# SHABBAT UNPACKED

Session 6

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

## BURST OF INSPIRATION:

As a community rabbi for almost two decades, we have been fortunate to host thousands of diverse Shabbat guests. For many, it was their very first Shabbat experience.

I will never forget one Shabbat dinner. We hosted a young Jewish family with roots in the former Soviet Union. They had never experienced Shabbat dinner and that was their first exposure to anything Shabbat. As they entered our home, they were immediately embraced by the scent of Shabbat. It was a blend of freshly washed floors, homemade challah warming in the oven, bubbling chicken soup, and of course yummy potato kugel. As they surveyed our beautifully set Shabbat dinner table, replete with china dishes and crystal glasses, we could sense their feelings of wonder. My kids graciously showed them to their seats and I offered play by play explanations of the rituals and songs that open our Shabbat dinner.

A few minutes into Shabbat dinner their teenage daughter Michelle innocently took out her iphone and began to scroll. While this was not at all the first time that this had transpired at our Shabbat table, my kids nervously glanced at me.

With a smile I turned to Michelle and I said, “Michelle, there is absolutely no way for you to know this but our Shabbat dinners are screen-free. Do you think that you would be able to help us keep it that way?” Innocently, Michelle asked me how long Shabbat dinner would last. She was clearly trying to see if she could last that long without her phone. I replied that I was not sure exactly how long, but that if she could not last without being on her phone, she was free to walk away from the table at any time. Michelle smiled, put her phone into her pocket, and replied, “I guess we will see!”

Over two hours later, as we concluded our meal, Michelle suddenly jumped up and asked, “Does anyone know what time it is?”

When one of my kids shared the time and Michelle realized that over two hours had passed, she blurted out, “That's impossible, it felt like ten minutes!” I replied, “Welcome to Shabbat, Michelle... welcome to Shabbat!”

# CREATION THROUGH COOKING CONTINUED (CATEGORY 4 OF 39)

In the last session we noted the catch 22 of Shabbat cuisine. On the one hand we cannot cook, on the other hand we are required to eat warm food on Shabbat. How do we resolve this apparent paradox?

The simple answer is that it is prohibited to cook on Shabbat, yet leaving food to stay warm is permissible under certain circumstances. Here is a basic overview of how to have delicious, warm Shabbat food.

**1. Food for Friday Night Dinner:**

a. The blech: A blech is a simple sheet of metal placed on top of the burner. Any type of cooked food may be left on a blech before Shabbat starts. Please note range knobs must be covered to avoid adjusting the temperature which can lead to cooking (a simple piece of aluminum foil does the job).

b. The hotplate: Any type of cooked food may be left on an electric hotplate before Shabbat starts. Please note if it has a knob to adjust the temperature, the knob must be covered.

c. The warming drawer: Any type of cooked food may be left in a warming drawer that cannot get hotter than 225° F. Knobs must be covered.

d. An oven: Any type of fully cooked food may be left in the oven before Shabbat provided that the oven light does not turn on and off when opened. The oven door may be opened once on Shabbat and all of the food removed. Oven knobs must be covered.

e. A crockpot/slow cooker: Any type of cooked food may be left in a crockpot before Shabbat starts. The inner pot must be removed from the heat source (the heating element) prior to removing the food from the crockpot. If the crockpot has a knob to adjust the temperature, it must be covered.

**2. Food for Shabbat Day:**

a. Any fully cooked dry food (i.e. rice, grilled chicken...) may be rewarmed on Shabbat day with the below methods. If there is gravy or liquid in the pan, it may not be rewarmed. Here are the methods for warming food per appliance mentioned above:

- Blech: One may not place food on Shabbat directly on the blech. The permissible method of rewarming using a blech is to take a tin pan and turn it over. One may place the dry cooked food on the inverted tin pan. One may place dry cooked food on top of a crock pot, a hot water urn or any pot that was placed on the blech before Shabbat.

- Hotplate: This is comparable to a blech and the same instructions should be followed as per above. Any knobs should be covered.

- Warming drawer: Food may be put into a hot box or warming drawer which cannot get hotter than 225° F and has its temperature control knobs removed or covered.

- Oven: Food may not be placed in an oven on Shabbat.

- Crockpot: Many people prefer to place their cholent or chamin (stews) in a crock pot before Shabbat. This is the preferred and most convenient way of enjoying hot food on Shabbat Day. (Please see crock pot directives above.)

b. One can enjoy coffee or tea on Shabbat by using an electric urn that has been boiled and stays on a warm setting over Shabbat. (See below for the permissible method of making coffee or tea on Shabbat.)

**3. Returning Food to the Heat Source**

a. If one removes their pan of hot food on Shabbat and wishes to return the hot food to the heat source (i.e. returning the crock to the crock pot base) a number of conditions must be met.

- Food must be fully cooked.

- When one removes the pan of hot food it must be with the intention to return it.

- One must continually hold on to the pan and not let go before replacing it on to the heat source.

- The heat source/knobs must be covered ie. a blech or hot plate.
- The food is still warm.

**4. Making hot beverages on Shabbat**

a. As noted above the preferred practical method for having hot water on Shabbat is using an electric hot water urn that dispenses manually.

b. It is considered bishul/cooking to brew coffee or steep tea on Shabbat and is therefore prohibited.

c. Therefore, one should use instant coffee, powdered tea, or tea essence that has already been steeped before Shabbat.

d. Even so, as we discussed previously, one cannot simply dispense the hot water onto instant coffee or tea. One must first dispense the water into a cup, which serves as the first vessel as we learned in Session 5, and then place the instant coffee or tea essence into that cup in order to avoid any cooking.

While in truth, the laws of cooking on Shabbat are very detailed, once one creates the appropriate Shabbat food prep routine, it becomes easier and easier to enjoy a cooking-free Shabbat. For more details and practical applications, please contact your mentor or LOR (local Olami rabbi) for more resources.

# CHOLENT BY JAMIE GELLER

Cholent or stew is a classic ashkenazi dish that can be prepared in a crockpot prior to Shabbat and can remain cooking until lunchtime. Here is a recipe for a classic ashkenazi cholent. Try it and you will be hooked!

THIS VERSION IS THE PERFECT CLASSIC CHOLENT I GREW UP WITH JUST LIKE SO MANY OTHER ASHKENAZIM AND IT'S PURE COMFORT. DID YOU KNOW THE SLOW COOKER WAS INVENTED BY A JEW BECAUSE OF CHOLENT?

**8 HOURS COOK TIME**
**10 MINUTES PREP TIME**
**8 SERVINGS**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 yellow onions, chopped
- 2 small potatoes, cubed
- 2 pounds beef stew meat, cubed
- 2-4 marrow bones, optional
- 1 cup pearl barley
- 1/2 cup kidney beans
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 3-4 cups of water
- Salt and pepper to taste

**PREPARATION**

1. Place the onions and potatoes in the bottom of the slow cooker.

2. Top with the beef stew meat and marrow bones. Sprinkle the meat with salt and pepper. Add the barley and kidney beans, then sprinkle on the paprika, cumin, turmeric and chili powder.

3. Drizzle the top of the cholent with honey, then pour the water over the top to cover the beans. Cover the slow cooker and cook on low heat overnight, or for at least 8 hours.

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