

SIMAN 60: THE LAWS OF THE BLESSINGS FOR SHEMA, AND WHETHER PROPER INTENTIONS ARE REQUIRED

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60:1. The second blessing (1) is "Ahavas Olam [with eternal love]" (Rama: Some begin the blessing with "Ahava Rabba [with abundant love]" (2) and so is the custom in all of Ashkanaz (Germanic European areas)). This blessing does not start with "Baruch Ata... [Blessed are You]" since it immediately follows the blessing "Who created". (*) As to whether this blessing fulfills the obligation of blessing on learning of Torah, see section 47.

[* Although long blessings should both begin and end with "Blessed are you", a blessing that immediately follows another does not have this requirement. -- YM]

MB 1: "Ahavas Olam" - Meaning that the beginning of the blessing is "Ahavas Olam", but the remainder of the blessing and its ending are the same as what we say in the blessing of "Ahava Rabba" even according to this (Ahavas Olam) opinion.

MB 2: So is the custom - for the morning prayers, however for the afternoon prayers our custom is to say Ahavas Olam. The reason that we say Ahava Rabba [with great love] in the morning is that it is written (Lamentations 3.23) "Chadashim L'bkarim Rabba Emunatecha [They are new every morning, Great is Your faithfulness]" [hence the prayer Ahava Rabba recognizes G-d's great love manifested by His recreating us each morning - NW]. This is all a priori but after the fact, if he said either version he has fulfilled his obligation.

60:2. If he says Shema without the preceeding blessings he has fulfilled his obligation of reciting Shema and he should then (3) go back and say the blessings without repeating Shema; but it appears to me that it is better to go back and say Shema along (4) with the blessings.

MB 3: Go back and say - Meaning that although the blessings are not essential to Shema, and he fulfilled the obligation of saying Shema without any of the blessings, nevertheless the obligation to say the blessings themselves was not fulfilled. He can say the blessings without re-reading the Shema, since the blessings were not established specifically for the recitation of Shema as is evident by the fact that the blessings do not read "Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and Who has commanded us" [All blessings that are recited prior to fulfillment of a Mitzvah make mention that we have been commanded to do the Mitzvah. As these blessings do not contain this language, this shows them to be

independent of the Mitzvah of reciting the Shema - NWI

MB 4: *With the blessings - so that he will get up to say the Amidah immediately after saying words of Torah. (*) This saying of Shema is considered as if he were reading the Torah.*

[* Note that saying words of Torah is considered more important and desirable before prayer than saying Blessings. -- YM]

60:3. The order of the blessings does not prevent their fulfillment, so if one said the (5) second blessing before the first, he has (6) fulfilled his obligation of reciting the blessings.

MB 5: *Second blessing to the first - the same is true if he said the blessing of "Emes Vyatziv [True and certain]", which follows Shema before Shema, or if he said all the blessings after reciting Shema or even after reciting the Amidah.*

MB 6: *Fulfilled his obligation - after the fact. If he said only the first blessing and the second not at all, he at least is credited for the one he did say - and look in the Biur Halacha.*

[The Biur Halacha says that certainly in the view of the Shulchan Aruch, who said that the blessings are not essential to Shema, they would not be essential to each other. And even in the view of Rav Hai Gaon, who says that the blessings hinder one another, this only applies to the prayers of a minyan but not to those of an individual (according to the prevalent interpretation of Rav Hai) - NWI]

Naftoli Willner ewillner@compucare.com Baltimore, MD

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Siman 60. The laws of the blessings on the Shema, and whether they require proper intent

60:4. (7) There are those who say that performance of the commandments does not require proper intent, and there are those who say that (8) intent is required in order (9) to fulfill each commandment - and (10) the law is according to the latter opinion.

MB 7: *There are those who say - According to the explanations of the Halachic decisors, there are two*

forms of intent for a commandment: 1) Concentration of the heart upon the Mitzvah that one is performing, and 2) Intent to fulfill one's obligation, meaning that with this action one intends to fulfill G-d's commandment, as is written by the Bach in Siman 8. The intent that we are dealing with here is the second category. The first category, "intent" of the heart upon the Mitzvah, means concentration of the heart upon the words that one is saying, and preventing oneself from thinking about other things. That is applicable to the reading of the Shema, praying, Grace after Meals, Kiddush and the like, and according to everyone this is the ideal way to perform the commandment - that one think in his heart. But after the fact, if one did not have this proper intent, all agree that he has still fulfilled his requirements in all cases, except for the first verse of the Shema and the first blessing of the Amida, as will be explained later. The argument here is whether one is obligated to have intent before he starts the commandment, to fulfill his obligation with this specific act. For the ideal performance of a commandment, all agree that one must have even this type of proper intent, as is found in the Talmud tractate Nedarim.

