YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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# THE LAWS OF SHABBAT

# By Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

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Shiur #26:

*Lash*, Part VIII

XIV) Instant Foods

Is one allowed to make instant soup, pasta or mashed potatoes on Shabbat? How may one prepare instant baby food or formula on Shabbat?

In this, our final *shiur* on the *melakha* of *lash*, we will examine the complex issue of how this prohibition relates to the increasingly pervasive phenomenon of the past half-century: instant food. Very often, preparing these foods means adding liquid to grains or powder and stirring the mixture. Is this *lisha*?

We must note that aside from the issue of *lash*, preparation of these foods needs to avoidthe *melakha* of *bishul* (cooking). To summarize the conclusion of my analysis as pertinent to this discussion, one may not prepare these in a primary vessel (the one “on the fire”) or in secondary vessel (which one pours into from the primary vessel), there is room to do so in a tertiary vessel (poured into from the secondary vessel). (Nevertheless, it is best not to do this regularly, since this resembles cooking on Shabbat.) In cases where the *bishul* issue has been overcome, the question then arises: is there a problem of *lisha* in preparing instant food?

To answer this, we must differentiate among three types:

1. If the instant food is a liquid, such as soup, or of similar consistency, there is generally no problem of *lisha*.
2. If the instant food consists of pasta with sauce and the like, it may be as liquid as soup; but at times, the mixture is more viscous, and the sauce makes the pasta cohere.
3. If the instant food consists of a powder, the water may sometimes turn the powder into a very thick mass; this is the case with instant **mashed potatoes (potato puree)**. In this case of a ***belila ava*** (thick mixture), sometimes the very addition of water creates the *belila*, without any further action, and sometimes there is a need to stir it so that a mass will form.

In the second case — e.g., pasta with tomato sauce — the resultant **mixture** can be pourable and thus defined as a *belila rakka* (thin mixture), and sometimes it is defined as a *belila ava*. A ***belila rakka*** may be created with a *shinnui* (alteration), according to the rules we mentioned in our previous *shiurim*. In other words, **one must alter the sequence of ingredients** — instead of putting boiling water in a container of instant food, one should empty the contents into another vessel, pour hot water into the now-empty container and afterwards put the instant food back into its container. In addition, one should do the **mixing with a *shinnui***, e.g., ***sheti ve-erev*** (crosswise).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Nonetheless, even if the resultant mixture is a ***belila ava***, one may be lenient and prepare it with a *shinnui*, because generally speaking, instant food cannot be prepared on Erev Shabbat, as it will be cold and unappetizing by mealtime on Shabbat. As we have explained in previous *shiurim*, one should stir the *belila* with a *shinnui*, and it is desirable to change the sequence of ingredients.

**When Stirring is Unnecessary**

If the instant food consists of a powder which becomes a thick mass on its own after hot water is added — e.g., potato puree — it is questionable whether a *shinnui* renders the *lisha* permissible. The Gemara in **Zevachim** (94b) discusses sowing flaxseed in water. In the Gemara, it is explained that there is a prohibition of *lash*, since the flaxseeds stick to each other. The **Rambam** (8:16) rules:

Whoever puts sesame seed, flaxseed and the like in water is liable because of *lash*, as they mix and adhere to each other.

It would stand to reason that this ruling is based on the view of **Rabbi**, who believes that the very act of putting flour into water makes one liable because of *lash*. According to **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**, who believes that one is liable only for actual kneading, even one who puts flaxseed in water would not be liable. However, we have not found in the Gemara or in the writings of the *Rishonim* that **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda** challenges this law, and the implication is that it applies according to all views. Similarly, the **Rambam** and other *Rishonim* rule in according with the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**, yet they also rule that one is liable for putting flaxseed into water. This is also the view of the **Shulchan Arukh** (340:12).

