Travelling on the Days Preceding Shabbat

Shiur number 12

In order to be ready for Shabbat, one must begin preparations long before Shabbat begins. This practical point has actual Halakhic ramifications. In this Shiur we will discuss how the requirement to be properly prepared for Shabbat affects how long before Shabbat one is allowed to set out on a journey. We will attempt to understand different Poskim’s definitions of what is considered “close to Shabbat.”

The Beraita addresses two important points:

a. The prohibition to set sail within three days of Shabbat.

b. The permission to set sail on Friday for a Mitzvah.

Regarding a situation where the trip will last into Shabbat, the Tannaim disagree as to whether one must make a condition with the ship’s crew that the traveling will stop on Shabbat (even though one is aware that they won’t actually stop on Shabbat).

Why is it prohibited to set sail within three days of Shabbat? Whatever the prohibition is, why is it waived in certain circumstances? There are several different explanations in the Rishonim:

א. רשב"ם – שhevitat keilim

The Rashbam’s explanation brings us back to the previous shiurim. He explains that the prohibition stems from the requirement of shevitat keilim and follows Beit Shammai, and it is therefore not accepted l’halacha. As we follow Beit Hillel, we are permitted to set sail close to Shabbat. According to the Rashbam, we learn that even Beit Shammai is willing to set aside the requirement of shevitat keilim for the sake of a mitzvah.

The other Rishonim offer other explanations, and the Rashbam apparently rejects all of the other suggested prohibitions involved with setting sail before Shabbat. As we bring the other opinions we will explain why the Rashbam might have disagreed with them.

ב. רבbeinu Chananel – The Prohibition of techumin

The Beraita addresses two important points:

a. The prohibition to set sail within three days of Shabbat.

b. The permission to set sail on Friday for a Mitzvah.

The other Rishonim offer other explanations, and the Rashbam apparently rejects all of the other suggested prohibitions involved with setting sail before Shabbat. As we bring the other opinions we will explain why the Rashbam might have disagreed with them.
In regards to the Halachot of techumin, one’s location at the beginning of Shabbat is the determining factor. Chazal forbid travelling more than 2000 Amot (Shulchan Aruch Siman 397 Sif 1, the techum d’Oraita is much bigger), in any direction, from one’s place on Shabbat. Assuming that a boat will travel more than 2000 Amot (approximately a kilometer) during Shabbat, Rabbeinu Chananel explains that techumin is the reason for the prohibition against setting sail before Shabbat.

Rabbeinu Chananel explains that since the rules of techumin only apply when travelling up to 10 tefachim over land, this prohibition only exists if there is a concern that the boat will travel in shallow water.

The Rif asks several questions on his position:

The Rif asks three questions on Rabbeinu Chananel:

a) Why doesn’t the Beraita specify that the prohibition only applies in shallow water?

b) Why is techumin not considered a problem when one sets out more than three days before Shabbat?

c) Why does the factor of a Mitzvah override the prohibition of techumin?

Why doesn’t the Rashbam believe that there is a problem of techum?

Tosafot explains that there is no issue of techumin on a boat because the person does not leave his “place” at all - rather, the water beneath his place moves him. The Ohr Zarua explains that Rabbeinu Chananel actually agrees with this understanding, and the problem of techumin is merely one of marit ayin:

With this explanation of the Ohr Zarua in mind, we can answer two of the Rif’s questions; apparently, when one leaves more than three days before Shabbat, there is no marit ayin of techumin, since people are not yet thinking about Shabbat.

Additionally, the factor of a Mitzvah overrides any concern of marit ayin.

