. Setting it on the ground signifies *hesech hada'at* (a turning of one's mind away), a new situation in which the pot is no longer intended for further heating. There is a question nowadays, since people usually set pots down on a table or on a kitchen counter, whether this is considered like the ground or not. I clarified this question at length in the responsum as well, and this is not the place to elaborate. The fourth condition is that the food still be boiling.

Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 253:2) writes: "If a *kirah* is *gerufah* and *ketumah* and one took the pot off it, even on Shabbat, one may return it as long as it is boiling and he did not place it on the ground." Maran does not mention here the condition that the food be *mevushal kol tzorko*, but he mentions it several times in *siman* 318.

In *se'if* 3 (*O.C.* 253:3) Maran repeats this, but this time he is speaking not of a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah* but of someone with an open flame who wants to heat food: a person who got up in the morning and saw that his *hamin* was about

to burn because the liquid had run out. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 253:3) writes: "One who rises early and sees that his food has scorched, and fears it will scorch further, may remove it, place an old empty pot on the *kirah*, and then place the pot with the food in it on top of the empty pot. He must take care not to set his pot on the ground, and it must be boiling." Here too the *Shulchan Aruch* repeats these conditions.

What does "it must be boiling" mean? Maran used two words here, in brief. But in the *Bet Yosef* (*O.C.* 253) he explains that when the *Tur* wrote "it must be boiling," this does not mean literally boiling, since anything at *yad soledet bo* (a temperature from which the hand recoils) is called boiling.

Hot Water and Boiling Water

There is a pitfall here, caused by some people who do not know how to learn and do not analyze the matter properly. They say that if I heated water and the water is already hot enough for *yad soledet bo* but is not yet boiling, that is fine, since the *Shulchan Aruch* says "boiling" and the *Bet Yosef* explains that anything at *yad soledet bo* is called boiling. But this is a very serious mistake, as we will explain.

When the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Bet Yosef* say that *yad soledet bo* is enough, they are speaking about food that has already been completely cooked, which we took off the heat and which has begun to cool. As long as it is at *yad soledet bo*, one may return it, since it is already cooked. But for initial cooking, *yad soledet bo* alone is certainly not enough. How could it be? A person puts meat into a pot, the water is very hot but not yet boiling, and the meat is still not cooked. Even when the water boils, it sometimes takes time for the meat to be cooked; some foods take a long time to cook.

Regarding water itself too, as I discussed in one of the previous shiurim, there is a doubt whether water is called cooked when it begins to evaporate or when it starts to bubble. In practice, anyone preparing tea or coffee waits for the water to boil and then waits for it to begin to cool. He does not take a shortcut; he does not make the coffee the moment the water is hot. Everyone waits for the water to boil, although seemingly this is a waste of time. The reason is that boiling is boiling, and for reasons of health the water needs to boil, and afterward it cools somewhat, and that is how people drink it. One must therefore certainly pay attention: for cooking, *yad soledet bo* is not enough. But regarding returning food that was already completely cooked and has begun to cool, this is what the *Shulchan Aruch* means by "it must be boiling": as long as it is at *yad soledet bo*.

Defining Yad Soledet Bo

What is the definition of *yad soledet bo*? My father, Maran zt"l, discusses this subject at length in several places (see *Yabia Omer*, vol. 3, *O.C.* 24:4 and onward, and elsewhere). The Gemara says: "Anything that would scald a baby's belly." This does not mean that you put in your finger and get burned. Some people have different skin, like the skin of an elephant… They put in a finger and nothing happens to them. That is why the Gemara's definition is that a baby's belly would be scalded by it. If a person came today to test on his baby whether it would scald his belly, the police would have to be called immediately to take him to prison… The reality is that today one cannot test what *Chazal* said in this way.

Therefore, several of the great *Acharonim*, among them the *Ben Ish Chai* (*Bo* 2:5), established that anything one can drink or eat without cooling it is called not *yad soledet bo*. There are also opinions as to the temperature, in Celsius or in the Fahrenheit of America, that is called *yad soledet bo*. HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l wrote a very interesting article on this in his time, bringing proofs that 45 degrees Celsius is called *yad soledet bo*. Some disagree, and there are proofs in each direction. But it is very clear that 80 degrees Celsius is certainly *yad soledet bo*.

The Conditions According to the Rama

As I said, Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* wrote four conditions: 1) that the food be *mevushal kol tzorko*; 2) a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah* or, as he writes in the next *se'if*, a pot on top of a pot when the bottom one is empty; 3) that he not have placed it on the ground; 4) that the temperature still be at *yad soledet bo*.