MB 8: *Intent is required - And if one did not specifically intend to fulfill his obligation with this performance, then he has not exempted himself from the Biblical requirement, and he must go back and do it again. Even if he merely doubts whether he had intent, if the case involves a Biblical commandment then one must be stringent - so said the Pri Megadim in Siman 589, see there. And it appears to me that in that case, one should not make a new blessing, because even without his doubt, there are many who say that there should be no new blessing even if he definitely did not fulfill his obligation the first time.*

MB 9: *To fulfill - Therefore, the one who blows a Shofar for practice, or the one who reads Grace after Meals with children in order to teach them, and forgot that he himself also had a requirement to read the Grace, has not fulfilled his obligation. And the same is true with all other commandments, in cases where one did them for some other reason than actual performance. And see in the Taz Siman 489, where it is clear from his words that if one read the Grace with children, as above, he has not fulfilled his obligation even according to those opinions that say that commandments do not require intent. This is because it is as if his explicit intent is not to perform the commandment. And if his intent is for the sake of something else, and also to perform the commandment, this is sufficient for him to fulfill his obligation.*

MB 10: *The law - The Magen Avraham wrote in the name of the Ridbaz that this is true only for commandments of Torah origin, but Rabbinic ordinances do not require intent. According to this, if one said any of the various blessings, which are all Rabbinic ordinances (except for the Grace after Meals), without intent to fulfill his obligation, he has nonetheless fulfilled it. However, from several places in the Shulchan Aruch, it appears that he disagrees with this, and so is implied from the explanations of the Gr"a to Siman 489, that no distinction should be made between Torah and Rabbinic commandments. Later on in Siman 489, note 8, the Magen Avraham wrote that the Shulchan Aruch rules that performance of the commandments requires intent; and if so, where a person did not have intent the*

first time, he must go back and do the commandment again. Even so he should not make a second blessing, because where the blessing is concerned we must worry about the minority opinion that says they do not require intent, and see in the Biur Halacha. Also be aware that the Chayei Adam wrote in chapter 65 that the requirement to go back and redo the commandment is in a situation where the first performance could have been done for some other reason - such as blowing Shofar, where we can say he was practicing, or the reading of Shema was for his own learning, etc. However, if one read the Shema as we do, following the order of the morning prayers, or one ate Matzah or blew Shofar or took a lulav, even though he did not have explicit intent to perform the Mitzvah, he has nonetheless fulfilled it - because that is why he is doing this action, for the sake of fulfilling his obligation. What he means to say is that where the circumstances prove that his performance is in order to fulfill his obligation, even though he did not have explicit intent this is sufficient. However, in another situation he would certainly agree that the obligation has not been fulfilled, as we see in the Tosfos to Tractate Sukkah 39a. All of this discussion concerns whether one fulfilled the requirements, having already performed the action. Clearly, in the ideal one must certainly concentrate before performing any commandment, and have specific intent to fulfill one's obligation with this action. And so agreed all the latter commentators in their works - see the Chayei Adam in chapter 21, and in the Derech HaChaim in the laws of reading the Shema, and in the Maasei Rav.

60:5. One who read the Shema, and did not (11) concentrate upon the first verse, which is "Shema Yisroel [Hear, O Israel]", has not fulfilled his obligation. If one did not concentrate for all the rest of the Shema, even if he was merely studying a Torah Scroll or (12) correcting these sections at the time for the Shema, he has fulfilled his obligation - provided he concentrated upon the first verse.

MB 11: *Concentrate - The "intent" referred to here is not that mentioned above in 60:4, which was intent to fulfill one's obligation - that is required throughout all the paragraphs of the Shema. Here, the "intent" is sincere concentration, and placing upon one's heart exactly what one is saying - and this is mandatory only for the first verse, which has within it the critical items of acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and the unity of HaShem. There are those who say that even the intent to fulfill one's obligation is only mandatory in the first verse.*