

Halachos of Bedtime Shema and Hamapil

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WHAT TO SAY BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP

- Chazal instituted the recital of Shema and the beracha of Hamapil to be said before one goes to sleep at night (Berachos 4b). The reason Chazal instituted it is to protect us from the dangers of the night. Lechatchilah, one should say the beracha of Hamapil, the first paragraph of Shema and the various chapters of Tehillim and pesukim that can be found in most siddurim (Shulchan Aruch OC 239). B'dieved, for one who is sick or weak it is sufficient to recite just the first paragraph of Shema and the beracha of Hamapil (M.B. 9).
- If one davened Maariv before nightfall, such as when making an early Shabbos or davening Maariv right after Mincha, all three paragraphs of Shema must be repeated at night. If one does so, he should say "E-I Melech Ne'eman" prior to saying Shema as the total of the 248 words of Shema should protect his 248 limbs. Poskim add that it is commendable to always recite all three paragraphs of Shema before going to sleep (M.B. 1).
- In regard to the proper order, some have the minhag of saying the beracha of Hamapil prior to the recital of Shema, while others say the beracha of Hamapil after the recital of Shema. The Mishnah Berurah (2) rules that someone who may fall asleep during his recitation of Shema should say the beracha of Hamapil first. If someone is confident that he will not fall asleep during Shema, he should say the beracha of Hamapil after the recital of Shema.

INTERRUPTIONS AFTER SAYING SHEMA AND HAMAPIL

- Anything a person has to say, or any food or drink that he would like to eat, should be done before reciting Shema. If one already said Shema and is hungry or thirsty, or has something of importance to be said, he may talk, but should repeat over the first paragraph of Shema again (M.B. 4).

With regard to talking or eating after the beracha of Hamapil, the Halacha is more stringent. In the view of the Mishnah Berurah (ibid. see Biur Halacha), the beracha of Hamapil is a beracha said *on* one's sleep, just as one makes a beracha on eating food. The proof of the Mishnah Berurah is from the wording of the beracha in which we say "Blessed is ... Who casts the bonds of sleep upon *my* eyes and slumber upon *my* eyelids". When one makes a beracha on food, any speech uttered between the beracha and the eating would be considered a hefseik and invalidates the beracha. Similarly, one's talking or eating done after the beracha of Hamapil before falling asleep would be considered a hefsek. Furthermore, according to the Mishnah Berurah if one is unsure whether he will be able to fall asleep he should not say the beracha of Hamapil, out of concern that the Hamapil will be a beracha levatalah. Based on this, the Chazon Ish (Dinim VeHanhagos 8:8) goes as far as to say that if one already made the beracha of Hamapil, he cannot even make the beracha of "Asher Yatzar," as this would be a hefseik between the beracha of Hamapil and one's sleep.

- The Chayeh Adam (35:4) disagrees with the approach of the Mishnah Berurah. He maintains that the beracha of Hamapil is not similar to brochos made on food. It is not a beracha said *on* one's sleep, but rather a beracha of praise and thanks to Hashem to be said before one goes to sleep. According to the Chayeh Adam, if one is unsure whether he will be able to fall

asleep, he should still recite the beracha of Hamapil. The Aruch HaShulchan (6) also follows this view, explaining that it is illogical for Chazal to institute a beracha to be said *on* one's sleep, since sleep isn't in a person's ability to control. (See Piskei Teshuvos (note 17) who brings a long list of Poskim who rule like the Chayeh Adam.) Therefore, according to this approach, talking or eating after reciting Hamapil would not constitute a hefseik.

- In consideration of the different viewpoints, the consensus of many Poskim is as follows: One should lechatchilah act in accordance with the ruling of the Mishnah Berurah and not talk or eat after saying the beracha of Hamapil. However, if something urgent comes up, one may be lenient and rely on the ruling of the Chayeh Adam.
- According to these Poskim, if one has to make the beracha of "Asher Yatzar" and he already said Hamapil, he should certainly do so. (Rav Dovid Zucker in the name of HaGoan Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l & Emes LeYakov note 234).
- Another case of potential hefseik is if a child wakes up and needs to be fed or pacified back to sleep. Hagoan R' Yitzchak Zilbershtein shlita (Aleinu L'shabeiach Vayikrah p. 681) deliberates over whether pacifying a child is considered a hefseik at all, even according to the stricter view of the Mishnah Berurah. The halacha regarding food is that any speech that pertains to the eating of food is not considered a hefseik between the beracha and the eating (OC 167:6). So perhaps calming a child to quiet him can also be considered necessary for the parents' sleep and would therefore not be considered a hefseik.
- In a situation where one knows in advance that in all likelihood, he will have to make a hefseik before falling asleep (ex: one is a doctor on call) many poskim hold that one should still say Hamapil. The sefer Minhag Yisroel Torah (p. 321) quotes the Divrei Chayim (Sanzer Rav ZT"L) that it's better to say Hamapil and talk afterward, rather than to avoid saying Hamapil altogether, for one who sleeps without saying Hamapil is like eating without making a beracha.

[There are dissenting opinions and various minhagim regarding this practice, see Teshuvos VeHanhagos 4:57.]

MISCELLANEOUS HALACHOS OF HAMAPIL

- The beracha of Hamapil is only said before going to sleep at night, not during the day. (M.B 8)
- If one makes the beracha of Hamapil and falls asleep, and then wakes up during the night, he may talk as much as he likes and does not make the beracha a second time before returning to sleep (Tefillah Kehilchasa 20:18 from Rav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg zt"l, Ishei Yisroel 35:8).
- Hagaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled that one who is an *"onein," r"l*, and not obligated in mitzvos, is still obligated to protect oneself by reciting the bedtime Shema and Hamapil (Minchos Shlomo 91:25:9, notes to Pnei Boruch). However, this is not mentioned by earlier Poskim, and one should not be lenient to recite a questionable beracha (Dayan Fuerst, Badei HaShulchan, Birchas Eisan pg. 429 in the name of Rav Nissan Karelitz zt"l)
- The first night of Pesach is referred to as a *"Leil Shimurim"*, a night of special protection by Hashem. We demonstrate this by limiting the tefillos one says when going to sleep. Rema (OC 481:2) writes that one only says the first paragraph of Shema and the beracha of Hamapil. The Levush (cited in the Pri Megadim) adds that for residents of Chutz L'Aretz, who keep two days of Yom Tov, the same halacha would apply for the second night of Pesach.
- [See Shem M'Shmuel on the Yom Tov of Succos p. 148 that quotes the Avnei Nezer that one who sleeps in a succah on Succos, also has a spiritual protection, and only recites the first paragraph of Shema and the beracha of Hamapil].



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