The *Rama* (*O.C.* 253:2), on the other hand, brings three other conditions in place of the last two conditions of the *Shulchan Aruch*. In place of the *Shulchan Aruch*'s condition that he not have placed it on the ground, the *Rama* writes two conditions: 1) *od'ah beyado*, that he has not set the pot down at all and is still holding it in his hand; 2) that when he takes the pot off the *kirah*, he intends to return it. From most angles we might look at it, the *Rama* is stricter than the *Shulchan Aruch*.

What will the law be if it is still in his hand but resting on the ground? The *Acharonim* discuss whether the *Rama* means to add a stringency or not, and that is another question. As for what the *Shulchan Aruch* wrote, that it must be boiling, the *Rama* is more lenient: as long as it has not completely cooled, one may return it. This is not the place to elaborate.

A Contradiction in the Words of Maran the Shulchan Aruch

Now, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 318:4) discusses the law of *ein bishul achar bishul*. It explains there that if, for example, one took a boiling pot off the plata and wants to put cooked but cold meat into it, although this is a *kli rishon*, it is permitted since *ein bishul achar bishul*.

But in *se'if* 7 and *se'if* 8 the *Shulchan Aruch* writes other things. *Se'if* 8 is the main *se'if*, which the poskim adopted as the halachah. This is what is says: "Regarding placing a cold item that was fully cooked on top of an urn that is on the fire: some say the law is as if he placed it opposite the bonfire, and anything that may be placed opposite the bonfire at a spot of *yad soledet bo*, such as something dry, may be placed on top of an urn on the fire. Others say it is like placing it on top of a *kirah*, and it is forbidden even if it was fully cooked, even if it shrinks and is harmed by this, and even if it was put there to keep it warm. Some are stringent. The first opinion appears to be the main one."

A *meicham* (urn) is a vessel containing hot water, and "opposite the bonfire" means beside the bonfire, in a very hot spot. If a person takes a pot and places it not on the bonfire but next to it, and the food is cooked, there is no problem at all, and indeed the *Shulchan Aruch* writes further on (*O.C.* 318:15) that this is fully permitted. Here, some say that placing food on top of an urn on the fire is like placing it opposite the bonfire, and anything that may be placed opposite the bonfire at a spot of *yad soledet bo*, such as dry food to which *ein bishul achar bishul* applies, may be placed on top of an urn on the fire.

In other words, the *Shulchan Aruch* says regarding someone who takes cold, dry, cooked food and wants to place it on top of an urn on the fire (the urn itself stands on the fire, but the food does not sit on the fire itself, only on the urn) that "the first opinion appears to be the main one": it is permitted. Here the *Shulchan Aruch* does not write "he did not place it on the ground," nor does he write "boiling." On the contrary, he writes explicitly "even cold." The *Acharonim* therefore discuss a major question as to what the *Shulchan Aruch* really means.

I will not go into all the opinions and clarifications on this subject. I have already written that the ruling should follow the opinion of *Minchat Kohen*, *Magen Avraham* and several other great *Acharonim*. The conclusion is that in *siman* 253 the *Shulchan Aruch* is speaking of liquid food, such as soup: on Friday night one takes soup out from the plata to give to all the members of the household, without setting it on the ground, and after everyone is served a lot of soup remains and it is still at *yad soledet bo*. Regarding this the *Shulchan Aruch* says that it is permitted. But dry food is what he means in *siman* 318 when he says it is entirely permitted. This is the first foundation, but it is not universally agreed upon.

A Plata Is Not a Way of Cooking

Why do I rule according to this opinion? Very simply, because the plata did not exist in their time. Their entire discussion concerns a pot on top of a pot (one pot on the fire, with the pot one wants to heat placed on top of it) or a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah*. If we think it through, a plata is far more lenient than *gerufah* and *ketumah*, for we see in the Gemara that with *gerufah* and *ketumah* they would cook a little: the pot was still extremely hot, and they would cook on a *kirah gerufah* or *ketumah*. A plata, however, is not normally used for cooking.

Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, the *Shulchan Aruch* speaks of placing food opposite the fire, close to it, which is certainly not a way of cooking. In that case all opinions agree that these conditions, that it not have been placed on the ground and that it be boiling, are not needed, since this is not a way of cooking at all.

Looking at the plata, first of all, on a plata with no buttons there is certainly no concern of stirring the coals. *Mechzei kimevashel* does not apply either, since this is not a way of cooking. Admittedly, some of the poskim argue that seemingly this is a way of cooking: there are families who bring the *hamin* to a boil before Shabbat, and there are those who do not even do that, so that it is not cooked at all, and they place it on the plata for many hours, especially in the winter. They place it at 4 in the afternoon, and by 10 the next morning it is fully cooked. If so, this should be called a way of cooking.

