



Hearing Shema

The *Mishnah* (*Berachot* 2:3) records a debate regarding one that recited *shema* but did not hear what he said. The first opinion is that he has fulfilled his obligation, while *R' Yossi* disagrees. *R' Yossi* argues that the opening words of *shema*, “hear” suggest that it is an obligation to hear the words one recites. The *Tana Kama* however understands that the word *shema* teaches that *shema* can be recited in any language one understands.

The *Rambam* (*Hilchot Keriyat Shema* 2:8,10) rules according to the first opinion. He writes that one needs to hear what they are saying. If they do not, they have fulfilled their obligation. The *Rambam* rules similarly in *Hilchot Berachot* (1:8) that one should ideally hear the words, when one recites a *beracha*. If one does not, then they have fulfilled their obligation. The *Rambam* however adds that this is the case whether they said the words allowed, or only said them in their head (*hirhur*). The *Bach* (OC 62) notes that the *Rambam* appears to differentiate between *Shema* and other *berachot*. Unlike *berachot*, for *Shema*, *hirhur* appears to be insufficient. We shall try to understand why.

The discussion would appear to hinge on the question of *hirhur ke'dibur dami* – does thought equate to speech. The *Shaagat Aryeh* (6) directs our attention to *hilchot Shabbat* (20:8) where the *Rambam* rules that on *Shabbat*, one is not allowed to talk about business matters. It is specifically speech that is problematic but not *hirhur*. Consequently, we find by *keriyat Shema* and *Shabbat hirhur* is not considered speech, while by *berachot* and other *mitzvot* it is. The *Shaagat Aryeh* explains that for *keriyat Shema* and the limits on speech

on *Shabbat*, the *pesukim* refer to specifically to *dibur* – “speech”. For *Shema* it states “*ve'dibarta bam*” – and you shall speak of them. Similarly, for *Shabbat* the *pasuk* states: “...and if you honour it and go not your ways, not look for affairs and not strike bargains” - “*daber davar*” (*Yeshayahu* 58:13). Whenever *dibur* is mentioned, *hirhur* is not sufficient.¹

The *Pri Megadim* (MZ OC 62) however explains that the position of the *Rambam* stems from ruling like the *Tanna Kama*. Recall that the *Tanna Kama* understands that from the word *Shema* we understand that one can recite the *Shema* in any language one understands. If *hirhur* was sufficient then the derivation would appear unnecessary. The license to recite the *shema* in any language implies that, for *shema*, recital is indeed required.

The *Emet LeYaakov* (*Berachot* 15a) however suggests a different explanation. Whether or not *hirhur* is considered speech is debated in the *Gemara* between *Ravina* and *Rav Chisda*. There is indeed a debate between the *Rishonim* regarding the *halacha*. The *Tosfot* and *Rosh* rule like *Rav Chisda*. The *Baal HaMeor* however is not certain and rules only stringently like *Rav Chisda*. The *Emet LaYaakov* therefore suggests that the *Rambam* aligns with the *Baal HaMeor*. Consequently, for *mitzvot* that are biblical – for *keriyat shema* – he rules stringently that *hirhur* is insufficient. *Berachot* (excluding *birkat ha'mazon*) however are rabbinic. The *Rambam* therefore rules leniently in those case; if a *beracha* was made *be'hirhur* it should not be recited again.²

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¹ See also *Yeshuot Yaakov* OC 62, *Aruch HaShulchan* 62:6.

² See also *Ohr Zaruah Letzadik*, *Keriyat Shema* (2:7)

Revision Questions

ברכות א' ג: - ג' ג:

- Explain the debate surrounding the halachic significance of "ויבשכבך ובקומך" (א' ג:)?
- Which *tana* put himself in danger to recite *sh'ma* in the manner held by *Beit Shammai*? (א' ג:)
- How many *brachot* does one recite before and after *kriyat sh'ma* in the morning and at night? (א' ד:)
- Is there a *mitzvah* of remembering *yetziyat mitzrayim* at night? If so, how is it fulfilled? (א' ה:)
- Explain the debate between *Ben Zoma* and the *Chachamim* about the *pasuk*: "למען" (א' ה:). תזכר את יום צאתך ממצרים כל ימי חייך" (דברים ט"ז ג:)
- If someone happens to be reading the chapter of *sh'ma* from the *Torah* during *zman kriyat sh'ma* do they fulfill the *mitzvah* of *kriyat sh'ma*? (א' ב:)
- Explain the debate between *R' Meir* and *R' Yehuda* about permissible interrupt during and in between the chapters of *sh'ma*? (א' ב:)
- To what does *בין הפרקים* refer? (ב' ב:)
- Explain the ordering of the chapters of *kriyat sh'ma*? (ב' ב:)
- Explain the debate or ruling in the following cases: (ג' ג:)
 - Reading *sh'ma* without hearing the words.
 - Not being precise with the pronunciation of the words.
 - Reading the *p'sukim* out of order.
 - If someone made a mistake.
- 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? (ז' ב:)
- Can a groom be *machmir* and recite *sh'ma* on his wedding night? (ח' ב:)
- What three *mitzvoth* 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? (א' ג:)
- 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:)

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
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Berachot 3:4-5	Berachot 3:6-4:1	Berachot 4:2-3	Berachot 4:4-5	Berachot 4:6-7	Berachot 5:1-2	Berachot 5:3-4

