

Seven Complete Weeks

Does making early Yom Tov detract from the days of *Sefira*?

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We all look forward to the sweet, uninterrupted learning that fills Shavuot night. Maggidrei Shiur and laymen alike prepare an engaging topic in advance, that will allow them to experience the beauty of in-depth Torah learning on the night of Kabbalas Torah. Practically speaking, however, the night is not as long as we'd like to think. This can be attributed not-so-much to an early sunrise than to the fact that we generally start davening Ma'ariv much later than we do on the usual Yom Tov night, which delays the start of our night of learning until after midnight. In this article we will review the sources of the Minhag to daven Ma'ariv after absolute nightfall on Shavuot night.

The difference between a regular Yom Tov and Shavuot

Generally speaking,

the *Poskim* allow a person to light candles and accept Yom Tov early. As long as the previous day is not *Shabbos*, there should be no problem of accepting a Yom Tov before nightfall.

With regards to *Shavuot*,

however, there is another element we must consider. The Torah writes that we must count seven weeks from the day following the first Yom Tov of *Pesach*

until *Shavuot*. The Torah states that this *Mitzvah* should be "*Sheva Shabbosos Temimos Tehiyenah*" – a count of seven *complete* weeks. Thus, the *Poskim* write that if a person were to accept the Yom Tov of *Shavuot* early, that would detract from the complete counting of *Sefira's* seven weeks[1].

We must understand

the logic behind this. Since the counting of the *Omer* takes place in the evening, then we

count the 49th day of the *Omer* after nightfall on *Erev*

Shavuot, thus completing our fulfillment of this precious *Mitzvah* on the night before *Shavuot*. How then would accepting *Shavuot* early detract from the completeness of the *Sefira*?

An early Shemini Atzeres

There is a similar

discussion regarding the Yom Tov of *Shemini Atzeres*. The *Poskim*[2] say that on *Shemini*

Atzeres, one should not recite *Kiddush* until after nightfall, at *Tzeis HaKochavim*. This is because if one were to recite *Kiddush* early, there is a concern that it is still the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*, in which case, one must eat in the *Sukkah* and recite the *Beracha* of "*Leishev BaSukkah*."

Since this *Beracha* should not be recited on *Shemini Atzeres*, the *Poskim* write that one should not recite *Kiddush* until after *Tzeis HaKochavim*.

It is clear that just because one accepts *Shemini Atzeres* upon himself, nevertheless, the *Yom Tov Sukkos* is not over in any way. This is similar to a person who makes *Havdala* on *Shabbos* before the *Z'man*. Although he fulfills the *Mitzvah* of *Havdala*, the *Halachos* of *Shabbos* are still intact. However, the discussion regarding an early *Shemini Atzeres* takes this concept one step further. Whereas in the case of an early *Havdala*, the day we are attempting to usher in has no special *Halachos*, and therefore a discussion of whether the weekday has begun or not is irrelevant, accepting the *Yom Tov* of *Shemini Atzeres* early would subject us to the *Halachos* of *Shemini Atzeres*. This would create a problem with reciting the *Beracha* of *Leishev BaSukkah*.

Ending Sefiras Ha'Omer

We must then inquire if accepting the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos* early would affect the completeness of the last day of *Sefira*, because the *Kedusha* of *Shavuos* - which is supposed to follow a complete *Sefira* - would now begin. Whereas the practical *Mitzvah* of counting *Sefira* is to count each day after nightfall, we must also ensure not to absolve that counting. Once one has declared that a specific day of the *Omer* is counted as that specific day, ushering in the next day would - in essence - contradict that counting. That is why, if one were to accept *Shavuos* early, he would be declaring that it is no longer *Sefira*, as it is impossible to have both at the same time. This would detract from the completeness of the count.

Ma'ariv or Kiddush

We must now determine at which point are we going to declare the beginning of *Shavuos*

in

a way that would contradict the continuation of the *Sefira*. The *Acharonim* dispute this point. The *Magen Avraham*[3] writes that one should not recite *Kiddush* until after absolute nightfall at *Tzeis HaKochavim* - star-break. Whereas the *Taz*[4] is of the opinion that one shouldn't even daven *Ma'ariv* on the first night of *Shavuot* until after *Tzeis HaKochavim*.

The logic of the *Magen*

Avraham would be, that although one may have davened *Ma'ariv*, which is an acceptance of the *Kedusha* of *Shavuot*, nevertheless, the fact that one is waiting to recite *Kiddush* demonstrates that one is not yet removing his mind from the count of *Sefira*.

According to this

opinion, it is not so much about whether *Kiddush* or *Ma'ariv* marks the beginning of the *Yom Tov*, but rather about the fact that the previous day still lingers on until after *Tzeis HaKochavim*, as it awaits other forms of marking the beginning of the *Chag*. Accordingly, if one would light candles or daven *Ma'ariv* by day, and recite *Kiddush* after *Tzeis HaKochavim* - or vice versa - that would not completely disregard the *Sefira* and would therefore not be an issue.

According to the *Taz*

however, any form of acceptance of the *Kedusha* of *Shavuot* already detracts from the previous day.

The second night

It should be noted,

that the question of accepting *Yom Tov* early should technically only apply to the first night of *Shavuot*, because of the *Sefiras Ha'Omer* is already done. However, the *Netziv* writes that it is *Minhag Yisroel* is not to accept *Shavuot* early, even on the second night of *Yom Tov*. This can be for an entirely different reason, as the *Passuk* states regarding *Shavuot* that we must sanctify it "*B'Etzem HaYom HaZe*" - on the day itself, which would exclude an early acceptance of the *Yom Tov*. This reasoning would apply even to the second day of *Shavuot*.

[1]

Emek Bracha

[2]

Maharshal, brought in the *Taz*

[3]

From the *Massas Binyomin, C.F. Emek Beracha*

[4]

Also brought in *Mishna Berura*