



חבורת מהות היהדות

Weekly Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 7

פרשת ויגש
י"א טבת תשפ"ד

From the Chaburah
By: Adam Friedmann

The Time for the Morning Shema

Earliest Time for the Shema

The morning Shema is recited when people generally get up for the day (*bekumecha*). (*Devarim* 6:7) In the Talmudic era, the first people woke up just after dawn (*amud hashachar*), but the majority of people woke up somewhat later in the morning. Accordingly, the Mishnah and Gemara (*Berachot* 9b) record a number of opinions about the earliest time to read the Shema. The most salient ones are:

When one can recognize between the blue and white areas in a single piece of dyed wool or fabric.

When one can recognize an acquaintance at a distance of 4 *amot* (known as "*misheyakir*").

The Gemara also records the practice of the *vatikin*, which is not obviously related to the others since it doesn't track the time that people woke up. The *vatikin* would begin reading the Shema just before *hanetz* so that they could finish it together with *hanetz*.

According to Rav Huna, the halachah follows the second view. According to Abaye, we should follow the practice of the *vatikin*.

The Rishonim debate how to understand the Gemara:

- According to the **Rif** and **Rambam**, Abaye is saying that the fundamental halachah follows the *vatikin*. The morning Shema should be read just before *hanetz*. Reading it at other times is only allowed in extenuating circumstances.
- According to the **Rosh** and others, the practice of the *vatikin* is only a *midat chasidut*. Fundamentally the Shema can be read from an earlier time.

The Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 58:1-3) rules like the Rosh. The Shema can be read from *misheyakir*. However, reading the Shema like the *vatikin* is still considered ideal. So much so, that one who has the practice to pray at this time regularly can do so even if there is no minyan or tefillin available. (*Be'ur Halachah* *ibid.*)

Latest Time for the Shema

The Mishnah (*Berachot* 1:2) records the view of Rabbi Yehoshua who says that the morning

Shema can be read until 3 halachic hours into the day. This is because the aristocrats (*bnei melachim*) would wake up at this time. The halachah follows this position. (*Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*,)

This position raises a question. In previous weeks, we discussed the view of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (*Berachot* 8b-9a) who rules that the evening Shema can *continue to be recited after amud hashachar*. This is because even though it's light out, some people are still sleeping at this time. By that reasoning, why doesn't the fact that the *bnei melachim* continue sleeping until three hours into the day allow us to continue reading the evening Shema until then? The Aruch Hashulchan (*Orach Chaim* 58:7-8) presents 3 answers to this question:

1. The **Rashba** argues that by that point it's so far into the day that it's absurd to read the evening Shema.
2. The **Aruch Hashulchan** himself explains that if someone would wait that long to read the evening Shema they wouldn't then be able to read the morning Shema whose time ends at three hours into the day. The halachah doesn't allow for this impossible situation.
3. The **Ramban** explains that the *bnei melachim* don't wake up at that time. Rather, they are awake and lounging in bed for several hours. The third hour is when they get out of bed and properly start their day. The time when the *bnei melachim* are lounging doesn't qualify as *beshochvecha* for the evening Shema since they're awake. But the time when they get out of bed does qualify as *bekumecha* for the morning Shema.

The Ramban's answer emphasizes an important fact about the morning Shema. The Shema is not a reaction to waking up like *Modeh Ani* or the *Birkot Hashachar*. Rather, it's related to time that we intentionally start the day. The themes of the Shema are meant to color all of our daily creative activity.

Marei mekomot for this coming week's chaburah

הבנת הצורך לזמני קריאת שמע

ספר החינוך, מצוה תכ

ערוך השולחן אורח חיים נח: ו

מורה נבוכים א: סח, ג: נא

משנה תורה הלכות תשובה י: ב, ג, ו

Aristotle, De Anima iii 5

יד פשוטה, הקדמה להלכות קריאת שמע

עין איה, ברכות י: "גדול קריאת שמע בעונתה"

Mishnah: A Philosophy of Life

By: Dovid Campbell

Berachot 1:5 — The Echoes of Our History

Our mishnah presents a debate that is familiar to many of us from the Passover Haggadah. In *Devarim* 16:3, we are told to remember the Exodus from Egypt “all the days of your life.” From the unnecessary addition of the word *all*, Ben Zoma derives an obligation to mention the Exodus even at nighttime. But the Sages do not understand the verse in this way. For them, *all* comes to include the Messianic era.

