

# THE DAILY PRAYER: WHEN TO PRAY

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***Rebbe Nachman said "Prayer is so great, who knows if one will have the chance to pray later on in the day!"***

Rebbe Nachman exhorted his followers to pray as early in the day as possible. He said: Prayer is so great, who knows if one will have the chance to pray later on in the day (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #31). Rebbe Nachman wanted his followers to have a head start on the day and he spoke very often of the need to arise for Tikkun Chatzot (the Midnight Lament). In most cases, those who did get up stayed awake until after the Morning Prayers. If not man rose early enough to pray *vatikin*, at daybreak.

Starting your day early has lots of advantages. It gives you a good deal of time for your devotions. You can spend time praying as one should: carefully reciting all the words and concentrating on their meaning. You can also have some quiet time alone in *hitbodedut*, study some Torah, do a mitzvah – all before making your way to your office or place of work to “begin” the day. Getting up late allows for none of this. Even before you’ve gulped down your prayers and a cup of coffee, it’s time to head into the rush-hour traffic that brings you unprepared and still bleary-eyed to face yet another day.

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Speaking of a cup of coffee, Rebbe Nachman said that he never drank even so much as a cup of water before reciting the morning prayers. He disagreed with all those who drank coffee and the like before praying (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #277). Although there are opinions in the Shulchan Arukh which permit this, God says: “After you eat and drink you come to praise Me?!” (*Berakhot* 10b). Quite simply, one’s heart is subdued and humble when it wants. Refraining from food or drink before praying gives you a greater desire to feed the spiritual than the physical. Obviously, if you start your day early, this usually presents no problem.



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Rebbe Nachman said: Those Tzaddikim that pray after the set time for the Morning Prayers are making a mistake (*Tzaddik* #487). When asked by Reb Meir of Teplik how people dared to shave their beards and *peyot* with a razor, thereby transgressing five Torah prohibitions daily, Reb Noson remarked, “And how can ‘religious’ people daily miss out reading the morning Shema in its correct time?” (*Kokhavey Or*, p. 75 #17). It is quite clear from the Shulchan Arukh that the correct time for reciting the Shema is up until one quarter of the day. The Morning Service may be prayed up until one third of the day has passed. (This changes according to location and one should check with one’s local rabbi.)

(Taken from the book [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman’s Teachings](#), chapter 8, Prayer)