

HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

If one stays awake the entire night, and has trouble staying awake for *shacharis* at sunrise, is it preferable to *daven* immediately, even before sunrise, with or without a *minyan*? Should he rather sleep until a later *minyan*? In general, if one cannot *daven* at sunrise, is it better to *daven* sooner rather than later?

The issues:

- A) *Hanaitz*, sunrise, the ideal time for *shacharis*
- B) *Zrizin makdimin*, doing *mitzvos* at the earliest opportunity
- C) *Kavanah*, concentrating while *davening*
- D) *Tefilah betzibur*, *davening* with a *minyan*

A) *The ideal time for shacharis*

Shacharis comprises two *mitzvos*: *krias shema* and *tefilah*, or *shemone esrai*. *Krias shema* is a Scriptural *mitzvah*, to be performed in the morning and in the evening. *Tefilah* is also considered Scriptural by many poskim. This is based on the *mitzvah* 'serve Hashem your G-d'. This refers to service of the heart, in keeping with a verse in *shema*. Service of the heart is *tefilah*. The Scriptural obligation is fulfilled by *davening* once a day, and one may improvise his *tefilah*, provided he covers the basic requirements. Rabbinically, one must say *shemone esrai* at *shacharis* and *mincha*, morning and afternoon. *Maariv shemone esrai* is considered a Rabbinical obligation of lesser stringency.

The timing of *shacharis* is based on the timing of these *mitzvos*. *Shema* must be said 'upon rising'. That is, when people arise from their beds with no artificial lighting. At this time one can recognize an occasional acquaintance at a short distance. This is the earliest ideal time. One pressed for time may recite it at dawn. The latest time for morning *shema* is when the idlest group of people arise – princes or wealthy heirs, who have no work. They do not allow more than a quarter of the day to go by in bed.

Shemone esrai is based on the timing of the *korban tamid*, daily offering in the temple. There was a morning and an afternoon *tamid*, and the fats were burned by night. [In addition, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov prayed *shacharis*, *mincha* and *maariv*, respectively.] The morning *tamid* was offered after dawn, and no later than midday, or according to some, a third of the day. The Talmud, basing itself on a verse in *Tehilim*, gives the optimum time for *shacharis* at *hanaitz*, sunrise. Thus, the optimum time for *tefilas shacharis* is when the sun is up. In a pressing situation one may begin at dawn. A minority view permits *davening* before dawn in urgent cases. The ideal, but not optimum time is a matter of debate. Some say this is when the Eastern sky is lit up. Others say it is when one is able to recognize an occasional acquaintance at a distance of four cubits.

The latest time also has an ideal: one should follow the view that it may not be said later than a third of the day, or four seasonal hours into daylight. This time is debated by

the poskim. Some calculate the hours as twelfths of the time between dawn and nightfall. Others calculate it as a twelfth of the time between sunrise and sunset. The emergency latest time is midday, calculated as the time the sun is directly overhead. If one missed this time unintentionally, he should make it up by repeating *shemone esrai* at *mincha*. [See Mishpatim 23:25. Brochos 9b 21a 26a-27a 30a Psachim 58a Yuma 28a-b Taanis 2a Baba Kama 92b Zevachim 56a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 58 89, commentaries.]

B) *Zrizin makdimin lemitzvos*

When performing any *mitzvah*, one should make an effort to fulfill it at the earliest opportunity. The Talmud cites Scriptural allusions to support this ideal, though some consider it a Rabbinical requirement. One should not allow a *mitzvah* to 'sour'. One who is not lazy about *mitzvos* will hurry to do them, rising early if necessary. It seems from these references that it is the enhanced way to perform a *mitzvah*. The poskim debate whether it is an obligation, a *mitzvah* in its own right, or a commendable attitude that shows love for the *mitzvah*. It is also common sense to avoid procrastination that might lead to forgetting or missing the *mitzvah*. It is especially invoked for *tefilah*.

Tefilah has an ideal time later than the first opportunity, for both *shacharis* and *mincha*. [*Mincha* should not be said until mid-afternoon, and according to many until right before sunset.] It is not considered a breach of the principle of *zrizim makdimin* to wait for the ideal time. However, if one cannot perform it at the ideal time, the question is whether the next best time is the earliest possible opportunity. Thus, should our questioner rather say *shacharis* at dawn, or rather wait until after sunrise, even if this will mean saying it close to the end of the time? Our case raises a second issue. It is forbidden to sleep even for a short while, once the time for a *mitzvah* has arrived, before performing it.

