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

Overview

Siman 235 Seif 2:

It is prohibited to eat half an hour before the time for krias shema. If one began to eat after that time arrived he must interrupt to read shema without the berachos and then resume his meal. Later he will read shema again with the berachos and daven shemone esrei. It is unnecessary to interrupt to daven shemone esrei since he already began to eat but if he did not begin to eat he must interrupt even if he washed his hands. If there will not be time to daven he must interrupt his meal even for shemone esrei.

- The concern is that the meal may take longer than expected or that one may fall asleep and forget to read shema. Taking a snack of fruit or bread the volume of an egg is permitted. (M.B. 16)
- Sleeping is also prohibited as are all of the activities enumerated in siman 232:2. Elya Rabba maintains that before the time arrives it is permitted and all opinions agree that one may learn during the time that is close to the time to read shema. Once the time for shema arrives it is prohibited even to learn if one will daven at home by himself. If one asked a friend who is not learning to remind him to daven it is permitted to study Torah. (M.B. 17)
- If one asked a friend to remind him to daven one may begin a meal even if the time for shema arrived. (M.B. 18)
- Magen Avrohom implies that even on motzai Shabbos one may not begin a meal close to nightfall. Later authorities write that even when one davened early and must repeat shema again after nightfall it is permitted to eat before reading a second time but once nightfall arrives one should be careful to read shema right away. (M.B. 19)
- If one began during the permitted time, i.e. more than ½ hour before nightfall one is not required to interrupt as long as there will be time to read shema after the meal. (M.B. 21)
- Since b'dieved one has all night to read shema there is a greater concern that he will be negligent relying on the fact that he has plenty of time. Therefore, as long as he did not begin to eat he must stop even though he washed his hands. This is true if he did not yet recite the beracha but if he recited the beracha he should not interrupt; rather he should recite hamotzi, eat an olive's volume of bread and then recite shema. (M.B. 24)
- This occurs whether it is close to alos hashachar or whether one anticipates that the meal will continue until amud hashachar. (M.B. 25)

Halacha Highlight

Reminders to read shema

Shulchan Aruch Siman 235 Seif 2
אסור להתחיל לאכל
It is prohibited to begin to eat

Shulchan Aruch writes that one may not begin a meal within ½ an hour of the time to read shema. (מ"ב ס"ק ט"ז) Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ז) adds that it is also prohibited to sleep during that time for the same fear that either the meal or one's sleep will extend for a longer period of time than expected and one will miss reading shema. He also adds that all of the activities that are prohibited before davening mincha (See siman 232:2) apply before one has read shema at night. Elya Rabba maintains that ½ hour before the time for shema these activities are prohibited and all opinions agree that one may study Torah during the ½ hour before the time for shema. Once the time for shema arrives it is prohibited for one to study Torah if he plans to daven ma'ariv at home out of fear that he will forget to read shema. However, if he asks a friend who is not studying Torah to remind him to read shema it is permitted for him to study Torah even after the time for shema arrived.

Poskim note that any reminder that will assure that one will not forget to read shema are effective and may be relied upon. For example, if someone sets an alarm that will go off after he finishes his meal and before he goes to sleep it is permitted for him to eat even though he has not yet read shema. Similarly, if one asks a friend to call him at a certain time to remind him to read shema, the restrictions do not apply. Leaving one's self a note in a place where he is certain to see it or leaving a siman on his garment as a reminder are also effective and permits one to engage in one of these activities before reading shema. Having a regular time to daven ma'ariv is also an effective reminder and the regular restrictions do not apply (פסקי תשובות אות ח').