

Transitory Inflation

February 23, 2023

Q May an air mattress be inflated on Shabbos with a manual pump?



A Contemporary *poskim* cite the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 340:8), who forbids the initial stuffing of cushioning into a new mattress or pillow but permits reinserting stuffing that has fallen out. The former is forbidden as *makeh bepatish* (the completion of a new utensil), but *Rishonim* disagree whether it is *de'Oreisa* or *deRabanan*; the Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 33) rules stringently. Based on the Shulchan Aruch, R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and many others write that initial inflation of an air mattress on Shabbos is forbidden (see Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah 34:24).

R' Betzalel Stern (Shu"t Betzeil Hachochmah 4:92) argues that air mattresses cannot be compared to stuffed ones, because they are made to be inflated only temporarily, and *makeh bepatish* requires permanence. He therefore permits inflation on Shabbos even of a new air mattress, though he recommends doing it only in case of need. One should consult his *rav* for a practical ruling.

If the mattress had been inflated previously, R' Shlomo Zalman rules leniently, comparing it to reinserting cushioning. But the Minchas Yitzchak (6:30) strongly disagrees, proving that the Shulchan Aruch only permits returning the stuffing that had fallen out, not replacing it with new stuffing—so pumping in different air would be like inflating the mattress for the first time. R' Shlomo Zalman addresses this challenge, saying that all air is considered one entity. Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah (ibid.) concurs.