
Fixing a Place for Prayer

ברכות דף ו': ושלחן ערוך סימן צ' סעיף י"ט [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

One is to fix a place for davening. What if someone is in my place?

First of all, according to the רבינו יונה, this does not refer to a shul, but to one who prays at home. Even according to the רא"ש, like whom the הלכה is fixed, that even in a shul, one should have a fixed seat in which he davens, within 4 אמות [about 2 metres] is considered the same place. Seemingly, one should not kick the visitor out of his place, often resulting in hurt and embarrassment, but rather should take the seat in front or next to him.

In the final analysis, should one have a fixed spot in his home?

Yes. Anyone who needs to pray at home, should have a designated spot, somewhere he or she will not be disturbed by noise and the alike.

Running To and From Shul

ברכות דף ו': ושלחן ערוך סימן צ' סעיף י"ב [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

There is a מצוה to run to shul, even on שבת. Does this mean the whole way there?

The פרישה, based on the simple reading of the ספר היראה of the רבינו יונה, maintains that there is no point to run the whole way, for who knows that he is running to shul? Rather, as he approaches the shul, he should then begin to run. Others disagree and state that the רבינו יונה means to say that one's alacrity should increase as he approaches the shul. However, the מצוה to run has nothing to do with another's impression and therefore, the מצוה begins when he leaves his home. [See משנה ברורה and אל"י רבה]

In the morning, when one is holding his טלית and תפילין, however, then all would agree that the מצוה applies the whole way to shul. [According to the פרישה, on שבת, if it is not clear that he is running to shul, is it forbidden to run the whole way? Would there be a difference if he was running late? What do you think?]

The משנה ברורה adds that either way, one should ensure to leave in good time, and not stop along the way to talk to people, often resulting in arriving late and missing קדיש and קדושה.

When leaving the shul, one should not run. Are there any exceptions?

The reason for the above הלכה is so that shul should not appear like a burden. Hence, even to walk with large steps is also forbidden. [Note that חז"ל warn that it is bad for the eyesight. See פרי מגדים who writes that this would not apply to someone who naturally takes large steps.]

However, if one is running in order to return quickly, to go to the בית המדרש or attend to any other מצוה, one need not be concerned with what others will think.

Can one run in the shul?

No. Even for the purposes of a מצוה, one should walk about, with awe and respect.