
To Daven with Respect and Humility

ברכות דף י"י: ושלחן ערוך סימן צ"ה סעיפים א' וד' וסימן צ"י סעיפים א' – ב' [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

May one stand on the **בימה** to daven?

Generally speaking, praying on a raised platform is a sign of גאווה and is therefore forbidden. However, lower than 3 טפחים, is still considered to be part of the level ground. Similarly, a platform that is raised but is either surrounded with מחיצות, or it is 4 אמות squared, becomes its own domain, such as an attic, and presents no problem. Subsequently, a **בימה** will generally be fine, though if it is new and as of yet, does not have מחיצות, it may be forbidden. For a שמש whose fixed place is on the **בימה**, the פרי מגדים writes that there is no issue.

Does this apply to praying on top of a chair too?

כלים, including beds and chairs, have an additional issue; namely, one may be concentrating on not falling off and, thus, be unable to focus on the תפלה. Hence, there are those, such as the שלחן ערוך, who rule them out completely, even if they are lower than 3 טפחים. Although there is a dissenting lenient view, the אלי רבה sides with the former opinion.

Are there any exceptions to these rules?

An ill or elderly person is mentioned as an exception. It *may* be that even in the case of the כלים, we do not bother them to have to descend; rather, they should stand or sit, as they feel comfortable. [Alternatively, where there is concern that they will not be able to concentrate, even they may not pray on the chair.]

The שליח ציבור or anyone else, whose voice must be audible to all, may also stand on a raised platform. As to whether he may even stand on a chair, this is a matter of dispute. [The common מנהג, however, writes the מגן אברהם, was for the חזן to actually daven from a lower position, so as to conform to the verse, ד', ממעמקים קראתיו ד',]

How and when is one to daven with his feet together?

The הלכה follows the opinion that one must recite שמונה עשרה with one's feet together, side by side, such that his 'single foot' will appear like that of the מלאכים. The פרי מגדים writes that this applies, even if he is having to pray sitting down, such as in a wagon. Additionally, in such a case, one must be particularly careful not to take a lackadaisical approach to davening, such as leaning back or to the sides, stretching out or crossing his legs; rather, he should sit with a bent head.

The תרומת הדשן adds that for קדושה, one's feet should also take on the form of the מלאכים; after all, we are copying the מלאכים who say קדושה up above.

If one did not daven with his feet together, must he repeat the שמונה עשרה?

Although the ב"ח takes a stringent line on this matter, the הלכה follows those who rule that one has still fulfilled the מצוה of תפלה.

How does one approach the שמונה עשרה?

The מהרי"ל would arise, in anticipation of the שמונה עשרה, when the שליח ציבור would begin תהלות לקל עליון. Likewise, at מנחה, he would stand up as soon as the שליח ציבור took to the עמוד and in מעריב, when the שליח ציבור began קדיש. Now is also the time to blow one's nose, clean one's mouth and the alike.

As if drawing close to the king, one then takes three steps forward, before he commences the עמידה. Strictly speaking, says the אלי רבה, one need not take three steps back; nonetheless, the prevalent מנהג is to first take the steps back and then forward.

Eating and Drinking before Davening

ברכות דף י': ושלחן ערוך סימן פ"ט סעיפים ג' – ה' [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

From when does the איסור to eat or drink kick in?

Based on the זוהר and the teachings of the אריז"ל, even if one arises at midnight, he should not eat at all. The פרי מגדים writes that this does not apply to one who did not go to bed, and even for one who did so, perhaps drinking is permitted. This is all from the point of view of קבלה, and for one who is able to adhere to this, should do so. The strict הלכה, however, is more lenient, such that one may eat or drink until daybreak, even on שבת [at least before davening, when the מצוה of קידוש has not yet arrived]. However, there are certain restrictions:

If one will not finish his סעודה before day-break, the מגן אברהם is unsure whether he may begin [See לבושי שרד]. However, once one reaches within half an hour of עלות השחר, even if he will finish in good time, one may not eat an amount that constitutes a סעודה; namely, a כביצה [size of an egg] of food or drink. After עלות השחר, even the smallest amount, a יטעימה, is forbidden, until one has recited the שמונה עשרה; not the mere recital of some ברכות, as is the opinion of the lenient view.

For one who began before עלות השחר, if he has already bentched and is now just drinking, he must stop immediately. If he has not yet recited ברכת המזון, there is a lenient opinion, that even if he begun באיסור, at a time that he should not have done so [as explained by the מגן אברהם, though the פרי מגדים disagrees with this extra assertion], he need not stop, other than for the מצות דאורייתא; to

lay תפילין and say שמע קריאת. However, the אחרונים side with the stringent ruling that even if he started בהיתר, in the case of שחרית, one must stop with the arrival of עלות השחר. [For one who wrongly began a sumptuous meal within half an hour of עלות השחר, the ביאור הלכה remains unsure as to whether he must stop immediately upon realising his mistake, or whether he may continue until עלות השחר.]

