POST THE TALMUD / DISCUSSION GUIDE

Evening Shema

Berakhot 2a: opening Mishnah and selected Gemara | Beta teaching adaptation

THE CORE QUESTION

When does a deadline mark the final limit, and when does it protect us from missing it?

THE ARGUMENT IN FOUR MOVES

1. The Mishnah locates the beginning of evening Shema at the time priests may eat terumah; the Gemara identifies nightfall.

2. Rabbi Eliezer sets the end at the first watch. The Sages say midnight; Rabban Gamliel says dawn.

3. Gamliel's sons return from a banquet without reciting Shema. He tells them they remain obligated if dawn has not arrived.

4. The Mishnah explains the Sages' midnight boundary as a safeguard. The Gemara also asks why the discussion begins with evening.

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

Read the opening Gemara's questions about the evening-first order and the priests' ritual status. Distinguish the Mishnah's rule from the Gemara's explanation.

DISCUSS

1. Why anchor a prayer time to an everyday activity rather than a clock?

2. How is a protective deadline different from the final limit of an obligation?

3. Design a helpful safeguard for a responsibility in your own life. What could make it confusing?

TEACHING NOTE

Draw a timeline with nightfall, the first watch, midnight and dawn. This adaptation is not a guide to present-day prayer times.

Source: https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.2a

Classroom thread: https://postthetalmud.com/shema/?mode=study&classroom=1

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Created by Rabbi Daniel Reichenbach.