The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ס' סעיף ה'-סימן ס"א סעיף ב'

Overview

Siman 60 Seif 5:

If a person reads shema and did not concentrate when he read the first pasuk of שמע ישראל he did not fulfill his obligation. If he did not concentrate for the rest of shema, even if he was reading from the Torah or proofreading the *parshiyos* during the time of *krias shema* he has fulfilled the *mitzvah* as long as he concentrated while reading the first *pasuk*.

- The concentration referenced here is to contemplate and pay attention to what one is saying; therefore, it is essential only for the first *pasuk* which contains the primary acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and the unity of Hashem. According to some intent to fulfill the *mitzvah* is also essential only for the first *pasuk*. (M.B. 11)

Siman 61 Seif 1:

One should read *shema* with concentration, fear, awe, trembling and shaking.

- *Shema* refers to all of *krias shema*. (M.B. 1)
- Mishnah Berurah shows where the Ten Comandments are alluded to in *krias shema*. (M.B. 2)
- "Fear and awe" means to accept the yoke of Heaven even if it involves giving up one's life to sanctify the name of Hashem. (M.B. 3)
- One should read *shema* as though one received a new message from the king which one would read carefully and deliberately and with great enthusiasm. One should think about each command and punishment that is mentioned in *krias shema* as it is read. (M.B. 4)

Siman 61 Seif 2:

The words, "אשר אנכי מצוך היום" teach that every day the words should seem as though they are new and not like one who heard it already numerous times to whom it is no longer dear.

- Pri Megadim emphasizes the importance of understanding the words as one reads them rather than reading them quickly without paying attention to its meaning. (M.B. 5)

Halacha Highlight

Concentrating on the first *pasuk*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 60 Seif 5

הקורא את שמע ולא כון לבו בפסוק ראשון וכו'

If one reads *shema* and does not concentrate while reading the first *pasuk* etc.

Rashba (שו"ת ח"א סי' שמ"ד) explains that there is a difference between standard intent when fulfilling a *mitzvah* and the intent necessary when reading *shema* or *shemoneh esrei*. The standard intent is the topic of dispute in the Gemara Berachos (13a) whether *mitzvos* require intent. The intent that is debated in that context is whether it is necessary for one to have in mind that he is performing this *mitzvah* for the sake of fulfilling the will of the Creator. When it comes to *krias shema* and *shemoneh esrei* one has to concentrate so that he does not become distracted by other things so that his mouth and his mind should be on the same page with the requests and the acceptance of the yoke of heaven. He writes a similar idea in his commentary to the Gemara (13b ד"ה שמע ישראל). He explains that the intent necessary when reading the first *pasuk* of *shema* is not related to the question of whether *mitzvos* require intent. Regarding *krias shema* one must be focused on the concept on hand. In other words one should not be distracted by other things that will detract from one's ability to accept the yoke of Heaven with a full heart. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"א) adds that included in the special intent one must have when reading the first *pasuk* is the meaning of the words.

For the rest of *krias shema* it is sufficient for one to have the standard intent to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *krias shema*. In addition there are other thoughts *Poskim* reference that one could have to enhance their *krias shema*. Sefer Piskei Teshuvos (אות ח') mentions that it is appropriate for a person to contemplate the six constant *mitzvos* while reading *shema* [1) to believe there is Hashem, 2) To not believe in any god other than Hashem, 3) to unify Him, 4) to love Hashem, 5) to have awe of Hashem and 6) to not turn towards improper thoughts or after what one sees.] Additionally Mishnah Berurah (סי' ס"א סק"ג) connects phrases in *shema* that allude to the Ten Commandments.

Stories to Share

The Greatness of Shema

ש"ע סי' ס"א, י"ד: "כי עיקר קיבול מלכות שמים הוא בפסוק ראשון..."

On today' amud we learn that by saying Shema we accept upon ourselves the yoke of Hashem's Kingship.

Once there was an assembly to memorialize the millions of innocents murdered at the hands of the Nazis. Although they advertised that the Rav of Ponevezh, zt"l was going to speak, no one mentioned this to him ahead of time. Yet when he was called up, he decided to speak in any case.

The Rav's speech moved the people to tears. "I will not even try to offer a eulogy, since only a prophet on the level of Yirmiyahu could eulogize such martyrs. But surely we must do something in their memory! So what can we do? Stand a few moments of silence? Light candles? Perhaps we should fast? Surely those who are now under the wings of the Shechinah and share the heavenly chamber of the greatest martyrs, Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, have no need of any memorialization on our part. However, there is one thing they would beg us to do for them. We can become parents to of all their orphaned children! All these holy departed souls are pleading with us, 'Please! Don't let them raise our children as goyim! Make sure our children not forget the mainstays of Judaism, let them know Shema Yisrael!'

Rav Kahanaman cried out, "My brothers! Let us all open our hearts and our pockets and donate as much as we can to build an orphanage for the desperate souls of our Jewish children. The speaker before me suggested that each person here donate a prutah for a foundation to promulgate their memory. Rabbosai, this is far from sufficient! The gemara in Kesuvos 67b states that in Ushah they decreed that one must refrain from giving more than twenty percent of his earnings to charity. When a Jewish heart is opened, the urge to give is so powerful that chazal had to make a proclamation that one hold back from giving everything to tzedakah! Let us give in this spirit in memory of our martyrs!"

The astronomical sum of 17,400 British pounds sterling was immediately raised!