

In Hilchos Shabbos

You have heard the shaylos . . .
Now learn the issues & the opinions

When Does
Shabbos Really
End?

A summary of the weekly shiur by Rabbi Shmuel Stein at the Miami Beach Community Kollel / Reviewed by Rabbi Yitzchok Reichman / To receive a copy send an email to InHilchosShabbos@gmail.com

There are various customs as to when one may begin performing *melacha* on *motza'ei Shabbos*. Some have the custom to wait 40 to 60 minutes after *shkiya* (sunset), while others wait 72 minutes after *shkiya*. When does Shabbos really end, and what are these different customs based on?

When Does Each Day Begin according to Torah Law?

*Chazal*¹ teach us that according to Jewish law each day begins at nightfall (unlike the secular practice where the day begins at 12:00 midnight). The Torah² states, "It was night and it was day"; by writing that the night preceded the day, the Torah is teaching us that each day begins at nightfall. However, what is unclear is when "night" actually begins. Where do we draw the line which defines when one day ends and the next day begins? Clarifying when nighttime begins is of great importance, since there are many halachic ramifications that are dependent on when the new day starts. For example:

- One may perform *melacha* on Friday only until it turns "night"; once nightfall occurs, Shabbos begins, and *melacha* becomes prohibited.
- One may begin performing *melacha* on *motza'ei Shabbos* only after it has become "night" and Shabbos ends.
- One may fulfill the *mitzva* of the nighttime *kriyas Shema* only once it has become "night."

Bein haShemashos (Twilight)

The Gemara³ teaches that there is a period of time between day and night, called *bein hashemashos*, which is a time of halachic uncertainty. Is this period considered "day" or "night"? The Gemara⁴ tells us that three periods exist during the day:

- 1) **Daytime:** The period during the day that is definitely considered "day." It is halachically considered daytime until *shkiya* arrives. (The word *shkiya* literally means "sinking." In our context it refers to the sun "sinking" below the horizon.)
- 2) **Bein hashemashos:** The period between day and night during which it is unclear whether it is "day" or "night." *Bein hashemashos* takes place between *shkiya* and *tzeis hakochavim* (nightfall).
- 3) **Tzeis hakochavim – nighttime:** The period during the day that is definitely considered "night." Once *tzeis hakochavim* (the emergence of three stars) occurs, it is halachically considered definitely nighttime.

Since the period of *bein hashemashos* is a time of uncertainty, we must treat it stringently with regard to the *halachos* of Shabbos by giving it the stringencies of both day and night. For example:

- On Friday, one must finish performing *melacha* before *bein hashemashos* begins. Since there is a possibility that this time period may be considered "night" and Shabbos may have already begun, one must already refrain from performing *melacha* on Friday as soon as *bein hashemashos* arrives.
- On *motza'ei Shabbos*, one may begin performing *melacha* only after *bein hashemashos* ends. Since there is a possibility that this time period may be considered "day" and accordingly it may still be Shabbos, one may begin performing *melacha* only after *bein hashemashos* concludes, and it is definitely nighttime.

What is still left unclear in the Gemara is when *bein hashemashos* begins and for how long it lasts. The Gemara actually seems to contradict itself regarding this important issue.

The Contradiction in the Gemara Regarding Bein haShemashos

The Gemara⁵ in two different *masechtos* cites the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda regarding the time frame of *bein hashemashos*:

- 1) *Maseches Shabbos*: Rabbi Yehuda⁶ states that the period of *bein hashemashos* is three-quarters of a *mil* (approximately 13½ minutes, since a *mil* is 18 minutes⁷).
- 2) *Maseches Pesachim*: Rabbi Yehuda⁸ states that the period of *bein hashemashos* is four *mil* (72 minutes).

These two statements of Rabbi Yehuda seem to contradict each other; does *bein hashemashos* last three-quarters of a *mil* or four *mil*?

