**סימן פט**

1. *The Earliest Time to Daven Shacharis*

In סימן קנא we learned about the sanctity of a shul and the reverence/respect one needs to feel before and during his stay in shul. In the next few *simanim* that we will be learning, we will discuss *halachos* related to the *tefilla* itself, beginning with סימן פט, which discusses the ideal to *daven Shacharis* and the *halachos* that apply before *davening.*

By way of introduction, the obligation to recite *Shacharis* takes effect at the beginning of every morning. However, since the transition between night and day is gradual, Chazal identified the following four stages in this transition, each of which has a different *halachic* ramification vis-à-vis the obligation to *daven Shacharis*:

1. **עלות השחר**/משעלה עמוד השחר – This refers to the initial phase of the transition from night to day, known as dawn, when the sky begins to light up slightly.
2. **האיר פני המזרח** – In the second phase, the eastern skyline is illuminated, but the rest of the sky remains dark.
3. **משיכיר את חבירו בריחוק ד' אמות** – The third phase is when there is sufficient light for you to recognize an acquaintance who is 4 *amos* away. This is the earliest time one can recite קריאת שמע (see סימן נח-א).
4. **נץ החמה** – This is sunrise, i.e., when the sun begins to be visible above the horizon. This is the ideal time to *daven Shacharis.*

Now that we understand the four stages, we can discuss what the earliest time for *davening Shacharis* is. The **משנה ברכות** (כו) (1) does not address this question, but teaches instead that according to the תנא קמא, one may daven *Shacharis* until חצות – midday. ר' יהודה argues, holding that one may only daven until the 4th hour of the day. The **רא"ש** (פ"ד-א) (2) explains that the Mishnah only delineates the latest time one can *daven* but not the earliest time because the proper time for *Shacharis* is derived from the timing of the תמיד של שחר – the morning offering. Once the Mishna teaches that the latest time for *Shacharis* is based upon the latest time for offering the *korban tamid*, it follows automatically that the earliest time for *Shacharis* will be parallel to the *korban tamid* as well: Ideally from *netz*, but when needed, any time after *alos.* Indeed, the **גמרא ברכות** (ל.) (1) relates that אבוה דשמואל and לוי would *daven* before *netz* when they needed to leave their house to travel.

The S”A in **סעיף א'** *passkins* that it is best to *daven Shacharis* (i.e., the *Amidah*) at *netz*, though if you *davened* from the time of *alos* when the eastern skyline is lit up you are יוצא. The **משנ"ב** סק"ב infers from the S”A that one only fulfills his obligation of *davening* if he *davened* at stage 2 listed above: עלות השחר and האיר פני המזרח. However, if he *davened* from *alos* alone he is not יוצא. Most of the modern-day calendars only write the time of *alos* (which is roughly 72 minutes before *netz*) and not the time of the עלות השחר והאיר פני המזרח because the **פמ"ג** (א"א-ב) (3) writes that the exact time of האיר פני המזרח is hard to determine.[[1]](#footnote-0),[[2]](#footnote-1)

Although the S”A in סעיף א' rules that *davening* between *alos* and *netz* is permitted only בדיעבד, the S”A in **סעיף ח'** writes that one who needs to leave his house for travel/work is allowed to *daven* at that time.[[3]](#footnote-2) This ruling is based on the Gemara above in the name of אבוה דשמואל ולוי. The S”A adds that you are allowed to *daven* the *Amidah* in between *alos* and משיכיר (phases 2 & 3 above) even though you will need to recite the *Shema* and its *brachos* after *davening* the *Amidah*[[4]](#footnote-3) and will not be able to be סומך גאולה לתפילה – reciting the *bracha* of "גאל ישראל" right before the *Amidah* (since you already *davened* the *Amidah*).

The **משנ"ב** סקל"ט explains that Chazal preferred that you *daven* at home, where you can stand up and concentrate properly, even if it is before *netz* and before the time that you can recite the *Shema,* rather than *daven* after *netz* while needing to sit and not being able to focus as well. However, the **משנ"ב** סקמ"ב writes that the custom has become to *daven* enroute because many rely on the *posskim* who hold that it is better to juxtapose the recital of "גאל ישראל" with the *Amidah.*

*Lema’ase,* the **פסקי תשובות** (סק"ד) *passkins* thatwhen traveling early in the morning and having the option to either *daven* before משיכיר at home with proper *kavanah* or after *netz* on the road, it is best to *daven* after *netz* on the road (like the custom quoted in the משנ"ב). However, when the option is to either *daven* at home in between משיכיר and *netz* with proper *kavanah* or *daven* enroute after *netz*, it is best to *daven* at home.

