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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן רמ"ט סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Traveling on erev Shabbos

Shulchan Aruch Siman 249 Seif 1

אין הולכים בערב שבת יותר משלש פרסאות

One may not travel on erev Shabbos more than three parsaos

Shulchan Aruch discusses the distance one is permitted to travel on erev Shabbos. He rules that one may not travel more than three parsaos on erev Shabbos (A parsa is four mil and each mil is 2000 amos). According to the opinion that it takes 18 minutes to walk a mil, one may not travel more than about 3.5 hours on erev Shabbos. According to the opinion that it takes 24 minutes to travel a mil, one may travel 4 hours and 48 minutes. The reason is that one must allot time to be able to prepare food for Shabbos after one reaches his destination, regardless of whether he is returning home or will be a guest at another's home for Shabbos.

Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) in the name of Magen Avrohom writes that in our countries where people prepare plenty of food, people are not so cautious with regard to this restriction, whether they are travelling home or whether they will spend Shabbos in someone else's home. He then notes that many later authorities warn against planning to reach one's destination immediately before Shabbos for a number of concerns. It could happen that the traveler will arrive as Shabbos begins and the host may put more food in the pot, thus violating the prohibition of cooking on Shabbos. Another concern is that one will miscalculate and not have enough time to arrive before Shabbos and then one runs into all sorts of issues related to continuing to travel on Shabbos or not, what to do with one's valuables and possibly even issues of traveling outside of the techum on Shabbos. Poskim note that nowadays that people travel by car or airplane, one must be very cautious since even if one carefully plans the timing of their travel there are always variables that come up that delay ones trip. Interestingly, Aruch HaShulchan (סע' ג') writes that the Satan works extra diligently on erev Shabbos. Therefore, when planning to travel on erev Shabbos one must add extra time to allow for various delays (פסקי תשובות אות א').

Overview

Siman 249 Seif 1:

One may not travel on erev Shabbos more than three parsaos so that one could reach his destination with time left in the day to prepare for the Shabbos meals, regardless of whether he is going home or elsewhere. This applies when he is in a settled area and can prepare food for Shabbos but if in the place where he is it is not possible to prepare for Shabbos or if the place is not safe to dwell it is permitted to travel many parsaos. If one sent a message that he is coming for Shabbos it is also permitted to travel many parsaos.

- The distance of three parsaos is about 1/3 of the day assuming that one can travel 10 parsaos over the course of a day. If one is travelling by wagon or on a horse one may travel a greater distance but up until 1/3 of the day. Bach implies that one travelling by wagon may travel until midday. (M.B. 1)
- Even though one will enjoy Shabbos at home more, it is prohibited since they may not expect him and did not prepare food. In our countries people prepare extra, therefore people are not particular about this halacha regardless of whether they are returning home or will be at a friend's house. However, many later authorities note that one should not intend to travel until close to nighttime since it leads to many errors and chillul Shabbos. For example, the host may add food to the pot and violate Shabbos and other times one does not reach his hotel or home before dark and there are many possible violations that one could transgress. (M.B. 3)
- In other words, if the end of the three parsaos is an inhabited area. (M.B. 4)
- Stopping on the road is not safe since roads are assumed dangerous, therefore, even if one has food for Shabbos it is permitted to travel until one reaches a safe destination. (M.B. 5)
- One must be careful not to travel until right before Shabbos begins. (M.B. 6)