



Halacha Highlight

Davening from a siddur

Mishnah Berurah Siman 93 Seif Koton 2
האר"י ז"ל היה מתפלל מתוך הסדור

Arizal was careful to *daven* from a *siddur*

Shulchan Aruch in this *siman* presents many *halachos* related to cultivating the conditions necessary for one to be able to concentrate fully while reading *shemone esrei*. This includes creating a sense of awe and submission. It also means that one should not begin *davening* if it is likely that he will be distracted. Thus one should not *daven* after studying Torah in a manner in which one's thoughts will remain on his studies rather than on his *tefila*. Along these lines Mishnah Berurah (סק"יב) relates that Arizal would *daven* from a *siddur*. One reason is that *davening* from a *siddur* is beneficial for one's concentration. A second advantage to *davening* from a *siddur* is that one will be more careful when he reads the words of *tefila* and will not miss or swallow a *nekudah*.

Other authorities also emphasize the importance of *davening* with a *siddur* and they relate that it is a *segulah* to protect one from foreign thoughts during *davening*. An allusion to this idea is found in Megilas Esther (9:25) that says, אמר עם הספר ישוב מחשבתו הרעה — he commanded by virtue of the *sefer* (i.e. a *siddur*) to retract the bad thought. However, there is no obligation to *daven* from a *siddur* as Mishnah Berurah concludes that each person should do what works for him. This is because some people concentrate better if their eyes are closed. It is in fact reported that Arizal would read *shemone esrei* with his eyes closed and it was the remainder of *davening* that he was careful to read from a *siddur*. Chavos Yair (מקור חיים סי' צ"ה סעי' ב') suggests that a person should sometimes *daven* from a *siddur* and other times he should *daven* without a *siddur*. His reasoning is that as soon as one becomes accustomed to *daven* in a particular manner his concentration will diminish, therefore, he should switch back and forth (ב' פסקי תשובות אות ב').

Overview

Siman 92 Seif 8:

One who urinates may not *daven* until he waits the time it takes to walk four *amos* out of concern for lingering drips. Someone who *davened* should not urinate until he waits the amount of time it takes to walk four *amos* since for that amount of time one's prayer remains on his lips and they continue to vibrate.

- ❖ One must wait the time it takes to walk four *amos* and after that one may even urinate where he *davened* although it is pious to avoid this. (M.B. 33)

Siman 92 Seif 9:

One who spits should not *daven* until he pauses the time it takes to walk four *amos* and one who *davens* should not spit for the amount of time it takes to walk four *amos*. This is limited to one who spits willingly but if it arises on its own it is permitted. (See below *siman* 97)

Siman 92 Seif 10:

It is appropriate to give *tzedaka* before *davening*.

- ❖ In some communities they give *tzedaka* when they reach the *pasuk* והעשר וכו' ואתה מושל בכל. In some places they incorrectly collect *tzedaka* during *krias hatorah*. (M.B. 36)

Siman 93 Seif 1:

A person should wait for an hour before he begins to *daven* so that he will have proper concentration. He should also wait for an hour after *davening* so that *davening* should not seem as though it is a burden that he wants to quickly leave behind.

- ❖ Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah prove that in this context the reference to an hour is literal. This practice is for the righteous but for most people it is sufficient to pause the time it takes to walk eight *tefachim*. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ Seder HaYom writes that if one could remain in the *Bais HaKnesses* to be amongst the last ten it will be good. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ Arizal was careful to *daven* from a *siddur* so that he would concentrate better and so that he would not swallow and *nekudos*. (M.B. 2)

Siman 93 Seif 2:

One should stand to *daven* with a sense of awe and submission but not from laughter, light headedness, meaningless matters or in anger. One should be in a state of joy meaning words of consolation found in the Torah e.g. after reading about the redemption from Egypt or following אש"י that mentions that Hashem does the will of those who fear him or that Hashem loves those who love him.

- ❖ It is best to be in a state of awe and submission but at the very least one should not be in a state of laughter; rather one should be experiencing the joy of a *mitzvah*. (M.B. 4)

Siman 93 Seif 3:

One should not begin to *daven* immediately after rendering judgment or after the study of *halacha* so that he will not be distracted; rather he should *daven* immediately following the study of *halachic* rulings. This is also considered *davening* in a state of joy since פקודי הי ישרים משמחי לב.

- ❖ *Halachic* rulings do not involve analysis and dispute so it will not distract someone who is *davening*. However, if one was analyzing a *halacha* and the *tzibbur* begins to *daven* one should *daven* with them. (M.B. 5)

Siman 93 Seif 4:

One who is engaged in communal matters is similar to one who is engaged in Torah study. This means that he can *daven* immediately after he finishes the communal matter since involvement in communal matters is joyful. According to others this comparison means that one who is engaged in communal matters is not required to interrupt to *daven*.

- ❖ The communal matter must be one that will not be distracting during *davening*. (M.B. 6)
- ❖ Authorities follow the second definition. (M.B. 7)
- ❖ If there is no one else to take care of the communal matter one may even miss *davening* and he is not required to make it up since he was exempt as a result of his involvement in the community matter. (M.B. 8)

Stories to Share

Another Form of Charity

ש"ע סי' צ"ב, י': "טוב ליתן צדקה קודם תפילה..."

On today's amud we find that one should give *tzedakah* before prayer, but what should one do when money is very scarce?

A poor man who had nothing to offer did some careful thinking about how to give *tzedakah* before praying and eventually he had a brainstorm. Although he could not give any money, he could do kindness for others. Wouldn't this be considered charity? In his neighborhood shul there was a late night shiur and the synagogue was always left somewhat messy. This poor man decided to clean up the shul. Each morning before *davening* he would put away the seforim and arrange the benches, feeling great since in this manner he could fulfill the *mitzvah*.

When he mentioned this to someone, the person pointed out that doing kindness instead of giving money is not exactly clear. In fact, the Rambam writes specifically to give to a poor person and neither the Shulchan Aruch nor the later authorities deal with giving other types of *tzedakah* or doing other forms of chessed.

When this question reached Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach he ruled that—despite the language of the Rambam—acts of chessed and the like fulfill this just as giving actual money does. "The halachah to give charity before *davening* need not be fulfilled by giving money. It is obvious that one who loans his friend money or does a kindness for his friend has fulfilled this *mitzvah* as well."