Many shuls around the world have the practice to have an “*alos* minyan” during the winter months when *neitz* is late and people need to get to work on time, where the *minyan* finishes *davening* before *netz*. The **משנ"ב** סק"מ writes that when a person needs to travel and is allowed to *daven* at *alos* it is best to find a *minyan* where they will recite the *Shema* after the time of משיכיר because then he can *daven* the entire *Shacharis* and still be סומך גאולה לתפילה. Based on this משנ"ב, these shuls begin *davening* somewhat before משיכיר and members of the *minyan* put on their Talis and Tefillin without a *bracha.* The *chazan* times the *davening* so that he should reach "ברכו" by the time of משיכיר. At this point, the participants move their Talis and Tefillin from the correct place, recite a *bracha* and place them back in their correct place.[[5]](#footnote-4) The *chazan* then continues with "ברכו" and the rest of *davening.* In such a *minyan* the participants are able to recite the *Shema* after משיכיר and also be סומך גאולה לתפילה.

1. *The Latest Time to Daven Shacharis*

The S”A in **סעיף א'** *passkins* like ר' יהודה that you have until the fourth hour of the day to recite the *Shacharis Amidah*. The **משנ"ב** סק"ה *passkins* that this means that you need to finish the *Amidah* by the end of the fourth hour of the day. The **משנ"ב** סימן קכד סק"ז *passkins* that ideally the חזרת הש"ץ should also be finished by the end of the fourth hour, so if you notice that there will not be enough time for the congregation to recite the *Amidah* and for חזרת הש"ץ, the chazan should immediately begin the חזרת הש"ץ (until "הקל הקדוש" including *kedusha*) before everyone’s silent *Amidah.*[[6]](#footnote-5)

The **מג"א** (סימן קי-א) *passkins* that if you realize you will not have time to finish the *Amidah* by the end of the 4th hour, you should *daven* the shortened הביננו prayer. The **ערוך השלחן** (סימן קי-ה) (4) argues on this מג"א and משנ"ב above and *passkins* that you only need to start your *Amidah* before the end of the 4th hour, and if you do so you are allowed to continue *davening* the *Amidah* slowlyafter the fourth hour. His proof is from the גמרא ברכות (ז.) which teaches that בלעם knew the exact moment in every day when Hashem is angry. It was at this split moment that he was planning to curse עם ישראל. **Tosfos** ד"ה אלמלי asks, what could בלעם have said in that split-second? Tosfos in his second answer explains that once בלעם started to curse at the appropriate time, he could have continued afterwards. Thus, we see that as long as you start in the correct time, you are allowed to continue past the allotted time*.* This is also the opinion of **Rav Ovadya** in יביע אומר (ח"ז או"ח לד).

The S”A in סעיף א' concludes that if one has not *davened* the *Amidah* by the 4th hour of the day he may still *daven* until חצות – midday, and although he is not rewarded for *davening* on time, he still receives reward for *davening.*[[7]](#footnote-6)The *Rama* adds that after *chatzos* one is not allowed to *daven Shacharis*. The **משנ"ב** סק"ז *passkins* that if you have not *davened Shacharis* by *chatzos* you should wait until the time of מנחה גדולה (i.e., half an hour after חצות) and then *daven* two *Amidahs,* one for *Mincha* and the second for *Shacharis*.

1. *Saying “Hello” to A Friend Before Davening*

In the next few sections, we will learn that there are four main categories of activities that are forbidden to perform before *davening* and each one of them is forbidden for a different reason*.* We will first mention all four briefly and then delve into the reasons and details for each one separately: A) Saying “hello” to a friend before *davening* B) Taking care of personal matters before *davening* C) Eating and drinking before *davening* D) Learning Torah before *davening.* Since each of these prohibitions is forbidden for a different reason (as will be explained below), the exceptions and leniencies to each prohibition will vary based upon the reasoning behind the prohibition.

The **גמרא ברכות** (יד) (5) teaches in the name of **רב** that one who greets his friend by saying "שלום" is considered as if he made that person into a במה – a makeshift altar. The **מהרש"א** (שם)(6)understands that greeting a friend is similar to offering a *korban* on a במה.[[8]](#footnote-7) He explains that *davening* is similar to offering a *korban* in the *Beis Ha’Mikdash* and if someone greets his friend before *davening*, it is as if he is neglecting the *Beis Ha’Mikdash* and instead offering a *korban* on a במה. **שמואל** adds that it is disrespectful to greet a friend before greeting Hashem. The Gemara then challenges these statements from the משנה that one is allowed to greet a prominent individual in between the *brachos* of the *Shema* (e.g., in between the *bracha* of יוצר אור and אהבה רבה), and if so, he is certainly allowed to greet a person before *davening*! The Gemara answers that רב and שמואל only forbade greeting another when going to his house before *davening,* but not if you happen to meet him.

