BERAKOTH (‘BENEDICTIONS’)

1. 1. From what time in the evening may the Shema be recited? From the time when the priest enters the Temple to eat of their Heave-noffering until the end of the first watch. So R. Eleyzer. But the Sages say: Until midnight. Rabban Gamliel says: Until the rising of dawn. His sons once returned (after midnight) from a wedding feast. They said to him, ‘We have not recited the Shema’. He said to them, ‘If the day has not risen ye are still bound to recite it.’ Moreover, wheresoe’ver the Sages prescribe ‘Until midnight’ the duty of fulfilment lasts until the rising of dawn. The duty of burning the fat pieces and the members of the animal offerings lasts until the rising of dawn; and for all offerings that must be consumed the same day, the duty lasts until the rising of dawn. Why then have the Sages said: Until midnight? To keep a man afar from transgression.

2. From what time in the morning may the Shema be recited? So soon as a man can distinguish between blue and white. R. Eleyzer says: Between blue and green. And it should be finished before sunrise. R. Joshua says: Before the third hour: for so is it the way of kings, to rise up at the third hour. He that recites it from that time onward suffers no loss and is like to one that reads in the Law.

3. The School of Shammay says: In the evening all should recline when they recite the Shema, but in the morning they should stand up, for it is written, And when thou liest down and when thou risest up. But the School of Hiilfel says: They may recite it every one in his own way, for it is written, And when thou walkest by the way. Why then is it written, And when thou liest down and when thou risest up? It means the time when men usually lie down and the time when men usually rise up. R. Tarfon said: I was once on a journey and I reclined to recite the Shema in accordance with the words of the School of Shammay, and so put myself in jeopardy by reason of robbers. They said to him: Thou hast deserved aught that befall thee in that thou didst transgress the words of the School of Hiilfel.

4. In the morning two Benedictions are said before [the Shema] and one after; and in the evening two Benedictions are said before and two after, the one long and the other short. Where the long is prescribed the short is not permissible; where the short is prescribed the long is not permissible. [Where it is prescribed to say the second Benediction it is not permissible to not say; and where it is not prescribed to say it, it is not permissible to say.]

5. The going forth from Egypt is rehearsed also at night. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: Lo, I am like to one that is seventy years old yet failed to prove why the going forth from Egypt should be rehearsed at night until Ben Zoma thus expounded it: It is written, That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life, the days of thy life [would mean] the days only; but all the days of thy life [means] the nights also. The Sages say: The days of thy life [means] this world only, but all the days of thy life is to include the Days of the Messiah.

2. 1. If a man was reading [the verses of the Shema] in the Law and the time came to recite the Shema, if he directed his heart he has fulfilled his obligation; otherwise he has not fulfilled his obligation. Between the sections he may make a man out of respect and return a greeting; but in the middle of a section he may salute a man only out of fear of him, and return a greeting. So R. Meir. R. Judah says: In the middle he may salute a man out of fear of him and return a greeting out of respect; between the sections he may salute a man out of respect and return the greeting of any man.

2. By ‘between the sections’ is meant: between the first Benediction and the second; between the second Benediction and the Hebrew, O Israel . . . ; between the Hebrew, O Israel . . . and It shall come to pass if ye shall hearken; between It shall come to pass if ye shall hearken and And the Lord spake unto Moses; between And the Lord spake unto Moses and True and firm . . .

R. Judah says: There may be no break between And the Lord spake unto Moses and True and firm . . .

R. Joshua b. Karna said: Why does the section Hebrew, O Israel precede And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken?—so that a man may first take upon him the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and afterward take upon him the yoke of the commandments. [And why does the section It shall come to pass if ye shall hearken precede And the Lord spake unto Moses? Because And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken applies both by day and by night, but And the Lord spake unto Moses applies by day only.

3. If a man recited the Shema but not loudly enough for himself to hear, he has fulfilled his obligation. R. Jose says: He has not fulfilled it. If he recited it without clearly pronouncing the letters, R. Jose says: He has fulfilled his obligation. R. Judah says: He has not fulfilled it. If a man recited [the sections] in wrong order, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he recited it and fell into error he should go back to where he fell into error.

4. Craftsmen may recite the Shema on the top of a tree or on top of a course of stones, which they may not do when they say the Tefillah.

A brideroom is exempt from reciting the Shema on the first night, or until the close of the [next] Sabbath if he has not consummated the marriage. Once when Rabban Gamaliel married he recited the Shema.
on the first night. His disciples said to him, 'Master, didst thou not teach us that a bridegroom is exempt: from reciting the Shema on the first night?' He said to them, 'I will not hearken to you to cast off from myself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven even for a moment.'

6. He washed himself the first night of his wife's death. His disciples said to him, 'Master, didst thou not teach us that a mourner is forbidden to wash himself?' He replied, 'I am not like other men: I am infirm.'