The Shulchan Aruch Harav writes something similar:

The Bach offers another explanation for Rabbeinu Chananel’s opinion:
Shiur number 12- Travelling on the Days Proceeding Shabbat

The Bach also offers an answer to the Rif’s first question:

What is the Rif’s own opinion about the prohibition of techumin while travelling on a boat? From the fact that he rejects Rabbeinu Chananel’s explanation, it would appear that he believes there is no prohibition:

According to the Maharik, the Rif’s leniency seems to work as follows – it is unclear whether techum is de’Oraita. Assuming it is, it is unclear whether this prohibition applies off land, and when the traveler is not taking part in the movement (but has the sailors doing that for him). Considering all that, a person should still do their best and leave well before Shabbat. If one leaves early enough in the week – three days or more prior to Shabbat, that is strict enough to justify leaning on the lenient possibilities.

The Rambam, however, who explains the Gemara like the Rif, writes the following:

We will soon see that the Rambam explains the Beraita differently from Rabbeinu Chananel. He does write that in a situation in which one is travelling in shallow water, the prohibition of techumin does apply, in accordance with Rabbeinu Chananel.

Meaning, the Rambam accepts Rabbeinu Chananel’s view, but not his reading of the Beraita. Remember that the Rif challenges Rabbeinu Chananel’s view that the Beraita should have specified that it was only referring to shallow water. The Bach answers that according to Rabbeinu Chananel’s reading, this is self-evident. The Rambam, however, accepts the Rif’s question, and thus must offer an alternative explanation of the Beraita, but he admits that the Halacha is correct - that there is a prohibition of techumin in shallow water.
The Beit Yosef explains that if the Rambam forbids travelling in shallow water, it is reasonable to believe that that is the Rif’s opinion as well.

To summarize the opinions so far:

According to the Rashi, the Beraita follows Beit Shammai, and halacha therefore permits boarding a boat before.

Rabbeinu Chananel explains that the reason for the Beraita’s prohibition is techumin. The Rashi, however, believes that there is no prohibition of techumin on a boat as the person is not actually travelling, but being moved along on the boat by the water.

The Bach writes that the de’Oraita prohibition of techumin fundamentally applies only on land, but the Rabbis included travelling on water into the prohibition so as not to be confusing. Still, the rabbis are lenient regarding techum on water for the sake of a Mitzvah. The Ohr Zarua explains that Rabbeinu Chananel fundamentally agrees with the Rashi, but understands that under normal circumstances, one must be stringent in regards to techumin on water due to marit ayin.

The Maharik learns that the Rambam and Rif believe that there is no prohibition of techumin on water at all. The Teshuvat HaRambam, however, specifies that there is a prohibition of techumin in shallow water (while the Beraita refers to deep water).

The Rif and the Rambam: For the sake of Oneg Shabbat

The Rif’s third question on Rabbeinu Chananel (how could the prohibition of techumin be put aside for the sake of a Mitzvah) implies that the prohibition at hand is a relatively lenient one. The Rif and Rambam base their opinion on the proximity between the original Beraita and the following one:

What is the common denominator between setting sail and laying siege?

The Rambam similarly writes:

Certain situations require several days to get adjusted. Since one must properly prepare for Shabbat in order to ensure full Oneg Shabbat, one must therefore begin those activities well in advance to ensure proper fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat. The Rif continues:

There is a rule of : when one is engaged in one Mitzvah he is exempt from fulfilling a second one. When one set sail in order to fulfill a Mitzvah, he is exempt from the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat, and he may therefore set sail less than three days before Shabbat.
Tosafot mentions the prohibition against swimming on Shabbat. Chazal forbid swimming out of concern that one might come to form a makeshift raft (Beitzah 36b). Tosafot understands that this prohibition applies to boating as well, but this prohibition is overruled for the sake of a Mitzvah, and it also does not apply when one sets sail more than three days before Shabbat.

The Beraitot are discussing activities that involve danger, and are likely to require Shabbat violation for the sake of *pikuach nefesh*, preserving life. Of course, if one is in a dangerous situation, he or she is required to do everything possible to overcome the danger, but one is still forbidden from knowingly putting oneself into such a situation before Shabbat. What is considered “before Shabbat?” The Baal Hamaor explains that this means three days before.

