

## Tractate Brachos

[But now the Gamorah will give another view to the same problem, so let's step over to the left, and view things from the other angle. The Mishnah said: From the time that Kohanim enter to eat their terumah, until the end of the first watch, the words of R' Eliezer.] **And if you prefer to say the first phrase is not R' Eliezer?** [In other words, maybe you hold that the phrase From the time that Kohanim enter to eat their terumah, is not R' Eliezer, and only the second part, which states the ending time for saying the Shema, is his. If you hold like that, then in our Mishnah, this R' Eliezer is giving us the ending time, and in the baraita the same R' Eliezer is giving us the starting time. Sit back and think about it. If it does not click, stop here, review it in your head throughout the day, chew it, savour it, argue it, and when you understand it, you should return. If this is so, it also means that R' Eliezer holds that the verse in the Shema, when you lie down, means, when people are within the process of going to bed, which may be, as his baraita states, right before bein hashemashos. (Rashi). This means that he holds from before sunset until the end of the first watch. The Sages hold that, when you lie down, means when people are already in bed.]

[He states the latest time] **Until the end of the first watch.** [Now the Gamorah will try to discover what he meant by the watch. The nights are divided into watches, and during each watch a different company of heavenly beings stand in service to Hashem. They sing praise. Some hold that the night has four watches and others hold by three. How does R' Eliezer hold, 3 or 4?] **What is R' Eliezer's opinion** [about how many watches there are in a night?] **If he is of the opinion that there are three watches in the night,** [each watch four hours long,] **let him just say, Until the end of the fourth hour of the night, and if he holds to four watches, let him say, Until the end of the third hour.** [What is his purpose for using the term, watches, rather than hours?] **Actually he is of the opinion that the night consists of three watches, and this is what he wishes to teach us by speaking of watches rather than hours, that there are watches in heaven and there are watches on earth.**

[Each thing on earth corresponds to its equal in Heaven. Because nothing can be physical without being tied by spiritual power to its source. Much like a mask must have a face behind it, or it has no purpose as a mask.]

[Rashi: By informing us that the Shema ends when the first heavenly watch ends, without informing us when that is, he is teaching us that there are signs on earth by which to recognise the heavenly watches]. **A baraita was taught: R' Eliezer says, the night consists of three watches, and at each and every watch the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and roars like a lion.** [He cries out concerning the destruction of the Temple, and the exile of the Jewish people, since the Temple, and their service in it, bonded heaven and earth,] **as the verse states, Hashem will roar from on high, and from His holy abode will send forth His voice, He will roar and roar over His lodgings** [Jeremiah 25:30]. **And the sign for this matter is as follows:** [the sign for each watch], **The first watch a donkey brays. The second watch dogs howl, the third watch an infant nurses from its mothers's breasts, and a woman speaks with her husband.** [Rashi: At this hour, the third watch, it is close to morning and an infant becomes hungry. Since it is close to morning, people start to awaken, and those who sleep together, will start to converse. It is also pleasing to note that R' Eliezer teaches us that we should speak to our partner upon arising. This is proper conduct.]

**What is R' Eliezer counting with these signs? If he is counting the beginnings of the watches, what need is there for a sign to identify the beginning of the first watch? It starts when it is nightfall!** [Rashi: When the stars appear. He said the sign is when the donkey brays, but are these signs the beginning of each watch or are they the end of each watch, and as the Gamorah points out to us, all can clearly see when it starts... when the stars come out is when it starts, but if they represent the beginning, what need is there for a sign to the first watch, since we can already see when it starts.] **And if we say he is counting the end of the watches, what use is there for a sign at the end of the third watch? It is daylight. Rather, we should say that R' Eliezer is counting the end of the first watch and the beginning of the last watch, and the middle of the second watch.** [So now the Gamorah assumes when it is at the end of the first watch when the donkey brays, the middle of the second watch when the dogs howl, and the beginning of the third watch when a child nurses, and at these times Hashem roars over the destruction of the Temple.]

[Now, as usual, let us step over to the other side, and let us view the baraita from a different angle.]

**Or, maybe you wish to say, With all these signs he is counting the ends of the watches. And if you object to say that the last watch does not need a sign, for what purpose is it? I will say for those reciting the Shema and whom sleep in a dark house, [no windows in their rooms,] and he does not know when is the time for reciting the Shema of the morning. Once a woman speaks with her husband, and a child is nursing from its mother's breasts, let him arise and recite the Shema [the night is over].**

**[Kashia** (difficulty): If the Gamorah holds that R' Eliezer's braita means to say the sign is for the end of the third watch because of those who cannot see that it is morning, we may come to ask about the evening before, "What about those who cannot see that it is night? Since the sign is not until the end of the first watch."

**The Answer:** Because we do not need to know from when in the evening, if we cannot see, if we hear the donkey bray, we are still in time, for we are permitted to say it until midnight (according to the Sages) and that the time has a sign as well, the howling dogs. And if you hold as Rabbi Gamliel from the Mishnah, who says, until the morning's dawn you can say the Shema, then you will be informed by the third sign when it is too late, and thus the Sages are correct in placing a limit at midnight because "we are afraid that a person will come to forget."]