

❧ chapter five ❧

The Halachos of קריאת שמע על המיטה

The Mitzvah

The Gemara in Meseches Brachos quotes R' Yehoshua ben Levi who says, "Even though one has recited *krias shema* in *shul* (during *Maariv*) it is a *mitzvah* to recite it again upon his bed (prior to going to sleep at night)." The Gemara derives this from a *posuk* in *Tehillim* which states, "רגזו – ואל תחטאו אמרו בלבבכם על משכבכם ודומו סלה – Tremble and do not sin, reflect in your hearts while on your beds, and be utterly silent (i.e. with the sleep that follows)." The Gemara continues: "R' Yitzchok said, If one recites *krias shema* on his bed, it is as if he is holding a two-edged sword in his hand (to protect against the evils of the night)". The essence of *krias shema al hamitah* is the *birchas hamapil* and the first *parsha* of *krias shema*. Some of the other portions of *krias shema al hamitah* can be traced back to the Gemara (e.g. יהי נועם, יושב בסתר, נועם), while some other parts can be traced back to the *Rishonim*.¹

The Obligation

Men, women, and children alike are obligated to recite the first *parsha* of *krias shema* and *hamapil* every night prior to going

to sleep.² The *Mishna Berurah* writes that it is customary to recite *all three parshios* of *krias shema*. The reason for this is because *krias shema al hamitah* is said for protection, and the 248 words that are in *krias shema* correspond to the 248 organs of the human body. However, being that the three *parshios* of *krias shema* only equal to 245 words, there is a dispute among the *poskim* as to what should be added to complete the 248 words.³ Some *poskim* hold that it is best to recite א-ל to complete the 248 words.⁴ There are some who hold that one should recite ה' twice to complete the 248 words, being that א-ל מלך נאמן is not part of the actual *krias shema*. Furthermore, there are others who recite ה' א-ל לוקיכם twice while not reciting אמת at all, being that אמת is not in conjunction with any following paragraph (i.e. אמת ויציב, אמת ואמונה).⁵ The custom of most people is to recite א-ל מלך נאמן.⁶

It suffices for one who is ill or one who is an *o'nes* to merely recite *hamapil* and the first *parsha* of *krias shema*.⁶

2. שעה"צ שם ס"ק ט"ז.

3. רמ"א סי' ס"א סעי' ג, ועי' מ"ב סי' רל"ט סק"א.

4. עי' רמ"א ומ"ב שם בס"א. ועי' ילקוט יוסף סי' רל"ט.

5. שער הכולל על שולחן ערוך הרב פל"ו ס"ק ד', ועי' מ"ב סי' ס"א סק"ח,

ועי' שם בס"ק י'.

6. מ"ב סי' רל"ט סק"ט.

1. גמ' ברכות דף ס, ועי' שבועות טו, ועי' מס' ברכות ד. ועי' שו"ע ומ"ב בס"י רל"ט.

An *onan* (i.e. a person who lost one of the seven *kerovim*, where the deceased was not buried yet) is required to recite the entire *krias shema al hamitah* (including the *birchas hamapil*).⁷

Reciting the *Posukim* and *Tefillos* Written in the *Siddurim* after Reciting *Krias Shema*

The *Mishnah Berurah* writes that it is customary to recite *mizmorim* to protect oneself against any harm or danger during the night. There are some *posukim* that are mentioned in the *Gemara* as being part of *krias shema al hamitah* (e.g. ויהי נועם יושב בסתר) that everyone is accustomed to say. However, there are various *minhagim* with regard to some of the other *posukim* and *tefilos* one must recite.⁸ Each person should follow their own *minhag* with regard to reciting the additional *posukim* and *tefilos*.