The Baal Hamaor is the first opinion that we have seen who discusses the issue of Melacha that will be performed on Shabbat. What would the other Rishonim think of this understanding? One possibility is that they reject the Baal Hamaor’s premise that for a certain period before Shabbat, one must be conscious of the implications one’s actions will have on Shabbat. Meaning, if one is allowed to violate Shabbat for *pikuach nefesh*, one need not be concerned that his actions before Shabbat will create a situation of *pikuach nefesh* on Shabbat. Just like the Baal Hamaor admits that it is permitted to set sail four days before Shabbat, even though it will likely require violating Shabbat, since one is not yet within the days that are considered “before Shabbat,” the other Rishonim could argue that there is no Halachic time of “before Shabbat” at all. In this context it is relevant to mention a question that we discussed earlier. The Rif asks on Rabbeinu Chananel: if sailing will result in a violation of *techumin*, then why is it permitted to set sail more than three days before Shabbat? The Bach (248, 4) answers that the concern of putting oneself into a situation where one will violate *techumin* only applies during the period “before Shabbat.” From the Rishonim, however, and even from the Gemara itself, it seems that one can infer that there is a different response to the Baal Hamaor’s concern:

The Gemara is discussing a boat whose crew is not Jewish. The Jewish passenger makes a condition with them that he will travel on the boat only if it will remain stationary on Shabbat. Even if the non-Jewish crew does continue travelling on Shabbat, the Melacha they perform is considered for their own benefit, and the Jew may therefore benefit. The Ritzvah, one of the Baalei HaTosafot, understands that the prohibition stems from the prohibition of swimming (as we mentioned earlier as the opinion of Tosafot); however, note his additional explanation:
He writes that perhaps the prohibition is due to the concern that the Jew will come to steer the ship. Meaning, the default situation is that the boat is not being steered by a Jew! According to this perspective, it seems reasonable that one does not need to be concerned that a Jew will come to violate Shabbat for the sake of the ship’s care, as the ship’s crew is not Jewish. The Ran, based on the Ramban, adds that, if most of the passengers are not Jewish, then there is no problem of benefitting from Melacha being performed on Shabbat by the crew:

The Ran explains that the Ramban holds like the Baal Hamaor. Therefore, if most passengers aren’t Jewish, one need not be concerned that the crew is performing Melacha specifically on the Jew’s behalf, and one may therefore set sail even within three days of Shabbat. These Rishonim’s idea that the prohibition is based on the fact that the crew will perform Melacha on the Jew’s behalf, appears to be implied in the Gemara itself, as it states that even if one is setting sail within three days in order to fulfill a Mitzvah, one must still make a condition that the boat not travel on Shabbat, seemingly in order to preclude the notion that any Melacha does end up being for the Jew’s benefit.

The Ritvah explains that the Ramban believes that the issue is that the non-Jewish crew will be performing Melachot on his behalf, so that the crew would be considered the Jew’s shaliach for performing Melacha:

We are familiar with the connection between shlichut and asking a non-Jew to perform Melacha from the first Shiur. The Ritvah proves that there is a connection between our Beraita and the prohibition of benefitting from Melacha performed by a non-Jew from the fact that the Tosefta brings our Beraita immediately after bringing the Beraita that forbids benefitting from water drawn by a non-Jew. In Shiur 10 we learned about the prohibition of renting one’s possessions to a non-Jew for Shabbat, and according to some of the Rishonim that prohibition is due to the fact that the non-Jew appears to be the shaliach of the Jew. The Ritvah explains that the Ramban believes that our Beraita too is based on the concern that the non-Jewish crew appears to be acting as the shaliach of the Jewish passenger. In Shiur 7 we learned about the distinction between a non-Jew performing Melacha for a Jew inside versus outside of the techum, and the explanation for this distinction is that some situations are prohibited only because of marit ayin, and they are therefore permitted outside of the techum where...
there is no concern of *marit ayin*. Similarly, in our case, there will be no *marit ayin* if one leaves before the period of “before Shabbat” (that we discussed in relation to the Baal Hamaor). (The Ritvah writes that there is no *marit ayin* when one sets sail "ברביעי ובחמישי," but this is still within three days, and the Poskim have already noted that this line is problematic.)

