



גדרים דף ע"ה

English Halacha Topics

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Mayer and Chaya Rivka Fischl

Shabbos and Yom Tov

Our Gemara notes differences between Yom Tov and Shabbos, such as that Shabbos begins without needing Beis Din to sanctify it. It is holy by itself. Shabbos is referred to as “Shabbos Bereishis.” Why does it use this title?

The Rashbam in Bava Basra (121a) explains that Yom Tov is also called “Shabbos” in the Torah. However, the seventh day is singularly holy, as the Torah says in the parsha of Bereishis that Hashem “sanctified it.” (This may be the intent of the Rosh here.) Thus, it is the “Shabbos of Bereishis.” Rav M.D. Soloveitchik zt”l applied this in a novel interpretation of the Shabbos Maariv prayer, וקדשתו מכל הזמנים. The common explanation is that Hashem sanctified the Shabbos above all other times. However, R’ Soloveitchik explained it as, “You” Yourself “sanctified the Shabbos, as opposed to all other times” of holiness – the Yomim Tovim are sanctified by man.

Let’s discuss one application of the Divine sanctification of Shabbos, as opposed to Yom Tov. What if someone is in the desert and loses track of time? When should he keep Shabbos? The Gemara in Shabbos (69b) talks about it, and the halacha is (O.C. 344) that he should count seven days from when he realizes he doesn’t know what day it is, and make that day as Shabbos. He should make Kiddush and havdala. All the same, he should work every day only as much as he needs to survive, and then stop, since every day might really be Shabbos.

It comes out that he works even on his “Shabbos.” But why do we say this; isn’t it better for him to abstain from work entirely on that day, and work more on the other days to compensate? The Biyur Halacha answers that since he doesn’t really know when Shabbos is, this solution is better. If he has nothing to eat, it’s pikuach nefesh (danger to life), so he may work and it’s not chillul Shabbos. However, if he willingly works a different day more than his needs for that day, it is a possible chillul Shabbos.

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נדרים דף ע"ח

A related subject is what to do if Shabbos follows Yom Tov, and a person knows he will have a situation of pikuach nefesh on Shabbos and must do a melacha. The Yom Tov that comes right before is considered a lesser sanctity than Shabbos, but on Yom Tov it isn't yet pikuach nefesh. When should he do the melacha? The Netziv (Ha'amek Davar, Bamidbar 17:12) states that he should do it on Yom Tov.

However, Rav Moshe Feinstein vehemently disagrees. On Yom Tov he has no dispensation of pikuach nefesh yet. We don't think ahead and reduce the severity, but wait until it is necessary (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:69). This echos the Biyur Halacha's concept, that doing melacha due to pikuach nefesh is not considered chillul Shabbos. Therefore, one should wait until Shabbos to do it, and essentially, no chillul Shabbos will occur.

A practical application of this actually happened and was posed to a Rav (Avnei Derech, 16): A lady started having contractions on a Friday Yom Tov. It seemed inevitable that she'd have to travel to the hospital by Shabbos. Should they go on Friday, to cut down on the melacha's severity, or wait until they must go, although it may be Shabbos? He answered that it depends on the dispute between the Netziv and Rav Moshe.

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