However, the *Bet Yosef* brings *Rashba* on this subject of "a way of cooking", and with a plata we see two differences. First, most people who want good, tasty *hamin* cook it before Shabbat, at least until it reaches *ben Derusai* (partially cooked). Some even cook it fully and only then place it on the plata, so that it can spend the night there and dry out, which is good for it. This is what most people do.

Second, we must take into account that people do not place only *hamin* on a plata. Every family places several kinds of food on it; nowadays, *Baruch Hashem*, many people have the means, and several kinds of food are usually sitting on the plata. If we look at the main use of the plata, it is not for cooking. Even those who cook *hamin* on the plata cook only that one particular food; for all the other foods the plata serves for heating.

Catering is similar: they keep the food warm by means of a plata. The caterer first cooks the food and then places it on the plata. Woe to him if he had to wait for the plata to cook it for him… The meal would be over and he would be unable to serve the food. A plata is meant for keeping food warm. For most people and

for most foods it is meant to heat and keep warm, not to cook. In light of all this, I think a plata more closely resembles the law of "opposite the fire," placing food beside the bonfire, where according to all opinions the conditions of *chazarah* are not needed.

Heating Cold Food on the Plata

To summarize: on an electric plata with no buttons, regardless of its temperature and even if it is extremely hot, one may take cold, dry food out of the refrigerator and heat it, for example rice, fish or meat. According to what I said in previous shiurim, if there is thin gravy like soup, even a small amount, one may not heat it. Gravy that is truly like soup, clear like water, may not be heated.

But thick, dense gravy, such as fish in sauce or meat in sauce: we will define it as being like ketchup, which is thick and dense. It need not be possible to hold the gravy in one's hand without it falling apart. That is the opinion of HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l, but my father, Maran zt"l, HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l and HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l all hold that if the gravy is thick and dense and the food is completely cooked, it is not called soup but is considered dry. The same applies to congealed gravy: sometimes one cooks meat and the gravy congeals and becomes like jelly. Although such gravy melts and turns into soup when placed on the plata, we go according to the time of placing it on the plata, and it is considered dry. That is a subject of its own, and this is not the place to elaborate.

In conclusion: with dry food this is permitted. With liquid food, however, such as soup, four conditions are needed: 1) that the soup be *mevushal kol tzorko*; 2) that it be returned to a plata and not to an open flame; 3) that I not have set the pot on the ground (it is worthwhile to place it, for example, on a chair, which poses no problem according to all opinions and is called not having placed it on the ground, and it may then be returned); 4) that it still be at *yad soledet bo*.

Why Sedom Was Destroyed

The destruction of Sedom is something that had not occurred in the history of the world since the Mabul, when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* destroyed the whole world. Since then it had not happened that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* destroyed a great city. Sedom was a city "like the garden of Hashem" (*Bereshit* 13:10), the most beautiful city in the world. Lot chose to live there because it was "well-watered everywhere," so beautiful and good. Nevertheless, the verse says about the people of Sedom: "The people of Sedom were exceedingly wicked and sinful toward Hashem" (*Bereshit* 13:13), and afterward in our weekly *parasha*, when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* looks at the people of Sedom: "I will go down now and see whether they have done according to her cry" (*Bereshit* 18:21).

They had a system of laws that became a byword: "the laws of Sedom." What is the bed of Sedom? When a guest arrived in their city, they would lay him on the bed. If he was short and the bed was bigger, they would stretch him until his bones came apart so that he would fit the bed, and if he was too tall, they would cut him down to fit. They were evil and cruel people, thieves, corrupt in every direction. We can understand that a city in which everyone is corrupt, whose legal system is terrible and cruel, against conscience and even against the laws of the gentiles, deserves to be destroyed.

How terrible was the destruction? The Yam HaMelach, where Sedom stood, is a sea without even any fish; no living creature can live in it. In English it is called the "Dead Sea." That is how far it went: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* overturned this city from end to end.

The prophet Yechezkel explains why Sedom was destroyed (*Yechezkel* 16:49): "This was the sin of your sister Sedom: pride, abundance of bread and peaceful ease were hers and her daughters', but she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." They had everything they wanted, they were sated, and they did not give *tzedakah*: "but she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Seemingly, this is very puzzling. We are speaking of evil and sinful people, corrupt from beginning to end, and the prophet says about them that they did not give *tzedakah*? That they were stingy? Was that the problem with Sedom? The problems were a thousand times more severe! It is hard to understand how Sedom was destroyed because they did not give *tzedakah*.

