

In Hilchos Shabbos

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

Making Early Shabbos

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

Many people have the practice to make “early Shabbos” during the summer months. However, there are a number of controversial issues and halachic compromises that may be involved in making early Shabbos. Some *poskim*¹ actually discourage making early Shabbos because of these issues, and suggest that one do everything possible to make Shabbos at the regular time. While the accepted practice in America is to permit making early Shabbos, it is important to be aware of and understand these issues in order to avoid many of these *halachic* compromises.

Making Early Shabbos

Although Shabbos automatically begins at *shkiya* (sunset),² there is a *mitzva d’Oraisa* to add on to Shabbos, extending its holiness into the weekday.³ This *mitzva* is called *Tosefes Shabbos* – adding time onto Shabbos.⁴ Although one fulfills the *mitzva* of *Tosefes Shabbos* by accepting Shabbos even a moment before *shkiya*,⁵ the more time he adds on to Shabbos the greater the *mitzva*.⁶ The *Pri Megadim*⁷ says: “Whoever adds onto Shabbos, [HaKadosh baruch Hu] adds [years] onto his life.”

The earliest time to accept Shabbos

The earliest time that one may accept Shabbos is at *plag hamincha*.⁸ *Plag hamincha* is 1/4 seasonal hours (*sha’os zemanios*)⁹ before *shkiya*.¹⁰ The *Mishna Berura*¹¹ rules that if one accepts Shabbos before *plag hamincha*, his acceptance of Shabbos is invalid.

Lighting the Shabbos candles before *plag hamincha*: The *Mishna Berura*¹² adds that a woman must be careful to light the Shabbos candles *after* *plag hamincha*, since lighting before does not fulfill the *mitzva* of lighting Shabbos candles. This *halacha* is particularly important to keep in mind when a family makes early Shabbos, as Rav Yisroel Belsky¹³ warns: “A woman must be careful to light the Shabbos candles *after* *plag hamincha*. Otherwise, both the candle lighting she performed and the *beracha* she recited are invalid, and she must relight the candles and recite a new *beracha* after *plag hamincha*.”

Asking someone who did not yet accept Shabbos to perform a *melacha*

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁴ rules that someone who already accepted Shabbos early is permitted to ask another Jew to perform a *melacha*. For example, if someone making early Shabbos remembers on his way home from shul that he forgot to set the air conditioner, he may ask someone who is making “late Shabbos,” and has not yet accepted Shabbos, to set his air conditioner.

Issues That Arise When Making Early Shabbos

In the subsequent paragraphs we will discuss the following controversial issues and halachic compromises that may be involved with making early Shabbos.

- 1) The “*Plag haMincha* Minyan”
- 2) Reciting *Krias Shema*
- 3) *Sefiras ha’Omer*
- 4) Eating the Shabbos *Seuda*
- 5) Making a *Tenai* during Candle Lighting

1) The “*Plag haMincha* Minyan”

Many shuls that make early Shabbos are careful to have a “*plag minyan*.” A *plag minyan* is careful to daven *mincha* before *plag hamincha*, and the Shabbos *ma’ariv* service *after* *plag hamincha*. The *Mishnah Berura*¹⁵ strongly encourages making a *plag hamincha* minyan when making early Shabbos. In order to understand the need for a *plag hamincha* minyan, let us quickly review some of the basic *halachos* regarding the proper times to daven *mincha* and *ma’ariv*.

The Correct time to daven *Mincha* and *Ma’ariv*

As we know, one must daven *mincha* during the daytime and *ma’ariv* at night. The *Mishna* in *maseches Berachos*¹⁶ cites two opinions regarding the latest time one may daven *mincha*, and at what point one may begin davening *ma’ariv*. Where do we draw the line that defines when the time for davening *mincha* ends and the time for davening *ma’ariv* begins?

1) The opinion of Rav Yehuda: *plag hamincha*. Rav Yehuda rules that one may daven *mincha* only until *plag hamincha*. Accordingly, since *plag hamincha* is the cutoff time, one may begin davening *ma’ariv* immediately after *plag hamincha*.

2) The opinion of Rabbanan: nightfall. Rabbanan rule that one may daven *mincha* until nightfall. Accordingly, since nightfall is the cutoff time, one may begin davening *ma’ariv* only immediately after nightfall.

As an example, if on Friday, *plag hamincha* is at 6:45 pm and *shkiya* is at 8:00 pm, according to Rav Yehuda one may daven *mincha* only until 6:45 pm and may already begin davening *ma’ariv* after 6:45 pm. According to Rabbanan one may daven *mincha* until 8:00 pm, and may begin davening *ma’ariv* only after 8:00 pm.

