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Time for Kerias Shema

The braisa had stated: [When is the beginning time for kerias shema in the evening? Rabbi Eliezer says: It is from the time the sanctity of Shabbos begins (bein hashemoshos; the time when it is questionable if it day or night and all manual labor must cease). Rabbi Yehoshua says: It is from the time that the Kohanim are purified to eat terumah. Rabbi Meir says: It is from the time that the Kohanim immerse themselves in the mikvah in order to eat terumah in the evening.] Rabbi Yehudah challenges Rabbi Meir: But behold, they immerse themselves during the day (and it is not yet time to go to sleep)?

The Gemora asks: Rabbi Yehudah's objection is a valid one! [How would R' Meir respond to this?]

The Gemora answers that Rabbi Meir was saying as follows: Do you (R' Yehudah) think that I am referring to what you maintain is regarded as bein hashemoshos (which is the time period that it takes for a person to walk a half a mil before the appearance of the stars)? [No, I am not, for then, their immersion would be occurring during the daytime, and that would be too early to recite the kerias shema of the evening!] I am referring to the bein hashemoshos of Rabbi Yosi, for Rabbi Yosi said: Bein Hashemoshos is like the weak blinking of the eye, which means that night enters and day departs, and one cannot tell whether it is day or night. [R' Meir holds like R' Yosi that bein hashemoshos is immediately prior to tzeis hakochavim, and therefore, the time after the Kohanim's immersion is already suitable for the recital of kerias shema, for then it is night.]

The Gemora asks: But there is now a contradiction in the opinion of Rabbi Meir (for before he said that the time to recite the shema is when people begin to eat their bread on Erev Shabbos, which is after the stars come out, and here it was stated in his name that

the time is when the Kohanim immerse themselves, which is before the stars come out)!?

The Gemora answers: There are two Tannaim who disagree as to what Rabbi Meir's opinion really is.

The Gemora asks: But there is now a contradiction in the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer ((for in the braisa he said that the time to recite the shema is when the time the sanctity of Shabbos begins - bein hashemoshos, which is before the stars come out, and in the Mishna he stated that the time is when the Kohanim are purified to eat terumah, which is after the stars come out)!?)

The Gemora answers: There are two Tannaim who disagree as to what Rabbi Meir's opinion really is.

Alternatively, you can answer that the first clause of the Mishna (where it cited the opinion that shema cannot be recited until the time when the Kohanim are purified to eat terumah) is not the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer (and he is only cited there regarding the latest time one can recite the shema, which is until the first watch). (2b – 3a)

Three Watches in the Night

The Mishna had stated: When is the proper time for reciting kerias shema in the evening? It begins from the time that the Kohanim (who were tamei) enter to eat the terumah until the end of "the first watch" of the night.

The Gemora states that the novelty of the Mishna is that just as there are signs in the Heaven as to when one watch concludes and the next watch begins (the Ministering Angels would sing praises to Hashem; they were divided up into three groups), so too, there are watches on earth (and it is recognizable to all people as to when one watch concludes and the next watch begins).

The *Gemora* cites a corroborating *braisa*: Rabbi Eliezer says: The night has three watches, and at each watch the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and roars like a lion. For it is written [Yirmiyah 25:30]: *The Lord shall roar from above, and from His Holy Habitation He shall give forth His voice; He shall roar over His habitation.* And the sign for recognizing these watches are as follows: In the first watch, the donkey brays; in the second, the dogs bark; in the third, the baby nurses from its mother, and the woman talks with her husband.

The *Gemora* asks: Which part of the “watch” was Rabbi Eliezer describing? If it was the beginning of each watch, why does the first one require a sign? The night begins at twilight! If it was the conclusion of each watch, why does the last one require a sign? The night concludes at dawn!

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Eliezer is describing the end of the first watch, the beginning of the third watch and the middle of the second watch.