Reciting *Krias Shema al Hamitah* on *Pesach*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Tisha B'av*

On the first night of *Pesach* one need only recite *hamapil* and the first *parsha* of *krias shema*.⁹ However, there are some *poskim* who suggest that one should recite all three *parshios* of *krias shema* on *Pesach* night.¹⁰

Some *poskim* suggest that on *Yom Kippur* one should recite the *posuk* of *baruch shem* in *krias shema* out loud, as is done during all the other *tefilos* of *Yom Kippur*.¹¹

On the night of *Tisha B'av* one is required to recite the entire *krias shema al hamitah*. One need not worry that it may be considered learning (since it contains many *posukim* from *Tanach*) and that one may not

learn on *Tisha B'av*, since *krias shema al hamitah* is considered a *tefilah*.¹²

One Who Goes to Sleep During the Day

One who goes to sleep during the day (after *alos hashachar*) does not recite the *birchas hamapil*, but should nevertheless recite *krias shema*. Furthermore, it is preferable that one recite ויהי נועם and יושב בסתר.¹³ It would seem that this *halacha* only applies for one who goes to sleep during the day occasionally. However, a night worker who remains awake all night on a regular basis and goes to sleep during the day, would be required to recite the *birchas hamapil*.¹⁴

It is questionable if one should recite *krias shema al hamitah* if he goes to bed before *alos hashachar* but will not fall asleep until after *alos hashachar*.¹⁵

A question arises when one *davens Maariv* while it is still day (i.e. after *plag haMincha*) and wishes to go to sleep while it is still day. Being that he has not yet fulfilled the *krias shema* of *Maariv Min HaTorah* according to many *shitos*, he is forbidden to go to sleep unless he will be woken up in the middle of the night, either by an appointed reliable person or by an alarm clock.¹⁶ One who made the necessary arrangements to be woken up may recite the entire *krias shema al hamitah* prior to going to sleep. Even though he is going to sleep while it is still day, he is nevertheless permitted to recite it, since most of his sleep will occur during the nighttime, and *krias shema al hamitah* is a protection regardless of whether he has fulfilled his *chiyuv* yet.¹⁷

12. יסוד ושורש העבודה שער ט' פ"ב, ובשרית רבבות אפרים ח"א סי' ש"פ.

13. מ"ב רל"ט סק"ח, ולכאורה הוא סותר את עצמו בסי' רל"א במ"ב סק"ג, וצ"ע.

14. כך שמעתי בשם הגר"ד פיינשטיין שליט"א.

15. ע"י ביאור הלכה שם ד"ה סמוך, שנשאר בצ"ע אם אמר ק"ש על המטה, וע"י שרית משיב הלכה ח"א סי' תי"ט דלא יברך, וע"י א"א מבוטשאטש שודאי יברך.

16. ע"י ברכות דף ד: משי"כ שם בענין מי שאכל קימעה וכו'.

17. שמעתי מפוסקי זמנינו שליט"א שמי שהולך לישון כשעוד יום וישן במשך הלילה שיאמר ברכת המפיל קודם שהולך לישון, וכן משמע

7. שרית מנחת שלמה ח"א סימן צ"א סי' כ"ה סק"ט.

8. ע"י שבועות דף טו, וע"י שו"ע רל"ט סעי' א'.

9. רמ"א סי' תפ"א סעי' ב', ובמ"ב סק"ד.

10. בן איש חי פרשת צו סעי' ל"ח, ועיין הגדה בית בריסק עמ' תח.

11. נטעי גבריאל הלכות יום כיפור.

One who davens *Maariv* while it is still day (i.e. after *plag haMincha*) is required *Min HaTorah* to repeat all three *parshios* of *krias shema* and have the proper *kavana*. (It is important to note that one who recited *krias shema* while it was still day must repeat it when its proper time arrives, even if he is accustomed to recite the entire *krias shema* every night at his bedside prior to going to sleep).¹⁸

The Proper Order of *Krias Shema al Hamitah*

The *Mishnah Berurah* quotes a *machlokes haposkim* whether one should recite *hamapil* before or after reciting *krias shema* and all the *posukim*. The *Mishnah Berurah* concludes that it depends on each person's behavior. If one habitually falls asleep while reciting *krias shema al hamitah*, then it is best that he recite it before saying *krias shema*. However, if one normally does not fall asleep while reciting *krias shema al hamitah*, he should recite it at the end (i.e. as close as possible to falling asleep).¹⁹