One may choose which opinion to follow

The Gemara¹⁷ concludes that there is no clear ruling regarding which opinion the *halacha* follows, and therefore one may choose to follow whichever opinion he desires. However, the *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁸ adds an important condition: Although one may choose to follow whichever opinion he desires, he must consistently follow that opinion every day. He may not switch opinions from one day to the next. For example, someone who follows the opinion of Rabbanan (and will daven *mincha* until *shkiya*) may not decide one day to follow the opinion of Rav Yehuda and daven *ma’ariv* immediately after *plag hamincha*. Since he chose to follow the opinion of the Rabbanan, who draw the cutoff time at *shkiyah*, he can no longer switch over to the opinion of Rav Yehuda and daven *ma’ariv* immediately after *plag ha’mincha*.

The *Mishna Berura*¹⁹ adds that one must certainly be careful not to hold by both opinions on the same day. For example, if on the same day one were to daven *mincha* after *plag hamincha* (like Rabbanan, who draw the line at nightfall), and then immediately daven *ma’ariv* before nightfall (like Rav Yehuda, who holds one may daven *ma’ariv* already after *plag hamincha*), he would be acting in a way that is inconsistent with both Rav Yehuda and Rabbanan.

The Issue with Making Early Shabbos

Based on these *halachos*, there would seem to be two potential issues with making early Shabbos:

1: An inconsistency from one day to the next. If all week long one davens *mincha* until *shkiya*, he is accepting the ruling of Rabbanan. Now, on Friday afternoon, when he wants to make “early Shabbos” and daven *ma’ariv* before *shkiya*, he will be following the opinion of Rav Yehuda, who draws the cutoff line at *plag hamincha*. This would seem to be problematic because it creates an inconsistency from one day to the next regarding which opinion he is following, i.e., the entire week he follows the opinion of Rabbanan and on Friday he follows the opinion of Rav Yehuda. It is specifically because of this difficulty that many *poskim* discourage making early Shabbos.²⁰

The custom to make early Shabbos in spite of this inconsistency is based on the leniency given by the *Mishna Berura*. The *Mishnah Berura*²¹ explains that although it is generally not permissible to be inconsistent from one day to the next, it is

¹ Rav Elyashiv (Kovetz Teshuvos Vol. 1 siman 23). See sefer *Migilas Sefer* (siman 7) where he writes that the *Chafetz Chaim* was careful in his yeshiva not to daven on Friday night before it was dark. ² See *Mishna Berura* 261:20. See *Shu”t Mahari Steif siman 1* that the *minhag* in America is to light 18 minutes before *shkiya* following the opinions that Shabbos begins at *shkiya*. See *Igros Moshe O.C. Vol. 1:96* ³ *Gemara Yoma 81b Shulchan Aruch 261:2 Mishna Berura 261:19* ⁴ *ibid* ⁵ *Tosfos Rosh Hashana 9a d”h Rabbi Akiva [Shmiras Shabbos k’hilchaso 46:4]*. However, see *Rosh Yoma 8:8* and *Mishna Berura 261:22*. Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled (*Igros Moshe O.C. Vol. 1:96*) that one can fulfill this *mitzva* of *Tosefes Shabbos* by adding accepting Shabbos two minutes before Shabbos [See sefer 39 *melachos* pg. 150]. ⁶ See *Igros Moshe O.C. Vol. 3:38 d”h V’hinei* “...If one’s intention when making early Shabbos is to accept Shabbos so that he can fulfill the *mitzva* of *Tosefes Shabbos* on an even greater level by adding additional time to his *Tosefes Shabbos*”. See sefer 39 *melachos* pg. 150. ⁷ *Eishel Avraham 256* ⁸ *Shulchan Aruch 263:4* ⁹ *Shulchan Aruch 263:4*; see *Mishna Berura 263:19*. The hour and a quarter is calculated using *sha’os z’manios* (seasonal hours), and not standard hours. *Sha’os z’manios* is calculated by dividing each day into twelve “seasonal” hours. For example, if a summer day has 13 hours, each seasonal hour is 1.08 hours. If a winter day has 11 hours, each seasonal hour is .91 hours. ¹⁰ *Shulchan Aruch 263:4* ¹¹ *Mishna Berura 263:18* ¹² *Biur Halacha 263:4 d”h m’bod yom* ¹³ *Shulchan Ha’Levi* pg. 63 note 3 ¹⁴ 263:17. The *Bais Yosef* (there) cites the *Rashba* who proves this *halacha* from the Gemarah in *Shabbos 151a*. ¹⁵ 267:2. ¹⁶ *Berachos 26a* ¹⁷ *Berachos 27a* ¹⁸ 233:1 ¹⁹ 233:6 ²⁰ See *Biur Halacha 271:1 d”h miyad* where he writes that “although we can explain this issue, it is better to avoid this leniency” [See *Shoneh halachos 267:2*]. As we mentioned earlier, the sefer *Migilas Sefer* (siman 7) writes that the *Chafetz Chaim* was careful in his yeshiva not to daven on Friday night before it was dark. ²¹ 267:3

