



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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Gershon Minkow, Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My family is planning its second family reunion for 1998, and they are considering having it on a small cruise ship (probably 100-200 people) over a weekend. If the ship were to take off on Thursday or Friday, would it be permissible to stay on it over Shabbat? Thank you for your response.

Dear Gershon Minkow,

The Talmud states it's forbidden to set sail within three days of Shabbat. The commentaries offer many explanations for this rabbinic prohibition. The Shulchan Aruch cites the reason offered by Maimonides, that there is a concern that one might become seasick and this will interfere with the celebration of Shabbat. It generally takes three days to 'get your sea legs.'

The Talmud, however, permits one to leave on a ship even within three days, if one is traveling for the purpose of a mitzva. Some authorities rule that in this regard, traveling for business or to visit a friend is considered a mitzvah, because it's a mitzva to provide for your family and to strengthen your bonds of love and friendship. Visiting your family is certainly no less of a mitzva than visiting a friend.

Furthermore, ships today are more stable than they used to be and motion sickness is less likely. Based on this, Rabbi Moshe Sternbach, *shlita*, permits traveling on such a ship within three days of Shabbat.

So if your family plans a weekend cruise, you're on 'solid ground' if you participate. Just don't rock the boat.

Sources:

- *Tractate Shabbat 19a*
- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 248*

Steven W. Luger <Swluger@aol.com> wrote:

With all the excitement about the Hale-Bopp comet, our family went out to see it and recited the Blessing "Oseh Maaseh Bereshit" ["Blessed are You, Hashem ... Who makes the works of creation"]. However, in the Mishna it says that the proper blessing is "Shekocho u'gvurato maleh olam" ["...Whose power and might fill the world"]. When did this change occur? And how, if the Mishna has a very specific blessing, can somebody change it? Thanks for your help.

Dear Steven W. Luger,

The Mishna states: "On comets, earth tremors, thunder, storm winds and lightning, say: 'Blessed is He whose strength and might fill the world.' On mountains, hills, rivers, oceans and desserts, say: 'Blessed is He who makes the works of creation.'"

The Talmud explains the Mishna as follows: On mountains, hills, etc., there is only one possible blessing which can be said — namely, "Who makes the works of creation." But on comets, earth tremors, etc., you can say *either* blessing you want. You can say either "Whose strength and might fill the world" or you can say "Who makes the works of creation." The custom is to say "Who makes the works of creation," but the other one is also acceptable.

Some commentaries understand the Mishna as referring to meteors ('shooting stars'), not comets. In practice, you say a blessing on both comets and meteors.

Speaking of star-gazing:

Gretta: You know, Betty, I have this horrible problem. I fell down and bumped my head last week, and ever since then I've been seeing stars!

Betty: Well, have you seen a doctor?

Gretta: No, just stars.

Sources:

- *Tractate Berachot 54a, 59a*
- *Mishna Berurah 227:1*

## Yiddle Riddle:

Last week, jerry@abcworks.co.uk wrote:

Hi, This may interest you as a Yiddle Riddle: When can a person be called to the Torah for 3 successive aliyot on the same day? Answer: (It happened to me) A kohen is called to the Torah for maftir, which is the last aliya on Shabbat morning. He then goes to the afternoon service where he is called up first for the kohen aliya. There is no levi, so he receives the next aliya in place of a levi.

Thanks, Jerry, for the question and answer.

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@virtual.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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