

## Lesson 5- How Chazal Structured Tefilas Shacharis Around Mitzvos

Welcome to this session of Take 5 for Tefila, a program sponsored by the Orthodox Union, as part of their Tefila Education Initiative. In this session, we will examine how Chazal structured Tefilas Shacharis around Mitzvos.

It is easy to make the mistake of viewing Tefilas Shacharis as the fulfillment of one Mitzvah, Tefila. I am here to remind you that several Mitzvos were combined to create Tefilas Shacharis. The Mitzvah that led us to this discussion was the Mitzvah of washing our hands when we first arise. What is the next Mitzvah that we perform? It is the Mitzvah of Limmud Torah; studying the Torah. In many versions of Tefilas Shacharis, the Brachos said for studying Torah follow closely after the Bracha of **עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם**. After reciting the Brachos for learning Torah, we immediately fulfill the Mitzvah of studying Torah by participating in two sessions of learning, each session being divided into three parts: excerpts from the Torah, excerpts from the Mishna and excerpts from the Gemara. The first session of learning begins with the Psukim of Birkas Kohanim, the priestly blessings. Those Psukim are taken from the Torah; then we recite the line of **אֵילּוּ דְּבָרִים** which is found in a Mishnah in Maseches Paeh and then a section of Gemara that also begins with the words: **אֵילּוּ דְּבָרִים** found in the Gemara of the same Masechta. The second session of learning is found in Korbanos, the recitation of the daily sacrifices. From the Torah we read the portion that portrays the daily Tamid offering; from the Mishna we study the chapter of Aizehu Mikomam, a description of where the Korbanos were prepared and then offered in the Beis Hamikdash and from the Midrash, which is considered a part of the Gemara, we study the rules that Rabbi Yishmael set forth for extrapolating from the Torah.

Putting on our Talis and Tephilin are our next Mitzvos. Some count the donning of Tefilin as two Mitzvos, one for the Tefillin of the arm and one for the Tefilin of the head. Let us not forget that we pray in a room in which a mezuzah is nailed to the doorpost.

Pseukei D'Zimra which follows consists of chapters and verses of praise of G-d primarily taken from Tehillim. We recite those verses as preparation for reciting Shemona Esrei and as further study of Torah. One anonymous Gaon from the 9th Century explained that we recite Kaddish after Pseukei D'Zimra because the recital of Pseukei D'Zimra is in and of itself the fulfillment of a Mitzvah. He further explained that when ten Jews perform a Mitzvah together they are required to recite Kaddish after completing the Mitzvah. In his opinion that rule led to the practice of reciting Kaddish at a funeral. It also led him to ask a very interesting question: why do we recite Kaddish after a funeral but we do not recite Kaddish after a wedding ceremony?

Kriyas Shema and Shemona Esrei are the next two mitzvos that we perform. Reciting

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Kriyas Shema serves two functions. It is the fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Kriyas Shema and it serves as preparation for reciting Shemona Esrei. Because Kriyas Shema is recited just before Shemona Esrei, it is easy to forget that the recital of Kriyas Shema is its own unique Mitzvah. On occasion we are reminded of that fact when we hear the Rabbi or the Gabbai of the synagogue interrupt Tefilas Shacharis on a Shabbos to remind us that the deadline for reciting Kriyas Shema is looming. The congregation then pauses and recites Kriyas Shema. Why do we never hear a similar announcement concerning Shemona Esrei? because the deadline for reciting Shemona Esrei is about one hour later than the deadline for reciting Kriyas Shema.

The recital of Kriyas Shema is considered preparation for reciting Shemona Esrei for several reasons. It represents the fulfillment of a mitzvah just before Shemona Esrei. It further represents one last moment of learning before reciting Shemona Esrei. It also serves to help us fulfill the requirement of **סמיכת גאולה לתפלה**. The third chapter of Kriyas Shema contains the Parsha of Tzitzis which includes the words that we recite in order to fulfill the mitzvah of **זכירת יציאת מצרים**, remembering the Exodus from Egypt. Reminding G-d of the Exodus from Egypt just before reciting Shemona Esrei is our way of introducing our request to G-d that just as he rescued the Jewish people from Egypt, he should gather all the Jews from around the world, bring us all to Israel and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. That is my definition of **סמיכת גאולה לתפלה**.

The Mitzvah of Kriyas Shema reminds us that in performing these Mitzvos during Tefilas Shacharis, we need to focus on two aspects of each Mitzvah; the need to perform each Mitzvah in order to fulfill that Mitzvah and the need to understand why the performance of these Mitzvos became a part of Tefilas Shacharis. The reason these Mitzvos became a part of Tefilas Shacharis is that they serve as preparation for reciting Shemona Esrei. We do not want to recite Shemona Esrei which includes prayers for our personal needs without having first prepared ourselves through the study of Torah and with the merit of having fulfilled several Mitzvos. The fact that these Mitzvos serve these two functions teaches us a very important lesson about Tefila; that the center of all of our Tefilos is Shemona Esrei.