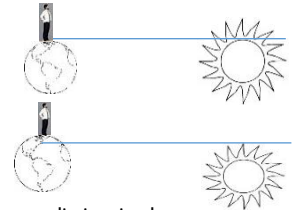
The dispute between Rabbeinu Tam and the Geonim

There are two classic opinions regarding how to resolve this contradiction, the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam and the opinion of the *Geonim*.

The opinion of Rabbeinu Tam

In order to resolve this contradiction, Rabbeinu Tam⁹ explains as follows: There are two times that can be referred to as "*shkiya*," because there are two stages that take place during sunset:

The first stage of Shkiya: When the ball of the sun sinks below the horizon. This *shkiya* is what is generally referred to as "*shkiya*." "Candle lighting" is generally performed 18 minutes before the first *shkiya*.



The second stage of Shkiya: When the rays of the sun sink below the horizon.

With this explanation Rabbeinu Tam answers the contradiction in the Gemara. When the Gemara (in tractate *Pesachim*) writes that *bein hashemashos* lasts for four *mil* (72 minutes) it was referring to the time it takes from the first *shkiya* until *tzeis hakochavim*. When the Gemara (in tractate *Shabbos*) writes that *bein hashemashos* lasts for three-quarters of a *mil* (13½ minutes) it was referring to the time it takes from the second *shkiya* until *tzeis hakochavim*.

In Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, the period of *bein hashemashos* begins at the second *shkiya*, when the rays of the sun sink below the horizon. Until the second *shkiya* begins it is considered definitely daytime. The period of *bein hashemashos* lasts for three-quarters of a *mil*. After three-quarters of a *mil* passes it is *tzeis hakochavim*, and it is definitely nighttime.

The opinion of Rabbeinu Tam has both a leniency and a stringency:

- The leniency is that *bein hashemashos* begins only at the second *shkiya*, and until that point it is completely daytime. Thus, according to Rabbeinu Tam, on Friday one may continue to perform *melacha* until the second *shkiya* (approximately 58 minutes after the first *shkiya*, i.e., the difference between 72 and 13½), because in his opinion, until the second *shkiya* arrives it is completely daytime.
- The stringency is that *tzeis hakochavim* begins 72 minutes (four *mil*) after the first *shkiya*, and only then is it completely nighttime. Thus, according to Rabbeinu Tam, on *motza'ei Shabbos* one may begin performing *melacha* only after 72 minutes have passed from the first *shkiya*, because in his opinion *tzeis hakochavim* begins at this point.

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁰ and the *Rema*¹¹ follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam.

1 Berachos 26a 2 Bereishis 1:5 3 Shabbos 34b 4 See Shabbos 34b where the Gemara says that there is a doubt whether *bein hashemashos* is "day" or "night", accordingly we see that there are three periods during the day: day, night, and *bein hashemashos*. 5 See *Tosfos* in *Pesachim d"h Rabbi Yehuda* 6 Shabbos 34b 7 Shulchan Aruch 459:2 Rema 261:1 Magen Avraham 339:3 Pri Megadim 339:3 8 Pesachim 94a 9 Quoted in *Tosfos Pesachim 94a d"h Rabbi Yehuda* 10 Shulchan Aruch 261:1:2 11 The Rema 261:1 does not argue with the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* and therefore apparently agrees with the ruling if the *Shulchan Aruch*. The *Biur Halacha* (261:2 *d"h mitchilas*) writes that the *Magen Avraham* (331:5) seems to concur with this opinion as well. Regarding whether the time frame of Rabbeinu Tam's "72 minutes" changes based on: a) *sha'os zmanios* and b) the different times of the year c) the different regions that get darker at different times: See *Biur Halacha* 261:2 *d"h She'hu* where he cites opinions that the "72 minutes" of Rabbeinu Tam changes based on *Shaos zmanios*, and on different times and places. Accordingly, it is very possible that according to Rabbeinu Tam who explained the Gemara that Rabbi Yehuda waited "72 minutes" in *Eretz Yisroel* would require that one wait between 80-105 minutes in New York! However, the *minhag ha'olam* seems to be to keep "72 minutes" consistently, regardless of the *Shaos zmanios* or different times or places. As Rav Moshe Shternbach writes (*Moadim u'Zmanim* Vol. 2:155) "In truth it has been the custom [to consistently keep "72 minutes"] for generation after generation in all communities that would follow Rabbeinu Tam's opinion. It was unheard of to add on any extra time onto the 72 minutes of Rabbeinu Tam." The *Chafetz Chaim* writes similarly in his letter brought in the *sefer Avnei Shoham* (29:10). See *Moadim u'Zmanim* (ibid) where he explains the reasoning behind consistently following "72 minutes", and not adjusting it based on other factors.

