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Is one supposed to accept Shabbos before sunset?

The answer is in the affirmative, and the source is an interesting one.

The *gemora* in *Rosh Hashana* 9a cites the *possuk* that commands us to fast on Yom Kippur (*Vayikra* 23:32). The referenced words of the *possuk* are ברעב בערב, *בתשעה לחדש ט*, where on the one hand it appears that the fast day takes place on the 9th of Tishrei, but on the other hand the *possuk* says, ברעב בערב, which means that it only commences on the 10th at night. The *gemora* learns from this that one must begin fasting a bit before the 10th of Tishrei. This concept is known as *מוסיףין מהול על קודש* – adding to the holy day by sanctifying part of the adjacent weekday and is called *תוספת שבת*.

The *gemora* continues to prove that this applies to Shabbos and Yom Tov as well, i.e. one must add to the Shabbos by sanctifying the Friday preceding Shabbos and one must add to the weekday preceding a Yom Tov.¹ We should note that although the *Rambam* holds that *מוסיףין מהול על קודש* only applies to the actual fasting on Yom Kippur and not to Shabbos and Yom Tov, many *Rishonim*² hold, as stated, that it applies to Shabbos and Yom Tov as well.

How we do practically apply this halacha?

¹ See the *M"B* 261:19.

² The period of the *Rishonim* refers to *Rabbis* who lived approx. from the years 900-1400, such as *Rashi*, *Rambam* and *Tosefos*.

The application of this *halacha* requires that one must refrain from performing *melacha*, as if it is Shabbos, even though it is not yet Shabbos. Prior thereto, we must know that there are several opinions amongst the *Rishonim* as to when Shabbos begins. The *Mishna Berura* points out³ that many *Rishonim* hold that Shabbos begins when the sun dips below the horizon and consequently from this point onwards, one may not violate the Shabbos in any form.

Accordingly, if we are to add to the Shabbos and refrain from *melacha* it must be done before sunset, as from sunset onwards we must refrain from performing *melacha* even if we did not add to the Shabbos from our own aspirations.

Therefore one must accept Shabbos **before** sunset. The *Mishna Berura* says⁴ that a few seconds are not enough for *tosafot shevah* and it appears that one should add a few minutes for *tosafot shevah* (this is done verbally or mentally, as explained later) and refrain from *melacha* from that point onwards.

tosafot shevah there is a problem with sunset in various locations. This is because of difficulties in calculating the exact time of sunset when, as in some cases, mountains obscure the sun and other halachic considerations.

Accordingly one should refrain from *melacha* prior to the last minute. Similarly, daytime *halachos* should be performed a few minutes

³ *Simon* 261:23.

⁴ *Simon* 261:22.

before sunset in order to avoid this problem].

How does one "accept" Shabbos early?
One should accept the Shabbos verbally and say "I hereby accept upon myself the holy Shabbos or "הרי ני מקבל עלי שבת קדש", or one should at least say this mentally. It is also known that if one says בואי כלה in the *lecha dodi*, or if one says שיר ליום השבתה מזמור, one accepts the Shabbos, because one mentions the Shabbos in these verses.⁵ The accepted custom is that the lady of the house accepts Shabbos with her candle lighting even though she lights some time before sunset.

What am I to do if mincha is davened in my shul close to Shabbos?

Since one should accept the Shabbos some time before sunset, one must make sure to *daven mincha* early enough to conclude the *sh'moneh esreh* before sunset and subsequently accept the Shabbos. It may happen the *chazzan* is still in the middle of the repetition, but each individual should accept the Shabbos immediately after the private *sh'moneh esreh* if it is close to sunset. One cannot accept the Shabbos before *mincha*, because many opinions hold that subsequent to accepting the Shabbos one may not *daven* the weekday prayer.⁶

My shul davens mincha five minutes before sunset and as a result I conclude my sh'moneh esreh after sunset. This obviously prevents me from accepting Shabbos, so what am I to do?
It is advisable to *daven mincha* early and conclude *mincha* before sunset and accept the Shabbos. Some poskim⁷ allow *davening mincha* on one's own in order to accept Shabbos on time. However this ruling has

not been accepted in many communities. One should nevertheless try at least to accept Shabbos mentally before sunset and by thinking "from now I accept the holy Shabbos".

Vort on the Parsha

שם משמואל writes that his illustrious father, the *Avei Nezer*, said that a Jew must continuously have two signs of his Jewishness. During the week one has the *B'ris Milah* and *Tefillin*, and on Shabbos one has the *B'ris Milah* and *Shabbos*. Both these concepts are distinguishing signs of *Am Yisrael*.

He explains that the necessity of having these two signs is because it is known that in order to return a lost item one must provide "signs" – *simanim* that the item is indeed his. Two signs are considered a perfect *simon* and excellent proof that the lost item does indeed belongs to the claimer.

We too are required to bear two *simonim* in order not to get lost. It is with these two *simonim* that we can continuously remember *Hashem Yisborach* and through them we will hopefully not lose ourselves to the mundane world.

Food For Thought

If I accepted Shabbos before sunset, may I instruct a fellow Jew to perform a melacha?

What am I to do if I need to do a melacha and I have already accepted Shabbos?

If I accepted Shabbos and I then remembered that I have not yet davened mincha, what is the halacha?

Answers coming be" H next week.

⁵ *M" B simon* 261:41 and *SS"K* 46:3.

⁶ See *M" B simon* 263:33 and *SS"K* 46 and footnote 28.

⁷ *SS"K* 46:5 and footnote 26.