



Volume 13. Issue 2

## The Worker's Keriyat Shema

The *Mishnah* (2:4) taught that a labourer that is working up in a tree or on the top of a high wall can recite *keriyat shema* there. This ruling is contrast to prayer for which the *Mishnah* rules that the worker must come down to ground level in order to pray. The *Bartenura* explains that in these raised location, the worker would be concerned that he would fall. Since *keriyat shema* only requires the proper intention for the first verse, this would be possible even in these locations. For prayer which requires the proper intention for a lengthy period of time, the worker must descend to ground level.

The *Gemara* (16a) cites *Rav Sheshet* who explains that a worker would stop his work to recite the *Shema*. This is consistent with our understanding thus far, since he requires the appropriate intention when doing so. The *Gemara* however then raises a question from another *Beraita* that cites *Beit Hillel* who rule that the worker would continue working whilst reciting the *Shema*. The *Gemara* resolves this difficulty by explaining that there is a difference between the first and second paragraph, with *Beit Hillel* referring to the second paragraph of *Shema*.

The *Tosfot* reasons that the *Gemara* is not to be taken literally since this *Gemara* is working with the opinion of *Rava* and *Rava* ruled (13b) that *kevana* is only required for the first verse. Consequently, according to the *Tosfot* the worker would only cease from work for the first verse.

The *Rif* (9b) however explains the *Gemara* literally and it therefore appears to be following the opinion of *R' Yochanan* that requires *kavana* for the first paragraph. Nevertheless, he explains that even according to *Rava*, the worker would stop work for the full first paragraph in order that the recital not be consider haphazard (*arai*). The *Rif* connects this to another *Gemara* (*Yoma* 19b) which rules that one may not motion with his eyes or hand during the recital of the first chapter of *Shema*.<sup>1</sup> The reason there is so that the words of *shema* should not be *arai*. Indeed, the *Gemara* continues explaining that in the *Shema* it is written “*ve'dibarta bam*”, and you shall speak them. *R' Acha* explains that this means

that the words shall be *keva* (fixed) and not *aria* (fleeting). We therefore find that according to the *Rif* there are two basic requirements when reciting *shema*. The first is the proper intention, which is required for the first *pasuk*. The second is that the recital of the first paragraph should be done in a fixed and appropriate manner.

With the introduction of this new requirement, why does it end after the first paragraph? Why does the requirement of *keva* not exist for the entire three paragraphs of *Shema*? *R' Yona* therefore concludes that only the first paragraph of *Shema* is required on a biblical level, otherwise the workers would be required to stop for all three paragraphs.

The *Baal HaMeor* understands that the *Rif*'s logic is based on the *Gemara*'s continuation cited above, which expounds the words “*ve'dibarta bam*” mentioned in the first paragraph of *Shema*. The *Baal HaMeor*'s difficulty however is that in the second paragraph it also mentions “*le'daber bam*”. The *Raavad* however explains “*ve'dibarta bam*” in the first paragraph refers to the recitation of *Shema*. “*Le'daber bam*” however mentioned in the second paragraph is referring to the study of *Torah* and teaching it to one's children. Consequently, since the context is different there is no difficulty.

The *Ritva* provides a different reason for the difference between the first and second paragraph. He explains that in the first paragraph it states “that which I have commanded you today upon your heart”. From here the *Ritva* understands that while *kavana* is not required beyond the first verse, the *Torah* requires for this first paragraph, that the heart be “resting”, and the person not be doing other things.

