

CHAPTER 16 - AFTERNOON AND EVENING PRAYERS; CONDUCT AT NIGHT

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

The afternoon SHEMONEH ESREH may be recited beginning half an hour after noon, or preferably half an hour after midafternoon, where an "hour" is 1/12 of the time between sunrise and sunset (233:1). It may be recited until sunset, or according to some, 1-1/4 hours before sunset (233:1). Some first recite passages about the daily Temple service; this is followed by Psalm 145 and (if ten men are present) KADDISH (234:1). If time is short, the congregation recite the first three blessings, including KEDUSHAH, together with the leader (232:1).

When it is close to the time for the afternoon SHEMONEH ESREH, a person who has not yet recited it should not begin a large meal, a haircut, a bath, or any work or business; see 232:2-3. Similarly, when it is close to the time for the evening SHEMA, a person who has not recited it should not start to eat; see 235:2. If possible, the hands should be washed before reciting these prayers, even if they are clean; see 233:2.

The evening SHEMONEH ESREH may be recited beginning after nightfall, or according to some, 1-1/4 hours before sunset (233:1). The evening SHEMA should be recited just after dark (235:3). If the congregation recites it earlier because they are reciting the evening SHEMONEH ESREH early, it should be repeated, without the blessings, after dark (235:1). It should be recited before midnight, or if possible before dawn (235:3); if necessary, it may be recited until sunrise, but without reciting the blessing "Lay us down..." (235:4), and if this is done, the next morning's SHEMA must not be recited until after sunrise (58:5). According to some, if SHEMA was missed during the day, it can be made up by reciting it twice in the evening, and vice versa (58:7). Two blessings are recited before the evening SHEMA and two after it; see 236:1. Some also recite the 18 verses beginning "May our eyes see...", ending with the blessing "...the King in His Glory..." (see 236:4); but there should be no unnecessary interruptions between the first blessing after SHEMA ("...Who redeemed Israel") and SHEMONEH ESREH (see 236:2-3). The leader does not repeat the evening SHEMONEH ESREH, and TACHANUN is not recited (237:1).

It is even more important to study Torah at night than during the day (238:1). A person who was unable to complete his quota of Torah study during the day should complete it immediately that night (238:2).

After going to bed, a person should recite the first paragraph of SHEMA, the blessing "...Who casts

webs of sleep on my eyes...", and other verses; he should do nothing else afterward (see 239:1). He should cover himself when he undresses, so he does not lie naked (239:2; see also 241:1). He should have relations with his wife at regular intervals (see 240:1), in particular on the night after her monthly immersion, the night before he goes on a trip, or whenever she indicates that she wants it (240:1). His intentions should not be for his own pleasure, but to fulfill his obligation to his wife and the Commandment to have children (240:1,8). On proper attitudes and behaviors during relations see 240:2-5,8-10. A couple should not have relations if anyone else in the room (except an infant; see also 240:16) is awake (240:6;13), or if holy books are present unless they are properly covered (see 240:6). They should not have relations at the beginning or end of the night (240:7) or if it is not dark (240:11). A man should not have relations in times of famine or other troubles unless he is childless; see 240:12. On the dangers of excessive sexual indulgence see 240:14; on situations in which relations are inadvisable see 240:15.

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