In light of this, it seems that all agree that if by adding water alone a **true mass is created**, this constitutes a violation of the *melakha* of *lash*. When one puts flour into water, a true mass is not created; therefore, according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**, one is not liable until one kneads the mixture. However, putting flaxseed into water creates a fully blended mixture and a true mass, and there is no need for additional kneading or stirring; therefore, this act is viewed as an act of *lisha* — on a Torah level — according to all views.

This case would seem to be similar to **instant foods which do not require stirring to form a mass**. Here too, the very act of adding liquid to the powder creates an agglomerated mass. As we have said, creating a mass in this way is forbidden by the Torah according to all views. Does a *shinnui* help here?

The Gemara does not explicitly address whether, in the case of putting flaxseed into water, a *shinnui* makes the act permissible. From a logical point of view, it appears that a *shinnui* in mixing will certainly not suffice here, because the mass is created before the stirring, and only **a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence** would be effective. As we have seen, this *shinnui*, which is not a total *shinnui*, is effective only for a ***belila rakka,*** which is rabbinically prohibited, and not for a *belila ava,* which may not be kneaded by Torah law. However, is this *shinnui* effective also according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda** (whose view is considered authoritative by the letter of the law)?

In a previous *shiur*, we saw an argument of the *Acharonim* as to whether a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence is effective only according to the view of **Rabbi,** or even according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**. According to the view of the **Terumat Ha-deshen** (Ch. 53) and the **Rema** (321:16), this *shinnui* is not effective according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**, and only a *shinnui* of kneading is effective according to his view. The **Mishna Berura** (68) seems to confirm this. The **Shulchan Arukh** (321:14), on the other hand, indicates that a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence is effective even according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**, and this is the view of the **Chazon Ish** (58:5, s.v. *U-mashma*).

Yet, it stands to reason that in the case of putting flaxseed into water, all will agree that a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence would help, even according to the view of **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda**. Only when the mass is created at the time of kneading is there an argument to say that a *shinnui* at the stage of adding ingredients is not effective, because this stage is not part of the *lisha*, and this is what the **Terumat Ha-deshen** and the **Rema** maintain. However, **when the mass is created on its own by putting in water,** and the very act of adding water makes one liable for *lash* according to all views, as explained above, **it makes sense that Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda would concede that a *shinnui* at this stage is effective**, because this is a stage which makes one liable for *lash*.

According to this, one may be lenient and add hot water to a powder which will then form a mass on its own if one changes the ingredient sequence, and on the condition that we are talking about a *belila rakka*. This is what **Rav Moshe Feinstein** (*Iggerot Moshe*, OC, Vol. IV, Ch. 74, *Lash*, 12) indicates:[[2]](#footnote-2)

Is it permissible to prepare instant potatoes or instant pudding by a *shinnui* of putting in the water afterwards and a *shinnui* of the mixing?

Answer: Instant potatoes are forbidden in any case, but one may prepare instant pudding as a *belila rakka* if one puts in the water afterwards and mixes it with a *shinnui*. For a *belila ava,* it is forbidden in every way.

According to this view, one may prepare **pudding** on Shabbat, even though it forms on its own after the addition of water, on the condition that it will be made as a very fluid pudding, so that it will be considered a ***belila rakka***. Furthermore, **one must alter the sequence of adding ingredients** (if one wants to stir, one should stir with a *shinnui*).

On the other hand, Rav Feinstein forbids preparing potato puree from a powder, since the *belila* is created on its own without stirring, and this *belila* is *ava*. In this case, a *shinnui* in the method of mixing will not be effective, since the mass is created before the stirring occurs, and a *shinnui* of ingredient sequence will not be effective, since this *shinnui* is not effective for a *belila ava*.

However, if it is impossible to prepare the puree before Shabbat, and one wants to prepare it on Shabbat itself, (for example, one is stuck for Shabbat in a place with no prepared meals), one should prepare the puree with a lot of water, so that it will be runny and considered a ***belila rakka***. In this case, one may be lenient **on the condition that one puts the water in first and afterwards the powder** (the reverse order from the weekday) and if one wants to stir, one should stir with a *shinnui*, i.e., ***sheti ve-erev*** instead of a circular motion.