One Who has Difficulty Falling Asleep

One should preferably recite *hamapil* immediately before going to sleep. One who can't fall asleep immediately should either recite the first *parsha* of *krias shema* repeatedly (without the *posuk* of *shema yisroel*), recite *pesukim* by heart, or think in learning until he falls asleep.²⁰ Although it is permitted to think in learning, nevertheless, it is preferable that one refrain from learning from a *sefer* once *hamapil* has been said.²¹ This *halacha* is only applicable to those who have the *minhag* to recite *hamapil* before *krias shema*. However, one who can't fall asleep and has the *minhag* to say *hamapil* after reciting *krias shema* and

all the *posukim*, should only think in learning and should not recite the first *parsha* of *krias shema* repeatedly or say *pesukim* by heart. The reason for this is because the purpose of this *minhag* is so that there should not be any interruption between the *bracha* of *hamapil* and the actual sleep.²²

One need not worry if he does not fall asleep immediately after reciting *hamapil*, since he is considered an *o'nes*.²³ However, one who is legitimately afraid that he might not sleep at all that night should only recite *krias shema* and not *hamapil*. Therefore, one who is traveling on an airplane, train, or bus, and has in mind to sleep for at least a half hour is required to recite the entire *krias shema al hamitah*, even if he may wake up in the middle of the night, and even if he is fully clothed or it won't be a pleasant sleep.²⁴ However, if he is not sure if he will fall asleep at all, he is not required to recite the *birchas hamapil*, but should recite *krias shema*.²⁵

Once one has fallen asleep and has already recited *hamapil*, then even if he wakes up in the middle of the night, he does not need to repeat *hamapil*, provided that he was not *mafsik* prior to going back to sleep.²⁶

Interruptions after Reciting *Krias Shema al Hamitah*

After reciting *krias shema* one should not be *mafsik* unless it is of utmost importance. One who is *mafsik* must recite *krias shema* again. One is permitted to change into pajamas after reciting *krias shema*.²⁷ However, after reciting *hamapil* one should not be *mafsik* at all, since one is causing a *hefsek* between one's sleep and the *bracha*. Therefore, one should not eat, drink, or talk, after reciting

22. אישי ישראל עמ' שמ"ט שהביא מהגר"ח קניבסקי שליט"א.

23. שם סק"ג.

24. עי שו"ת באר משה ח"ז סי' קי"ד:ג.

25. בה"ל שם ד"ה סמוך.

26. עי שו"ת סי' ו' סק"ז, אכן עי' בה"ט שם, ומחצה"ש שם, ועי' אישי ישראל.

27. ביאורי משנה ברורה סי' רל"ט.

מבה"ל שם.

18. עי' סי' רל"ט במ"ב שם סק"א ועי' סי' רל"ה סע' א' ומ"ב שם סק' י"ב.

19. מ"ב שם סק"ב.

20. עי' רמ"א ומ"ב שם סק"ז.

21. תפילה כהלכתה עמ' שני"ג שהביא מגדולי הפוסקים.

hamapil.²⁸ Some *poskim* hold that if one slept for a short period of time (even less than a half an hour) after reciting *hamapil*, he is permitted to talk, eat, or drink.²⁹ One who was *mafsik* after reciting *hamapil*, does not have to repeat *hamapil* again. However, the first *parsha* of *krias shema* should be repeated.³⁰

There are certain situations where one is permitted to be *mafsik* after reciting *hamapil*, and they are as follows. One is permitted to: 1. recite *asher yatzer* after going to the bathroom, 2. *daven Maariv*, 3. count *sefira*, 4. recite *birchos hamazon*, *al hamichya*, and *borai nefoshos* if he had forgotten to do so earlier, 5. recite *kiddush levanah* if it is the last night that one may do so,³¹ 6. eat *melava malka* on *Motzaei Shabbos* if one had forgotten to eat beforehand,³² 7. recite the *bracha* for thunder and lightning, and 8. answer a question asked by his parents. Nevertheless, parents should try to refrain from asking their children questions after they have recited *hamapil*, and if possible, the children should try to answer without talking (e.g. nodding their head, motioning with their hands, etc.).³³

One who was *mafsik* completely and took his mind off sleeping, or if a long period of time had elapsed while one was performing an activity, he should then repeat *hamapil* in addition to repeating the first *parsha* of *krias shema*.³⁴

