

❧ chapter six ❧

The Implications of the International Dateline and Time Zones in *Halacha*

The Dateline

The countries of the world decided that every day during the year starts at midnight. This agreement was made in order to avoid confusion between calendar dates of one country and another. Midnight, however, does not occur at the same time in all areas in the world. As we know the setting of the sun goes from east to west. This explains why the sun rises and sets at different times across the globe. It follows that the times of day in the areas to the east are progressively later than those to the west since the sun has risen and set there earlier.

It takes the sun twenty-four hours to circle the entire earth. Since the earth is round, a complete rotation around the earth would be 360° . Consequently, the setting of the sun travels across the horizon 15° every hour ($360^\circ \div 24 \text{ hours} = 15^\circ$). We explained that the further west that one travels, the earlier it becomes. This explains why when it is midnight in New York, it is only 11 PM in Chicago, and 9 PM in Los Angeles. This obviously means that it becomes Sunday in Chicago an hour after it does in New York, and it becomes Sunday two hours after that in Los Angeles. Several hours later, it becomes

Sunday in Hawaii. It follows, that as we travel westward, it *should* become Sunday in Iran several hours later, then in Israel, and then in England (all at their respective midnights). As we continue to travel westward, we will be returning to New York. However, does that mean that it will once again become Sunday in New York? Of course not, for somewhere along the way we have to stop saying that it becomes Sunday, and that it now becomes Monday at midnight. Clearly then, we have to draw a demarcation line where east begins and where west ends. An area that is in close proximity to the east of this line would be one day later than an area to the west of it. This would cause these two 'opposite' areas to be a *complete* day apart from each other. This demarcation line is called the International Dateline.

By international agreement, the line was drawn at 180° from Greenwich, England (i.e. where the lines of longitude start). This places the dateline in middle of the Pacific Ocean. This arbitrary line was placed there, to prevent the confusion of two neighboring areas on one landmass from being a day apart. By convention, it deviates slightly to accommodate several landmasses (i.e. Siberia, Fiji). All areas west of this line are included in

the Eastern Hemisphere and are referred to with east lines of longitude (e.g. 90° east), while all areas east of it are included in the Western Hemisphere and are referred to with west lines of longitude (e.g. 90° west).

Clearly, an international agreement as to where the International Dateline is has no bearing in *halacha*. However, where the 'halachic' International Dateline is has major *halachic* significance. (Most notably, when *Shabbos* is to be observed around the world).

The Dateline Controversy

During 1941, hundreds of *bnei Torah* from various European *Yeshivos* miraculously escaped Nazi persecution, fleeing to the far east where they were granted asylum. They stayed temporarily in Kobe, Japan. Later on, this group was transferred to Shanghai, China where they remained for the duration of the war. Kobe is located 135° east longitude (100° east of *Yerushalayim*), which is still west of the International Dateline (see map). The *talmidim* were concerned that perhaps they crossed the *halachic* dateline, causing them to be a day apart from the secular International Dateline. The question was whether Kobe is to be viewed as being 100° east of *Yerushalayim*, placing it in the Eastern Hemisphere, six hours ahead of *Yerushalayim* time in accordance with the secular International Dateline, or as 260° west, placing it in the western hemisphere, eighteen hours behind *Yerushalayim* time.

This question was by no means new to the *Torah* world, as is evident from a number of *Rishonim* who dealt with this *shailah* many centuries ago. However, they only dealt with this question in theoretical terms because the situation only arises when one travels a significant distance across the globe, which was not relevant that long ago. The *shaila* first became a reality in 1910 when some one thousand of the Jewish refugees made their way to Japan during World War I. Rav Moshe Aharon Kisilav, a Lithuanian *Rov*, ruled that they should observe *Shabbos* on Saturday, as

it is around the world. However, the *shaila* arose once again when the new group of refugees arrived in Kobe. Rav Issur Yehudah Malin, a prominent *dayan* in Brisk, instructed them to observe *Shabbos* on Sunday. This was based on a ruling he personally received from R' Chaim Brisker.¹