The S”A in **סעיף ב'** *passkins* that going to greet a friend and saying "שלום" is forbidden because "שלום" is one of the names of Hashem and it is inappropriate to give respect to a person using Hashem’s name before showing respect to Hashem (see **משנ"ב** סקי"א). The **משנ"ב** סק"ט writes that even if you are both in shul, you are not allowed to walk towards your friend’s seat in order to greet him. The **ערוך השלחן** (ס' י"ח) (7) adds that going to a friend for the sake of greeting him is forbidden even if you say “good morning” or stay silent.

The S”A continues that if one is going to check on some personal matter and stops by his friend’s house on the way, he is allowed to say to his friend "צפרא דמרי טב" – “good morning, sir”. The **ביה"ל** ד"ה ואפילו adds that some *passkin* that if you are going specifically to a friend’s house for a personal matter you are even allowed to say "שלום" since you did not go out of your way to greet him (though others disagree). The S”A concludes that if you bump into a friend in the street you are allowed to greet him by saying "שלום", though some say that it is best to say "צפרא דמרי טב" to remind yourself that you should not delay too much before beginning to *daven.* The **משנ"ב** סק"ט clarifies that this stringency is only when you are greeting others in the street, but if someone greets you in the street with "שלום" you are allowed to answer with "שלום". Additionally, if you already *davened,* you are allowed to say "שלום" to your friend who did not *daven* even if he will respond.

To summarize clearly, there are four scenarios with varying *halachos* that emerge from this סעיף:

1. Going to a friend for the sake of greeting him is always forbidden even if you stay silent. This applies even if you are both in shul and you walk to his seat to say “hello” or acknowledge his presence. This is forbidden because you are neglecting Hashem by showing your friend more respect.
2. Stopping by to greet a friend while on the way to take care of personal matters is permitted if you say "צפרא דמרי טב" but greeting him with the name of Hashem by saying "שלום" is forbidden.
3. When going to your friend’s house for a personal matter, such as picking up something you forgot there, you are even allowed to say "שלום" (the ביה"ל quotes those who argue, but Rav Elyashiv *passkins* like this opinion in the ביה"ל, see below) [This is different than case two where you are on the way to place A, but take a small detour to your friend’s house. In this case, your friend’s house is the final destination (for personal manners) and your intention was not to greet him.]
4. If you meet someone in the street, you are even allowed to say "שלום", but the S”A concludes by citing an opinion that even when you meet a friend in the street it is best not to say "שלום" to remind yourself that you still need to *daven.* The משנ"ב adds that answering "שלום" to someone who greeted you with "שלום" is allowed and if you already *davened,* you are allowed to say "שלום" to your friend who did not *daven* even if he will respond.

**Practical applications**:

*Aufruf:* Many families, when hosting a *simcha* such as an *aufruf* in their community, invite the guests to their home for some coffee before *Shacharis.* Are you allowed to say "שבת שלום" or “mazal tov” to the חתן or other guests who are present in their home? The answer is that this case is similar to scenario #3 above, since you are going to the house for personal reasons (i.e., to have a coffee) and not for the purpose of greeting the family/חתן. Therefore, according to Rav Elyashiv (see below), you would be allowed to say “mazal tov,”[[9]](#footnote-8) "צפרא דמרי טב" or even "שבת שלום". However, if you are not interested in drinking coffee and only wish to go to greet the חתן and his family, it would seem that you may not go. That case would resemble scenario #1, where specifically greeting a friend before *davening* is forbidden even if you do not say anything.

Some congregations have the custom for friends and family to walk the חתן from his home to shul on his *Aufruf.* The **משנת יוסף** (ח"ה-כ) writes that this is allowed since your goal is to be משמח the חתן and not necessarily to show him respect.

Phone call: Rav Elyashiv in **פניני תפילה** (עמ' נט) (8) *passkins* that you are not allowed to call a friend just to say hello as this is similar to going to greet a friend (scenario #1). However, if you are calling about a personal matter, such as to ask what time *Shacharis* begins, you are even allowed to say "שלום" (scenario #3). Rav Elyashiv *passkins* like the opinion in the ביה"ל that when going to a friend for personal matters one is allowed to greet him with "שלום".

