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# The International Dateline and the Weekly Sabbath

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November 26, 2004

Some have expressed the opinion that the International Dateline has led to observance of the weekly Sabbath on the wrong day in part of the world. They believe that Sabbath keepers in the nations east of Jerusalem, between Jerusalem (longitude 35 degrees) and the International Dateline (longitude 180 degrees), are observing the weekly Sabbath one day too early. Their belief is based on the assumption that those living eastward from Jerusalem should not begin observing the weekly Sabbath before Jerusalem does. They maintain that only those living westward from Jerusalem to the International Dateline are observing the Sabbath at the proper time. In their view, people in these countries should continue to observe the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, but those living eastward from Jerusalem should keep the weekly Sabbath on Sunday.

Let's consider how Sabbath observance in Australia would be affected by this proposed change. At the present, Australians begin to observe the weekly Sabbath 9 hours before it arrives in Jerusalem, allowing an overlap of 15 hours of shared Sabbath observance between Sydney and Jerusalem. Let us assume that Australians decide to postpone their observance of the weekly Sabbath one day and keep it from sunset Saturday evening to sunset Sunday evening. Doing so would theoretically correct the day "lost" due to the present placement of the International Dateline and would resolve the supposed problem of Sabbath observance beginning in Sydney before it begins at Jerusalem.

If such a change were instituted at the beginning of 2005, here is what would take effect: The sun at Sydney would set at 8:10 PM Saturday evening, January 1, beginning the first day of the week. When "Sabbath" observance began in Sydney it would be 11:10 AM Saturday morning in Jerusalem—the Sabbath day having begun there at sunset, 4:46 PM Friday evening. The Sabbath day in Jerusalem would end at 4:46 PM Saturday evening, corresponding to Sunday, 1:45 AM Sydney time. The new Sunday "Sabbath" of Sydney would overlap the Sabbath of Jerusalem from 11:10 AM to 4:46 PM Jerusalem time, a period of 5 hours and 36 minutes. Thus the present overlap of 15 hours of shared Sabbath observance would be reduced by nearly two thirds. Moreover, Sabbath keepers would be observing the first day of the week—not the seventh day.

Would moving the International Dateline to the vicinity of Jerusalem correct this problem, as has been proposed? Some would have the dateline run through the middle of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Others say that it should run along the eastern border of the State of Israel. Another view is that the dateline should run through modern Iraq, the

proclaimed site of the ancient Garden of Eden. Supporters of these views claim that moving the International Dateline would enable those living at the longitude of Jerusalem to be the first in the world to begin Sabbath observance, and the rest of the world would observe the Sabbath as it came to them.

Would instituting this change in the International Dateline make the Sabbath arrive in Jerusalem before it arrives in Australia? Suppose the IDL were moved westward from the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian to the 35<sup>th</sup> meridian, which runs through the State of Israel. The Sabbath would still begin at sunset, Friday evening, January 1, at 4:46 PM in Israel. What time and day would it be in Sydney? Well, it would still be 1:45 AM, Saturday morning, which means that the Sabbath day would still begin in Sydney before arriving in Jerusalem. Why is this so? Because the world revolves counterclockwise on its axis once every 24 hours, and the weekly cycle of seven 24-hour days cannot be changed.

The only way for an Australian to begin observing the seventh day of the week after it arrives in Jerusalem is to travel to a point west of Jerusalem and remain there until the sun sets on Friday. The Australian could then begin observing the Sabbath after those living in Jerusalem. He cannot do so as long as he is in Australia. It is impossible to do so in Australia because Friday sunset reaches the Sabbath keeper in Australia before it does the Sabbath keeper in Jerusalem. The only way to make the Sabbath arrive in Jerusalem before it arrives in Australia would be to reverse the rotation of the earth.

Moving the International Dateline to Jerusalem cannot change the sequence of the days in the weekly cycle. Doing so would, however, throw Jerusalem into incredible turmoil! Imagine the hustle and bustle at sunset in Jerusalem. On the west side of the IDL it would begin the Sabbath, while on the east side of the line it would begin Friday. The west side of Jerusalem could travel to the east side and conduct business as usual. Likewise, 24 hours later, Saturday evening would arrive for the west side of Jerusalem while the Sabbath was just beginning on the east side. Jews could travel to the west side and business could go on as usual.

