

THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

Published by



A Project of
The Shema Yisrael Torah Network

based on the shiurim given by

RABBI DOVID
OSTROFF shlita

developed from the Chabura of the
Shulchan Aruch Project

These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to HaGaon HaRav Moshe Sternbuch, shlita

Parshas Eikev 5766

August 11, '06

Volume V Issue 34

Hilchos Shabbos in Enemy Territory

Since today's sheet is not intended as psak halacha, it was not shown to R' Sternbuch, shlita

My dear brother, Rav Rafael Ostroff, spent the last week in Lebanon fighting the war against Yishmael, whose only desire is to obliterate the Jewish people. They were in a town in Lebanon called Maroon Aras and spent Shabbos in a bombed out house, which acted as some sort of shelter. Mortars and missiles whizzed non stop all around them and amidst the battle they set the Shabbos table. Everyone enthusiastically joined in the Shabbos preparations, including soldiers with non-religious backgrounds. They ALL joined in kabbolas Shabbos and davening and sang z'miros Shabbos, accompanied by the shrieking missiles and shelling.

The day after Shabbos his unit was sent back into Israel for one day's leave at a border village called Avivim, in order to shower and do some of the things we take for granted every day. There he sat down and wrote the following questions he and his troops had had to deal with. To show that amidst all the havoc, *Am Yisrael chai v'kayam*, we present the following.

We were not provided with candles for Shabbos so we improvised.

The lid of a large tin can was bent into the shape of a container into which we poured tuna fish oil for fuel. For wicks we used utah (flax-like material). Our problem was that the *Mishna* and *halacha*¹ says that one may not use fish oil for Shabbos candles, but upon closer inspection we saw that the fish oil that is prohibited is made from fish intestines.

¹ *Simon* 264:5.

The *Mishna Berura* writes ² that oil extracted from fish flesh may be used and is categorized with other oils that are permitted for Shabbos light.

We did not know whether to accept Shabbos early or not.

The problem was that we did not have any light and eating the Shabbos meal at the regular time would mean eating in the dark. Our option was to accept Shabbos early, which is not really a problem under the circumstances, only that we were 'violating' Shabbos for *pikuach nefesh* - operating the 2-way radio and other devices.

Halacha says it is preferable to eat with light than have wine for *kiddush*, ³ which was the decisive factor for us in accepting Shabbos early.

For clarity sake, we *davened mincha* before *p'lag hamincha* (an hour and a quarter before sunset) and *ma'ariv* after *p'lag* and made *kiddush* right after *ma'ariv*.

In retrospect, I suppose we could have organized more candle light and accept Shabbos at the regular time.

We were in a quandary as for the prayer "magen avos" cited in *ma'ariv*.

The *Shulchan Aruch* says ⁴ that 'magen avos'⁵ is not recited in a house where people gather to celebrate a wedding or in a house of mourning. The reason this *tefilla* is recited is because in the time of the *gemora*, shuls were outside town, and since davening is brief, people might remain alone in shul and be in danger. *Chazal* therefore added this brief prayer to give time for everyone

² *Simon* 264:21.

³ *Simon* 263:3.

⁴ *Simon* 268:10.

⁵ Recited immediately after the silent *shemone esreh* during *ma'ariv*.

to conclude davening. Consequently this rule only applies to permanent minyanim, not sporadic places of prayer.

The wedding entourage is not permanent, nor is the mourner's, which negates the need for this extra prayer.

Our brief sojourn in Maroon Aras is *B" H* not permanent either, thereby discharging us from this *tefila*. ⁶ It is noteworthy that some Sephardim have the custom to always recite this *tefila*. ⁷

We did not posses any cups and didn't have a clue how to make kiddush.

Some of us suggested cutting a plastic coke bottle in half and filling it with grape juice. Firstly, cutting it on Shabbos probably involves a melacha *d'oraisso* of making a *k'li*. We see that one may not make a hole in a barrel on Shabbos, even in a semi-permanent *k'li*. ⁸ So obviously we would cut it before Shabbos.

The second problem is that our new container is hardly a worthy *k'li*, surely one not fit *l'chatchila* for making *kiddush*. Under the circumstances it is also kosher, but we wanted to be stringent and do the best possible. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes ⁹ that one should not use a disposable cup for *kiddush*. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was not so adamant and says that since distinguished people use them at important functions, one need not be too particular if nothing else is available. Again, we tried to be *machmir*.

The best solution would have been to make *kiddush* on the grape juice bottle itself, or perhaps to fill one of our water canteens. *l'chatchila* the vessel needs to be fill to the top, so we would have filled the bottle with grape juice from another bottle. Maybe next time – should there be one.

We had a unique Shabbos table – a door ripped from its hinges and placed on bricks. The bare concrete floor was our throne.

⁶ *M" B simon* 268:24.

⁷ *Kaf haChaim simon* 268:50.

⁸ *Simon* 314:1.

⁹ *Igros Moshe* vol. III *Orach Chaim simon* 39, *SS"K* 47:11.

We were not sure whether it is permitted to place the board on the bricks on Shabbos. For our fantastic Shabbos meal (consisting of fried meat loaf, instead of festive roast chicken, corn salad instead of coleslaw) we needed a table so the door seemed the best solution. Prying it from its hinges on Shabbos is *osur* on account of *s'tira* – demolishing, so that was done before Shabbos, but we only erected it on Shabbos and the issue of *ohel* – making a tent arose. ¹⁰

The *halacha* is that one may erect a table tennis table on Shabbos in the regular manner, i.e. positioning the legs and placing the board on top, because one does not use the underside. ¹¹ A bed may not be made in the same fashion because one uses the underside to store shoes. Accordingly, the table could be erected on Shabbos.

The entire floor was full of rubble and stones and we were at a loss how to move them because of muktze.

Although we could designate large bricks (*blok'kim*) for the table and perhaps benches, we could not designate stones and pebbles to make them a *k'li*, which without doing so they remain *muktze*.

Imagine lying down on the floor in your sleeping bag and stones are poking at your sides and head. Our option was to move the stones with one's foot etc. which is permitted according to the *Mishna Berura*.

May *Hashem* answer our prayers and bring our captives and soldiers home safely.

These issues are not intended as p'sak halacha.

We pray for the welfare and safety of our soldiers.

¹⁰ *Simon* 315.

¹¹ There is a problem fastening the net into place because the side screws are screwed tight. I don't have a practical solution for that.

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com.

Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.