This is the end of this mishnah, but the Tosefta includes Ben Zoma's fascinating response to the Sages. He cites a verse from Yirmiyahu that clearly implies that we will no longer mention the Exodus following the final Redemption. Hashem's ingathering of exiles will become the dominant event of Jewish history, and according to Ben Zoma, any obligation to mention the Exodus will simply cease.

The Sages have a ready response. Yirmiyahu is not saying that mention of the Exodus will cease *entirely*. Though the ultimate ingathering from the various nations will become our primary praise of Hashem, our remembrance of the Exodus will endure. The Sages compare this to the changing of Yaakov's name to Yisrael. Although *Bereishit* 35:10 states clearly that he “will no longer be called Yaakov,” we see that he continued to use this name. The idea is that Yisrael, not Yaakov, would become primary.

What Ben Zoma and the Sages are debating is nothing less than our proper relationship to history. For Jews, the study of history is only valuable to the extent that it serves as a praise of Hashem and a reminder of our undying national mission. But perhaps the nature of these praises and reminders can shift profoundly throughout time. Perhaps certain forms of praise must be jettisoned in order to facilitate a greater revelation.

This is the position of Ben Zoma, and the underlying logic seems compelling. After all, is it appropriate to continue praising someone for a certain victory that has already been surpassed? Would we want to praise a gold medalist by mentioning that one time he won the silver? For Ben Zoma, the Messianic era is to some degree discontinuous with what came before. It is a radically new reality.

But the Sages take a different view of our history, and they even tie it to the question of personal identity in the case of Yaakov. There are no clean breaks in Jewish history, and today's revelations can never supplant the significance of those that preceded them. We should indeed praise the gold medalist for last year's silver, since that silver was a uniquely meaningful moment in his life – and perhaps even the basis for his eventual gold.

Philosopher Isaiah Berlin once wrote, “All Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history.” Our mishnah goes a step further and asks us to consider: What does it mean to be steeped in history?

Eilu v'Eilu
By: Dovid Campbell

Yosef's Private Unmasking — A Reputation at Stake?

“And Yosef could not bear all those who were standing before him, and he called, ‘Take out everyone from before me!’ And no one was standing with him when he made himself known to his brothers” (*Bereishit* 45:1).

It seems obvious that Yosef would want this emotionally-charged reunion to be private. After all, some moments are just too personal to be shared publicly. Surprisingly, the *mefarshim* actually offer a wide range of explanations for Yosef's decision, and they reveal that Yosef may have been grappling with complex questions of ethics, halachah, or even political strategy.

According to Rashi, Yosef's primary concern was his brothers' feelings. He could not bear the thought of them standing humiliated before the Egyptians when their involvement in Yosef's sale was revealed. Despite their betrayal, Yosef felt a deep need to shield them from embarrassment.

Other *mefarshim* see Yosef's clearing of the room as a legal obligation. Drawing on a midrash, Hadar Zekeinim and Paneach Raza explain that the brothers had included Yosef in their vow of secrecy, prohibiting him from revealing the details of his own sale. Whatever feelings might arise, Yosef's primary concern was to avoid violating this vow.

An additional and intriguing possibility is offered by Paneach Raza in the name of R' Yosef Kara: Yosef realized that if the Egyptians were to learn that his own brothers had sold him into slavery, they might conclude that the entire family was untrustworthy, and even Yosef was unfit to be their ruler. Yosef's decision was a strategic attempt to maintain his position of authority in Egypt. Along similar lines, Ralbag writes that from Yosef we learn the proper conduct of a ruler before his subjects. It was simply improper for Yosef to display certain emotions publicly.

This episode is certainly one of the most dramatic in Chumash, and it seems natural to view Yosef's demand for privacy as an expression of his emotional bond with his brothers. Nevertheless, the majority of these *mefarshim* see much more strategic or technical considerations at work. How does this affect our understanding of the story, and what might it teach us about how to navigate emotionally-charged situations in general?

Did you enjoy this newsletter? Join our weekly chaburah!

When: Thursday nights at 8:45 (following Maariv)

Where: Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Nachal Dolev 12, Bet Shemesh

Questions, comments, and concerns: **contact@essenceofjudaism.com**

To receive this newsletter via email visit **www.essenceofjudaism.com/newsletter**

For back issues and more great content visit **www.essenceofjudaism.com**