



Halacha Highlight

Overview

Davening while sitting or laying down

Shulchan Aruch Siman 94 Seif 6
חולה מתפלל אפילו שוכב על צדו

Someone who is ill may *daven* even while laying on his side

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ו') discusses someone who is ill and as a result cannot stand for *shemone esrei*. He rules that one who is ill may *daven* even while laying on his side as long as he will be able to concentrate on his *davening*. The reason why Shulchan Aruch writes that one should *daven* on his side is that one should not read *shema* while laying on one's back or on one's face (ע' לעיל סי' ס"ג סע' א'). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (נשמת אברהם אור"ח סי' ס"ג) rules that one who is laying on his back but his head is propped up by pillows is not categorized as one who is sleeping on his back. Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg (חידושי בתרא סי' ס"ג) also explains that the prohibition against sleeping on one's back is limited to one whose face is straight up. For this reason it is permitted to sleep on a lazy-boy chair.

Mishnah Berurah (סק"כ) extends this *halacha* to one who is elderly and writes that an elderly person who cannot stand for *davening* should *daven* while sitting but if they have the strength, when it is time to bow they should stand so they could bow properly. Accordingly, Teshuvos Shevet HaLevi (ח"י סי' י"ט) writes that someone who is ill who will not be able to stand for the entire *amidah* on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur should begin the *amidah* while standing. At the point that he realizes that he can no longer stand he should sit. If he can stand again at least when it is time to bow and take three steps back at the end of the *amidah* he should do so (רמ"א סע' ה') but if he does not have even that degree of strength he may remain seated for the duration of the *amidah*.

Stories to Share

Changeable Conditions

ש"ע ס' צ"ד, ו': "חולה מתפלל אפ' שוכב על צדו..."

When people get sick ר"ל they often come up against special circumstances that touch upon halachos that are new to them—and this is especially true when the sick person does not always feel the same way. Sometimes one may feel so weak that he literally cannot stand. But when his weakness passed, he feels fine. As we find on today's amud, a sick person who cannot stand should daven lying on his side. And the halachah is that one should not do anything to disturb his concentration during *shemoneh esrei*. An elderly man wondered what he should do if when he began *shemoneh esrei* he was unable to stand, but he felt fit enough to stand while still in the middle. Should he get up even though this would disturb his concentration?

When this question reached Rav Chaim Kanievsky, זצ"ל, he ruled that he must get up.

The man asked about another occurrence. "What if I can just about stand, but if I do I will have to rush the prayer? If I lie down, though, I will have better concentration throughout my davening. Should I lie down and daven slowly or stand and rush the *tefillah*?"

"Lie down," replied Rav Chaim.

The man went on, "If I am lying down during *shemoneh esrei*, do I need to do my best to bow at *avos* and *modim* or needn't I bother?"

Rav Chaim's response was terse and decisive as always. "If you are able, you should bow slightly at the appropriate times."

שאלת רב, ע' קצ"ד-קצ"ה

Siman 94 Seif 3:

One who cannot face the correct direction should direct his heart towards his Father in Heaven.

Siman 94 Seif 4:

If one was riding a donkey it is unnecessary for him to descend to *daven* even if he has someone to hold the donkey for him; rather he should *daven* as the donkey walks. Similarly, one who is on a boat or a wagon, if he is able he should stand to *daven* but if not he should *daven* while seated. Someone who was walking may *daven* while walking even if he cannot face *Yerushalayim* even though it is not a dangerous area since standing to *daven* will cause him to become distracted that he is unable to continue his journey and will not have proper concentration. This decision must take into account the road, the place, his fear and peace of mind. There is a stringent opinion that requires one to stand for the first *beracha* of the *amidah* and one should follow that opinion if it is not a dangerous place.

❖ Concentration for the first *beracha* is essential and one who is walking will not have such good concentration. (M.B. 17)

Siman 94 Seif 5:

One who was sitting while *davening* on a boat or a wagon who could stand when it is time to bow should do so, so that he could bow from a standing position and take three steps back. Even though one is sitting for the *amidah* if he could stand he should do so to properly fulfill the obligation to bow and take his steps back. If this is not possible, e.g. he is riding on an animal, he should turn the animal back three steps and it is considered as though he took three steps back.

❖ If one is *davening* while walking he should stop for a moment so that he could bow and take his three steps back. (M.B. 18)

Siman 94 Seif 6:

Someone who is ill may *daven* even though he is leaning on his side as long as he will be able to concentrate. (If he is unable to *daven* he should mentally *daven* without reciting the words as the *pasuk* states אמרו בלבבכם על משכבכם.)

❖ An elderly person who cannot stand should sit while he davens and if he can stand when it is time to bow he should strive to do so. (M.B. 20)

❖ It may be that one who davens in his mind b'dieved fulfills his obligation and is not required to repeat his *tefila* even if he recovers from his illness while it is still time to *daven*. (M.B. 21)

Siman 94 Seif 7:

Someone surrounded by rough people who fears that his *tefila* will be interrupted or that his merchandise will be damaged should *daven* while sitting since otherwise he will not have proper concentration. Even though he must take three steps back at the end of his *tefila* he should sit and *daven* and bow.

Siman 94 Seif 8:

One must be careful not to lean on a pillar or friend while *davening*.

❖ Standing while leaning on something is not considered standing. If one leans only slightly, meaning if the item upon which he *leans* was taken he would remain standing it is permitted. According to a second opinion the issue is that he must stand in awe and according to that opinion any leaning is prohibited. (M.B. 22)

❖ One must be careful not to lean on a shtender. The same is true regarding any other circumstance in which standing is required. (M.B. 23)

❖ Someone who is ill and knows that he will have proper concentration if he leans on something may do so but if not he should sit. (M.B. 24)