Most of the *bnei Torah* who fled were from the *Mirrer Yeshivah*, which was then lead by R' Chatzkel Levenstein, the *Mirrer mashgiach*. R' Laizer Yudel Finkel, their *Rosh HaYeshivah*, had already made his way to Eretz Yisroel. R' Chatzkel was *mashgiach* in Petach Tikvah before returning to the *Mir* following the *petirah* of R' Yeruchem Levovitz. While in Eretz Yisroel, he became well acquainted with the *Chazon Ish*. He telegraphed the dateline question to R' Laizer Yudel to submit it to the *Chazon Ish*. Upon receiving the telegraph, the *Chazon Ish* asked his nephew to open two metal boxes in which his writings were stored, and asked him to bring him two manuscripts. Years earlier, the *Chazon Ish* had already researched and analyzed the dateline issue in the course of his learning. The *Chazon Ish* quickly reviewed his writings to be certain that he still concurred with his original decisions with regard to this issue, which he did. The *Chazon Ish* was certain that according to all *Rishonim* who wrote on this subject, *Shabbos* was to be observed in Kobe on Sunday. To observe two days was unnecessary; one reason was since this meant not wearing *tefilin* on a weekday. The *Chazon Ish* placed the *halachic* dateline 90° east from *Yerushalayim* (i.e. 125° east longitude, which is 50° west of the International Dateline), placing Japan, as well as most of most of Australia and Continental Asia, east of the dateline (i.e. in the Western Hemisphere) (See map). (However, we will explain below that the *Chazon Ish* considered the entire Australia and Asia to be part of the Eastern Hemisphere, because they are attached to the rest of their continent, which is

1. ע"י ספר ישראל והזמנים דף ש"ד.

west of the dateline).² Meanwhile, some students from *Yeshivah Chachmei Lublin* who were then in Kobe, sent the same question to the *Gerer Rebbe* who was then residing in *Yerushalaim*. The *Gerer Rebbe* then submitted it to one of *Yerushalayim's* great halachic authorities, R' Yechiel Michel Tuketzinsky. R' Yechiel Michel Tuketzinsky was the compiler of *Yerushalayim's* daily *luach* and was thus assumed to be an expert in these issues. His ruling was that those in Kobe should observe *Shabbos* on Saturday. Furthermore, *Shabbos* in Hawaii according to him would be on Friday, while according to the *Chazon Ish* it would be on Saturday. He later wrote, that at the time he issued his ruling he did not know that there was a master in all areas of *halacha* residing in Eretz Yisroel, namely the *Chazon Ish*, who was well versed in this topic and had already ruled on this issue. As a result, he had sent his own ruling without discussing it with the *Chazon Ish*. He placed the halachic dateline 180° from *Yerushalayim* (i.e. 145° West longitude, which is 35° east of the International Dateline). This places Japan in the Eastern Hemisphere in accordance with the International Dateline, but it also places Hawaii in the Eastern Hemisphere, unlike the secular dateline. (see map)³ This ruling caused much controversy. R' Chatzkel appeared in the *beis medrash* on Saturday wearing *tefilin*, and instructed all the *bochurim* to follow suit. He considered the *Chazon Ish* to be the *posek hador* after the death of R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky who had passed away one year earlier. However, others went with the *psak* of R' Yechiel Michel Tuketzinsky and kept *Shabbos* on Saturday, while some others refrained from *melachos Deoraisa* on both days.

However, the dateline controversy is not limited to Japan and Hawaii. We mentioned earlier that the *Chazon Ish's* dateline runs directly through Siberia and Australia. This

would pose an inconsistency for two people who are each standing on different sides of the dateline, for each one would be observing *Shabbos* on a different day. The *Chazon Ish* maintained that the line bends to the east to include a solid landmass on one side of the line, thereby placing all of Siberia and Australia to the west of the dateline (i.e. in the Eastern Hemisphere).⁴ *Shabbos* would therefore be observed there on Saturday. It follows that one should be careful not to go in a boat or on a plane if one is on the eastern coast of Australia on Sunday, since it is *Shabbos* on the eastern coast.⁵ The *Brisker Rov*, however, maintained that the line does not bend. Accordingly, some parts of Australia would have to keep *Shabbos* on Sunday.⁶ This causes added confusion for those living in Melbourne, Sydney, etc. Most *Yiddin* presently living in Australia, Continental Asia, and Hawaii, observe *Shabbos*, *Yom Kippur*, etc. in accordance with the *Chazon Ish's* ruling.

