

Clothes and New Utensils During the Three Weeks

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SHOULD ONE REFRAIN FROM PURCHASING NEW CLOTHES DURING THE THREE WEEKS?

Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 551:17) writes that one should refrain from reciting She'hechyanu on new clothing during the Three Weeks. The Mishnah Berurah (551:98) explains that the Three Weeks are a time of tragedy (תונערופ) and thus it is not appropriate to recite She'hechyanu. Thus, for example, one should not purchase a new talis during the Three Weeks (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:80). The Mishnah Berurah (551:98) follows the view that permits reciting She'hechyanu on Shabbos during the Three Weeks, even on Shabbos Chazon.

WHAT ABOUT PURCHASING AND WEARING NEW CLOTHES UPON WHICH ONE DOES NOT RECITE SHE'HECHIYANU?

Because the restriction focuses on the She'hechyanu berachah, clothing that does not warrant reciting She'hechyanu may be purchased and worn during the Three Weeks before Rosh Chodesh Av. Therefore, socks, shirts, and a talis koton may be purchased and worn during the Three Weeks (Mishnah Berurah 551:45 and Igros Moshe O.C. 3:80). Similarly, those who recite She'hechyanu upon wearing a new garment rather than upon purchase may purchase new garments during the Three Weeks. Additionally, since She'hechyanu is not recited over new shoes, one may purchase and wear new shoes during the Three Weeks (Kovetz Halachos 5:6).

IS IT PERMITTED TO PURCHASE NEW UTENSILS, SUCH AS A CAR, DURING THE THREE WEEKS?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:80) differentiates between a car needed for work and a car that is merely a luxury automobile. If it is needed for work, it may be purchased during the Three Weeks until Rosh Chodesh, since it is not considered a purchase involving simchah. When purchasing a luxury vehicle, the question depends on who will use it. If only the purchaser will use it and will recite She'hechyanu, it may not be purchased during the Three Weeks. If multiple family members will drive it and the berachah of HaTov v'Hameitiv is recited, it may be purchased, since there is no restriction on reciting the berachah of HaTov v'Hameitiv during the Three Weeks.

IS IT PERMITTED TO PURCHASE A HOUSE OR RENT AN APARTMENT DURING THE THREE WEEKS?

One should not purchase a house, meaning closing on a house,

during the Three Weeks, unless it is a circumstance of a davar ha'avud. Similarly, one who has already purchased a house should not move in during the Three Weeks. However, it is permitted to sign a contract to purchase the house and even to make a down payment. It is also permitted for someone renting an apartment to move in during the Three Weeks (Kovetz Halachos 5:16-17).

WHAT ARE THE PROHIBITIONS AGAINST LAUNDRY DURING THE NINE DAYS?

Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 551:3) writes that there are two restrictions regarding laundry during the Nine Days. 1) It is prohibited to launder clothing, even if one will not wear them during the Nine Days. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:79) includes dry cleaning in this prohibition. Furthermore, even pressing clothing without cleaning them is prohibited during the Nine Days (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:83). 2) It is prohibited to wear clothing that was laundered. Since a sheitel is categorized as a garment, one may not wash a sheitel during the Nine Days (Kovetz Halachos 11:8).

IF A GARMENT HAS A SMALL STAIN, IS IT PERMITTED TO SPOT CLEAN JUST THAT STAIN?

Most Poskim permit spot cleaning during the Nine Days (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:1:[2]). Although spot cleaning is prohibited on Shabbos because it is kibus, during the Nine Days the issue with laundering is that it distracts from the aveilus, whereas spot cleaning does not.

IS ONE PERMITTED TO WEAR SHABBOS CLOTHES DURING THE NINE DAYS?

Generally, it is prohibited to wear Shabbos clothing during the Nine Days. The Rema (O.C. 551:1) extends this restriction to wearing Shabbos clothing even on Shabbos Chazon. The reason is that Shabbos clothing has a freshly pressed appearance, and wearing freshly pressed clothing falls under the prohibition against laundering (Sha'ar haTziyun 551:46). However, most people follow the practice of the Gra (see M.B. 551:6), who permits wearing Shabbos clothing even on Shabbos Chazon.

HOW EARLY ON EREV SHABBOS MAY ONE PUT ON SHABBOS CLOTHING? HOW QUICKLY AFTER SHABBOS MUST ONE CHANGE OUT OF THEIR SHABBOS CLOTHING?

Although some Poskim write that one may not put on Shabbos clothing before plag haminchah, most Poskim write that one may put on Shabbos clothing as early as chatzos, if that is when he normally puts on Shabbos clothing (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:3:[5]). After Shabbos, one is not required to take off his Shabbos clothing immediately. The reason is that the prohibition is putting on Shabbos clothing, not wearing them once one is already wearing them.

ARE THERE EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROHIBITION AGAINST WEARING SHABBOS CLOTHING DURING THE NINE DAYS?

Yes, for a bris milah, the mohel, sandek and the baby's father may wear Shabbos clothing. Similarly, on the occasion of a bar

mitzvah, the bar mitzvah boy, his parents, and his grandparents may wear Shabbos clothing (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:2).

