



'Sabbath mode' ovens

How to use them .. and how not to use them! [Part III]

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Part 3 – Sabbath mode on Yom Tov

This week, our discussion of Sabbath mode ovens makes a timely finale and will examine their use on Yom Tov. In previous sections of this article we have discovered that use of these ovens on Shabbos must be limited to follow specific halachic criteria. Is this the case on Yom Tov?

Yom Tov's more permissive laws allow us to engage in cooking and baking. They allow lighting one fire from another and prohibit extinguishing a fire. This article will clarify whether opening the oven door can be permitted if the oven has been set to Sabbath mode. We will also analyse whether the temperature dials can be used to raise or lower the oven temperature.

Can the oven door be opened?

Use of modern ovens which do not offer a Sabbath mode involves many halachic questions. Opening the door can trigger a variety of problematic reactions. Lights are switched on, LED displays may be altered and in some models the heating element is switched off. If you have a question regarding use of an unauthorised oven on Yom Tov, a rabbi should be consulted. In the following lines we will discuss the use of ovens in Sabbath mode.

Our previous article, which discussed use of these ovens on Shabbos concluded with a quote from the Star-K agency's instructions which dictate that on Shabbos the oven may be opened, all the food removed, and then once empty may be closed.

This ruling is based on the fact that in Sabbath mode, the door switch does activate and deactivate the heating element. The 'kosherised' innovation only ensures that these effects are set to work on a time delay. The permission for this is provided by a collaboration of halachic considerations, which, when present together are sufficient to permit the **opening** of the oven door. The subsequent **closing** of the door was only to be permitted once all the food has been emptied from the oven.

To recap on some of what has been written - the principle of *grommo* – causative action, acts on Shabbos only as a mitigating factor and ensures that the action being performed is **more lenient**. *Grommo* cannot act as the sole basis for **permission to perform** an action. What are the instructions in regards to Yom Tov?

Yom Tov's *halochos* are more lenient, and *poskim* point to the ruling of Mishna Berurah (514:25 and Shaar Hatziyun 31) who, citing many *acharonim* allows actions performed through *grommoh* on Yom Tov.

When operating in Sabbath mode on Yom Tov, the oven door can be opened and closed anytime and as many times as necessary to insert and remove foods for cooking and baking.

Use on Yom Tov – raising and lowering oven temperature?

Of particular interest when reading the Star-K agency's *halachic* guidance, is the fact that when operating in Sabbath mode, their Rabbonim permit one to raise and lower the oven temperature on Yom Tov. This feature is surely a winning argument in any sales pitch. What is the basis of this permission?

Yom Tov is different from Shabbos. Cooking, prohibited on Shabbos is permitted on Yom Tov. Similarly, increasing the heat by adding wood to a fire is permitted where necessary in food preparation or for heating. Nonetheless, lighting a new fire by striking a match is prohibited. In an era one cooked on lighting the kitchen stove, one needed to simply prepare a candle before Yom Tov from which the fire could be lit.

The advent of electric ovens and stoves has complicated matters. Can one turn the temperature dial up? Ignoring the possibility of electronic activity, surely if the heating element is currently off, would this not be prohibited under the Rabbinic prohibition of lighting a new fire?

Star-K's Shabbos mode puts the effects of change to the temperature dial on time-delay. In their analysis, raising and lowering the temperature is then '*grommoh*' and would be permitted on Yom Tov.

In the coming section we will examine the difficulties involved in labelling activities as *grommoh*.

Can't all appliances be designed for Shabbos use with *grommoh* technology?

This issue is raised periodically – when products are purpose designed for the Shomer Shabbos public. On all these occasions there are two primary questions raised by Rabbinical authorities. First is the issue of *zilzul* – diminishing of the holiness and sanctity of Shabbos.

Mindful of this issue, Star-K exercised great judicious caution in the manner in which they have applied the use of *grommoh*. In their view, the oven temperature dial is significantly different from a light switch or car which employs time delay. Yom Tov's laws anyway allow a fire's heat to be increased. The temperature dial, can thus be viewed as fitting naturally into the spirit of Yom Tov.

The second issue which is raised is a more technical *halachic* point and deserves its own introduction.

The height of sophistication – from water mills to microchips

Poskim debated early technology – and discussed the use of a water mill on Shabbos. Grinding wheat was clearly prohibited on all counts. But the severity if the issue was analysed. Is a *de'oraisah* – Torah level

prohibition involved or is this action subject to a lower grade *derabbonon* prohibition.

This academic question impacted directly on the preparation of wheat for Pesach *matzos* – and *poskim* discussed whether a non-Jew could be employed for this work on Shabbos. Instructing a non-Jew to perform a *meloch* activity for mitzvah purposes is permitted IF the prohibition involved has its origins in Rabbinic as opposed to Torah law.

Although Mogen Avrohom (252:20) permitted the use of a water mill in this context, others were more stringent and challenged his analysis. Even Ho'Oizer cites other cases where the rule of *grommoh* should have been applied and yet is not. Most notable is the act of winnowing – this activity is performed by harnessing the wind's power to blow away the chaff from the heavier kernels of wheat, and yet is categorised as one of the 39 constructive acts of work on Shabbos.

What differentiates winnowing from cases of *grommo* – surely man's actions have only **caused** the action, and it has in fact been completed by the wind? In the words of Even Ho'Oizer - it is the intention which defines the nature of the activity. מלאכת מחשבת אסרה – Shabbos prohibitions are defined by whether they are 'thought out', 'intention based' and 'productive'. When intentionally engaging the wind to perform a *meloch*, the wind is man's accessory and the action is considered to be of direct human origin.

In light of this analysis, which cases **are** categorised as '*grommo*'? This is a matter which has challenged *poskim* of our era, and it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a final accurate definition on this complex question.

We can, however, draw on *halachic* precedent. It has become commonly accepted practice to open a fridge door unless obvious *melochos* are triggered. Employing the Sabbath mode to open the oven door would be similarly permitted on Yom Tov as in both cases, the true intention was to access the foods from behind the door – triggering the prohibited *melochos* are mere by-products.

Turning the dial to change the temperature, however, would seem to be different. Here there is a clear intention to affect change in the heat of the element. This is the very function for which this dial is designed and purpose built – can the *meloch* intent be deemed secondary? Does the time delay offset this problem? This is a question which continues to be debated.

May one turn up and down the temperature dial on an oven when operating in Sabbath mode?

Due to the halachic questions involved, the Shailatext team advise that members of the public ask their Rabbonim whether this feature may be used.

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