allowed on *erev Shabbos*. Since there is a *mitzva* to extend the holiness of Shabbos into the weekday, one may switch to the opinion of Rav Yehuda who allows davening *ma'ariv* before *shkiya* in order to accommodate davening early on Friday afternoon and making early Shabbos, thereby fulfilling the *mitzva* of *Tosefes Shabbos*.

2: An inconsistency on the day itself. The *Mishna Berura*²² states that although one may switch to the opinion of Rav Yehuda on *erev Shabbos*, he must be careful to completely adopt the opinion of Rav Yehuda on *erev Shabbos*, and not be inconsistent *on the same day*. This means that on *erev Shabbos* he must consider the cutoff time for davening to be *plag hamincha*; he must daven *mincha* on Friday before *plag hamincha* and *ma'ariv* after *plag hamincha*. Davening at a minyan that accommodates such an arrangement is referred to as a *plag hamincha* minyan. On the other hand, if he were to daven *mincha* after *plag* (following the opinion of *Rabbanan*) and still daven *ma'ariv* before *shkiya* (following the opinion of Rav Yehuda), his davening times would be inconsistent on the same day and would not adhere to the opinion of Rav Yehuda or *Rabbanan*. Therefore, the *Mishna Berura* cautions, he must be careful to ensure that he completely follow the opinion of Rav Yehuda, by davening at a *plag hamincha* minyan.

Although the *Mishna Berura*²³ does cite a lenient opinion²⁴ permitting this inconsistency even on the same day (so long as he is davening with a *minyan*), he writes, "It seems to me that one should not rely on this opinion."

To summarize: The *Mishna Berura* rules that when making early Shabbos one must be careful to make a *plag minyan* in order to avoid creating an inconsistency on the day itself. The *Mishna Berura* cites an opinion that is lenient and allows this inconsistency on *erev Shabbos*, so long as he is davening with a *minyan*; however the *Mishna Berura* does not accept this opinion.

2) Repeating *Krias Shema*

There is a *mitzva d'Oraisa* to recite *krias Shema* twice each day.²⁵ The Torah²⁶ states that one must recite *krias Shema* when he lies down (i.e., at night) and when he gets up (i.e., in the morning). The *Rambam*²⁷ writes that this teaches us that one must recite *krias Shema* once in the morning and once in the evening.

The correct time for reciting *krias Shema* in the evening

The *Shulchan Aruch*²⁸ rules that one fulfills the obligation to recite the evening *krias Shema* only if he recited it after *tzeis hakochavim* (the emergence of three stars). If he recited it before *tzeis hakochavim* he must repeat it.²⁹

The *Aruch haShulchan*³⁰ explains that even Rav Yehuda, who rules that one is permitted to daven *ma'ariv* immediately after *plag hamincha*, agrees that *krias Shema* may be recited only after it is definitely night. This is because the Torah states that *krias Shema* must be recited "when you lie down," and people normally lie down and go to sleep only at night. The *Mishna Berura*³¹ remarks that when accepting Shabbos early, one must be careful to repeat all three *parshios* (paragraphs)³² of *krias Shema* after *tzeis hakochavim*.

The *Mishna Berura*³³ adds that one should not fulfill his obligation to repeat *krias Shema* with the *krias Shema al hamita* which he recites when going to bed, even if he says all three *parshios* of the *Shema* during this recitation. A person recites *krias Shema al hamita* in order to merit protection, and when fulfilling the *mitzva* of reciting the evening *krias Shema* his intent should be solely in order to fulfill the *mitzva*, not to merit protection.

3) Counting *Sefiras haOmer*

One may not fulfill the *mitzva* of *sefiras haOmer* (counting the Omer) before nightfall. When *sefiras ha'Omer* is counted at night, the counting is being done for the upcoming day which may only be done after it turns night, and the next day begins.³⁴ Someone who makes early Shabbos is generally unable to count the Omer in shul, as he finishes davening *ma'ariv* before nightfall. Therefore, one must be careful to ensure he counts it later, after nightfall.