IS ONE PERMITTED TO WEAR SHABBOS CLOTHING ON A DATE?

Many Poskim permit one going on a date to wear Shabbos clothing, as they consider it a tzorech mitzvah (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:2)

IS THE PROHIBITION LIMITED TO CLOTHING?

No, the prohibition encompasses even bed sheets, towels, and tablecloths. Even changing sheets for Shabbos during the Nine Days is not allowed

IF ONE IS HOSTING GUESTS DURING THE NINE DAYS, IS IT PERMITTED TO GIVE THEM FRESHLY LAUNDERED SHEETS AND TOWELS, OR MUST ONE GIVE THEM USED SHEETS AND TOWELS?

Poskim permit a host to provide guests with fresh sheets and towels and it is not even necessary to crumple them and place them on the floor (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:8 and Kovetz Halachos 11:46).

IS IT PERMITTED TO START WASHING CLOTHES IN A MACHINE LATE EREV ROSH CHODESH AFTERNOON?

The reason laundering clothing during the Nine Days is prohibited is that it distracts from aveilus. When washing clothing in a machine, only the act of loading and turning on the machine is a distraction, so it is permitted to allow the machine to continue running even after dark.

DOES PUTTING CLOTHES IN THE DRYER DURING THE NINE DAYS VIOLATE THE PROHIBITION AGAINST LAUNDERING?

No. It is specifically laundering or pressing/ironing clothing that is restricted. There is no restriction against drying clothing during the Nine Days (Kovetz Halachos 11:2 and Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:5).

IS IT PERMITTED TO DROP OFF A SUIT OR DRESS AT THE CLEANERS BEFORE THE NINE DAYS, EVEN THOUGH THEY WILL CLEAN IT DURING THE NINE DAYS?

The Rema (O.C. 551:3) writes that one may give clothing to a launderer before the Nine Days, even if one knows the clothing will be laundered during that period. It is also permitted to pick up a cleaned suit or dress during the Nine Days. Doing so does not raise a concern for maris ayin because everyone knows that people do not pick up their clothing as soon as it is ready and will therefore assume that the garment was cleaned before the Nine Days (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:6).

IS IT PERMITTED TO LAUNDRER CHILDREN'S CLOTHING OR RAGS DURING THE NINE DAYS?

Clothing of young children, under the age of bar or bas mitzvah, who constantly soil their clothing is not included in the restriction, and their clothing may be laundered even during the week of Tisha B'Av (see The Halachos of the Three Weeks, written by R' Shimon Eider, pg. 9, quoting Rav Moshe Feinstein).

Even when it is permitted to wash a young child's clothing, one may not add other clothing to the washing machine. Regarding clothing belonging to older children but below the age of bar or bas mitzvah, the Mishnah Berurah (551:82) cites the Elya Rabba, who prohibits washing their garments during the entire Nine Days, whereas the Chaye Adam limits the restriction to the week of Tisha B'Av. Since the Aruch HaShulchan (O.C. 551:32) subscribes to the stringent view, one should prepare enough clothing for older children so that one will not have to launder their clothing. If they dirty all their clothing, one may rely on the lenient opinion and wash it before the week of Tisha B'Av.

Similarly, rags and towels used in a mikvah or in a shul may be laundered since they are constantly used and become dirty.

CAN ONE WEAR A NUMBER OF GARMENTS FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE NINE DAYS AND THEN WEAR THEM DURING NINE DAYS?

In Hilchos Aveilus, the Rema writes (Y.D. 389:1) that once someone wears a freshly laundered garment, an aveil may then wear it, since it is no longer considered freshly laundered (see Teshuvos Lachmei Todah 30). Although the Rema mentions תחא העש, literally, one hour, the Shach (Y.D. 389:4) explains that the intent is a short period of time. Some Poskim write that 15 minutes suffices, whereas others maintain that 30 minutes is necessary (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:8). Dayan Fuerst maintains that wearing garments for 5 minutes suffices.

IF ONE FORGOT OR DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO PUT ON MULTIPLE GARMENTS BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE NINE DAYS, IS THERE ANOTHER SOLUTION TO AVOID WEARING DIRTY CLOTHING DURING THE NINE DAYS?

One solution is to wear different garments each time one gets dressed on Shabbos. In other words, on Shabbos morning one should wear different clothes than he wore on Shabbos night. And if he naps on Shabbos afternoon, he can put on a third set of clothing for minchah.

Another solution is to place the clothing on the ground in a way that will slightly soil them. Merely placing them on a clean floor or carpet is not effective in permitting their wearing during the Nine Days (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:8).

IS ONE OBLIGATED TO WEAR UNDERGARMENTS BEFORE THE OUTSET OF THE NINE DAYS?

Although there are Poskim who maintain that one must prepare enough undergarments by wearing them before the onset of the Nine Days. Rav Moshe Feinstein was lenient since people are delicate (סיניטסיו מיקנופמ) and therefore can be lenient and change every day (Shiurei Halachah: Bein HaMetzarim 46:9. See also Kovetz Halachos 11:23, who is lenient concerning wearing clean undergarments during the Nine Days.



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