It seems that some poskim determine that it is better to wait until after sunrise for *shacharis*. While the *tamid* was offered before sunrise, the reference connecting *tefilah* to the sun's presence seems to be an additional advantage. *Davening* early will mean that this advantage will be lost. This trumps the advantage of *davening* the *tefilah* at the earliest opportunity. However, the majority maintain that the ideal but not optimum is to begin between dawn and sunrise, as mentioned. In practice, if one begins early enough to reach *shema* at *misheyakir*, he will reach *shemone esrai* at the ideal time. [See Bo 12:17. Brochos 2b 6b Psachim 4a 68b Yuma 28b Megilah 20b Chagigah 7b, Poskim. Terumas hadeshen 35. Tur Sh Ar OC 89 94:5[SA Rav] 426:2, commentaries. Chacham Tzvi 106.]

C) *Kavanah*

Apart from the issues with delaying and sleeping, one must bear in mind that *tefilah* requires *kavanah*. The literal translation of *kavanah* is direction – of thoughts and mind. Before beginning *shemone esrai*, one must be aware of Whom he stands before in prayer. There are other deep meanings. However, it is impossible to include all the deep layers of meaning intended in *tefilah*, nor the full intent. During *tefilah* one must concentrate on the meaning of the words. If this is not possible for the entire *shemone esrei*, one should do so for the first *brocha*. In former times, one who lost his *kavanah* needed to repeat, at least the first *brocha*. Nowadays, there is no guarantee that repetition will help. To avoid uttering Hashem's Name in vain, one should not repeat, unless he has not yet finished the *brocha*. One must remember that he is praying *shemone esrai* to Hashem. If a strange thought interrupts one's *kavanah*, he should wait until he rids himself of it.

Further, one must plead for his needs like a beggar at the door. The poskim debate the absence of this *kavanah*. The prevailing view does not render the *tefilah* invalid without such *kavanah*. Nevertheless, one should try hard to put himself into this mood, rather than hurry through *tefilah* as though it is an unwanted obligation. Based on all this, one must ready himself for *tefilah* with *kavanah*. This means avoiding places or times that will lead to distractions. In former times, one going on a trip would abridge *shemone esrai* to avoid losing *kavanah*. If one is *misnamnem*, sleepy, he will not have enough *kavanah*, but will still have fulfilled his obligation. If he actually falls asleep, he has not fulfilled his obligation. One should make sure that he is not *misnamnem* for the first *brocha*.

The question is whether it is worth going to sleep, risking missing *davening* totally later. Do the advantages of *zrizim makdimin* and the prohibition against sleeping after the time of *tefilah* arrives override the disadvantage of insufficient *kavanah*? It seems that nowadays we do not base a decision like this on the chances of better *kavanah* later. In our case, the *mispalel* must be able to judge himself. How lackluster will his *kavanah* be when *davening* early? If he is so sure that he will not even realize that he is *davening*, and will indeed be sleeping through it, he does not fulfill his obligation. [See Brochos 13b 28b-31a 34a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 64:4-5 90-95 98 110:1, commentaries.]

D) Tefilah betzibur

Tefilah betzibur, communal prayer service, is highly recommended by the Talmud. If one cannot join a *tzibur*, he should *daven* alone at the same time that the *tzibur daven*s. However, there is a question whether it is indeed an **obligation** in its own right. Clearly, if one is unable to pray with a *minyan* he must still pray privately. The only occasion when this is even debated by the Talmud is regarding *Musaf*. However, the question is, is it a *chiyuv*, strong obligation, a *mitzvah*, or simply a *maaleh*, advantage?

Kadish, *kedusha* and *borchu* may only be said with a *minyan*. However, even if one is not together with the *tzibur* in their location, he still gains an advantage by *davening* with them, at the time of their service. This time is an *ais ratzon*, time of Divine benevolence. Hashem is 'open' and positively disposed at this time. This is because a large group approaches Hashem at this time, or when a *minyan* assembles and are qualified to say *devarim shebikedusha*, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is present, or that at this time all *tefilos* are gathered up together, including those of one was not present with the *tzibur*.