The *Beit Yosef* however explains that even though *kavana* is only required for the first *pasuk*, the main focus of the first paragraph is *kabalat ol malchut shamayim* – accepting the yolk of heaven (see 2:2). The *Chachamim* were therefore stringent requiring the cessation of all activity during its recitation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Baal Ha'Meor* however argues that the language of “first paragraph” in that *Gemara* was used in order to teach the law in accordance with all opinions, since no one requires *kavana* past the first chapter. Furthermore, he understands that the exposition that follows in the *Gemara* is focused on the study of *Torah* in general rather than the recitation of *Shema*. See also the *Biur HaGra* that who also raises potential question on deriving a proof from the *Gemara* in *Yoma*. Nevertheless, the *Gra* cites the *Yerushalmi* that makes the connection between that *Gemara* and our *Mishnah* explicitly demonstrating that the logic is shared.

<sup>2</sup> On reflection we find two more important points. The first, as an employee, the *Chachamim* allowed one even to recite the remainder of *Shema* while working. As a paid worker, any moment of inactivity for the employer needs to be justified. That said, despite one's time being dominated by mundane activities, the *Chachamim* did demand one to stop with a manner of *keviyut*, for one to remember what is truly *keva* and what is *aria*. *Aseh toratcha keva, u'melachto aria*.

**Revision Questions**

ברכות ב' ד' – ד' ג'

- What is ruling regarding an employee working in a tree with regards to reading *sh'ma* and *t'fillah*? (ב' ד')
- Until when is a groom exempt from reciting *sh'ma*? (ב' ה')
- What are the three cases where *Rabban Gamliel* acted against the ruling of the *mishnah*? What was his justification in each of these cases? (ב' ה' ז')
- What was the name of *Rabban Gamliel's* slave? (ב' ז')
- Can a groom be *machmir* and recite *sh'ma* on his wedding night? (ב' ח')
- What three *mitzvot* are close relatives of the deceased exempt from prior to the burial? What is the law regarding those carrying the coffin and others attending the funeral? (ג' א')
- What is the law regarding the obligation of *sh'ma* for people attending a funeral as the mourners pass by them after the burial? (ג' ב')
- What are the *mitzvot* that women, slaves and minors are exempt from listed in the *mishnah* and why? What are the listed *mitzvot* that they are obligated to perform? (ג' ג')
- What is the debate regarding a *ba'al keri* regarding *sh'ma* and *birkat ha'mazon*? [To which *takanah* does this debate (and the next three *Mishnayot*) refer?] (ג' ד')
- If someone was in the *mikvah* close to *netz ha'chamah* what should they do with regards to *sh'ma*? What if the water was filthy? (ג' ה')
- Explain the debate about a *zav* that also becomes a *ba'al keri*? What are the other cases included in this debate? (ג' ו')
- Explain the debate about the starting and finishing times for all the *tefillot*? (ד' א')
- What is the nature of *R' Nechunya ben Hukana's tefillot* recited when entering and exiting the *beit midrash*? (ד' ב')
- What are the three opinions regarding what to say when praying the *sh'monah esrei*? (ד' ג')

**Melbourne, Australia**

**Sunday -Thursday**

10 minutes before *Mincha*  
Mizrachi Shul  
Melbourne, Australia

**Friday & Shabbat**

10 minutes before *Mincha*  
Mizrachi Shul  
Melbourne, Australia

**Efrat, Israel**

*Shiur in English*

**Sunday -Thursday**

Rabbi Mordechai Scharf  
9:00am  
Kollel Magen Avraham  
Reemon Neighbourhood

**ONLINE SHIURIM**

*Rabbi Chaim Brown*  
[www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/](http://www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/)

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*Rabbi C. Brown*  
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il/calendars/myomi/myomi-thisweek.htm>

**SHIUR ON KOL HALOSHON**

*Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss*  
In US dial: 718 906 6400  
Then select: 1 – 2 – 4

**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
10 April ב' ניסן	11 April ג' ניסן	12 April ד' ניסן	13 April ה' ניסן	14 April ו' ניסן	15 April ז' ניסן	16 April ח' ניסן
Berachot 4:4-5	Berachot 4:6-7	Berachot 5:1-2	Berachot 5:3-4	Berachot 5:5-6:1	Berachot 6:2-3	Berachot 6:4-5