Alternatively, the *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Eliezer is describing the end of all three watches. And if you will ask: why is it necessary to provide a sign for the end of the last watch? What practical difference does it make? It can be used for the recital of *kerias shema* for one who is sleeping in a dark room and is uncertain when the correct time for the recital arrives; once a woman is talking to her husband or a child is nursing from its mother, he will get up and recite *kerias shema*.

Rav Yitzchak Bar Shmuel said in the name of Rav: There are three watches during the night, and at each and every watch, Hashem sits and roars like a lion, and He says: “Woe to my children that because of their sins, I destroyed My House, and burned My Sanctuary, and I exiled them among the nations of the world.” (3a)

Eliyahu and Rabbi Yosi

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Rabbi Yosi said: I was once walking on the road and I entered one of the ruins of Yerushalayim to pray. Eliyahu, who is remembered for good, came and waited by the door until I finished praying. After I finished my prayer he said to me: “Peace unto you my Rebbe.” And I replied to him: “Peace unto you my Rebbe and my master.” And he said to me: “My son, why did you enter this ruin (*which is a dangerous place*)?” I said to him: “I entered in order to pray.” And he said to me: “You should have prayed on the road.” And I said to him: “I was afraid that the

people who would pass by would interrupt me.” And he said to me: “You should have prayed an abridged prayer.”

At that time, Rabbi Yosi said: I learned from him three things: I learned that one should not enter a ruin; and I learned that one is permitted to pray on the road; and I learned that one who prays on the road should pray an abridged prayer.

Rabbi Yosi continues: Eliyahu said to me: “My son, what sound did you hear in this ruin?” And I said to him: “I heard a Heavenly voice moaning like a dove and saying: “Woe to my children that because of their sins, I destroyed My House, and burned My Sanctuary, and I exiled them among the nations of the world.” And he said to me: “By your life, and the life of your head, it was not only at that moment that the Voice says that, but it is said three times on each and every day. And not only that, but when the people of Israel enter their Synagogues and Houses of Study, and they answer (*yehe shmei hagadol mevorach*) May His great Name be blessed, the Holy One, Blessed is He nods his head and says, ‘Fortunate is the king that is praised in this manner in his house, what is there for the father who exiles his children, and woe unto the children who have been exiled from their father’s table.’” (3a)

Three Reasons for Avoiding a Ruin

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: It is for three reasons that one should not enter a ruin: People might suspect him of entering there to meet a harlot; there is a danger that the ruin might collapse; and there are demons lurking in the area.

The *Gemora* asks: Because of suspicion? Isn’t the prohibition of entering because of the danger that it might collapse sufficient enough reason not to enter?

The *Gemora* answers: We need the reason of suspicion for a case when the ruins are from a new structure (*where there would be no element of danger*).

The *Gemora* asks: Wouldn’t the reason based upon the demons be sufficient in that case?

The *Gemora* answers: We are referring to a case where there are two people (*and there would be no fear from demons*).

The *Gemora* asks: Accordingly, there should be no concern for suspicion either (*for a woman may seclude herself with two men*,



for each one of the men will be embarrassed to sin in front of the other one)?

The *Gemora* answers: We are referring to a case where the two people have a very low moral character (*and cannot be halachically trusted to be secluded with one woman*).

The *Gemora* asks: Because there is a danger that it might collapse? Isn't the prohibition of entering based upon the demons or suspicion sufficient enough reason not to enter?

The *Gemora* answers: We are referring to a case where it is a new ruin (*and there is no concern that it will collapse*) and there are two people with a high moral character there.

The *Gemora* asks: If there are two people, there should be no concern on account of the demons?

The *Gemora* answers: In a place where the demons are usually found, there is still reason to be concerned that the people will be harmed.

Alternatively, you can answer that we are referring to one person, and the case we are dealing with is with a new ruin that is located in the fields. There is no concern for suspicion, for women are not usually found there, but we still are concerned because of the demons. (3a – 3b)

Watches during the Night

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The night has four watches (*each one being three hours long*); these are the words of Rebbe. Rabbi Nassan says: The night has three watches.

