

Activities Before Davening

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WHAT ACTIVITIES MAY BE DONE BEFORE DAVENING?

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 89:3) based on the Gemorah in Brachos (14a) says that once the time of Tefillah arrives, it is forbidden for a person to be engaged in his own affairs or to travel on the road. The Terumos Hadeshen (#18) comments that people have adopted a custom of saying Berachos (i.e. Birchos HaTorah and Birchas HaShachar) and some praises prior to their own affairs. Then, after being involved in their own affairs, Shmoneh Esrei. The Terumos Hadeshen rejects this and requires one to daven Shmoneh Esrei before one engages in his own business. The Poskim¹ follow the ruling of the Terumos Hadeshen.

The question is: what goes into the category of "affairs" that is prohibited before davening. The poskim permit for trivial activity such as making one's bed, dropping a letter in the mailbox or taking out the garbage on your way to shul.² In addition, any activity that is deemed to be a Mitzvah is also permitted before davening. For example, purchasing food for Shabbos before davening is permissible.³ Likewise the poskim⁴ permit buying breakfast for children before they go off to yeshiva. With regards to learning Torah before davening, the Shulchan Aruch rules that one should not begin once the Zman of Tefillah arrives.⁵ The reason is we are afraid he will become involved in his learning and forget to daven. However, if one has a daily minyan which he attends, we are not

scared that he will forget to daven and he may therefore learn prior to davening. Some poskim (Pri Chodosh, Aruch Hashulchan 89:27) rule that under all circumstances one may learn Torah prior to Tefillah.

If one started doing melacha or began traveling prior to Alos Hashachar (dawn) he may continue even beyond Alos if he will have enough time to say Krias Shema and daven before their zman⁶. However, if one started eating before Alos, he may no longer continue to eat after alos arrives⁷. If one began to work after Alos, although he was not permitted to do so, he would not be required to stop for tefilla (assuming there is sufficient time to finish the work before the zman), but he would be required to stop immediately to recite Shema⁸. With regards to Mincha and Maariv, if one appoints a shomer to remind him to daven, or has regular minyan in which he always joins, then he may start a melacha or travel even though the zman has arrived. But by Shachris the halacha is more strict as one would not be allowed to begin melacha relying on a shomer, since by doing melacha at the beginning of the day (before davening), you are showing more honor to yourself than to Hashem⁹.

IS IT PERMITTED TO EXERCISE BEFORE DAVENING?

Many Poskim¹⁰ maintain that exercise is considered "personal affairs" and is therefore prohibited to be done before davening. However, to do a light workout (ex: stretching, a few pushups) to get oneself moving is permitted¹¹.

IS IT PERMITTED TO SHAVE BEFORE DAVENING?

Many Poskim¹² hold that just like one may not take a haircut before davening, so too one may not shave. However, other Poskim hold that it is permitted for various reasons. Some¹³ say that it is considered part of one's preparation for Tefillah.

Others¹⁴ say that if it's part of one's daily routine to shave then it's considered "getting dressed" and is permitted. Some¹⁵ are only lenient if it is inconvenient to shave after davening (ex: one will have to leave minyan early).

IS IT PERMITTED TO DRIVE CARPOOL (CHILDREN TO YESHIVA) BEFORE DAVENING?

The Poskim permit this since it's considered heavenly affairs.

CAN ONE THROW A LOAD OF LAUNDRY INTO THE WASHING MACHINE BEFORE DAVENING?

If the laundry is not presorted it is prohibited. If it is pre-sorted some¹⁶ Poskim permit it since it's considered a simple activity. However, others argue and prohibit even if it is pre-sorted.

CAN ONE SHOWER BEFORE DAVENING?

HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l¹⁷ holds that one may not shower with soap and shampoo before davening. However, most poskim disagree¹⁸ and permit showering. They deem it to be considered preparations for Tefillah.

CAN ONE CALL A JEWISH PLUMBER TO DO WORK IF YOU KNOW THAT HE WILL DO THE WORK BEFORE HE DAVENS?

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁹ rules that this is prohibited because we are causing someone else to violate this Halacha. However, if he will not daven anyway (Rachmona L'tzlan) then perhaps it is permitted.

- 1 The Rema only says that it's "best to be strict" in this matter, and not to rely on the opinions that hold it sufficient to recite Berachos. However, the Aruch Hashulchan (89:21) strongly disagrees and says that one is obligated to daven Shmoneh Esrei. Some even question if the Rema actually wrote this.
- 2 See Tefillah K'hichasa 6 note 36 and Halichos Shlomo (2:5), The Ma'amer Mordechai (89:2) writes that something that "does not take any time" is not included in this halacha.
- 3 M.B. 89: 7:36, see M.B. 250: 1 that this should only be done if he will not be able to purchase food after davening and even then he should recite Kerias Shema prior to shopping.
- 4 Tefillah K'hichasa 6:18 note 39 from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, as this is considered an act of chessed and is therefore deemed cheftzei shamayim.
- 5 See M.B. 89: 31 that brings a Machlokes if this is dawn or sunrise.
- 6 O.C. 70:5 M.B. s.k. 23
- 7 O.C. 89:5 M.B. s.k. 29
- 8 O.C. 70 M.B. 23
- 9 See Piskei Teshuvos 89:20
- 10 HaRav Dovid Feinstein zt"l, HaRav Yisroel Belsky zt"l and ybl"c HaRav Shmuel Fuerst shlit"a (oral rulings)
- 11 Dayan Fuerst shlita
- 12 Hagoan Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (as heard by Harav Shmuel Fuerst shlita) HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l quoted in Halichos Shlomo 2:7
- 13 HaRav Yisroel Belsky zt"l
- 14 HaRav Shmuel Vosner zt"l quoted in Avnei Yashpei 1:90
- 15 HaRav Dovid Cohen shlita (Gevul Yaavetz) in oral ruling.
- 16 HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l quoted in Halichos Shlomo 1:5 and HaRav Yisroel Belsky zt"l
- 17 Halichos Shlomo 2:8, as well as Hagoan R' Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv zt"l (Leshichno Sid'rishu vol. 1 p.275, Ashrei Haish 19:3)
- 18 HaGaon Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (oral ruling heard by Dayan Fuerst shlita), Az Nidbaru 6:43, HaGaon Rav C.P. Sheinberg zt"l and others
- 19 Halichos Shlomo (2:10)



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