The Ritvah then brings a very significant leniency:

In Shiur 2 we learned that when a Melacha is performed by a non-Jew for the sake of non-Jews, and that one act of Melacha can be enjoyed by many people, then it is not prohibited for Jews to benefit from it as well. The Ritvah therefore explains, according to the Ramban, that the prohibition of travelling within three days does not apply when there are many passengers, most of whom are not Jewish.

**1. סיכום שיטות הראשונים**

The *Beraita* states that it is forbidden to set sail within three days before Shabbat, unless it is for the sake of a Mitzvah. According to the Rashbam, the *Beraita* follows Beit Shammai’s opinion, but the halacha is that there is no prohibition against setting sail any time before Shabbat.

Rabbeinu Chananel explains that the reason for the *Beraita*’s prohibition is the fact that the boat travels outside of the *techum* on Shabbat. The Rashbam disagrees and explains that there is no issue of *techum* on a boat because the person is not actually moving – rather, he or she remains stationary on the boat, which is being moved along by the water underneath.

The Bach writes that Rabbeinu Chananel believes that the *d’Rabbanan* prohibition of *techumin* fundamentally only applies to land travel, but Chazal extended the prohibition to water travel under normal circumstances, but not when travel is required for a Mitzvah. The Ohr Zarua writes that Rabbeinu Chananel fundamentally agrees with the Rashbam’s reasoning, but he holds that one must generally be stringent even on water due to *marit ayin*, but that stringency is waived for the sake of a Mitzvah.

The Rif and Rambam explain that travelling by boat is an example of an activity that requires an adjustment period, until one overcomes sea sickness. Therefore, one is required to leave more than three days before Shabbat, so that his or her *Oneg Shabbat* will not be compromised. The Maharik understands that the Rambam believes that this is the only problem and that *techumin* does not apply at all when travelling on water. The Teshuvat HaRambam, however, explicitly states that there is an issue of *techumin* in shallow water but the *Beraita* was discussing deep water, and therefore the only issue is sea sickness. The Beit Yosef writes that that is the correct understanding of the Rif and Rambam’s opinion.

Tosafot explains that the prohibition of the *Beraita* is based on the *d’Rabbanan* prohibition against swimming on Shabbat. The Baal Hamaor writes that the prohibition is based on the idea that within three days before Shabbat, it is forbidden to place oneself into a situation that might require one to violate Shabbat for the sake of *pikuach nefesh*. The Ran writes that one may therefore be lenient if most passengers aren’t Jewish, in which case the Melachot will not be considered to be performed for the sake of the Jewish passenger.

The Ritvah explains, according to the Ramban, that the prohibition is due to the appearance that the non-Jew is acting as the Jew’s *shaliach*. Since this is only *marit ayin*, it is overruled for the sake of a Mitzvah. Additionally, when the trip begins more than three days before Shabbat, there is not even
Shiur number 12- Travelling on the Days Proceeding Shabbat

the appearance of the Jew asking the non-Jew to do Melacha for him. The Ritvah writes that if most of the passengers are not Jewish then there is not even a problem of marit ayin, and one may set sail within three days before Shabbat.

2. הללכה

א. Actual Halacha

The Shulchan Aruch rules in accordance with the Rif and Rambam. The Rema adds:

The Rema writes that, in addition to the issue of Oneg Shabbat, there is also an issue of needing to perform Melacha, as the Baal Hamaor holds.

The Shulchan Aruch rules like the Rashbam that there is no prohibition of techumin for travelling on a boat.