This scenario could occur anywhere on the earth if the International Dateline were located across a continent or large land mass rather than across an expanse of water, as it is now. Jewish authorities are well aware of this fact. They have already considered the issues involved in Sabbath observance in various parts of the world, especially for Jewish businessmen who must cross the International Dateline on a regular basis. The following article shows the problems that would result if the IDL were relocated, as some rabbis feel it should be.

### **A Traveler's Guide To The International Dateline**

**Rabbi Dovid Heber, Star-K Kashrus Administrator**

[Refer to attached map](#)

*Halacha* addresses two aspects of the Dateline: The location and *halachic* implications of crossing the Dateline.

**I. Location:** Various *Rishonim*, early commentators, and many *Acharonim*, later commentators, have written extensively on this topic. **The three major opinions are as follows:**

A. The *Chazon Ish* bases his opinion on the *Baal Hamoer's* (and other *Rishonim*) explanation of a complicated *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (20b, which discusses the appearance of the new moon in different regions of the world). The Dateline "technically" runs 90 degrees east of *Yerushalayim*, where the time is six hours later. This line is at 125.2°E (line B) and runs through Australia, China, and Russia.

However, if the Dateline in reality ran through the Chinese and Australian continents, the line could run through Main Street of Changchun, China, and Rawlinna, Australia. Families on one side of Main Street would recite *kiddush* while families on the other side recite *havdala*. It may be possible for those who want two days of *Shabbos* to cross from west to east after *shalosh seudas* and start *Shabbos* again. Those who want to skip almost all of *Shabbos* could cross Main Street from east to west and go from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. However, *halacha* does not allow for such a situation. Instead, we consider the eastern land masses of the Asian and Australian continents *tafel*, secondary, to the western land masses of these same continents. Therefore, eastern sections of Australia, China, and Russia observe the same day for *Shabbos* as the western sections (based on *Yesod Olam* - a student of the *Rosh*).

Therefore, the *halachic* Dateline of the *Chazon Ish* avoids going through land by gerrymandering along the Russian and Korean coasts, then along the 125.2°E longitude line, through the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, and Indonesia. Finally, the line cuts eastward, around most of the Australian coast, and south towards Antarctica. According to the *Chazon Ish*, Japan, New Zealand, and Fiji are on the same side of the Dateline as the United States. When the Japanese and New Zealand residents say it is Saturday, *halacha* says it is Friday. When they say it is Sunday, it is *halachically Shabbos*.

B. Rav Yechiel Michel Tucazinsky, the author of the *Gesher Hachaim*, in *Sefer Hayoman B'Kadur Ha'aretz*, bases his ruling on *Chaza'l's* Judaic principle that *Yerushalayim* is "the center of the world." If so, the Earth "starts and ends" (i.e. the dateline) on the exact opposite side of the Earth, halfway around the globe at 144.8°W (line E). This line runs from the Gulf of Alaska through the Pacific Ocean east of Hawaii, placing Hawaii on the "other side of the Dateline" from the United States. Hawaii would then be nineteen hours ahead of Baltimore, rather than five hours behind, as it is on the same side of the Dateline as Asia. The day Hawaiians call Friday is *halachically Shabbos*, and the day they call Saturday is *halachically* Sunday.

C. "Mid-Pacific *Poskim*" - Several *Poskim*, including the *Bnai Tzion* (Rav Dovid Shapiro *z"tl*), are of the opinion that the *halachic* Dateline runs through the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and closely resembles the Civil Dateline. According to these opinions, Japan and New Zealand are on the western side of the Dateline (similar to Asia), and residents of these locations observe *Shabbos* on the local Saturday. Hawaii is on the eastern side of the Dateline (similar to America), and residents observe *Shabbos* on their local Saturday.

