

Two Questions About Sheepteeding Addressed to Abraham Maimonides

T.-S. 13 J 9, f. 10

(The decalogue prescribes that not only man, but the cattle as well, should do no work on the Sabbath (cf. Exodus 20:10). In later times, when religion was taken very seriously, the question was asked what should be the form of the weekly rest of the cattle and whether any profit accruing from it on Saturdays was permissible.)

I

A person possesses a limited number of sheep, which he keeps in a pen of his own. The milk drawn on Friday night^{a)} and on the Sabbath is taken away by him on the Sabbath at the end of the day. When the shepherds take them out for grazing, they do so only after having given them small quantities of beans, so that they will not graze on Saturday in the same way as they do during the week. The man is needy and owes forty dinars. He has no property (except the sheep. The rest of the page is torn away.)

II

^{So-and-so}
Mr. I possesses sheep. He has engaged shepherds to tend them on week-days and on Sabbaths and to milk them on Sabbaths and holidays,^{b)} with the understanding that the milk will be delivered to a merchant who is known to buy the milk of all the herds in the village for making cheese.^{c)} Please instruct us whether this work done by the shepherds is permissible, as the Jewish proprietor does not say to them on Sabbaths or holidays: "Do this work," but has engaged them, from the very beginning, to tend his flocks in general. Please explain to us in detail whether this is permitted or in which other way (milking on Sabbath) is permissible, so that we act accord-

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ingly. May your reward (be given from Heaven). d)

Notes

- a) The Jewish, Muslim, and Christian ecclesiastical day begins at nightfall on the preceding day (see p.).
- b) During the weekdays, the milking was done by the proprietor and/or members of his family.
- c) I.e. no profit would be made on Sabbath by selling fresh milk.
- d) No payments were made for learned opinions on religious or legal questions, although they must have taxed the time of more prominent scholars to a very great extent. Our formula - the like of which is found also at the end of queries addressed to Muslim religious scholars - means to say: instead of earthly reward, God will repay you.