The Proper Position While Reciting *Krias Shema al Hamitah*

One is permitted to recite *krias shema al hamitah* in a room in which he does not plan on sleeping in. There is no problem of שינוי

מקום, since it is obvious that he knows where he will be sleeping.³⁵

It is permitted to recite *krias shema al hamitah* while lying down, especially if one is already lying down prior to reciting *krias shema al hamitah*. However, care should be taken to recite it while lying on one's side. *Bedieved*, one is *yotze* even if he recited it while lying on his stomach or on his back. One should try to condition himself to recite *krias shema al hamitah* while sitting or standing (in order to prevent himself from falling asleep while reciting it). One who *davened Maariv* while it was still day and is therefore still required to recite all three *parshios* of *krias shema Min HaTorah*, should definitely try to recite *krias shema al hamitah* while sitting or standing.³⁶

Other Halachos

Before one goes to sleep, he should examine his deeds, and forgive everyone that has wronged him, in the manner that is printed in most *siddurim*.³⁷ It is important to make sure that one's hands are clean before reciting *krias shema al hamitah*. If one touched a part of his body that is normally covered, he should wash his hands before reciting *krias shema al hamitah*.³⁸ One should not be occupied with anything else while reciting *krias shema al hamitah*.³⁹ Some have the *minhag* to kiss the *mezuzah* in one's room while reciting the *posukim* of: "ה' ישמר צאתי ובאי לחיים ולשלום מעתה" and "ועד עולם ה' שמרי ה' צלי על יד ימיני בכל דרכיך" and "דעהו והוא יושר באורחותיך" seven times. Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, only said these *posukim* once.⁴⁰

28. מ"ב שם סק"ד, ועיין בשערים מצויינים בהלכה סי' ע"א אות ב' שאפשר להקל אם צמא מאד ואינו יכול לישן, ועי' עוד ביחודה דעת חלק ד' סי' כ"א.
29. תפילה כהלכתה עמ' שנ"ג שהביא בשם הגר"ח פ' שיינברג שליט"א.
30. שו"ע סי' רל"ט ורמ"א, ומ"ב שם סק"ד.
31. מקור"ח סי' רל"ט, ואורחות רבינו ח"א עמ' צ"ח, ולכאורה פשוט שהוא הדין בענין אמירת ברכת המזון ועל המחיה.
32. שו"ת התעוררות תשובה סי' קכ"ח.
33. רבבות אפרים ח"א סי' ק"פ.
34. תפילה כהלכתה שם עמ' שנ"ב שהביא מסידור היעב"ץ.

35. רבבות אפרים ח"א סי' ק"פ.
36. מ"ב סי' רל"ט סק"ו ושעה"צ אות י', ועי' ביאור הלכה סי' ס"ג ד"ה אבל, וכ"ש בק"ש שעל המטה.
37. מ"ב רל"ט סק"ט.
38. סי' ד' סעי' כ"א.
39. מקור"ח סי' רל"ט.
40. קיצשו"ע סי' ע"א, וכך שמעתי מהגר"י בעלסקי שליט"א.

The Bracha of Hamapil

The bracha of hamapil contains within it numerous *tefilos* that seemingly do not have any direct connection to sleeping. However, carefully analyzing the *tefilah* would improve our simple understanding of the bracha and would cause us to appreciate its significance. One would be amazed how valuable each of those *tefilos* really are and how they do have a direct connection with sleeping. To explain the entire bracha is beyond the scope of this publication. However, we will select and explain some thoughts expressed in the bracha. It is printed in many *siddurim* that we ask Hashem to grant us a share in His Torah. At first glance, it would seem puzzling as to why we should ask Hashem to give us our portion in the Torah immediately before going to sleep, since it is obvious that a slumbering person cannot learn Torah. The *Tzlach* explains that we are required to learn Torah at all times. When a person sleeps, he is completely devoid of Torah and *mitzvos*. To make it clear that this inactivity is due to the fact that we are human and it is necessary for us to sleep, and not because we have become weak in our performance of *mitzvos*, one therefore *davens* to Hashem beforehand to grant him a portion in His Torah.⁴¹ In addition, we ask Hashem that no unfit or wicked person be among one's children and that one's offspring should be perfect before Hashem. (See the *Avudraham* who explains why we are *mispallel* for this immediately before going to sleep).⁴²

