

A Guide to the Three-day Yom Tov
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We will have the chance this year to celebrate three separate instances of a “three-day *Yom Tov*”. A three-day *Yom Tov*, of course, actually consists of two days of *Yom Tov* on Thursday and Friday followed by a regular Shabbos. Spending three consecutive days without doing *melacha* presents some unique halachic and practical challenges. What follows are some guidelines for addressing a few of the most common issues.

Eiruv Tavshilin: An *eiruv tavshilin* allows us to make preparations on Friday for Shabbos when Friday is a *Yom Tov*. An *eiruv tavshilin* should be prepared before *Yom Tov* begins; this year, it should be prepared on Wednesday. The actual *eiruv tavshilin* consists of one cooked food and one baked food. It is common practice to use a *matzah* and a cooked egg, but any baked or cooked food is sufficient, as long as they are about the size of an egg. Having designated the appropriate foods, one recites the *bracha* and makes the appropriate declaration for *eiruv tavshilin*, which can be found in the beginning of the *machzor* (p. 16 in the Artscroll *Rosh Hashanah machzor*) or in a *siddur* (p. 654 in the Artscroll Hebrew/English *siddur*). The foods of the *eiruv tavshilin* should be saved over *Yom Tov* and then eaten over the course of Shabbos.

Note that the *eiruv tavshilin* only permits preparing on Friday for Shabbos; it does not allow us to make preparations on the first day of *Yom Tov* (Thursday) for the second day of *Yom Tov* (Friday). It also does not allow us to make preparations on Thursday for Shabbos; for instance, it would not be permitted to cook food on Thursday for a Shabbos meal.

If, this year, one forgot to make an *eiruv tavshilin* before the first day of *Sukkos* or before *Shemini Atzeres*, one may make a conditional *eiruv tavshilin* on Thursday. In this case, one should not make a *bracha*. A conditional *eiruv tavshilin* is made by adding the following stipulation: “If today is the real day of *Yom Tov*, tomorrow is actually a weekday and it is permitted to prepare for Shabbos in any case. If tomorrow is the real day of *Yom Tov*, today is in fact the day before *Yom Tov* and my *eiruv tavshilin* can take effect.” This stipulation, however, is **not** effective on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, which we consider for halachic purposes to be “one long day” and whose second day is not treated differently than its first.

If one completely forgot to make an *eiruv tavshilin*, and it is the first time he/she has ever forgotten, it is still permitted to prepare on Friday for Shabbos. This is because the rabbi of a shul or city always makes an *eiruv tavshilin* on behalf of everyone in the city. This, however, may only be relied upon once in a lifetime. If this has happened more than once, one is considered to be without any *eiruv tavshilin* and the preparations that can be made for Shabbos are extremely limited. There are some options which would allow preparations even in this case; these include cooking for a second-day meal and adding extra food for Shabbos or transferring ownership of one’s food to someone else. These options, however, involve halachic complexities too intricate to describe here, and it would be advisable to consult with a rabbi before proceeding.

Candle lighting: On *Yom Tov*, we are not allowed to create a new flame but we may add to or transfer from an existing flame. When lighting candles on the second night of *Yom Tov* and again on Friday afternoon, the fire for the candles must be taken from a fire which is already lit. For this reason, it is common practice to light a *yahrtzeit* candle before *Yom Tov* which will last until the second night and whose flame can then be used to light candles. For a three-day *Yom Tov*, it is usually necessary to light a new *yahrtzeit* candle on the second night of *Yom Tov*, so that its flame can be used to light Shabbos candles on Friday afternoon.

The rules for lighting candles are slightly different for each day of a three-day *Yom Tov*. On the first evening (Wednesday), candles are lit before sundown, as on any Shabbos. However, it is permitted, when necessary, to light candles after sundown even though *Yom Tov* has already begun; in this case, one may only light them from an existing flame. On the second night (Thursday night), candles may not be lit until after dark (about 45 minutes after the previous day’s candle lighting time), since no preparations may be made for the second day of *Yom Tov* until after this time. On Friday afternoon, candles must be lit at the regular time and may not be lit at all after sundown.

It is important to remember that while preparations can be made on Friday for Shabbos (when an *eiruv tavshilin* has been prepared), they cannot be made on Thursday. This means that if, for instance, the *yahrtzeit* candle that has been lit on *Erev Yom Tov* is about to go out on Thursday afternoon, one may not use its flame to light a new candle, as this would be making preparations for the following day. In this case, an additional source of fire would have to be sought on Thursday night; for example, a flame from a gas burner or a neighbor’s candles.