The exact location varies among the Mid-Pacific *Poskim*. The *Bnai Tzion's* Dateline slants westward through the Bering Straits (between Alaska and Siberia), touching the Siberian coast, through the Pacific Ocean at approximately 177°E (west of Fiji), then turns east of New Zealand. Due to the slanting, the line intersects the Civil Dateline at three points. Other Mid Pacific *Poskim*, including the *Atzei Sodeh* (Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Siegel) and Rabbi B. Rabinowitz Thumim (in *Hapardes Iyar 5714*), are of the opinion that the line is at

169.7°W (Line D) - from the eastern tip of Siberia, directly southward through the Pacific Ocean, 10° east of the Civil Dateline.

**What is the *Halacha*? One should consult with his *Rav* prior to crossing the Pacific Ocean, especially if he must stay over *Shabbos* in Japan, New Zealand, or Hawaii.**

The *halachic* ruling of Rav Moshe Heinemann, *shlit"a*, Rabbinic Administrator of the Star-K, is as follows: One should follow the majority of opinions in determining which day is observed as *Shabbos*, and also observe *dinei d'oraisa shel Shabbos*, *Shabbos* prohibitions of the *Torah*, on the day of the minority opinion. However, Rabbinic prohibitions, such as shopping and the handling of *muktzah*, are permissible on the day which the minority opinion considers *Shabbos*. In addition, performing even a biblically prescribed violation of *Shabbos* through a *shinui*, unusual manner, or through the action of a Gentile, would be permitted on the day which the minority opinion considers *Shabbos*.

The *halachic* ramifications of this *psak* (ruling) are as follows: **In New Zealand and Japan, "Saturday" is *Shabbos* according to the *Gesher Hachaim* and the Mid Pacific *Poskim*. Therefore, the local Saturday should be fully observed as *Shabbos*, with *Shabbos* Prayers and *kiddush*, etc. (Incidentally, this is the day the Orthodox Jewish community in New Zealand observes as *Shabbos*.) However, according to the *Chazon Ish*, *Shabbos* is on the local Sunday.** Therefore, one should not perform any *melacha d'oraisa* on Sunday. Nevertheless, on Sunday, one should *daven* regular weekday *tefillos*, donning *tefillin* during *Shacharis*.

**In Hawaii, "Saturday" is *Shabbos* according to the *Chazon Ish* and the Mid Pacific *Poskim*. Therefore, the local Saturday is fully observed as *Shabbos*. (This is the day the small Orthodox Jewish community in Hawaii observes as *Shabbos*.) The day known locally as "Friday" is *Shabbos* according to the *Gesher Hachaim*, and one should not perform *melacha d'oraisa* on that day. Cooking for *Shabbos* should be done on Thursday.**

Determining the majority opinion on the Aleutian Islands or South Pacific Islands, including Fiji and American Samoa, is complicated and beyond the scope of this article. However, in the following locations, *Shabbos* is observed on the local Saturday, and a "second day" is not necessary: Australia, China, Mainland Russia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland Alaska (below the Arctic Circle; there are halachic concerns above the Arctic Circle - for a full discussion, [see "When Does One Pray When There Is No Day"](#)), and Manila, and other areas of the Philippines west of 125.2°E.

**II. Crossing the Dateline: Repeating or skipping a day by crossing the Dateline poses various concerns in many aspects of *halacha***, including *davening*, *sefira*, Holidays, and laws of family purity. The guidelines are as follows: *Halachos* relating specifically to the time of day are not affected by crossing the Dateline. For example, if one davens *Shacharis* on Monday morning on a plane flying westbound, and crosses the Dateline "into" Tuesday morning, one does not daven *Shacharis* again. The person has already fulfilled his obligation and is not required to perform these *mitzvos* until the sun sets and rises again. However, *mitzvos* that are dependent on the day of the week or month are affected by crossing the Dateline. For example, **if one crosses the line westbound from 1:00 p.m. Thursday to 1:00 p.m. Friday, one must begin preparing for *Shabbos* as it is *Erev Shabbos* and *Shabbos* will begin in several hours.** If one flies westbound from 1:00 p.m. on Monday, the 16th of Tammuz, and crosses the *halachic* Dateline to 1:00 p.m. Tuesday on the 17th of Tammuz, one fasts until nightfall.

