



Overview

Halacha Highlight

Correct intent while reading *shema*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 63 Seif 4
עקר הכונה הוא בפסוק ראשון

The primary intent is while reading the first *pasuk*

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ד') writes that the primary intent is while reciting the first *pasuk*. Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק י"א) explains that the *pasuk* included in the first *pasuk* and one's intent is essential to fulfilling the *mitzvah*. The primary meaning of the requirement to have proper intent is that one should accept the yoke of Heaven as one reads *shema*. Additionally, before one begins reading *shema* he should have in mind his intent to fulfill the *mitzvah* of Hashem to read *shema*, accept the yoke of Heaven and declare His unity.

Sefer Piskei Teshuvos offers the following explanation for שמע and ברוך שם:

שמע ישראל—One should contemplate and accept the following idea and believe it (pause),
That ה'—who was, is and will be and is the Master of all,
He is א-לוקינו—our G-d who is omnipotent, and the force behind everything and we accept upon ourselves the yoke of his reign as the One who guides and oversees all of our actions with Divine Providence without the need for an intermediary (pause),
He is ה'—who was, is and will be and is the Master of all,
And He is אחד—One in the heavens, on earth and in the four corners of the universe (pause),
ברוך—He is the source of all blessing (pause),
שם כבוד מלכותו—His Holy name that we mentioned is deserving of the honor of His kingdom that we accepted upon ourselves and the world (pause),
לעולם ועד—Will endure for eternity.

ing on the first verse of *shema*. Although he was able to pay attention to what he was saying in general, he found that he would sometimes be hit with a fleeting thought between the words that had nothing to do with *shema*. But he would immediately remember where he was and muster all of his concentration on saying *shema* with *kavanah*. When he mentioned this passing unpleasantness to someone, this person shocked him with a fact that he had never known.

The friend said, "The Mishnah Berurah in siman 63 implies that if you have other thoughts while saying *shema* you did not discharge your obligation..."

But when this question was brought to Rav Moshe Sternbuch, shlit"א, he ruled that since the illicit thoughts arose between the words, this person had in fact discharged his obligation b'dieved. "That the Mishnah Berurah holds this to be true is even clearer from the Biur Halachah in the beginning of siman 101 regarding focusing during *birkas avos*. However, I was unable to locate any indication of this in the Rashba that the Biur Halachah quotes. All I saw was that the Rashba holds that if one is preoccupied with other thoughts while reciting *avos* and the like he does not discharge his obligation. But that only means that one had an irrelevant thought while reciting the words, not in between words. It seems clear that the *mitzvah* here is that the recital of *avos* or the first *pasuk* of *kriyas shema* be with *kavanah*. B'dieved, if one had other thoughts between words his recital discharged his obligation."

שו"ת תשובות והנהגות, ח"ג, סי' כ"ד, אות ב'

Siman 63 Seif 4:

The primary intent is for the first *pasuk*, therefore, if he did not have intent for the first *pasuk* he must read it again. Even the opinion who maintains that *mitzvos* do not require intent would agree regarding intent for the first *pasuk* of *shema*.

- ❖ If one did not have proper concentration for שם ברוך he is required to reread *shema*. (M.B. 12)
- ❖ If one read שמע and והיה אם שמע and then realizes that he did not concentrate properly for the first *pasuk* he must reread the *parsha* of שמע. If he realizes while in the middle of the *parsha* of שמע he should finish the *parsha*, reread שמע and then read ויאמר. (M.B. 14)

Siman 63 Seif 5:

If someone was sleeping we disturb him and wake him to read the first *pasuk* while fully awake. From that point on we do not disturb him to be fully awake for even if he reads while dozing he fulfills the *mitzvah*. The halacha of one who was drinking or is drunk is discussed later in 91:1.

- ❖ One opinion is that reading the first *pasuk* is Biblically mandated, a second opinion maintains that one must read the first *parsha* and a third opinion asserts that the second *parsha* is also Biblically mandated. All opinions agree that reading the *parsha* of ויאמר fulfills the Biblical obligation to recall the exodus and that is why it was incorporated into *shema*. (M.B. 16)

Siman 63 Seif 6:

One who is reading the first paragraph of *shema* should not signal with his eyes or lips or point with his fingers since that is the primary acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and communicating gives the impression that one is doing so casually and the *pasuk* says וברת בם and this is understood to mean that it should be formal.

- ❖ One may not signal even for a *mitzvah*. (M.B. 17)
- ❖ Some opinions are stringent and do not permit signaling even while reading the second *parsha*. (M.B. 18)

Siman 63 Seif 7:

If one was engaged in an activity and wants to read *shema* he must stop that activity until the he reads the first *parsha* so that it should not appear as though his reading is casual.

- ❖ The implication is that for the other paragraphs and while reading the *berachos* one may continue his activity. (M.B. 19)

Siman 63 Seif 8:

Craftsmen or homeowners who were working in a tree or on the top of a row of a structure may read *shema* where they work and are not required to descend before reading *shema*.

Siman 63 Seif 9:

A porter is permitted to read *shema* while carrying a load on his shoulder but he should not read while loading or unloading his load since at that time his mind is not settled.

Stories to Share

Between the Words

מייב סי' ס"ג, סי"ק י"ג: "פנה לבו לדברים אחרים הרי לא קבל מלכות שמים..."

A certain person noticed that at times he had a hard time focus-