Oven use: Using an oven and stovetop on *Yom Tov* can be very complicated. As a general rule, it is permitted to add to an existing flame but not to create a new one. It is prohibited to extinguish or even to turn down a flame unless there is food in danger of being burned. Once Shabbos begins, of course, the regular laws of Shabbos apply and no adjustments may be made to the oven at all.

Practically, the many different kinds of modern ovens each present their own unique considerations. One fact which is common to all ovens is that even when it otherwise permitted to adjust the temperature, one cannot do so when it will cause an indicator light to go on or a digital readout to change. If these have not been disabled before *Yom Tov*, it will be impossible to adjust the temperature once *Yom Tov* begins. (When an oven is on Sabbath Mode, these indicators are automatically turned off.) Assuming this has been addressed, some basic rules are as follows:

For a gas oven: In the typical modern gas oven, there is a glow plug on the bottom of the oven which indicates that gas is flowing to the oven and a flame already exists. When the glow plug is on, it can be seen as a bright orange glow when peering through the side vents on the bottom of the oven. It will typically turn on and off as the oven regulates its temperature. When the glow plug is on, it is permitted to raise the temperature of the oven as needed. Note, however, that the oven must be turned on before *Yom Tov*; the temperature can then be turned up further on *Yom Tov*. The oven should be turned down only for the sake of food (when there is food which needs to remain warm but will burn unless the temperature is decreased). In older gas ovens, there is a pilot light which always maintains a low flame, even when the oven is turned off. These ovens may even be turned on during *Yom Tov* itself.

For a gas stovetop: If a flame is left on before *Yom Tov*, it may be raised as necessary and lowered only for the sake of food (when there is food which needs to remain warm but will burn unless the temperature is decreased). In an older gas oven where there is a constantly burning pilot light, the burner may be turned on even during *Yom Tov*. In a modern gas oven which does not have a pilot light, turning the burner on poses a challenge. The typical gas burner is ignited by beginning the gas flow and then using an electrical igniter switch, which would not be permitted on *Yom Tov*. One way to do this permissibly is to begin the gas flow without igniting the flame, then using a pre-existing flame (like a candle) to light the gas. Care should obviously be exercised when pursuing this approach; in some models it is not even possible to light the gas in this manner.

For an electric oven and stovetop: Changing the temperature on an electric oven is problematic because it will usually initiate a flow of electricity to the oven, which would be prohibited on *Yom Tov*. While the typical electric oven does have an indicator light, this does not necessarily mean that there is electricity flowing; the electricity flow stops and starts to maintain the desired temperature. For this reason, it is generally not permitted to adjust the temperature on an electric oven or stovetop.

Sabbath Mode: A Sabbath Mode oven is designed to avoid many of the halachic and practical challenges posed by the modern oven on *Yom Tov*. The various digital readouts and indicator lights have been disabled, as well as the automatic shut-off feature; this greatly simplifies the process of using the oven and stove on *Yom Tov*. Adjusting the temperature on Sabbath Mode ovens is certainly not permitted on Shabbos; whether it is permitted on *Yom Tov* is the subject of some controversy. The Sabbath Mode setting must be set before *Yom Tov* begins.

For a three-day *Yom Tov*, it is important to remember that an oven or stove may only be turned down when it is for the benefit of the food, such as when the temperature is too hot to cook the food properly without burning it. One is not allowed to turn down an oven or stove simply to avoid overheating the kitchen or to preserve energy. When heating food on Friday afternoon to be eaten on Shabbos night, remember that the oven temperature cannot be turned down until after Shabbos.

One simple approach to this problem is to cook or warm food in the oven for Shabbos well ahead of candle lighting. When the food is finished cooking but still needs to stay warm, and leaving it at the higher temperature would ruin the food, it would be permitted to lower the temperature to the desired degree.

Showers: Perhaps the most pressing halachic issue for many people on a three-day *Yom Tov* is the question of bathing. While the Sages did not permit us to take a full-blown hot shower even on *Yom Tov*, we are allowed to heat up water on *Yom Tov* for more specific purposes. This means that it is permitted to use hot water to wash one's face and hands. Hot water can also be used to wash particular, targeted areas of the body which are unusually sweaty or dirty. If needed, it would also be permitted to take a shower using completely cold water.

Care must be taken, however, not to violate the prohibition against *sechitah*, or squeezing out water. One should not use a washcloth, since it is quite easy to squeeze water out of it unintentionally. It is also important to make sure not to rub wet hair strenuously, as this is considered to be squeezing the water out the hair. The optimal approach would be to pat it gently with a towel or simply to let it dry on its own.

A three-day *yom tov* is a unique extended opportunity to be absorbed in the rarified sanctity of *Yom Tov* and Shabbos. With a little advance planning and awareness, even its practical challenges can be overcome, allowing us to appreciate these special days and to enjoy true *simchas Yom Tov*.