The *Gemora* provides the Scriptural source for Rabbi Nassan's opinion. It is written [Shoftim 7:19]: *Now Gideon came with the hundred men that were with him to the edge of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch.* If there is a "middle" watch, there must only be three watches, and not four. Rebbe would respond that the verse only means that it is one of the two middle watches.

The *Gemora* provides the Scriptural source for Rebbe's opinion. Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rabbi Ami who said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: One verse states [Tehillim 119:62]: *At midnight, I (David) rise to give thanks to You for Your just judgments.* And a different verse states [ibid. v. 148]: *My eyes preceded the watches to speak of Your word.* [It would seem from

the latter verse that when he woke up, there were still two watches remaining!?] How can this be reconciled (*if he rose at midnight, there should be less than two watches remaining*)? This proves that there are actually four watches during the night.

Rabbi Nassan would respond that he holds in accordance with Rabbi Yehoshua. For we learned in a *Mishna*: Rabbi Yehoshua said: One may recite the morning *kerias shema* until three hours into the day, for that is the time that kings wake up. The verse is stating that King David, who woke up at midnight, would be arising two watches prior to the other kings. For there would be six hours of the night and two hours during the day, which totals two watches.

Rav Ashi suggests (*in explaining Rabbi Nassan*) that a watch and a half can also be referred to as "watches." (3b)

Speaking Before the Deceased

Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rabbi Ami who said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: One is not permitted to speak in the presence of the deceased except matters pertaining to the deceased.

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana qualified this ruling to be referring only to matters of Torah (*for then, it would be like you are mocking the deceased that he cannot learn Torah or perform mitzvos*); however, with respect of worldly matters, there is no problem.

Others say that Rabbi Abba bar Kahana qualified this ruling differently: This prohibition is applicable even to Torah matters, and it is certainly relevant to worldly matters. (3b)

Midnight

The *Gemora* asks: Did David wake up at midnight? A different verse seems to say that he woke up in the early evening!?

Rabbi Oshaya answers in the name of Rabbi Acha: David was saying that he never slept past midnight (*for he was always up sometime before then*).

Rabbi Zeira answers: Up until midnight, David would doze like a horse; afterwards, he would be as strong as a lion (*fully awake*).

Rav Ashi answers: Up until midnight, he would occupy himself studying Torah; afterwards he would sing to Hashem and praise Him.

The *Gemora* asks: And did David actually know when midnight was? If Moshe didn't know, is it possible that David knew?

The *Gemora* proves that Moshe didn't know, for it is written [Shmos 11:4]: *At about midnight I shall go forth into the midst of Egypt*. Why did Moshe say "about midnight"? It cannot be that Hashem told Moshe "about midnight," for is there any uncertainty before Heaven? Rather, it must be that Hashem told Moshe "at midnight," and Moshe went ahead and said "at about midnight"!?

The *Gemora* answers: David knew when it was midnight, for he had a sign which notified him, as Rav Acha bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida: There was a harp hanging over David's bed and when it reached midnight, the north wind would blow on the harp and it played by itself. At that point, David would get up and study Torah until the break of dawn. After the break of dawn, the *Chachamim* came to him and said: "Our master, the king! Your nation Israel requires sustenance." David replied, "Go and sustain each other." They said back to him, "A handful cannot satisfy a lion, nor can a pit be filled up with its own earth." He said to them, "Then go out and stretch your hand against the enemy (for plunder)." They immediately took counsel with Achitofel (as to their battle strategy) and consulted the *Sanhedrin* (for permission and that they should pray for them) and questioned the Urim VeTumim (if they would be successful or not). (3b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Yehei Shmei Rabbah

Rava (*Gemora Sukkah Daf 39*) rules that one should not pause when answering by *kaddish* between *yehei shmei rabbah* and *mevarech* since the *mevarech* will be disconnected and have no meaning by itself. Rav Safra disagreed with him and maintains that even with a pause the meaning is still the same – The Great Name of Hashem should be blessed.