Text Message: It would seem that texting has the same status as a phone call and one is only allowed to begin with a "שלום" if he is texting mainly for personal matters, but texting just to say good morning is forbidden. However, the **אז נדברו** (יד-לד) argues on Rav Elyashiv and is inclined to allow greeting your friend on the phone since the Gemara and S”A forbade a case when you actively walk to your friend’s house to greet him. Therefore, texting would also be permitted.

Saying good morning to your wife/children: This is similar to scenario #3 where you are not going out of your way to greet them and you are even allowed to say "שלום".

Helping an old man to shul: This is similar to scenario #3 where you are even allowed to say "שלום" since you are not going to greet him.

1. *Taking Care of Personal Matters Before Davening*

The second activity that is forbidden before *davening* – taking care of personal activities – is also mentioned in the **גמרא ברכות** (יד.) (9). The גמרא teaches that you are not allowed to take care of personal matters before *davening* and one who is careful to *daven* before taking care of his personal matters will be successful in his endeavors. The S”A in **סעיף ג'** *passkins* based on this גמרא that one is forbidden to take care of his personal needs or even travel before *davening* the *Amidah.* There are two reasons for this prohibition given by the **משנ"ב** סוף סקכ"ב: A) It is inappropriate to take care of your personal matters before *davening* to Hashem*.*[[10]](#footnote-9)B) Lest you get carried away and miss *davening*. The *Rama* quotes an opinion that if you *davened* some of the *brachos* until ברוך שאמר, you are allowed to take care of personal matters because you are acknowledging Hashem’s sovereignty and existence (through the recital of the *brachos*) before taking care of any personal matters.[[11]](#footnote-10) The *Rama* concludes, though, that it is best to be מחמיר and not perform any personal activities until finishing to *daven.*

There are three exceptions to this rule. First, the **משנ"ב** סקל"ו writes that for the sake of a mitzvah one is allowed to take care of personal matters before *Shacharis*. Second, **RSZA** (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach) writes in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-יא) (10) that the prohibition of performing your own personal activities before davening may apply only if both arise at the same time (i.e., you can either *daven* now or take care of your personal activities). However, if you have a set time to *daven* you are allowed to take care of your personal needs before *davening*. This would be permitted because both reasons above do not apply: You are not showing disrespect by taking care of personal activities before *davening* because your set time to *daven* has not arrived[[12]](#footnote-11) and we are not worried that you might get carried away and not *daven* since you have a set *minyan*. RSZA concludes that you can definitely rely on this with regard to activities when the time for *mincha* and *maariv* arrive if you have a set *minyan,* and maybe even *Shacharis.* Lastly, **RSZA** in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-ה) *passkins* that one is allowed to perform actions that can be done on the run. Here too, the reasoning would be because both reasons that forbid performing personal actions before *davening* do not apply. You are not showing disrespect by performing an action on the run, and we not worried that you might get carried away and miss *davening.*

**Practical applications**:

Laundry/throwing out the garbage/making your bed: **RSZA** in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-ה) (11) *passkins* that throwing laundry into the washing machine that does not need to be sorted or taking out the garbage on the way to shul are permitted and not included in the category of “personal matters.” Similarly, making your bed (when others do not do it for you) or quickly glancing at the news is permitted. These activities are permitted (even if you do not have a set *minyan* for *Shacharis* or even if you do but do not want to rely on RSZA’s suggestion that having a set minyan allows you to take care of personal matters) because they are actions that can be done on the run, and we are not concerned that you will get carried away and miss *davening*. Consequently, they are not classified as taking care of personal matters before *davening.*

Buying food for your children/Taking them to school: **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** (12) in נקיות וכבוד בתפילה (פרק י הע' 25) writes that bringing your child to school to learn Torah is a *mitzvah* and permitted before *davening.* **RSZA** is quoted in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-ה) as saying that even buying food for your children to take to school is allowed because it is considered a *mitzvah.*

Shaving: **RSZA** in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-ז) (13) *passkins* that shaving before *davening* is prohibited because it is an activity that takes concentration and is not done on the run.[[13]](#footnote-12)

Exercise: The **רבבות אפרים** (ח"ה-ל"ט) (14) only allows exercising before *davening* if a combination of the following three factors exists: The exercise is for health reasons, it is too difficult to exercise after *davening,* and you recite ברכות השחר beforehand. The basis for allowing it in this case would be the consideration that it is a *mitzvah* to watch over yourself in conjunction with the *Rama’s* suggestion that reciting ברכת השחר suffices.