The author wishes to thank Rabbi S.D. Siegel, author of *Atzei Sadeh*, Rabbi Yisroel Taplin, and Mr. Chaim Brumer for their invaluable assistance. <http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-trav-dateline.htm>

As this article shows, differing opinions are held by the followers of Judaism as to proper observance of the Sabbath in a number of countries in the world. In some countries Jews are required to extend some of their Sabbath practices beyond the Sabbath day, either beginning with Friday or continuing through Sunday, the first day of the week.

Should Sabbath-keeping Christians also be observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week in some parts of the world? Is the present placement of the International Dateline causing them to violate the Scriptural commands for Sabbath observance? Should the International Dateline be moved, as a number of leading rabbis have argued?

As Christians, we do not need to resort to the opinions of rabbinical authorities. We should look to the records of Scripture to guide us in resolving the question of Sabbath observance in those areas that are in doubt. What is the example of Sabbath observance that we find recorded in Scripture? The Sabbath command clearly requires observance of the seventh day of the week from sunset to sunset. Do the Scriptures require that Sabbath observance begin in Jerusalem before it begins in any other part of the world?

To find the answer, we must examine the records of Sabbath observance in the nations outside of Jerusalem in Old Testament times. When we look into the Scriptures, we find evidence in the book of Daniel that the weekly Sabbath was observed in Babylon before it was observed in Jerusalem. Notice the record in Daniel 10 as presented on pages 15-17 in the paper entitled *The Feast of Trumpets 2000*:

### **Daniel 10 and the Calendar Calculations of 536 BC**

The book of Daniel offers more Scriptural evidence to support the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar. Let us examine the account in Daniel 10, which records that a prophetic revelation was given to Daniel in the “third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (Dan. 10:1). This verse refers to the third year of Cyrus’ reign over Babylon, which was **536 BC**. The following verse records that Daniel was fasting at the time the prophecy was given: “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning **three full weeks**” (verse 2).

Daniel also describes this period as “**whole weeks**” (verse 3). A more literal translation of the Hebrew text would read “weeks of days.” This Hebrew expression refers to whole or complete weeks, which run from the beginning of the first day at sunset to the end of the seventh day at sunset. Thus Scripture reveals that the three weeks of Daniel’s fast were indeed whole weeks, counted from the first day of the week through the seventh day.

Continuing in Daniel 10, we find that the fulfillment of the three weeks was “the four and twentieth day of the first month...”(verse 4). Because the twenty-fourth day of the first month, or Nisan, ended the three full weeks, we know that this day was a weekly Sabbath. Counting backward from Nisan 24, we can determine that Daniel began his fast on Sunday, Nisan 4. Thus Daniel 10 establishes the weekly cycle of days for the month of Nisan in **536 BC**. By checking the calculated calendar data for **536 BC**, we can determine whether the weekly cycle of days matches the account in Daniel 10.

Hebrew Calendar calculations for **536 BC** place Passover, Nisan 14, on Wednesday, **April 11**. Counting backward ten days, we find that the calendar places Nisan 4, the first day of Daniel's fast, on a Sunday. Counting forward from Passover, we find that the calendar places Nisan 24 on a weekly Sabbath, **April 21**. **Here is clear and undeniable evidence that the weekly cycle of the calculated Hebrew Calendar matches the weekly cycle of the Old Testament.**

The account in Daniel 10 clearly contradicts the claim that the Hebrew Calendar is invalid because the weekly cycle has been broken. The words that Daniel was inspired to write in **536 BC** testify today that the calculated Hebrew Calendar is in perfect accord with the weekly cycle of Scripture.

This account is significant because Daniel was dwelling in Babylon, which was more than 500 miles east of Jerusalem. Consequently, at the beginning of each weekly Sabbath, the sun would set at Babylon before it set at Jerusalem. Yet Daniel was reckoning the days of the week by the cycle of the Hebrew Calendar. He did not alter the weekly cycle in order to begin observing the Sabbath after it had arrived in Jerusalem. Rather, he observed the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week exactly as he had done in Jerusalem before being taken to Babylon.

Here then, is Scriptural evidence that the prophet Daniel observed the Sabbath in Babylon before it was observed in Jerusalem! The prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Daniel was a righteous man (Ezek. 14:14). The Scriptures do not condemn Daniel because he observed the Sabbath in Babylon before it had begun in Jerusalem.