We saw earlier that the Beit Yosef (as opposed to the Maharik) understands that the Rif and Rambam are stringent and believe that techumin apply when travelling in water less than ten Tefachim deep. That is how he rules in the Shulchan Aruch:

The Mishna Berura (Sif Katan 13) writes that since techumin on water is a chumra d'Rabbanan, one may be lenient in a case of doubt and assume that there are at least ten tefachim from the bottom of the boat to the bottom of the water.

The Rema is even more lenient:

The Gra explains the disagreement between them:

Meaning, the Shulchan Aruch is stringent on travelling within ten tefachim even if one leaves more than three days before Shabbat, while the Rema is only stringent within three days.

Questions and comments may be sent to: info@eretzhemdah.org
It is important to note that the above discussion only applies to boat travel, since it does not travel on dry ground. For a car or train, however, all agree that the prohibition of techumin applies. (And it is very possible that one would violate techumin de'Oraita when travelling by car or train!)

### Ruling based on the Baal HaMaor

We saw earlier that the Rema cites the Baal Hamaor. This perspective has several practical implications:

The Rivash suggests that the Halacha follows both the understanding of the Rif and Rambam and of the Baal Hamaor, and it is therefore forbidden to begin travelling through the desert within three days of Shabbat.

The Shulchan Aruch, who rules in accordance with the Rif and Rambam, brings the Halacha of the Rivash regarding travelling in the desert. Meaning, both understandings are Halachically true and accepted.

The Radvaz (vol. 4 Siman 77), however, writes that the Shulchan Aruch does not completely accept the Baal Hamaor, permitting setting out more than three days before Shabbat when he will certainly have to violate Shabbat. Rather, he suggests that the Shulchan Aruch was lenient when leaving more than three days before only if it is not a certainty that one will need to violate Shabbat. For this reason the Magen Avraham writes:

The Mishna Berura (Sif Katan 26) brings this opinion, but other Poskim are more lenient:
To summarize:
The Baal Hamoar’s opinion contains a stringency and a leniency. The stringency is that one may not enter a situation where Shabbat will necessarily need to be violated for the sake of pikuach nefesh. The leniency is that the above prohibition does not apply if there are more than three days until Shabbat.
The Rif and Rambam believe that the prohibition against setting sail within three days before Shabbat stems from the fact that it will ruin Oneg Shabbat. One might ask what the Rif and Rambam would say about the Baal Hamaor. We saw three different perspectives:
1. They would completely reject his stringency: That before Shabbat, there is no problem with entering a situation that will result in pikuach nefesh on Shabbat (as held by the Yad Aharon).
2. They would accept his stringency, but not his leniency. Meaning, they would be stringent and forbid putting oneself into a situation of pikuach nefesh at any time before Shabbat. This is the Radvaz’s view. Even this view, however, does not apply if there are more than three days before Shabbat and one will not necessarily be in a state of pikuach nefesh on Shabbat.
3. They would accept both the stringency and leniency of the Baal Hamaor. This is the Shevet Halevi’s view.

