

The Right of Return  
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May 27, 2021

**Q** We normally cook cholent in a crock pot with a foil *blech* placed between the base and the crock. This week we forgot the *blech*, but the cholent was fully cooked before Shabbos. Not realizing there was no *blech*, my son took some cholent Friday night and returned the crock to the base. May we eat the cholent during the day?



**A** Five conditions must be met to permit *chazarah* (returning food to the flame) on Shabbos:

1. The flame must be covered with a *blech*.
2. The food must be fully cooked.
3. The food must still be warm.
4. The pot must have not been put down.
5. The person must have removed it with the intention of returning it.  
(Ex post facto, there are some exceptions to the last two conditions.) In your case, the first condition was not fulfilled, so it was forbidden to return the cholent to the fire.

May the cholent now be eaten? The Biur Halacha (318) writes that if one violated an *issur deRabanan* by mistake, he may benefit from it, even during Shabbos. However, the Mishnah Berurah (353:35) writes that the *issur deRabanan* of *chazarah* is more stringent in this regard. But it is only forbidden to eat if it was improved by remaining on the fire, and it is only forbidden to the violator but permitted to others. (The Chazon Ish (37:27) writes that if the average person wouldn't consider the food improved, it is permitted to everyone.) It would appear that even a cholent that some enjoy at night is generally considered to be improved by the additional overnight cooking and would therefore be prohibited. But to whom? We often find that family members of a violator are in the same halachic category as the violator, so the cholent would be forbidden to the entire family. A solution

would be to swap cholents with a neighbor.