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

22 267:3 23 267:3 24 *Derech HaChaim*. The *sefer* *Toras Chaim* (brought in *sefer* *Nishmas Shabbos siman* 512) who also permits davening in a time that is in contradiction with Rav Yehuda and the *Rabbanan*. His reasoning is as follows: When one accepts Shabbos it becomes the next day in regard to all halachos. Therefore, one may daven *mincha* before he accepts Shabbos and then daven *ma'ariv* afterwards since it is now considered the next day. The *Toras Chaim* concludes that this is the true halacha "as all the communities in Ashkenaz were not careful with this halacha." However, the *Nishmas Shabbos* (*ibid*) disagrees with this leniency. 25 *Rambam* *Krias Shema* 1:1 (See *Aruch haShulchan* 58:15) 26 *Devarim* 6:7 27 *Rambam* *ibid* 28 235:1 29 *Shulchan Aruch* *ibid*. See *Mishna Berura* 235:3. One may only read *Krias Shema* after it is definitely night (*Tzeis ha'Kochavim*), since reading the *mitzva* to recite *Krias Shema* is *d'Oraysa*, and one may only fulfill his obligation when it is definitely night. See also *Mishna Berura* 235:6 30 237:7 See also *Mishna Berura* 235:1 31 267: end of 3 32 The *Mishna Berura* writes (235:12) that it is sufficient to repeat the first two *parshios* of *Krias Shema*. The third *Parsha* of *Krias Shema* which talks about "remembering *yitzias mitzrayim*" does need to be repeated since it was already recited earlier in *Shul*. Although one may only recite [the first two *parshios* of] *Krias Shema* at "night," one may fulfill the *mitzva* of "remembering *yitzias mitzrayim*" with the earlier recitation that was done in *Shul*. However, *Mishna Berura* cites the *Shagas Aryeh* who says that a *yirei Shamayim* (one who has fear of Heaven) should repeat all three *parshios* of *Krias Shema* after *Tzeis ha'Kochavim*. 33 235:12 34 The *Shulchan Aruch* writes (489:2 *Mishna Berura* 489:15) that one may count *sefiras ha'Omer* during *bein ha'shmashos*, since according to the majority of *poskim* the *mitzva* of counting *sefiras ha'Omer* nowadays is only a *mitzva d'rabanan*. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* writes that "those who are careful with performing *mitzvos* properly should only count *sefiras ha'Omer* after *Tzeis ha'Kochavim*." (See *Mishna Berura* 489:15 where he writes that if someone counted *sefiras ha'Omer* during *bein ha'shmashos*, he should count again after *Tzeis ha'Kochavim* without a *beracha*.) The *Biur Halacha* (489:3 *d'h m'bod*) writes that it seems from the *poskim* that one cannot fulfill his obligation to count *sefiras ha'Omer* if he counts before *plag hamincha*; see the *Biur Halacha* there. 35 *Gemara* *Shabbos* 117b; see *Aruch haShulchan* 274:3 36 *Shulchan Aruch* 291:1 *Mishna Berura* 291:3 37 *Shemos* 16:25 38 267:2 *Mishna Berura* 267:5 39 267:5 40 Rav Bodner (The halachos of *Brachos* pg. 247) from Rav Ahron Kotler 41 235:2 42 *Mishna Berura* 235:16 43 *Mishna Berura* 267:6 44 The *Mishna Berura* (235:21) writes that once one starts his meal in a permissible time (i.e., a half an hour before *tzeis hakochavim*) he may continue eating even after the time for *krias Shema* arrives, so long as he is careful to recite *krias Shema* after the meal. 45 267:6 based on the opinion of the *Taz*. Rav Yisroel Belsky (*Shulchan HaLevi* pg. 66) writes that someone who cannot wait until *tzeis hakochavim* to begin the meal should do the following: When it reaches the time of *bein hashmashos* (after *shkiya*) he should recite *krias Shema*, and then begin his meal. Although it has not yet reached *tzeis hakochavim* and is not definitely night he may rely on this second reading of *krias Shema* to begin his meal. He should then recite *krias Shema* (a third time) after *tzeis hakochavim* arrives. 46 See *Rama* 263:10 and *Mishna Berura* 263:44 47 *Shulchan Aruch* 263:4 48 263:4 49 If one erroneously makes a *tenai* when making early Shabbos, the *poskim* dispute whether or not the candle lighting is at all valid. The *Shulchan Aruch* *harav* (263:11) rules that the candle lighting is invalid and the *beracha* recited was in vain. However, the *Mishna Berura* rules (263:20 *Biur Halacha d'h m'bod yom*) rules that *b'dieved* even if one did make a *tenai* the candle lighting is still valid. 50 *Nishmas Shabbos siman* 360. One of the reasons to permit this is that nowadays when one lights Shabbos candles it is always obvious that it is being done in honor of Shabbos, since nowadays people illuminate their homes with electric lighting and not candles.