If ten are needed for the reciting of *devarim shebikedusha*, there is something about the number ten that has in it the secret of the sanctity of Hashem. When a group does a *mitzvah* together the combined efforts add up to much more than the sum of the parts, much like a group doing something physical together. Furthermore, just as a team functions as a group, each contributing his unique part, so too, a group of Jews has different parts to it. Each contribution to the whole makes a difference in the result. The complete group is able to accomplish things that no individual can do by himself. This is learned from the inclusion in the blend of incense in the *bais hamikdash*. One ingredient had a natural bad odor. It was added in, according to some, because when combined with the others, it brought out hidden qualities in them, and they brought out hidden benefits in it. An individual needs to be sure that his prayer is pure. Aspects could be lacking in the average individual. The *tzibur* has a special quality of its own. If individuals are unable to focus and concentrate on their personal *tefilos*, the group's *tefilah* is accepted. Often a

group includes some who are not deserving. Yet, a group is judged by its majority.

If *tefilah* is to make one's voice heard by Hashem, and there is a chance that when *davening* alone it will not be heard, but with a *tzibur* there is a guarantee that it will be heard, it follows that one is obliged to *daven* with a *tzibur*. Thus, the Talmud does not specify the obligation, but highlights the advantages. Furthermore, since one fulfills a *mitzvah* when *davening* alone, the Talmud, and later on, the poskim do not use terminology that implies that there is something wrong with *davening* without a *minyan*.

Perhaps the *mitzvah* of *tefilah* is essentially different when done with a *tzibur*. *Tefilah* is *rachamim*, to plead one's cause, or *avoda*, service of Hashem with the heart, or both. There is a big difference between one presenting it as an individual and a group presenting the *rachamei* of the entire Israel. There is a difference between individual *avoda*, such as an individual's offering in the *bais hamikdash*, and the *avoda* of the *tzibur*. Therefore, there is an additional obligation on anyone who is part of the *tzibur*.

When traveling, one is obliged to go a certain distance out of his way in order to catch a *minyan*, but no further. As a *maaleh*, it would not make sense to oblige one to make accommodations for it. Furthermore, how could one be exempted if the *minyan* is past than the limit? In summary, it is certainly an advantage, apparently a *mitzvah*, and possibly an obligation to participate in *tefilah betzibur*. To qualify as *tefilah betzibur*, some suggest that one must begin with the *tzibur*. However, others point out that it is impossible for people in a group, all praying silently, to ensure that every word is said together. Clearly, as long as one is generally saying his personal *shemone esrai* in a group setting, at approximately the same time, it counts as *tefilah betzibur*. [See Brochos 7b-8a 21a-b 30a-b, Megillah 19b, Poskim. Tur, B.Y. Sh. Ar. OC 55:22 (Rema), 90:9, etc. commentaries. Bais Elokim II:11. Igros Moshe OC II:27, III:4 7.]

In conclusion, the person should decide whether he will be able to stay awake enough to know that he is *davening*. If so, he should rather *daven* early, even without a *minyan*, than go to sleep and *daven* later. If he knows that he will be too sleepy, he should sleep first. He should arrange to be woken up in time for the later *minyan*.

On the Parsha ... *The job of Elazar ... oil for the lamplight and ketoress hasamim, and the minchah of the tamid ... [4:16] The oil and incense he was in charge of carrying. The minchas hatamid he was in charge of ordering and being mezarev its offering when they would camp [Rashi] For many reasons, it does not make sense that Elazar carried the ready made mincha. He must have been given a separate job to organize its offering when they camped. [Maharal, ur Aryeh] Why would there be a specific job for this? Why just the minchas hatamid and not the other regular offerings? The tamid symbolizes the continuity of the avodah. The mincha offered with it could be taken lightly, since it looks like a minor part of the offering. By ensuring zerizus for this, the entire regular service was guaranteed to be done in time. Perhaps this is why the afternoon service, the shortest and often hurried tefilah, is called mincha. It requires extra zerizus. It happens to be the source for forbidding prior activities. [See Tur OC 232]*

**Sponsored in memory of Yitele bas R. Shimon, Henriette Silver a'h, whose *yahrzeit* is on the
first day of Shavuos.**

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