The opinion of the Geonim

The Geonim¹² rule that the period of *bein hashemashos* begins at the first *Shkiya*, when the ball of the sun sinks below the horizon. It lasts for three-quarters of a *mil*, at which point it becomes *tzeis hakochavim* and is definitely night. They¹³ explain that Rabbi Yehuda retracted his statement in *maseches Pesachim*, and therefore we follow his statement in *maseches Shabbos* that *bein hashemashos* lasts for only three-quarters of a *mil*.

The opinion of the Geonim also has both a leniency and a stringency:

- The leniency is that *tzeis hakochavim* occurs three-quarters of a *mil* (13½ minutes) after the first *shkiya*, and at this point it is certainly nighttime. According to the Geonim, on *motza'ei Shabbos*, one may perform *melacha* beginning 13½ minutes after *shkiya* [Note: This time varies in different places and different times of the year. It may take as long as 20 minutes to reach this time.¹⁴]
- The stringency is that the period of *bein hashemashos* begins at the first *shkiya*. Accordingly, on Friday one must refrain from performing *melacha* from the first *shkiya*.

The Vilna Goan^{14a} and many other *poskim*¹⁵ follow the opinion of the Geonim.

Adhering to the stringencies of both Rabbeinu Tam and the Geonim

The *Mishnah Berura*¹⁶ rules that because there are great *poskim* on each side of this argument, we must adhere to the stringencies of both Rabbeinu Tam and the Geonim. Likewise, Rav Moshe Feinstein¹⁷ writes, "Since we cannot determine on our own which of these two opinions is correct, we must certainly adhere to the stringencies of both of them with regard to *shkiya* and *tzeis hakochavim*; this is how we conducted ourselves in Europe. Especially regarding serious issues such as performing *melacha* on Shabbos, which is a capital offense, one must follow the stringencies of both opinions. One must follow the opinion of the Geonim and refrain from performing *melacha* on Friday after the first *shkiya*, and follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam and wait 72 minutes before beginning to perform any *melacha* on *motza'ei Shabbos*."

Thus it would seem that the correct practice to follow is to begin Shabbos at *shkiya* (following the stringency of the Geonim) and only begin performing *melacha* on Motzai Shabbos after 72 minutes (following the stringency of Rabbeinu Tam). However, we find two opinions on this matter:

1. The opinion of the Satmar Rebbe: Always waiting 72 minutes
2. The leniency of Rav Moshe Feinstein: The emergence of three stars

The opinion of the Satmar Rebbe: Always waiting 72 minutes

The Satmar Rebbe¹⁸ and other *poskim*¹⁹ rule that according to the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam *tzeis hakochavim* is always four *mil* - 72 minutes after *shekiyah* regardless of the location one finds himself in.²⁰ Thus, these *poskim* rule that one should always wait 72 minutes after *shekiyah* before performing any *melachah* on Motza'ei Shabbos.

The Leniency of Rav Moshe Feinstein: The Emergence of Three Stars

Rav Moshe Feinstein²¹ and many other *poskim*²² hold that although Rabbeinu Tam rules that *bein hashemashos* ends four *mil* (72 minutes) after *shkiya*, if three (small) stars become visible, we can be sure it is already nighttime – even if 72 minutes have not yet passed. The Gemara²³ writes that nighttime occurs at *tzeis hakochavim*, "when (three) stars emerge." Accordingly, once three stars emerge nighttime begins. Although Rabbeinu Tam writes that it normally takes 72 minutes for three stars to emerge and *tzeis hakochavim* to occur, in many regions three stars emerge earlier than 72 minutes. As Rav Moshe writes, "Here in New York and New Jersey, one can see the entire sky full of stars 50 minutes after *shkiya*. After 50 minutes the stars are just as visible as they were after 72 minutes in Europe. And I have heard that the same is true regarding most of the cities in America."