Is there anything that is permitted before davening?

The prohibition is derived from the verse, וְנִאתִי הַשְּׁלֶכֶת אַחֲרַי גֵּןךְ; you have cast Me behind your back. However, חז"ל saw reason only to forbid food and drink which is seen to be ידרך גאוה and therefore instructed to read the verse, וְנִאתִי. This rules out any food, but leaves room for certain drinks.

Unsweetened water is most definitely permitted. Likewise, plain tea or coffee, drunk so as to aid one's concentration, especially in places where this is common practice, is not seen as an act of גאוה. Although the רדב"ז describes the addition of milk and sugar to the tea or coffee, as an act of 'supreme גאוה', the משנה ברורה writes that seemingly one may place a little sugar into his mouth, so as to sweeten the drink. [It is important to note that since nowadays, the addition of tea or coffee is so standard and not a luxury whatsoever, the פוסקים see no problem with this.]

Drinking beer is most definitely forbidden. [Whether fruit juices are permitted nowadays, is discussed in the פוסקים.] Moreover, the משנה ברורה warns against drinking even tea or coffee in the company of many friends, for worry that this will divert his mind from the upcoming תפלה and worse still, could lead to missing the latest times for שמע קריאת and תפלה.

What is the זין for the ill or weak?

Something necessary for medicinal purposes is in no way interpreted, as being גאוה. The מגן אברהם qualifies that even if it is 'quality' food, since the intention is for רפואה, it is permitted, even if he is not a complete חולה; even if he is simply feeling weak. Even הרב חיים ויטל, the primary disciple of the אריז"ל, is reported to have eaten or drunk a little in order to strengthen his heart. Furthermore, the חיי אדם permits, if necessary, the eating or drinking for one who wishes to learn before davening; otherwise, there will be ביטול תורה.

However, the ביאור הלכה notes that the גמרא brings two sources for the prohibition. The first is the aforementioned, which the גמרא links to the need to recite שמע before eating. The איסור to eat before the שמונה עשרה is learnt from a different verse: לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל הַדָּם. The משנה ברורה and ביאור הלכה therefore advise that even if one must eat for medical reasons, one should at least recite שמע, or at least the first paragraph, before hand.

The ביאור הלכה quotes the פרי חדש and פרי מגדים, who say that even if he could wait until after the תפלה, as long as his intention is for רפואה, he need not worry. However, the חיי אדם writes that on the contrary, one who is naturally weak, should ideally daven alone early, eat and then go to shul to hear קדושה, קדיש and other דברי קדושה.

If one is hungry, may he eat?

If he is *very* hungry or thirsty [as explained by the לבוש], to the extent that he will be unable to concentrate on his תפלה, the רמב"ם writes that he should eat or drink, first. However, since nowadays we generally do not follow the רמב"ם's ruling to forbid davening in the event that one will be unable to focus as he should, the שלחן ערוך downgrades this to a היתר, for one who wishes to eat or drink; not an obligation. However, the אלי רבה maintains that the דין has not changed and one *should* do so.

The Absolute Latest Time for Shema

ברכות דף י': ושלחן ערוך סימן נ"ח סעיפים ו' – ז' [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

רמב"ם הלכות קריאת שמע פרק א הלכה יג

הקורא אחר שלש שעות ביום אפילו היה אנוס לא יצא ידי חובת קריאת שמע בעונתו, אלא הרי הוא כקורא בתורה, ומברך לפניו ולאחריה כל היום אפילו איחר וקרא אחר שלש שעות.

Until when can one read the שמע?

As discussed earlier [see 'Ideal Time for Shema in the Morning'], one only has a quarter of the daylight hours to fulfil the מצוה of שמע. Nonetheless, if one failed to do so, though not obligated and although he will receive no more reward than one who reads any other פסוקים of the תורה, the לבוש advises that one *should* still be שמע, when he subsequently remembers. Moreover, the third פרשה of the שמע, which deals with the remembering of מצרים, has no restrictions and can be read for the מצוה, any time in the day.

There is an opinion that, one who, by mistake, failed to read the שמע, can even make 'תשלומין', for with תפלה. This would mean that following the שמע of the evening, he reads it again for the sake of the daytime שמע that he missed. However, the Vilna Gaon and Chida side with the opposing opinion that this dispensation is limited to תפלה.

What about the ברכות of שמע?

Based on the יסוד of the רשב"א, that the ברכות are not intrinsically connected, like a ברכת המצוה, to the שמע, it follows that they follow the timeframe of תפלה. Thus, one can most definitely say them until the fourth hour of the day, as is the ruling of the רא"ש. For one who, through no fault of his own, missed the fourth hour, the ביאור הלכה writes that possibly, one could rely on the משכנות יעקב, who allows up until midday. Although the פרי חדש rules like the רמב"ם, who allows the whole day, this opinion is not accepted. One who recited the ברכות beyond the latest time, say the רא"ש and טור, has made ברכות לבטלה.