With regard to Japan, many contemporary *poskim* are of the opinion that one should keep *Shabbos* on Sunday in accordance with the ruling of the *Chazon Ish*. However, one should refrain from doing *melachos Deoraisa* on Saturday. Others maintain the exact opposite, and hold that one should keep *Shabbos* on Saturday and refrain from doing *melachos Deoraisa* on Sunday. *Havdalah* is recited Sunday night.⁷

Some *poskim* suggest a third approach, which is to blend both *shitos*. Accordingly, *Shabbos* in Japan would be kept on both Saturday and Sunday as far as *melacha* goes. The weekday *davening* is said on both days, and *tefilin* are worn on both days without a *bracha* and with a *tenai*. (I.e. If it is a weekday it should be considered as if I am wearing it for the sake of fulfilling the *mitzvah*, otherwise let it not be considered מצות תפילין). While

4. עי' חז"א שם.

5. כך הורים כמה פוסקים, ומהגרי"י בעלסקי שליט"א שמעתי שרק בספינה יש חשש חילול שבת, אבל לשטוף סמוך לשפת הים במקום שאינו עמוק כ"כ אולי מותר.

6. ספר מועדים וזמנים ח"ו סי' י"ד.

7. עי' תאריך ישראל ב:ט שהביא מחלי' הפוסקים בזה.

2. עי' חז"א אור"ח סי' ס"ד בקונטרס י"ח שעות.

3. ספר הימים בכדור העולם, ועי' בהק' שם, ועי' ספר תאריך ישראל א.ט. שכן דעת הגר"י אלישיב שליט"א, ועי' לב אברא דף קע"ח שזהו דעת הגר"י העניקין זצ"ל.

observe *Shabbos* until the sun rises and sets again. It follows, that one who arrives there in the middle of the week won't observe *Shabbos* for a long period of time, since it is considered the same continuous day for the next few months until the sun rises or sets, depending on what time of the year he arrived. Furthermore, were two people to arrive there at two different times, each would observe *Shabbos* according to his own calendar and depending on when he came. Some even extend this reasoning in calculating the eighth day to perform a *bris milah*.¹²

However, most *poskim* reject this way of thinking, and maintain that the *halachic* day is determined by a twenty-four hour period of time (i.e. the time it takes for the earth to rotate 360°), and one must therefore count and keep record of the days of the week for himself. Some *poskim* suggest that one should split the day into equal parts, and should recite *krias shema* up until the third hour, *shemona esrai* up until the fourth, etc.¹³ R' Chaim Volozhiner is quoted as stating that since there is no clear solution to this problem, one should avoid traveling to these places altogether.

Taanis – Fast Day

When an airplane flies westward, it travels in the same direction as the sun, and therefore the time will not advance significantly throughout the flight. This causes a problem for one who leaves an eastern location (e.g. Eretz Yisroel) on the morning of a fast day (e.g. Tuesday), and flies westward (e.g. to the United States), since he will first arrive there in middle of the fast (e.g. Tuesday). In reality though, he has already fasted more than the time of a full day. Some *poskim* suggest that the end of the fast is determined by the location where he left from. Others suggest that one is only required to fast until 9:30 PM. This is based on the custom of the *Yiddin* in