Each week, sunset Friday night came to Babylon before it came to Jerusalem. The weekly cycle has not changed since that time. The earth still revolves on its axis in a counterclockwise motion, as it did at the time of Daniel.

Just as Daniel observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath day when he was living east of Jerusalem, so Sabbath keepers today in Australia and New Zealand are correctly observing the seventh day as the Sabbath. The records of Scripture show that the seventh day is the Sabbath day in countries that lie east of Jerusalem, as well as in lands that lie west of Jerusalem. The Sabbath in Australia and New Zealand is the same Sabbath day that is kept in Jerusalem, the United States of America and the rest of the world.

A person who dwells in any part of the world, whether east or west of Jerusalem, should have no problem determining which day is the Sabbath. However, a traveler who crosses the International Dateline may encounter a problem. Travel eastward across the IDL results in loss of a day, and travel westward results in gaining a day. This difference in time is the result of traveling on a planet that is perpetually rotating in an easterly direction. It is this physical reality which led to the establishment of an imaginary line at the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian called the International Dateline.

### **Why the International Dateline was Established**

The International Dateline is not an arbitrary device, as some have been led to believe. It is an acknowledgement of an undeniable fact of astrophysics involving the movement of the earth in relation to the sun. Due to the rotation of the earth in a counterclockwise direction, one who travels in an easterly direction will gain time, and one who travels in a

westerly direction will lose time. This fact became self-evident in the days of the early mariners who discovered that when they circled the world, they either gained or lost a day.

What appears to be the **earliest reference to the circumnavigator's paradox** is found in the works of the Syrian prince and geographer-historian Isma'il ibn 'Ali ibn Mahmud ibn Muhammad ibn Taqi ad-Din 'Umar ibn Shahanshah ibn Ayyub al Malik al Mu'ayyad 'Imad ad-Din Abu 'l-Fida (1273 - 1331). In his *Taqwin al-Buldan* ('The ??? of the Lands'), Abu 'l-Fida described how **a traveller, depending on his direction of travel, would either lose or gain a day at the completion of his circumnavigation** [Rudolf Wolf, *Handbuch der Astronomie, Ihrer Geschichte und Literatur* (Zurich, 1890), vol 1, pp. 465-466; I still have to check the original source].

It was Antonio Pigafetta (c. 1490 - c. 1535), the Italian chronicler of the first circumnavigation of the world by the Portuguese explorer and navigator **Ferdinand Magellan (c. 1480 - 1521)**, who first mentioned a peculiar incident that had occurred during the voyage: somewhere a whole day had apparently been 'lost'. When Pigafetta, one of the eighteen survivors of the original 270-odd crew members who had set out from the Spanish port of San Lúcar de Barrameda in September 1519, nearly three years later sighted the Cape Verde Islands, he noted:

**“On Wednesday, the ninth of July [1522], we arrived at one these islands named Santiago, where we immediately sent the boat ashore to obtain provisions. [...] And we charged our men in the boat that, when they were ashore, they should ask what day it was. They were answered that to the Portuguese it was Thursday, at which they were much amazed, for to us it was Wednesday, and we knew not how we had fallen into error. For every day I, being always in health, had written down each day without any intermission. But, as we were told since, there had been no mistake, for we had always made our voyage westward and had returned to the same place of departure as the sun, wherefore the long voyage had brought the gain of twenty-four hours, as is clearly seen.”**

(for the complete Italian text of Pigafetta's journal, click [here](http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/idl/idl.htm))  
<http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/idl/idl.htm>

The story of the 'lost day' experienced by Magellan's crew was also transmitted in a different version by **Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (1457 - 1526)** in the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of his *De Orbe Novo* (1530). This passage was translated by Richard Eden in *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India* (1555) as:

**“And amonge other notable thynges by hym [Peter Martyr] wrytten as touchyng that vyage, this is one, that the Spaniards hauynge sayled abowt three yeares and one moneth, and the most of them noytyng the dayes, day by day (as is the manner of all them that sayles by the Ocean), they found when they were returned to Spayne, that they had lost one day. So that at theyr arryuall at the porte of Siuile beinge the seventh day of September, was by theyr accompt but the sixth day. And where as Don Peter Martyr declared the strange effects of this thyng to a certeyne excellent man [Gaspari Contarini of Venice (1483 - 1542)] who for his singular lernyng was greatly aduanced to honoure in his common welthe and made Themperours ambassadore, this woorthy gentelman who was also a greate Philosopher and Astronomer, answered that it coulde not otherwyse chaunce unto them hauynge sayled three yeares continually, euer folowyng the soonne towards**

**the West. And sayde furthermore that they of owlde tyme obserued that all suche as sayled behind the soonne towards the West, dyd greatly lengthen the day.”**

Peter Martyr’s lengthy discussions with Gaspari Contarini on this topic were summed up as:

**“Being much disquieted and touched with that case, I conferred with Gaspari Contarini (a man not meanly instructed in all kinds of literature), who was then ambassador with the Emperor for his famous commonwealth of Venice. Whereby we know (discussing the matter with divers arguments) that this strange report, never heard before, might very well be after this manner: This Castilian ship set sail from the Islands of Gorgades [Cape Verde Islands] towards the west, which way also the sun goeth. Thence it came to pass that having followed the sun, they had every day longer according to the quantity of the way they made, wherefore having perfited [encompassed] the circle, which the sun performeth in twenty-four hours towards the west, it consumed and spent one whole day, therefore it had fewer days by one than they who have that space of time kept one certain place of abode. But if the Portugal fleet, which saileth toward the east, should return again unto the Gorgades, continuing their course unto the east by this way and navigation, now first found and discovered to mortal men, no man would doubt, seeing they should have shorter days, having perfited the circle, but that twenty-four whole hours should remain unto them over and above, and so one whole day, wherefore they should reckon more by one. And so if either fleet, to wit, the Castilian and the Portugal, had set sail the same day from the Gorgades, and the Castilian had sailed toward the west and the Portugal had toward the east, turning stern to stern, and had returned to the Gorgades by these divers ways in the same space of time and at the same moment, if that day had been Thursday to the Gorgades, it had been Wednesday to the Castilian, to whom a whole day was consumed into longer days. But to the Portugal, to whom by shortening of the days one day remained over and above, the same day would be Friday. Let philosophers more deeply discuss this matter, we yield these reasons for the present.”**

Nearly sixty years later, the same phenomenon was observed by the crew members of the fleet of the English explorer Francis Drake (c. 1545 - 1596), when in September 1580 they arrived back again in Plymouth after a long westward voyage around the world that had started in late 1577.

**“The 22 day [of September] we were in the height of the Canaries. And the 26 of Sept. (which was Monday in the iust and ordinary reckoning of those that had stayed at home in one place or countrie, but in our computation was the Lords day or Sunday) we safely with ioyfull minds and thankfull hearts to God, arrived at *Plimoth*, the place of our first setting forth, after we had spent 2 yeares 10 moneths and some few odde daies beside, in seeing the wonders of the Lord in the deep, in discovering so many admirable things, in going through with so many strange aduentures, in escaping out of so many dangers, and ouercomming so many difficulties in this our encompassing of this neather globe, and passing round about the world, which we haue related.”**

In 1594 the Venetian trader **Francesco Carletti (1574 - 1636)** set out on a remarkable circumnavigation of the world in westward direction that lasted until the year 1606 and which he described in his *Ragionamenti del mio viaggio intorno al mondo*. Travelling without great haste via the Spanish dominions, crossing the isthmus of Panama and



stopping over at Manila, he booked a passage for the Japanese port of Nagasaki in 1597. Upon his arrival there he observed:

**“And we found a difference in reckoning the days between us, who had come from the city of Manila, and the Portuguese who had come from that of Macao, an island of China. These Portuguese, having left Lisbon and navigated constantly eastward, had reached Japan as the furthest point of their journeying. During their voyage, the sun having risen for them constantly earlier, they had gained twelve hours of a natural day. We, on the contrary, having left the port of Sanlucar de Barrameda in Spain and navigated steadily westward and having lost daylight constantly because the sun kept rising later, had lost twelve hours. So when we discussed it with them, we found that we had reached a difference of one day. And when they said it was Sunday, we counted up to Saturday. Had I pursued my voyage around the entire world without having met those Portuguese, by the time of my arrival in Europe, whence I first had departed, I should have lost exactly a whole day of twenty-four hours.**