Tzeis hakochavim (i.e., the emergence of three stars) varies from place to place and season to season. The time it takes for the sun to sink below the horizon is different throughout the world, as the process of nightfall occurs more quickly closer to the equator. Likewise, the process of nightfall varies from season to season, as it takes the longest amount of time for the sun to sink below the horizon in the summer, and shortest amount of time in March and September.

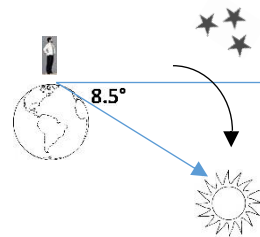
The difficulty with determining when "three stars emerge"

The *Mishna Berura*²⁴ writes that it is difficult to determine when *tzeis hakochavim* occurs by simply looking up at the sky to find three stars, because various factors come into play such as the type of stars that must be visible and in which direction they must be seen. Therefore, the *Mishna Berura* rules that one cannot merely look up at the sky and determine on his own when *tzeis hakochavim* occurs and Shabbos concludes. Moreover, because the emergence of three small stars will vary based on different places and seasons, we cannot simply give a universal time for *tzeis hakochavim*. So how can one figure out *tzeis hakochavim* in his community?

The method of Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky: 8½ degrees below the horizon

Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky was one of the great Torah scholars of the last century. He developed a calculation that can be used to determine when *tzeis hakochavim* occurs in every community. Rav Tukachinsky²⁵ calculated that when the sun sinks 8½ degrees below the horizon the sky becomes dark enough that three stars become visible.

Therefore, although the speed at which the sun sinks below the horizon will vary from place to place and from season to season, the sky will always be dark enough for three stars to be visible anywhere in the world after the sun has sunk 8½ degrees below the horizon. For example, in New York City the longest amount of time it takes for the sun to sink 8½ degrees below the horizon (i.e., during the summer months) is 50.7 minutes after *shkiya* (indeed, this calculation matches almost exactly what Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote with regard to New York). In Montreal, the longest amount of time it takes for the sun to sink 8½ degrees below the horizon is 59 minutes after *shkiya*. In Miami Beach, which is closer to the equator, the longest amount of time it takes for the sun to sink 8½ degrees below the horizon is 39 minutes after *shkiya*.



Accordingly, many communities have the custom to begin Shabbos at the first *shkiya* (following the stringency of the Geonim), yet they will end Shabbos 40 to 60 minutes after *shkiya*, based on the time when three (small) stars emerge. [Note: If someone who follows these opinions is traveling, he must be cognizant of the fact that the time for *tzeis hakochavim* is different in each city. Although he may be accustomed to following an earlier time for *tzeis hakochavim* in the city he lives in, he must make sure to find out when Shabbos ends according to where he is, in order to avoid violating Shabbos prohibitions before Shabbos has actually ended.]

Postscript: Prolonging the End of Shabbos

Although we have discussed the basic opinions with regard to when Shabbos concludes, one should not hurry to end Shabbos. The *Shulchan Aruch*²⁶ writes that one should prolong Shabbos by adding time onto the end of Shabbos. The *Mishna Berura*²⁷ adds that the custom in all of Klal Yisrael is to begin davening a little later on *motza'ei Shabbos* in order to prolong the holy day. It is for this reason, writes the Rema,²⁸ that the custom during *ma'ariv* on *motza'ei Shabbos* is to draw out the words of *veHu rachum* and *Barechu*. By prolonging the end of Shabbos not only do we add more time onto Shabbos and fulfill *tosefes Shabbos*,²⁹ we express our appreciation for the gift of Shabbos, and our desire to hold on to it for another few moments.³⁰

Similarly, Rav Moshe Feinstein³¹ writes that although according to halacha one may perform *melacha* after 50 minutes in the New York area, "l'*chatchila*, it is appropriate to postpone doing *melacha* even after it is becomes permissible. Therefore, even in New York it is commendable to wait 72 minutes before performing any *melacha*. Especially *bnei Torah* and *yereh Shamayim* should wait 72 minutes before performing *melacha* just as we did in Europe, even though from a halachic standpoint here in America there is no need to do so."