A Summary so far: What is relevant to Halacha?
The Rashbam explains that the entire prohibition is only true according to Beit Shammai, whose opinion was not followed.
The Baalei Tosafot associate the prohibition with that of swimming on Shabbat. The poskim do not bring this opinion either (although they do record the prohibition against swimming).
The Ramban writes that the prohibition stems from that of benefiting from Melacha performed by a non-Jew. The Poskim do not quote his opinion as an accepted explanation of our Beraita, but they do believe that his perspective is true on a practical level, and one must take care that travelling on a boat on Shabbat does not violate any of the Halachot regarding benefiting from Melacha performed by a non-Jew on Shabbat.
Rabbeinu Chananel explains that the prohibition is due to techumin. The Beit Yosef writes that the Rambam accepts that there is a prohibition of techumin if the boat is travelling within ten tefachot of the sea bed (but the Beraita is discussing deep water), and this is how the Shulchan Aruch rules. The Rema disagrees and writes that the prohibition of techumin does not exist even if the boat is travelling in shallow water.
The Rif and Rambam explain that the prohibition is due to the negative impact it will have on the passengers’ Oneg Shabbat. The Shulchan Aruch and Rema write that this is the accepted understanding of the Beraita.
The Baal Hamaor writes that the prohibition is due to the fact that it will result in being in a situation of pikuach nefesh, where one will need to violate Shabbat. If one leaves more than three days before Shabbat then it is permitted, as it is not yet considered the period “before Shabbat” that requires consideration of long term consequences. The Shulchan Aruch does not rule like the Baal Hamaor in the context of travelling by boat, since he believes that one need not be strict when the boat’s crew is not Jewish.
However, he does bring the Baal Hamaor’s perspective in the context of travelling in the desert. The Radvaz, Magen Avraham, and Mishna Berura explain that the Shulchan Aruch does not fully accept the Baal Hamaor; that he only permits leniency when there are more than three days until Shabbat only if one will not necessarily need to violate Shabbat. The Shevet Halevi, however, writes that the Shulchan Aruch completely accepts the Baal Hamaor’s leniency, and one may put oneself into a situation more
than three days before Shabbat, even if one will certainly have to violate Shabbat for the sake of *pikuach nefesh*.

We will now see several practical implications to the above Halachot:

1. Setting sail in comfortable conditions:

The Rambam, who as mentioned rules that the prohibition stems from the problem of seasickness, rules that if the travelling will be done on calm waters where there is no concern that there will be a lack of *Oneg Shabbat*, then the prohibition is not relevant. That is how the Shulchan Aruch rules:

The Meiri expands this leniency:

The Kaf Hachaim also rules thus:

Rav Moshe Hadaya (Chief Rabbi of Eilat) similarly rules that there is no concern regarding modern cruise ships:

2. Flights:

Rav Moshe Feinstein writes:

Questions and comments may be sent to: info@erethzemdah.org
Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that there are many Halachic problems once a plane lands on Shabbat. However, in a situation where a plane could take off before Shabbat and land after Shabbat (see techumin volume 32 page 30), would there be a problem of a lack of Oneg Shabbat?

Rav Waldenberg writes:

Rav Tzvi Reisman writes that this issue is much less relevant in our time:

Regarding the Tzitz Eliezer’s responsum, he writes:

The Bemareh Habazak is lenient in a situation of need:

The Halachic Implications based on the Baal HaMaor

The Tashbetz writes that just like it is forbidden, based on the Baal Hamaor, to set sail within a few days of Shabbat because this will result in Shabbat violation, one should also avoid arranging a Brit Milah (of a convert or of a baby whose Brit was postponed for health reasons) within three days of Shabbat. The Taz (Yoreh Deah Siman 262 Sif Katan 3) rules like the Tashbetz, but the Shach disagrees:

The Mishna Berura follows the Shach:
Rav Kook, however, rules stringently:

Shiur number 12- Travelling on the Days Proceeding Shabbat

Rav Kook, however, rules stringently:

משנה ברורה סימן שלא
אין מחמיצין את המצוה.

Rav Kook, however, rules stringently:

Rav Kook, however, rules stringently:

 Meaning, since Milah involves an element of danger, one should try to fulfil it in a situation where one is certainly obligated in the Mitzvah, in order that the Mitzvah should serve as a merit that protects against the danger. Since the Tashbetz believes there is no Mitzvah for a delayed Milah within three days of Shabbat, it is therefore preferable to wait and do the Milah only once one is certainly obligated.

מלוקט יוספ שבת א סימן רמח
תינוק שחלה ונדיח למלל מחלה אחרי יום השמיני ליום הלromo, ויומד יום חמישי, או יום שישי, אסור למקו ביום חמישי או שבת. וכן ההמג' חדש, יש לחוש פן יצטרכוחלל עליה, כדי להעלות ארוך ומרפא למכתו. ולכן יש לדחות את המילה ליום ראשון. ובמקום שיש להם מנהג ברור למול מילה שלא בזמנה ביום חמישי או שבת, יש להניחם במנהגם, יש להם על מה שיסמוכו. ועל כן יש להחמיר בזה.