**For I, having moved constantly from the east toward the west, changing meridians and therefore making the day later for myself, would have encountered this difference of one day as caused, as I have said, by the later or earlier rising and setting of the sun in the diverse meridians, which continue changing daily for those who navigate toward the east and toward the west. And it is true that in the Philippine Islands on that same day when the Spaniards and their Church are celebrating Holy Saturday, those who are in Japan - that is, the Portuguese and their Church - are eating meat, because for them it is the day of the Resurrection. So that if they were moving swiftly enough to reach Manila the next day, as is said to have happened to some navigators, they would celebrate the same Easter or other solemnity twice. And if they were to arrive on the day when those people celebrate the feast, it would befall them to return on Holy Saturday. On the other hand, if those from Manila should set out on the day when they solemnize Christmas and reach the island of Macao, where the Portuguese are, they would find those others at the second feast of Saint Stephen, and would thus celebrate one and another solemnity on the same day. And if they were able to arrive on the day before Christmas by their count, they would be able to eat meat without having fasted on the preceding day.**

**And this suffices for knowledge of that occurrence, perhaps not better understood earlier because the world had not been circumnavigated in olden times as it now is travelled around by value and virtue of the two crowns of Castile and Portugal, who have showed the way, the former navigating toward the east and reaching China and Japan, the other toward the west and reaching these Philippine Islands, about one thousand miles from the island of Macao in China, the residence of the Portuguese. Together, those two crowns have come to make a circle around the whole world ...”**

Dutch circumnavigators of the world also had similar experiences. When **Isaac le Maire (?? - 1624)**, after an arduous voyage around the southern tip of South America (named Cape Horn after the port of departure Hoorn), finally reached the port of Batavia on Java in November 1616, he noted in his journal:

**“This [*the confiscation of his ship and cargo by the authorities of the Dutch East India Company*] was done on Munday the first day of November, after our**

reckoning, but upon a Tuesday the second of November by our Countrimens reckoning there. The reason of the difference of time fell out thus – as we sayled westward from our own Countrey, and had with the Sun compassed the Globe of the World, we had one night, or Sun-setting less then they. [...] That weeke we lost the Tuesday, leaping from Munday to Wednesday, and so had one weeke of six dayes.”

<http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/idl/idl.htm>

As the records of ancient mariners show, the rotation of the earth makes the existence of an International Dateline an absolute necessity. Since the one that has been established stretches across a vast expanse of ocean with relatively little land involved, it has served its purpose well. There is no reason to move it. In fact, the rabbis of Judaism have pointed out the potential dangers in placing the IDL in populated regions of the world, as some have proposed.

There is no Scriptural basis for moving the International Dateline to Jerusalem or changing the observance of the Sabbath day in countries that lie east of Jerusalem. Records in the Old Testament show that faithful Sabbath keepers in Babylon were following the same weekly cycle they had used in Jerusalem, although Babylon was located east of Jerusalem. Sabbath keepers living today in Australia and other such regions should follow the Scriptural example and continue to observe the seventh day of the week.

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- [Ferdinand Magellan: The first to go around the world](#)
- <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1519magellan.html>
- <http://www.harlingen.isd.tenet.edu/coakhist/explor.html>

### **Rabbinic Material:**

A Traveler's Guide To The International Dateline  
Rabbi Dovid Heber, Star-K Kashrus Administrator

<http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-trav-dateline.htm>

### **Scientific Sites:**

The International Date Line

U.S. Naval Observatory  
Astronomical Applications Department

<http://aa.usno.navy.mil/>

Sailing thru Science...  
INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE

<http://www.goals.com/ClassRm/SailSci/SailSciF.htm>

**Time and Date Sites:**

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/fixedform.html>

- <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001769.html>

**World Map of Time Zones:**

[http://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/world\\_tzones.html](http://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/world_tzones.html)

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