The intention of this summary is to discuss common practical *shaylos*. One should consult a Rav concerning *p'sak halacha*.

12 Rabbeinu Shriria Goan, Rav Hai Goan, Rav Nissim Goan and many other *Rishonim* quoted in *Biur Halacha* 261:2 *d"h mi'tchilas* from the Maharam Alshkar. 13 Maharam Alshkar (*siman* 96). However, the Vilna Goan resolves the contradiction with the Gemara in *mesechos Pesachim* differently: He explains that when the Gemara writes that it takes the time of four *mil* for the stars to become visible, it is not referring to the time when it becomes *night* (as this occurs already after three-quarters of a *mil*). The Gemara is referring to the time when all the stars become visible and people no longer walk outside at night. 14 See *Biur Halacha* 293 *d"h shlosha* 14a on *Shulchan Aruch* 261:2 15 Cited in *Biur Halacha* 261:2 *d"h mi'tchilas*: *Shach*, *Maharal mi'prag Raavan*, *sefer seder zmanim*. 16 261:23 where he writes that one must be very careful not to perform *melacha* after the first *shkiya*; See also *Biur Halacha* 261:2 end of *d"h Shehu* where he writes that it is appropriate *l'chatchila* not to perform *melacha* before the [72 minutes] of Rabbeinu Tam. 17 *Igros Moshe* O.C. Vol.4:62 18 quoted in *sefer Yisroel v'Hazmanim* Vol. 2 pg. 818 19 *Pekudas Eluzar* (O.C. 58) *Oros Chaim* (perek 4) 20 As the time of *tzeis hakochavim* is not dependent on the emergence of three stars but strictly on the timeframe of four *mil*. 21 *Igros Moshe* *ibid* 22 See *Biur Halacha* 293:1 *d"h a'd* from the *Minchas Cohen* who also rules this way. See *Moadim u'Zmanim* Vol. 8 - notes on Vol. 2 *siman* 155 where he writes that the *Vishnitzer Rebbe* was told by Rav Aharon Belzer that in *Eretz Yisroel*, where the suns drops below the horizon much quicker than other regions, one may perform *melacha* after 50 minutes even according to Rabbeinu Tam. See *Moadim u'Zmanim* (*ibid*) where he discusses the following question on this opinion: Rabbeinu Tam was explaining the Gemara which took place in *Eretz Yisroel* or *Bavel*, both of which are very close to the equator, and still Rabbeinu Tam explained that one must wait 72 minutes after *shkiya*? 23 *Pesachim* 94 24 *Biur Halacha* 261:2 *d"h She'hu* 293:2 *d"h She'yiru*. 25 *sefer Bein hashemashos* 26 *Shulchan Aruch* 293:1 27 *Mishnah Berura* 293:1 28 *Rema* 293:3 29 See *Rema* 293:3; *Mishnah Berura* 261:19; and *Biur Halacha* 261:2 *d"h yeish omrim* [*Nishmas Shabbos* Vol. 2:498] that there is a *mitzvah* of *tosefes Shabbos* just like there is on *erev Shabbos*. However the *Mishna Berura* (293,1) writes that unlike adding time onto *erev Shabbos* where the more you add onto Shabbos the greater the *mitzvah*, adding more than the required minimal amount of *tosefes Shabbos* onto the end Shabbos] is a time honored custom throughout all of *klal yisrael* [*Nishmas Shabbos* Vol. 2:498]. 30 39 *melachos* pg. 165 31 *Igros Moshe* O.C. Vol.4:62