**Gelatin Desserts**

**Gelatin desserts** would apparently be similar to instant potato puree, in that it hardens on its own and becomes a *belila ava*, so that it would be forbidden to make them on Shabbat. This is what the **Shevet Ha-levi** writes (Vol. VII, Ch. 41). However, it may be that the case of a gelatin dessert is different, since there is no mass per se (as with pudding); rather the powder dissolves in its entirety and becomes fluid, and after that it congeals **on its own**, so that there may be no prohibition of *lash* at all. This is what the **Orechot Shabbat** (Ch. 6, n. 83) writes; nevertheless, he indicates that it should be forbidden because of *uvdin de-chol* (a weekday practice — something inappropriate for Shabbat but not falling under the rubric of any particular *melakha*). Practically, allowing this is very questionable, and therefore one should not make gelatin desserts on Shabbat. However, in a case of great need, if one prepares the gelatin desserts with a very soft consistency and also alters the sequence of ingredients, there are opinions on which one may rely in order to prepare it.

**Baby Food**

When one prepares **instant cereal for infants**, one is often dealing with a **powder which forms a mass on its own**, and if so one may prepare it as a *belila rakka* (pourable) if one changes the ingredient sequence, and this is the preferable practice. However, many times we are dealing with a granular substance **which requires additional stirring**; therefore, the law will be that of a regular *belila*: one may prepare it **for an infant** with a *shinnui* even if the *belila* is ***ava*** (as we explained previously).

When one is preparing **formula for a baby** — i.e., powdered milk — generally it is very fluid (even if it is a bit thicker than coffee or chocolate milk). Therefore, it does not even rise to the level of a *belila rakka,* and one may prepare it on Shabbat normally, without any *shinnui* (one should first put in the hot water and afterwards the powder, to avoid a concern of *bishul*). If the liquid is more viscous and defined as a *belila rakka*, one should prepare it with a *shinnui*.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This is our final *shiur* on *lash*. The next *melakha, bishul*, has been dealt with at length by HaRav Baruch Gigi in his 27-part “Hilkhot Shabbat” series (available at <http://www.vbm-torah.org/hilshabbat.html>). We will resume our course of study by going back to the beginning — to the *melakha* of *zoreia* (sowing).

Translated by Rav Yoseif Bloch

Fluid mass

Dense mass

Powder creates a mass without a need for mixing

**Preparing Instant Food**

Baby Foods

**Powders**

It may be prepared normally.

If the mass forms without stirring, its status is the same: one should make a *belila rakka* with a *shinnui*. If the mass does not form on its own, but requires mixing, one may be lenient even for a *belila ava* with two *shinnuyim*.

It may not be prepared on Shabbat (even with a *shinnui*). Therefore, one should not prepare potato puree pudding made from powder, if they are dense.

One may prepare with a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence (if stirring, it must be with a *shinnui*). To make potato puree from powder, make it pourable, with lots of water and the abovementioned *shinnuyim*.

Baby cereal

Instant food (liquid like soup)

Instant food (pasta with sauce)

If it is very fluid, one may prepare it normally (and this is the common reality). If it is dense, one should prepare it with a *shinnui*.

If it cannot be prepared before Shabbat, change the ingredient sequence (empty the container, put in water, and put the contents back in), mixing crosswise

Baby formula

1. As we have explained above, according to the Sefardim one *shinnui* suffices — in either ingredient sequence or mixing, while according to the Ashkenazim, one should first change both the ingredient sequence and the mixing. However, in cases where this is difficult or for a very thin mixture, a *shinnui* in ingredient sequence suffices. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also **Shevet Ha-levi**, Vol. VII, Ch. 105; Vol. IX, Ch. 73. See **Shalmei Yehonatan**, 321:16, 55 as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. When there is a doubt as to whether a mixture is a true liquid or a *belila rakka*, it is appropriate to change the ingredient sequence; however, if this proves to be difficult, one may be lenient, as we have explained previously. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)