

The Cost To Frum Jews In Changing Daylight Saving Time

By Rabbi GIL STUDENT

The Orthodox Jewish world is watching closely as President-elect Donald Trump has appeared to support eliminating Daylight Saving Time, a change that could have profound implications for Jewish religious practice. In a post on Truth Social, on Dec 13, Trump wrote, "The Republican Party will use its best efforts to eliminate Daylight Saving Time, which has a small but strong constituency, but shouldn't! Daylight Saving Time is inconvenient, and very costly to our Nation." The question is whether he would push Congress to make Daylight Saving Time permanent or end it altogether. The direction makes a world of difference to observant Jews, although either can pose serious religious challenges.

Daylight Saving Time is the practice of setting the clock one hour ahead so that, for example, the New York City sunset on December 31, 2024, of 4:38 Eastern Standard Time (EST) would be at 5:38 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). Daylight Saving Time allows for later sunsets and therefore more sunlight in the evening. The United States regulated Daylight Saving Time on the federal level beginning in 1967, when half the year was set to Standard Time and half to Daylight Saving Time. Over the subsequent decades, more weeks were added to Daylight Saving Time until now when it lasts for approximately eight months of the year. In 2024, Daylight Saving Time began on March 10 and ended on November 3.

On March 15, 2022, the U.S. Senate passed the Sunshine Protection Act which would extend Daylight Saving Time throughout the entire year. Thankfully, the bill never passed through the House of Representatives and therefore never became law. Year-round Daylight Saving Time would be disastrous for observant Jews. Sunrise would become unreasonably late making *Shachris* a great challenge for religious Jews working regular jobs. For example, on December 31, 2024, in Detroit, the earliest time to put on *tefillin* for the morning prayers would be 8:04 EDT. (In New York City it would be 7:27 EDT.) How

is someone supposed to say his morning prayers before commuting to work if he cannot reasonably finish praying until 8:30 a.m.? In a 1971 responsum, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein wrote that the extra winter hour of permanent Daylight Saving Time is a crisis that risks the morning prayers of observant Jews for months at a time every year.

Personally, I regularly attend a 6:15 a.m.

al inconvenience into a permanent employment liability. Thankfully, New York State has laws protecting Sabbath-observant individuals from discrimination. Observant Jews will be less protected in other states and even in New York such prolonged early absences may risk otherwise promising careers.

Additionally, the earlier sunrises that would follow a permanent Standard Time pose a different challenge. Instead of concern with a late start for prayers during the week, we would face a challenge of having to start earlier on Shabbat in order to say *Kriat Shema*. Under year-round Standard Time, June 7, 2025, would be the Shabbat with the earliest *sof zman Kriat Shema* (latest possible time in the day one is allowed to recite *Shema*): 8:09 a.m. EST in New York City. This means that Shabbat services must start 30-40 minutes earlier, around 7:30 or 7:40 a.m.. Most synagogues begin between 8:30 and 9 a.m.. The earlier start times required by the change to Standard Time would pose a challenge to many observant Jews who look to the weekend for a little rest.

There are possible halachic solutions to allow a later starting time in synagogue but the realistic result is that many, perhaps even most, Jews will fail to say *Shema* at home by 8:09 a.m.

Milwaukee and Las Vegas are a bit worse off, where the latest time for

Shema would be 8:01 a.m. in both places on June 7, 2025. Boston synagogues would have to start even earlier; the latest time for *Shema* there would be 7:55 a.m. EST on that early June Shabbat.

Undoubtedly, the current system of changing the clock from Standard Time to Daylight Saving Time can use some fine-tuning. I would like to see Daylight Saving Time revert to Standard Time earlier in the year. However, eliminating the clock change altogether poses religious challenges for observant Jews. With a country sharply divided over the proper path forward for standardizing time, we can only pray that the status quo remains in force and no drastic changes are made.

(All halachic times in this article are taken from MyZmanim.com. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's otherwise unpublished responsum is available online at <https://agudah.org/rabbi-moshe-feinsteins-teshuva-on-daylight-saving-time>.)



Brooklyn prayer service for commuters and about two weeks a year we have to begin late because of the increasingly late time of sunrise and related halachic times. We look forward to the change of the clock when we no longer have to begin and end our morning prayers late and therefore leave for work late. Permanent Daylight Saving Time would force us to be late for about two months a year rather than two weeks. This would significantly affect the employment status of many people.

Permanent Standard Time poses different, but no less severe, challenges to observant Jews. Under Standard Time, sunset in New York is earlier than 6 p.m. from early September through early March. Making Standard Time the year-round default would mean that Sabbath-observant Jews will need to leave work early on Friday afternoon for six months out of the year. Rather than having to excuse yourself for early Fridays during only the winter, you would have to do so for half the year. This turns a season-