

C O P Y

By the Grace of G-d
21st of Shevat, 5718
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Miss Marilyn Bell
c/o Duane Hotel
237 Madison Avenue
New York 16, New York

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter of January 30th, in which you wrote about your spending your vacation at home, after which you planned to return to your studies in New York. I am gratified to note that you do not content yourself with your own progress in Hebrew Studies, but you are trying to use your good influence with your friends in that direction. This kind of benevolent effort expresses in the best possible way the commandment of "Love thy fellow-Jew," which is the great principle of our Torah. For, if helping a fellow-Jew in material things is so great a Mitzvah, how much more so helping one spiritually, in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, which are eternal.

Moreover, the Mitzvah of Sabbath observance that you write about is one of the most fundamental ones, and as the Rabbis stated in the Talmud (Jerusalem Nedarim 319) that the Sabbath equals in importance all the other Mitzvoth combined. By the same token Sabbath desecration is one of the gravest transgressions, so that Rabbis have ruled that he who publicly desecrates the Sabbath is regarded as if he was desecrating the entire Torah.

I mention this particularly in reference to your inquiry regarding the disgraceful Sabbath desecration which is perpetrated by the Jewish oceanliner. The claim that everything is done automatically during the 24 hours of the Sabbath is completely absurd, and I state it with the fullest authority, being an engineer myself, and having studied also marine mechanics. For one thing, certain machinery cannot be operated automatically especially those in connection with the steering, radio communications, services, and similar ones.

Secondly, even those machines which can operate automatically are required by their very operation, as well as by international law, to be checked periodically every few hours, which involves direct Sabbath desecration a corresponding number of times during the 24-hour period of the Sabbath.

Thirdly, certain so-called automatic machines, including some of the boilers, require change of parts periodically, approximately every six hours, when the affected sections of these machines are stopped and restarted for the said purpose, diminishing or extinguishing the fire and then starting it again.

In addition to the above, there are so many other instances on a ship plying the high seas which involve Sabbath desecration, as anyone who is familiar with the technical aspects of modern shipping will know. For instance, the water which is supplied for drinking, and even the running water in the cabins, is derived from the sea-water by a process of distillation, which, as you no doubt know, means the boiling and evaporating of the water and converting it back to distilled water by cooling. The water supply is not stored for days ahead, not even for 24 hours, because of the storage room that it would require, but is produced simply by a continuous process of distillation. In other words, even if the entire crew

consisted on non-Jews, the water could not be used by the passengers on the Jewish ships several hours after the Sabbath had begun, because the water supply was from before Sabbath would have been exhausted, and the crew would be providing fresh water on the Sabbath, specifically for the Jewish passengers, the use of which Jewish law prohibits until several hours have elapsed after the termination of the Sabbath. The same is true of the lighting system. This law would apply even if only a majority of the passengers were Jews, how much more so in the case of the Jewish ships which carry almost exclusively Jewish passengers, for it is in their behalf that the ship is operated and the machines are regulated, involving flagrant violation of the Sabbath. Only one who has no conception of how such machines are operated can be made to believe the absurd claim that an oceanliner can, for 24 hours, be operated automatically, without any Sabbath desecration.

Unfortunately, there have been Rabbis who have been misled, and have misled others, on this subject. In their ignorance of the technical aspects involved, and under the influence of misleading statements by technicians who, for reasons of their own, did not choose to disclose all the facts, these Rabbis have regretfully been misled into thinking, or even declaring openly, that no Sabbath desecration was here involved.

You mention in your letter that one of your friends has spoken to a Captain of a Jewish boat, who is said to have declared that his boat was operated automatically on the Sabbath. In this connection, I would like to enclose a copy of a questionnaire which I sent a year ago to an executive of the shipping company, who had claimed that the ships are navigated automatically during the Sabbath. This communication remained unanswered to this day, for obvious reasons, for I am sure there will not be found anyone who will state that any of the enumerated items can be worked automatically, if he has any regard for truth and does not wish to be caught in making false statements.

I would like to comment also on your reference regarding the Kashruth of the food served in the said ships. You can easily see, and any Rabbi will confirm this, that when food is served by Jews who openly desecrate the Sabbath (as on the ships), the Kashruth of such food is under a serious question mark. Moreover, even if a Mashgiach (supervisor) is engaged to supervise the Kashruth on these ships, it would not change the situation, since the Mashgiach himself would be guilty of open Sabbath desecration, and his reliability as a Mashgiach would thereby be "jeopardized".

The question has been asked, If the operation of the Jewish ships involves such a violation of the Jewish Law, why is there no storm of protest raised in the Holy Land to stop it? The answer will become self-evident from the following two instances: a) For some ten years the supply and distribution of milk in the Holy Land has been in the hands of cooperatives and farms many of which have been known to raise pigs and under very strong suspicion of tacking with the milk which therefore made the milk trefah. Yet, until late last summer, nothing was done about it, until finally Rabbi Nissim stepped in and banned such milk, inducing the guilty farmers to give up their pig breeding, since they did not want to lose the more lucrative milk business. No doubt you have read about it in the papers. Surely, no one would declare cow-milk mixed with pig-milk as Kosher, yet for years this disgraceful thing went on unchallenged.

(b) Fact #2 is connected with Sabbath violation; which had for a long time been practised by the paper factory in Hedera. This, too, was only recently stopped by Rabbi Nissim when he banned such paper from use by publishers of sacred literature. Again the issue was not in doubt, for no one will say that the Torah permits a Jewish paper factory because it is in the Holy land

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Finally, I must forestall another "argument" in connection with the Jewish ships. Some interested parties refer to a book written by Rabbi Waldenberg, in which the legal aspects and conditions under which a Jewish ship could, theoretically, run its course on the Sabbath, are examined. This book is "cited" as purportedly giving approval to travel on the Jewish ships during the Sabbath. How misleading this is can easily be seen from the fact that none of the mitigating requirements mentioned in the book have actually been met in practice, and the conditions prevailing on these ships are precisely such as make the operation of the ships a definite violation of the Torah.

I want to mention here that last year when a group of Jewish girls, who were planning to go to the Holy Land on one of these ships, on learning of the Sabbath desecration that it involved, they changed their plans and went by air instead. I believe they belong to the Mizrahi and Poel Ha-mizrachi. These girls certainly deserve credit. Actually, would it not be ridiculous, were it not for the grave issue involved, for a person desirous to go to the Land which is regarded as Holy even by non-Jews, that he should choose a way of transportation which involves the open violation of one of the Ten Commandments, namely, the Commandment of "Keep the Sabbath day Holy," which as we noted above, equals in significance all the Commandments combined.

I trust that you surely knew that the Shulchan Aruch begins with the admonition "Do not be influenced by scoffers" (cf. Tur and Rema, Orach Chaim, beginning of par. 1) I sincerely hope that this will be so in your case, and may G-d help you to save others from open desecration of the Sabbath, which, even when committed unwittingly, is one of the most serious offences, especially as, insofar as the onlooker is concerned, the distinction between conscious or unwitting Sabbath desecration does not apply.

With prayerful wishes for your success in all your affairs, and in connection with the above in particular.

With blessing,

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