The Rama (O"C 56) rules that one should not pause in between those words. The Magen Avraham asks that this is against the conclusion of the *Gemora*. He answers that in actuality, it depends on the meaning of *yehei shmei rabbah mevarech*. According to the Machzor Vitri (Tosfos Brochos 3a), the meaning is that Hashem's name should become great, by becoming complete. In the future, Hashem's throne will be complete and that is what we are praying

for. According to this, one should not pause between *yehei shmei* and *rabbah*.

The Magen Avraham concludes that the explanation in the Rama could be that one should not pause for longer than one breath and this would be consistent with our *Gemora*.

The Harp and the Northern Wind

The *Gemora* asks: And did David actually know when midnight was? If Moshe didn't know, is it possible that David knew? [Although it is possible that David had some type of clock, and we know that such things existed in those times as is evident by the Zohar in Lech Lecho, where he mentions a type of alarm clock, which functioned through water, nevertheless, the Zohar states that it was impossible to determine the precise moment of midnight through the use of those man-made items!?]

The *Gemora* answers: David knew when it was midnight, for he had a sign which notified him, as Rav Acha bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida: There was a harp hanging over David's bed and when it reached midnight, the north wind would blow on the harp and it played by itself. At that point, David would get up and study Torah until the break of dawn.

The Commentators ask: If so, why couldn't Moshe make use of a harp as well?

The Satmar Rebbe answers based on the following Yonasan ben Uziel in Parshas Yisro: On the night that the Jewish people were about to leave Egypt, the clouds lifted them up and brought them to the place where the Beis HaMikdash would be built in order for them to offer the *korban pesach*.

The *Gemora* in *Yevamos* (72a) states that for all forty years that the Jewish people were in the Wilderness, the northern wind did not blow for them. One of the reasons cited was because the wind would cause the Clouds of Honor to scatter.

Accordingly, it can be explained that the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the northern wind could not blow, for if it would have, it would have scattered the Clouds of Honor, and they would not have been able to "fly" to Yerushalayim. It was for this reason that Moshe could not determine the precise time for midnight on that night through the usage of a harp, for the harp would begin to play when the northern wind blew on it, and that night, the northern wind did not blow at all.



When is a Half a Whole?

Rav Ashi suggests (*in explaining Rabbi Nossen*) that a watch and a half can also be referred to as "watches."

Reb Tzvi Pesach Frank in his response (*Har Tzvi § 66*) writes that if one reads two and a half verses in the Torah by *Minchah* on *Shabbos*, it is regarded as if he read three verses, and he has discharged his obligation.

He proves this from our *Gemora*, which states that one and a half watches is regarded as two watches. Evidently, a half of something is counted as a whole.

The Mayan Haberocha challenges this from a Chasam Sofer (*responsa § 46*) where he states that a half is only regarded as a whole with respect to time, e.g. a half of an hour can be reckoned as an hour. However, with respect to factual things, a half is not a whole. It is for this reason that one cannot use a loaf and a half for *lechem mishneh* on *Shabbos*!?

DAILY MASHAL

David's Sleep

The *Gemora* states Dovid HaMelech dozed like a horse. It is known that a horse's nap is sixty respirations. The Zohar states that David did not wish to sleep more than sixty respirations, because sleep is one sixtieth of death, and David did not wish to taste death.

Rabbi Yonasan Eibschutz writes in *Ya'aros Devash* that the Medrash states that when the angels observed Adam HaRishon, they wished to declare on him *kadosh*, the Holy One i.e. that he was g-dly and thus eternal. For this reason HaShem cast a slumber on Adam, to demonstrate to the angels that Adam was mortal and would eventually die. Nonetheless, had Adam not sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad, he would have lived forever. For this reason, writes Reb Yonasan, in the future there will only be day and no night, because the purpose of night in this world is for sleep, and in the future the righteous will not experience death. Since sleep is one sixtieth of death, in the future there will be no need for night.

It is noteworthy that regarding the sixty respirations, the *Biur Halachah* (O"C 4) brings down that some say that this means three hours; some say that it is a half hour; others say that it is three minutes. The *Artzos Hachaim* states that it is six hours.