*Mikvah* before *Shacharis*: The **שבט הלוי** (ח"ט-א) (15) allows going to the *mikvah* before *Shacharis* even if you need to shower before/after entering the water. The reason is because going to the *mikvah* before *davening* is considered part of the *mitzvah* of properly preparing oneself for *davening.* Even taking a quick shower before/after is permitted because we are not worried that you will get carried away and miss *davening.* He concludes, though, that if you are the type to take your time in the shower it is forbidden.

Showering before davening*:* **RSZA** in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-סקי"א) (16) only allows showering if you do not use soap. He explains that showering is allowed because it is a *mitzvah,* since it serves as proper preparation for *davening*.[[14]](#footnote-13)But using soap for your personal enjoyment is not needed for *davening* and is forbidden because that is considered actively taking care of your personal matters. RSZA adds that if you have a set *minyan* and it is before that time, it may possibly be permitted, as explained above. The **ילקוט יוסף** (פט-ל) quotes his father, Rav Ovadya, who *passkins* that it is not proper to shower before *davening,* though it is not forbidden. However, if he is showering not as preparation for *davening,* but because he does not have enough time after *davening,* it is prohibited.

Driving to work and having a minyan there or on the train: Although we saw that the S”A forbids traveling before *davening,* the **שבט הלוי** (ח"ח-יט) (17) *passkins* that you are allowed to drive to work and *daven* with a minyan there provided you recite ברכות התורה before leaving. He explains that even in such dire circumstances, we rely on the opinion quoted in the *Rama* that you are allowed to take care of personal matters as long as you first recite ברכות השחר. (This would be allowed even if you do not have a set *minyan* for *Shacharis*.)

1. *Drinking Coffee before Davening*

The **גמרא ברכות** (י:) (18) teaches in the name of רבי אליעזר בן יעקב that there are two reasons to forbid eating and drinking before *davening*: A) It is derived from the verse "לא תאכלו על הדם", which Chazal understood to mean "לא תאכלו" – “do not eat”, "על הדם" – “until you first pray for your blood, i.e., your well-being. B) Eating and drinking before *davening* is haughty and disrespectful to Hashem, as it says "ואותי השלכת אחרי גוך" – “and Myself you have thrown behind your body (גוך)” and the word "גוך" is read as "גאיך" – arrogance. In other words, Hashem is saying that you have acted with arrogance by eating and drinking before being מקבל עול מלכות שמים, i.e., before reciting קריאת שמע*.* The **בית יוסף** (19) explains within the second reason that the reinterpretation of the word גוךis necessary because if we read the verse literally as “and Myself you have thrown behind your body (i.e., bodily needs, such as ingesting food) before Me,” then any form of ingestion would be forbidden before *davening*, including drinking water*.* However, since the prohibition of eating/drinking before *davening* is rabbinic, Chazal interpret the verse to mean that only ingesting drinks and food in a haughty manner is forbidden, but drinking water or eating for medical reasons is permitted. According to the first reason, though, it would seem that any form of ingestion before *davening* is forbidden,including water.

The **טור** *passkins* that the main reason that eating and drinking are forbidden before *davening* is because of haughtiness (i.e., the second reason of רבי אליעזר בן יעקב). The S”A in **סעיף ג'** *passkins* in accordance with the טור and therefore permits drinking water or consuming foods for medical reasons. The **משנ"ב** סקכ"ב וסקכ"ד explains that drinking water or ingesting food for one’s health is permitted even if you enjoy their taste, since consuming such foods is not considered haughty behavior. Similarly, children who need food in order to grow properly (even those who have reached the age of חינוך) are allowed to eat before *davening* (see משנ"ב סימן קו סק"ה).

What is the *halacha* regarding drinking coffee before *davening?* Are you allowed to have it with sugar? What about having it with some milk or even having a latte? The **משנ"ב** סקכ"ב *passkins* that drinking coffee with milk or sugar is considered haughtiness and is forbidden, but placing a sugar cube in your mouth and then drinking a dark coffee is permitted (if it helps you maintain proper *kavnah*)because it is evident that you are using the sugar not out of haughtiness but only to sweeten your drink. Additionally, the משנ"ב writes that one who is weak and needs to eat/drink for medical reasons is allowed to have coffee with milk or sugar, but it is best to recite "שמע ישראל" beforehand. In the **ביה"ל** ד"ה ולא he explains that since according to the second reason in the Gemara the prohibition of eating/drinking in a haughty matter (which includes drinking coffee with sugar or milk) applies is specifically before reciting the *Shema*, it is best to first recite at least the *Shema* and then eat/drink. What emerges from here is that according to the משנ"ב, a healthy person is only allowed to have a tea or dark coffee (without milk or sugar) before *davening,* but no other food or drink.