7. And when his slave Tabi died he accepted condolence because of him. They said to him, 'Master, didst thou not teach us that men may not accept condolence because of slaves?' He replied, 'My slave Tabi was not like other slaves: he was a worthy man.'

8. If a bridegroom is minded to recite the Shema on the first night he may recite it. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says: Not every one that is minded to assume the name may assume it.

3. He whose dead lies unburied before him is exempt from reciting the Shema, from saying the Tefillah and from wearing phylacteries. They that bear the bier and they that relieve them, and they that relieve these, they that go before and they that follow after the bier—they that are needful for the bier are exempt, but they that are needful are not exempt [from reciting the Shema].

Both alike are exempt from saying the Tefillah.

2. When they have buried the dead and returned, if they can begin [the Shema] and finish it before reaching the Row they begin it; but if they cannot, they do not begin it. Of them that stand in the Row, they of the inner line are exempt [from reciting the Shema] but they of the outer line are not exempt.

3. Women and slaves and minors are exempt from reciting the Shema and from wearing phylacteries, but they are not exempt from saying the Tefillah, from the law of the Mezusah or from saying the Benediction after meals.

4. He that has suffered a pollution should ponder over the Shema in his heart but he may not recite a Benediction before it or after it. Over a meal he should say the Benediction which follows after but not that which goes before. R. Judah says: He should say both the Benediction which goes before and the Benediction which follows after.

5. If he was standing during the Tefillah and then remembered that he had suffered a pollution he should not break off [his prayer] but he must shorten it. If he went down to immerse himself and, before sunrise, had time to come up, clothe himself and recite [the Shema], he may come up, clothe himself and recite it; but if not, he must remain covered with water and recite it. But he must not remain covered with foul water or water used for soaking [flax] unless he had poured [clean] water therein. And [when a man recites the Shema] how far should he go apart from it and from excrescence? Four cubits.

6. If a man with flux suffered a pollution, or if a menstruant discharged semen, or if a woman suffered a flow during intercourse, they must immerse themselves. R. Judah pronounces them exempt.

4. 1. The morning Tefillah [may be said any time] until midday. R. Judah says: Until the fourth hour. The afternoon Tefillah [may be said any time] until sunset. R. Judah says: Until midday through the afternoon. The evening Tefillah has no set time; and the Additional Tefillah [may be said] any time during the day. R. Judah says: Until the seventh hour.

2. R. Nehunya b. ha-Kanah used to pray a short prayer when he entered the House of Study and when he came forth. They said to him, 'What is the nature of this prayer?' He replied, 'When I enter I pray that no offence shall happen through me, and when I come forth I give thanks for my lot.'

3. Rabban Gamaliel says: A man should pray the Eighteen Benedictions every day. R. Joshua says: The substance of the Eighteen. R. Akiba says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth he should pray the Eighteen, but if not, the substance of the Eighteen.

4. R. Eleazar says: He that makes his prayer a fixed task, his prayer is no supplication. R. Joshua says: He that journeys in a place of danger should pray a short prayer, saying, 'Save, O Lord, the remnant of Israel; at their every cross-road let their needs come before thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, that hearest prayer.'

5. If he was riding on an ass he should dismount [to say the Tefillah]. If he cannot dismount he should turn his face toward Jerusalem; and if he cannot turn his face, he should direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies.

6. If he was journeying on a ship or a raft he should direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies.

7. R. Eleazar b. Azariah says: The additional Tefillah may be said only with the local congregation. But the Sages say: Either with the local congregation or without them. R. Judah says in his name: Wheresoever there is a local congregation the individual is exempt from saying the Additional Tefillah.

5. 1. None may stand up to say the Tefillah save in sober mood. The pious men of old used to wait an hour before they said the Tefillah, that they might direct their heart toward God. Even if the king salutes a man he may not return the greeting; and even if a slave was twisted around his heel he may not interrupt his prayer.

2. We make mention of the Power of Rain in [the Benediction] the Resurrection of the Dead, and we pray for rain in the Benediction 'The Years,' and [we make mention of] Haftarah in [the Benediction] Thou

1 Before they may say the Tefillah. This is in addition to the immersion prescribed for their particular major uncleanness.


3 Now nineteen. One was later added denouncing the 'slanderers' (Singer, p. 48) who brought evil on the congregation. It is now the twelfth in order.

4 Or 'abstract.' The Gemara (29a) here gives a shortened form, reproduced in the present-day Jewish Prayer-book (Singer, p. 55. Ihinenu).

5 Some texts add, 'the substance of the Eighteen.'

6 In the metaphorical sense. Bert. and Tif. Y. renders: Whencesoever they go apart in transgression.

7 Some texts add, 'wager.'

8 R. Eleazar b. Azariah's.

9 See Taan. 1.

10 The second of the Eighteen Benedictions. Singer, p. 44 (bottom).

11 The ninth Benediction. Singer, p. 45 (bottom).