The Magen Avraham, however, writes:

מנה أبريلס סימן עלא סימן

All Poskim should seemingly accept the reasoning of the Magen Avraham; if, practically, nowadays one almost never needs to violate Shabbat after a Milah, then why shouldn’t one perform it at the earliest possible opportunity, even within three days of Shabbat?

Of course, if we were not discussing Milah, but something that is not a Mitzvah, then all Poskim would admit that one must be careful to not create a situation that will require one to later violate Shabbat:

שמירת שבת על�א, מחכים שהר' פעץPri כמלל, ולפיו

Summary
The Gemara in Shabbat (19a) states that it is forbidden to set sail within three days of Shabbat. We saw six different opinions of the Rishonim for the reason behind this prohibition:

1. Rashbam: This is the opinion of Beit Shammai, who requires Shevitat keilim.
2. Tosafot: It stems from the prohibition against swimming.
3. Rabbeinu Chananel: It is due to the prohibition of techumin.
4. Ramban (according to the Ritvah): It is due to the prohibition against benefitting from Melacha performed by a non-Jew.
5. Rif and Rambam: It is because of the negative impact it will have on Oneg Shabbat.
6. Baal Hamaor: It is because it is forbidden, in the days preceding Shabbat, to enter a situation where one will later need to violate Shabbat for pikuach nefesh.
The Halacha:
The opinions of the Rashbam and Tosafot are not accepted. Rabbeinu Chananel’s opinion, which forbids due to techumin, was accepted by the Shulchan Aruch if the boat is travelling in shallow water (less than ten Tefachim deep), while the Rema rules that the prohibition of techumin does not apply at all on water.
The Poskim believe that the Gemara is not discussing the Ramban’s concern - benefitting from the Melacha of a non-Jew, but that concern is certainly true Halachically.
The Shulchan Aruch (and this is also the Rema’s implication) rules, in accordance with the Rif and Rambam, that the reason behind the Beraita’s prohibition is the impact the boating will have on Oneg Shabbat.
The Rambam himself writes that, according to his understanding, there is no problem of setting sail close to Shabbat on calm waters, and the Shulchan Aruch follows this ruling. The Meiri writes that one may also be lenient for a ship’s crew who are used to being at sea and will not get seasick, and this is the ruling of the Kaf Hachaim. Rav Hadaya learns from here that this prohibition does not apply when travelling on a cruise ship that is designed to avoid motion sickness.
The Tzitz Eliezer writes that air travel is very turbulent and should certainly be included in the prohibition against boat travel. Rav Tzvi Reisman, however, writes that one needs to consider if that is still the case in modern aircraft.
The Rivash explains that the Baal Hamaor’s view is relevant to desert travel, and that is accepted by the Shulchan Aruch and Rema. Meaning, leaving on a trip through the desert within three days of Shabbat is prohibited, while setting out more than three days before Shabbat is permitted (that is the Shevet Halevi’s understanding, while the Magen Avraham and Mishna Berura write that if one will certainly need to violate Shabbat, then it is prohibited even more than three days before Shabbat).
In light of the Baal Hamaor’s position, the Tashbetz forbids performing a postponed Brit Milah in the days before Shabbat. The Taz, Rav Kook, and Yalkut Yosef accept his position. The Shach and Mishna Berura, however, disagree and write that it is preferable to not delay the Mitzvah further and to perform it before Shabbat (as the Gemara itself writes that one can leave within three days for the sake of a Mitzvah). The Poskim learn from this discussion that one certainly needs to be stringent if it is not for the sake of a Mitzvah, and one should therefore not schedule an elective surgery before Shabbat if it will lead to the need to violate Shabbat later.