Miscellaneous Halachos Pertaining To Sleep

One should have in mind while going to sleep that the sleep should strengthen him so that he can serve Hashem with his utmost ability. By doing so, one's sleep is considered a *mitzvah*.⁴³ The *Pirkei DiRebbi Eliezer* teaches

41. צל"ח במס' ברכות ס.
42. עי' ספר אבודרהם.
43. עי' שו"ע סי' רל"א.

that a person's sleep is nourishment and heals, and contributes to one's lifespan.⁴⁴ The *Vilna Gaon* writes that the purpose of sleep is to enable one's *neshamah* to ascend to the *Beis Din Shel Ma'alah* where the hidden secrets of Torah are learned; something that would take a person on this world over seventy years to learn.⁴⁵ Someone once noticed that the *Arizal* was moving his lips while he was sleeping one *Shabbos*. When asked what had occurred, the *Arizal* responded that he was taught the hidden secrets of the *parsha* discussing *Bilam* and that it would take him over eighty years to teach it to his students.⁴⁶

There is no set amount of time that one is required to sleep during the night. It is obviously dependent on each person's strength and state of health. However, one should not sleep for a much longer period of time than his body requires.⁴⁷ The *Gemara* writes that sleep is one of the eight things that are harmful when one indulges in them excessively.⁴⁸ The *Medrash* writes that the beginning of a person's downfall is sleep; some sleep and do not learn Torah, others sleep and do not work.⁴⁹ The *Rambam* writes that an average person should get eight hours of sleep a night.⁵⁰ The *Gemara* writes that a person finds it easier to shrug off fatigue all night than to arise early from his bed in the morning. However, it is more valuable for someone to go to sleep early and wake up earlier, than to stay up later and thereby cause himself to arise later in the morning.⁵¹

The *Rambam* writes that it is best for one to start sleeping on his left side and finish sleeping on the right. This is good for one's health, because the liver is on the right side of the body and the stomach on the left and

44. פרקי דר"א יא: א.
45. גר"א במשלי יט: כג.
46. עי' ספר עץ חיים.
47. עי' מ"ב סי' רל"ח סק"ב.
48. גמ' גיטין דף ע.
49. בראשית רבה פרשה מד: יז.
50. רמב"ם הל' דעות פ"ד ה"ד, ועי' מג"א סי' רל"ח, ועי' באה"ט סי' א' סק"ו, אכן עי' קצשו"ע סי' ע"א.
51. עי' יומא דף כב. ורש"י שם, ועי' אורחות חיים להרא"ש סעי' ע, ועי' רמב"ם הל' דעות פ"ד ה"ה.

when we recline on the left, the liver rests on top of the stomach and warms it, thereby aiding in the speedy digestion of food. After the food has been digested and we recline on the left side the waste comes down. One should not turn from one side to the other too often during the night.⁵²

One should not sleep by himself in a closed room. One who is sleeping himself should preferably keep the door slightly ajar. Some *poskim* permit one to sleep in a closed

⁵². רמב"ם שם. ועי' קיצשו"ע סוף סי' ע"א.

room if he has a small nightlight on in the room.⁵³

One may not sleep during the day for more than a certain period of time. However, one who has difficulty learning *Torah* without going to sleep, is permitted to sleep for short period of time even during the day. There is a dispute among the *poskim* how long one is permitted to sleep during the day. Most *poskim* say that the longest consecutive period of time one is permitted to sleep for during the day is 30 minutes.⁵⁴

⁵³. עי' מ"ב סי' רל"ט סק"ט, ועי' שעה"צ שם, ועי' אורחות רבינו ח"א.
⁵⁴. רמב"ם שם. ועי' שו"ע ומ"ב בסי' רל"א ועי' סי' ד' סע' ט"ז, ובמ"ב ובה"ל שם, ועי' קצשו"ע סי' ב' סע' ח'.