The **ערוך השלחן** (ספ"ט-כג) (20) argues on the משנ"ב and writes that adding sugar to your coffee is not considered haughtiness and is permitted since it is only meant to add flavor. However, adding milk is forbidden since milk is filling, though he concludes that many are lenient with milk as well since it too is meant to flavor the coffee and is not seen as haughtiness. **RSZA** (21) in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-ב) *passkins* that drinking coffee with milk and sugar is permitted before *davening* if you feel it is needed, but it is best to recite a verse of prayer first. He explains that today, drinking coffee with milk and sugar is the norm and is not considered haughtiness. In the footnote it is quoted that RSZA would sometimes drink a coffee with milk and sugar before *davening*, but he would first recite the verse "אליך ד' אקרא וכו'" (תהילים ל:ט). RSZA adds that the definition of haughtiness is determined based on time and location. Thus, in today’s age the משנ"ב’s suggestion of holding a sugar cube in your hand and drinking coffee after placing the cube in your mouth is haughtier than just drinking a coffee with sugar.

**Rav Elyashiv** (22) in פניני תפילה (פ"ג עמ' נו) also *passkins* that drinking coffee with milk and sugar is allowed before *davening* and adds that even orange juice and other soft beverages are allowed since today there is no haughtiness associated with these drinks. The **ילקוט יוסף** (פט-לז) (23) *passkins* that drinking coffee with a small amount of milk is permitted if you recite ברכת התורה, פרשת העקדה and some of the קרבנות.

What about drinking a latte (which is mostly milk) before *davening*? It seems from the language of the ילקוט יוסף that it is forbidden since he only allows adding a small amount of milk to the coffee. It is unclear from the language of RSZA whether he would view drinking a latte as an act of haughtinessor as flavoring the coffee. **Ha”Gaon Rav Neventzal** shlit”a *passkined* that it depends on one’s intent: If he is drinking the latte to wake up then it is allowed, but if he is drinking it for enjoyment then it is forbidden. Rav Neventzal understands that the definition of גאוה is anything that you are doing for your personal enjoyment.

1. *Eating before Davening*

After learning that drinking a coffee nowadays with milk before *davening* is permitted according to most *posskim* since it is not viewed as haughtiness*,* what is the *halacha* regarding eating a piece of cake or some other food with your coffee before *davening*?

As mentioned, the S”A *passkins* that eating (even a little bit) before *davening* is not seen as a necessity and is forbidden because of haughtiness, though sick people are allowed to eat before *davening* because their eating is for medical reasons and not viewed as haughtiness.The **בית יוסף** (24) quotes the רמב"ם who *passkins* that someone who is hungry and will not be able to concentrate during *davening* is considered “sick” in this regard, and is allowed to eat and drink before *davening* (because his eating is not viewed as haughtiness but as a necessity)*.* However, the רמב"ם also *passkins* that although one is exempt from *davening* when he cannot concentrate (e.g., he is in a location where there is a good smelling food that will distract him, see סימן צח-ב), it is still best to *daven* since in any case today most people do not fully concentrate. Therefore, the same would be true in our situation that even if your hunger will impede your concentration, it could be that it is best to *daven* and then eat. The בית יוסף concludes that those who want to rely on the רמב"ם and eat before *davening* in order to be able to concentrate during *davening* are allowed.

The S”A in **סעיף ד'** *passkins* based on what he wrote in the בית יוסף that those who are hungry/thirsty are considered sick. Nevertheless, he says that if they can have proper *kavanah* they should *daven* first*,* and if they cannot concentrate they may eat and drink before *davening* if they prefer. The **משנ"ב** סקכה writes that this leniency of the S”A applies only to those who are extremely hungry. The **אליה רבה** (פט-י') (25) argues on the S”A and *passkins* that if being hungry will affect your *kavanah*, you are forbidden to *daven* before eating even if a full meal is necessary, because you must do everything in your power to facilitate proper concentration.