Stockholm who break their fast at 9:30 PM even though the sun has not yet set. The rationale behind this custom is based on the *Gemara* that says that the fast days are only a *minhag* and at the time this *minhag* was established there were no *Yiddin* so far north as Stockholm. Consequently, no one accepted the custom to fast longer than approximately 9:30 PM. However, this logic does not apply to *Tishah B'av* and *Yom Kippur*, which are bona fide fast days. Nevertheless, most *poskim* reject these approaches. They maintain, as explained above with regard to *Shabbos*, that one is required to observe the laws in accordance with the location that he is currently in (i.e. that is below the plane). Therefore, one is required to fast until sunset of the location where he is currently in. In certain instances, this may be a leniency (e.g. a person traveling from the United States to Eretz Yisroel), and in other instances this would be a stringency (e.g. a person traveling from Eretz Yisroel to the United States).¹⁴ However, a person who fasted the complete *taanis* in one location (i.e. until nightfall) and crossed the dateline into a location where it is in the middle of the *taanis* is exempt from fasting again.¹⁵ Some claim that this approach would indeed be an extreme hardship for one who crosses the International Dateline in the middle of a *taanis* flying eastward. For example, one who leaves on a *taanis* Wednesday morning from Taiwan and flies eastward towards New York, will first land in New York on Wednesday morning and would be required to fast until sunset. However, this is not so according to the line of reasoning that we established (i.e. that one judges the day by where he is at the present moment). It would follow that since he is traveling 'back in time', somewhere along the flight he will encounter night (i.e. Tuesday night) and will be in a location where the fast has not yet begun. He may therefore break his fast for the period of time that he is flying over

12. עי' שו"ת מנחת אלעזר ח"ד סי' מ"ב, ועי' ספר אהלך באמיתך ל:טז, ועי' ספר כורת ברית על הל' מילה סי' רס"ב.
13. עי' מור וקציעה או"ח סי' שד"מ, ועי' תפארת ישראל סוף פ"א דברכות, ועי' שו"ת ישכיל עבדי ח"ח או"ח סי' כב:ט.

14. עי' שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"ח סי' רסא:ב, ועי' מקראי קודש ח"ב עמ' רי"ד, אכן עי' אג"מ או"ח ח"ג סי' צ"ז ועי' תאריך ישראל פרק כ'.
15. עי' ספר תאריך ישראל שם סעי' יח, וכך שמעתי מהגור"י בעלסקי שליט"א.

that area, and continue to eat until he encounters daylight (i.e. Wednesday morning), and must then resume his fast until sunset in New York.¹⁶

Tefilah

One is required to *daven* all *tefilos* in accordance with the location that he is currently in. Therefore, one who davened *Shacharis* Tuesday morning and then crosses the International Dateline eastward into Monday morning, is required to *daven Shacharis* again. Although he has already davened *Shacharis* on Monday, the *tefilos* are not governed by the day of the week, and one is required to *daven* three *tefilos* every day. Therefore, since it is a different day for him, he is required to *daven* once more. However, there are other *poskim* who maintain that one who traveled eastward across the dateline is not obligated to repeat the *tefilos* despite the fact that the day has repeated itself. Similarly, the latter opinion maintains that one who crosses the International Dateline westward and thereby advances one day, is required to *daven* the *shemonah esrei* of that time (i.e. *Shacharis, Mincha, or Maariv*). If this advancement occurred in the middle of the day, he is not required to *daven Shacharis* again since we don't view it as if he missed *Shacharis*, and it is as if he never became obligated to *daven Shacharis* that day. He should, however, put on *tefilin* and say *krias shema*, since one is required to do so every day. Some *poskim* suggest that in all cases one should repeat the respective *tefilos* with a *t'nai*. (i.e. If I am indeed obligated to repeat *shemonah esrai*, I should fulfill my obligation with this *shemonah esrai*, otherwise I am just davening a *tefilas nedava* – a voluntarily *tefilah*).¹⁷

16. כך שמעתי מהגר"י בעלסקי שליט"א, מהגר"ד פיינשטיין שליט"א, ומשאר פוסקי זמנינו.

17. עי' שו"ת בצל החכמה ח"ה סי' ק"ג, ועי' שו"ת אור לציון סי' י"ד, אבן עזר ספר הזכרון להגר"מ פיינשטיין בפסקי הלכות שכתב בנו הגר"ד שליט"א, ועי' אהלך באמיתך י:לב-לג.

