

AN HOUR OR LESS

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

Generally, when Chazal referred to an hour, they meant an unspecified amount of time. Regarding the practice of waiting an hour before tefillah, one hour refers to an actual hour. Are we in fact obligated to spend an hour preparing for prayer?

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one should spend a full hour beforehand preparing for prayer (93,1). As stated in the previous section, one can include Berachos, Korbanos, Pesukei D'zimra, Krias Shema and the berachos before and after Krias Shema as well. If a person prays in a slow minyan, these tefillos alone can fill a good part of an hour (Pri Megadim, Eshel Avraham 93,1).

When the Tur cites this halachah he writes that a person should pause momentarily before tefillah (93,1). The commentators explain that the time span of an hour was primarily said for the extremely righteous, but for everyone else a few seconds suffices. Nonetheless, every person must pause a short time before he starts tefillah (Mishnah Berurah 93,1).

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