What emerges from here is that there is room for leniency to eat before *davening* if it will help you concentrate during *davening* and you will otherwise be very hungry because such eating is not considered a haughty activity*.* However, **RSZA** in הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-א) (26) was less inclined to allow eating before *davening* and *passkined* that even those who are allowed to eat before *davening,* such asfor real medical reasons,[[15]](#footnote-14) should only eat the bare minimum of a כזית and if they need to eat more, they should spread the eating out over a ~3-minute period, which is longer than the period of "בכדי אכילת פרס".[[16]](#footnote-15) The **ביה"ל** ד"ה וכן further limits this leniency and writes that it is better to *daven* at home without a *minyan*, eat and then go to shul for קדיש וקדושה than to eat before *davening* and *daven* with a *minyan.* Therefore, if your Shabbos minyan starts late or takes a long time and you will not be able to concentrate without eating, it is best to *daven* at home, recite *kiddush,* eat, and then go to shul for קדיש, קדושה and *laining.*

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe** (27) in אגרות קודש (י"ד-עמ' יט) argues and writes that in our weakened generation one is allowed to eat cake before *davening* (if he reads *Shema* first). He quotes the צמח צדק, the 3rd Lubavitcher Rebbe, who famously said that “it is better to eat in order to be able to properly *daven* than to *daven* in order to eat.”

To summarize, eating and drinking before *davening* is prohibited because it is considered haughty to fill up your stomach before reciting the *Shema*. Today, drinking coffee with milk and sugar before *davening* is permitted. Eating before *davening* is permitted for medical reasons, but one should first recite *Shema*. With regards to eating for those who are very hungry, we saw opinions that you are not allowed to *daven* while you are hungry if the hunger will inhibit your concentration (but you should first recite *Shema*). We also saw opinions that even if you do need to eat, instead of eating a normal amount of food, it is better to eat less than a כזית or *daven* ביחידות at home and then eat*.* These two diametrically opposed opinions are really coming from the same place. According to the simple reading of the S”A, the אליה רבה and the Lubavitcher Rebbe who allow you, and perhaps even require you to eat before *davening,* it is because *davening* is so important that you should do whatever you can to enhance your *kavanah*. On the other hand, the opinions of the ביה"ל/RSZA that you should eat less than a כזית or that it is better to *daven* at home and then eat rather than eat before *davening* also show the importance of *davening,* which is why a person should immediately *daven* before eating or doing anything else. *Lema’ase,* it seems that the majority of *Achronim* (משנ"ב, RSZA and ילקוט יוסף) forbid eating before *davening* (even though they saw the words of the בית יוסף and אליה רבה), though, you should ask your Rav.

[Optional but *geshamak* addition: The **שו"ת ארץ צבי** (ח"ב-ב) (28), written by Rav Aryeh Tzvi Fromer – Rosh Yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin who was murdered in the Holocaust – asks that even if you are allowed to eat before *davening* to help with *kavanah,* it should still be forbidden on a weekday because you are not allowed to eat before performing a *mitzvah* that is incumbent upon you, as we find with Shofar and Lulav that eating and drinking is forbidden until you perform the *mitzvah.*[[17]](#footnote-16)So too, here, it should be forbidden to eat or drink before donning Tefillin. The ארץ הצבי answers that Tefillin is different than Shofar, Lulav and other one-time *mitzvos.* With regards to Tefillin, ideally, one is obligated to wear them every moment of the day, but today we are not capable of having full, ongoing control of our body and thoughts throughout the day. Therefore, Chazal were lenient and allowed wearing Tefillin only once a day. In contrast, Shofar and Lulav is a one-time obligation; the second you blow Shofar or shake the Lulav you fulfill your obligation. Since the obligation of wearing Tefillin is ongoing, Chazal could not forbid eating before performing the *mitzvah* because then you would never be allowed to eat throughout the day. However, with Shofar and Lulav, which are one-time *mitzvos,* Chazal are able to forbid eating and drinking before performing the *mitzvah* to ensure that you perform it*.*]

1. *Learning Before Davening*

The S”A in **סעיף ו'** *passkins* based on the **רא"ש** that you are not allowed to learn Torah after *alos* until you *daven* because Chazal were worried that you would get carried away with your learning and forget to *daven.* However, if you normally go to shul for *minyan*, you are allowed to learn before *davening* because you will certainly stop learning when the time of *davening* arrives (as explained by לבוש סק"ו)*.* The **משנ"ב** סקל"דaddsthat even if you do not have a set *minyan* you are allowed to learn before *davening* if you appoint a friend who is not learning to remind you to *daven.* The S”A *passkins* based on **רבינו יונה** that teaching the רבים Torah before *davening* is allowed even if you do not have a set *minyan*, though the **משנ"ב** סקל"ה clarifies that if the latest time to recite *Shema* will pass, you are obligated to recite the *Shema* before the shiur.