Sefiras Ha'omer

One who crosses the International Dateline during *sefira* does not really have much of a problem. For example, if one travels westward and thereby advances one day (e.g. from Tuesday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon), then although he missed counting the *sefira* of Wednesday night, he is nevertheless still able to count the *sefira* of that day during the day, and resume counting that night with a *bracha*. One who crosses the dateline eastward and thereby loses a day (e.g. Wednesday to Tuesday), should count that night without a *bracha*, since he has already counted the *sefira* for Wednesday. The following night, he may resume counting with a *bracha*. Similarly, the *Yom Tov* of *Shevuous* is observed on the day that it is regularly observed in the location that one is presently in.¹⁸

Chanukah

One who travels from Hong Kong (or any other area on the other side of the *halachic* dateline) to Japan which is a day behind, would be obligated according to the *Chazon Ish* to light the same number of lights that are being lit in Japan, without a *bracha*. (He would be lighting the same number of lights that he had previously lit the night before in Hong Kong.) The reason is that one was already *yotze* for that day in Hong Kong. This *shaila* would not arise for one who flies to New York, since he will arrive there on the next day anyway. One who flies in the other direction across the dateline to Hong Kong, should light the number of lights being lit in that place with a *bracha*, even though one will end up losing a day.¹⁹

ותן טל ומטר

Yiddin living in Eretz Yisroel begin saying ותן טל ומטר in shemonah esrai on the

18. עי' שו"ת בצל החכמה ח"ה סי' צ"ו, ועי' תאריך ישראל פרק כ"ד.

19. כך שמעתי מהגר"י בעלסקי שליט"א ושאר פוסקים.

seventh day of *Cheshvon*. However, *Yiddin* outside of Eretz Yisroel begin saying it on either December fourth or fifth, which is much later. The *minhag* is for a person from outside of Eretz Yisroel who is presently in Eretz Yisroel (and vice versa) to say ותן טל ומטר in *shema koleinu*. However, if this insertion was forgotten in such a case, one need not repeat *shemonah esrai*.²⁰

Second Day Yom Tov

Yiddin who live outside of Eretz Yisroel observe two days of *Yom Tov*, whereas those in Eretz Yisroel observe only one day. One who lives outside of Eretz Yisroel must observe two days of *Yom Tov* even while he is in Eretz Yisroel. In addition, he may not ask a *Yid* who lives in Eretz Yisroel to do *melacha* for him.²¹

Bris Milah, Pidyon Haben, Bar Mitzvah

One who flies eastward from Taiwan across the *halachic* dateline loses a day. One who flies westward from New York across the *halachic* dateline advances a day. This does not mean that this would affect one who flies with a newborn baby born on Monday in either direction across the dateline with regard to the day of the *bris* or *pidyon haben*.

Similarly, one who became *bar mitzvah* while in Taiwan and then crosses the dateline, does not become a *koton* once again. The general rule is that one has to calculate what day it would be if he were to fly around the globe to his destination via the longer route. Just because one took a short cut does not change the *halachic* status of the day. To explain: One who travels eastward from New York to Taiwan on Monday will eventually pass nightfall on Monday and sunrise on Tuesday, and the *halachic* day for him in Taiwan is Tuesday. Therefore, in a case where one takes the shortcut (i.e. where one travels westward), then even though he jumped from Monday afternoon into Tuesday afternoon, we still consider it to be a full fledged Tuesday for him. The same would apply to one who travels eastward from Taiwan to New York (i.e. via the shortcut). Although by taking the shortcut he jumped back from Tuesday afternoon into Monday afternoon, nevertheless, Tuesday in New York will be considered a full fledged Tuesday for him. The reason for this is because had one traveled westward (i.e. via the longer route), it would have remained Tuesday for his entire trip. Therefore, although one took a short cut that does not change his age.²²

²². כך שמעתי מהגר"י בעלסקי שליט"א ומשאר פוסקים.

²⁰. כן הוא הסכמת הפוסקים.

²¹. עי' שו"ע תצ"ז סע' ג', ושערי תשובה שם. ועי' חכמת שלמה שם, ועי' בשו"ת אג"מ בענין זה, ועי' פסקי תשובות על שו"ע שם.