Killing the Conscience

But *Rabbotai*, let us sit and think. Tzedakah is not an easy mitzvah. Even when people feel compassion, they often have a *yetzer hara* not to give *tzedakah*. If a poor person comes before someone and asks him for *tzedakah*, and he is a miser who does not want to give, then afterward, when he goes home and remembers the poor man who stood before him with dull eyes, pleading and asking for *tzedakah*, and he did not give him anything, it is very likely that this will hurt him: Why didn't I give? Why was I stingy? After all, I could have given.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu created a conscience in us. Gentiles too have a conscience. Sometimes the conscience awakens, and in this way a person can do *teshuvah*. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is slow to anger; He does not punish immediately, but waits for the person to do *teshuvah*. How does a person do *teshuvah*? When his conscience awakens and he has *musar kelayot* (pangs of conscience). It is written (*Tehillim* 16:7): "Even at night my innermost thoughts rebuke me." A person who sinned goes to sleep at night, he lies on his bed and thinks about what he did, and then his holy soul begins to cry: Wicked man, what have you done? You have blemished me! How could you? He cannot bear the fact that he sinned, and he does *teshuvah*.

The people of Sedom were so wicked that they were very sophisticated: they made a law that it was forbidden to give *tzedakah*. And not merely a law, but a law whose violators were put to death. Lot's daughter gave *tzedakah* and supported a certain poor man. They saw this poor man sitting there for a week and not dying; he was eating, he looked fine, fat and healthy. They followed her and caught her giving him food. They smeared her body with honey and set her before the bees, and she died a strange death. And *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* heard her cry!

In Sedom they considered that a person's conscience could awaken and that he would then do *teshuvah*, so they made a law to kill the conscience. When a person sins, he can think: I made a mistake, I will do *teshuvah*. But when a person is law-abiding, the law established it this way, an explicit law! And if the law established it, am I to blame? Did I do anything wrong? Every orderly country makes laws, and I am a law-abiding citizen!

This is what the prophet says: "but she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." In Sedom they killed the conscience by making laws. When there is no conscience, there is no hope; a person will no longer do *teshuvah*. It is said that if there is a place where the poor do not cry, that is not a sign that there are no poor people; it is a sign that the poor have already given up... This is what happened in Sedom: there was no more hope, no chance at all that they would do *teshuvah*. This is why "she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy": the moment they turned the laws of Sedom into law and showed people that they were law-abiding, there was no more hope, and therefore *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* destroyed Sedom.

The Laws of Sedom in the Jewish State

Let us learn what is happening in our day. We have the Supreme Court, and there are laws. For example, there has been talk lately about separation between men and women for halachic reasons of modesty. The Supreme Court does not recognize this; those who want separation on religious grounds, they define as *hadarat nashim* (excluding women). It is simply unbelievable! *Baruch Hashem* they have not yet decided that it is forbidden to sit separately in synagogues. But at every event (if you remember what happened in Tel Aviv before Yom Kippur, when they wanted to make a separation between men and women, and they placed the flag of the State between the men and the women) they see the very separation as a humiliation of women, *Hashem yishmor*.

They see it the same way in the army: they do not agree to have separation. Religious soldiers come and ask not to have a female instructor or a female soldier serving together with them, and the army does not accept this because of the court! What we consider one of the fundamentals of Judaism, modesty, for them is the opposite! When one of us comes and warns about this, they tell him: What do you mean? The Supreme Court has decided, and I am law-abiding! Soon they will say the same about synagogues: there is a law, and the court comes first. That is how it is with them.

We must denounce every law they make that goes against halachah and against common sense as well. Fifty years ago, how did people regard marriage between a man and a man or between a woman and a woman? Today, anyone who dares to open his mouth is presented as abnormal, and 50 years ago it was different. Why has this come about? Because of the Supreme Court, which all along has been trying to erase our halachah and to create supposedly progressive laws, but they are progressing backward! They are going back to Sedom, to something like the laws of Sedom.

We must know: the laws to which we are loyal, the laws that have logic, conscience and love of people in them, are the laws of our holy Torah. With Hashem's help, may we walk in the path of Torah, mitzvot, good deeds and fear of Heaven, and may we merit the complete *Geulah* soon, Amen, *ken yehi ratzon*.

I want to bless the entire dear public participating in the shiur here and hearing it wherever they are, through Radio "Kol Berama" and all the other channels broadcasting the shiur. *Yehi ratzon* that you succeed in all the work of your hands, continue to rise ever higher in Torah and fear of Heaven, and merit to raise all your descendants to Torah, mitzvot and good deeds, Amen, *ken yehi ratzon*.