The **ספר נקיות וכבוד בתפילה** (פ"י-לח) (29) quotes from the *achronim* that there are 4 instances in which learning before *davening* is permitted.

1. If you learn in shul or in a place where people will gather to *daven,* because they will remind you to *daven*
2. If you usually go to shul to *daven* (The S”A only wrote “if you normally go to shul”, the ספר נקיות וכבוד בתפילה is quoting Rav Elyashiv who adds that it is only permissible if you *daven* at a set time)
3. If you appoint a friend to remind you, as long as that friend is not learning
4. Rav Elyashiv, RSZA, Rav Wosner and the אור לציון allow if you set an alarm clock and will stop as soon as it rings. Rav Nissim Karelitz in **חוט שני** (הלכות תפילה- סימן קל"ג-מג) (30) does not allow relying on an alarm clock since the *shomer* needs to remind you to actually *daven* and an alarm clock just rings. (Today, where you are able to set an alarm with a specific reminder, maybe Rav Nissim would agree that it is allowed if you include mention of davening in the reminder.)

What emerges is that learning before *davening,* such as attending a *daf yomi shiur,* is allowed if you have a set *minyan* that you go to. However, during COVID when people were *davening* at home after testing positive or if you are traveling for business and *davening* alone, it would be forbidden to do the *daf* or any learningbefore *davening,* unless you appoint someone as a *shomer* or set an alarm clock (according to most *Achronim*)to remind you to *daven.*

1. It seems from Rav Elyashiv, quoted in אשרי האיש (פרק יח), that it is 13.5 minutes after עלות, similar to בין השמשות in the evening. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. The **ביה"ל** ד"ה ואם quotes the מג"א who writes that one is יוצא בדיעבד if he *davened* in between *alos* andהאיר פני המזרח. The ביה"ל himself, though, *passkins* against the מג"א. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Here too, the ביה"ל ד"ה ואם writes that “*alos”* means *alos +* האיר פני המזרח. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. In other words, you would *daven* פסוקי דזמרה until ישתבח, jump to recite the *Amidah,* and once the time of משיכיר arrives, then recite the *brachos* of *Shema* and the *Shema* concluding with "גאל ישראל". [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Some congregations *daven* פסוקי דזמרה without Talis and Tefillin and the *chazan* times the *davening* to reach "ברכו" by משיכיר, whereupon everyone puts on their Talis and Tefillin and they then continue with "ברכו". [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. See ביה"ל ד"ה שיעבור there, who writes that with respect to *Shacharis,* it might be better to recite a regular חזרת הש"ץ, since some allow *davening* until חצות. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. The S”A in נח-ו *passkins* that the *brachos* of *Shema* may not be recited after the 4th hour of the day. Therefore, someone *davening* after the 4th hour (but before *chatzos*)would recite פסוקי דזמרה and after ישתבח immediately begin the *Amidah.* However, the ביה"לסימן נח-ו ד"ה קוראה, writes that if you missed the time of the *Shema* because of an אונס you may recite the *brachos* of *Shema* and *Shema* until *chatzos.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. See also the מאירי there who explains that “creating a במה” means offering a *korban* to עבודה זרה. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. The שבט הלוי (ח"י-טו:א) explains that saying “mazal tov” is not considered a greeting that is prohibited before *davening.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. This is different than the reason it is forbidden to say "שלום" to a friend. There, the reason is because it is comparable to neglecting the *Beis Ha’Mikdash* by offering a *korban* on a במה instead, and because you are showing your friend more respect than Hashem by greeting him first. Here, the reason is because it is inappropriate to take care of personal matters before *davening.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. See דרכי משה הארוך (א) in the name of אורחות חיים. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Only when the two clash and you choose to take care of personal matters is it disrespectful to Hashem. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. If you have a set *minyan,* RSZA (10) would permit. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Either because 9 קבין is similar to a *mikvah* or because the removal of sweat will help you concentrate better. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. The same is presumably true for any other case that one is allowed to eat before *davening,* e.g., he is very hungry. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. See Rav Moshe in אגרו"מ (או"ח ח"ד-מא) concerning the amount of time of בכדי אכילת פרס. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. With regard to the obligation of reciting the morning *Shema,* the משנ"ב סקכ"ב and ביה"ל ד"ה ולא write that when eating for medical reasons (or to be able to concentrate) you should first recite the *Shema*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)