



A Davening Guide for Mothers with Young Children

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Davening is a primary Avodah of the Yomim Noraim. The Rosh Hashona haftorahs highlight the power of a woman's prayers. On the first day we read about Chanah's prayers for a son.

The haftorah of the second day alludes to the powerful prayers of Rochel on behalf of her children when they were going into exile. Her prayers effected that which even the Avos could not achieve.

It is ironic therefore that it is often difficult for women to be more involved in the Yomim Noraim davening, due to their maternal responsibilities.

Chanah, a prophetess, understood that her sacred role and responsibility as a mother took precedence over her personal spiritual feelings. Until her son Shmuel was weaned, she chose to stay at home rather than make her annual pilgrimage to the Mishkan. Looking after her child was what Hashem wanted of her. This was a far more important Avodah.

Despite some degree of dispensation, women do have some obligations in davening. They also have their personal desire to connect to Hashem through prayer.

Prioritising Your Tefillos

Below is a list of the Tefillos in order of priority of what should be included, when mothering and household responsibilities makes a full davening impractical. This guide applies on weekdays, Shabbos and Yomtov, including the Yomim Noraim.

Amidah: A woman is halachically required to daven the Amidah for Shachris and Mincha each day. This reflects the majority opinion and is also the ruling of the Alter Rebbe¹.

Shachris should be davened within the correct time and certainly before *Chatzos*.

In a situation where her obligations make this genuinely not possible, she should rely on the view which only requires her to recite a short Tefillah each day which gives praise and thanks to Hashem². *Birchos Hashachar* would suffice. A personalised Tefillah would also do the job.

Emes Veyatziv until its conclusion *Go'al Yisroel* is the next requirement. Through this one fulfils the Mitzvah of remembering the Exodus from Egypt, a positive Mitzvah which is *not* time-bound. This should be said just prior to Shemoneh Esrei without any interruption in between³.

A woman is obligated and should recite the Morning Blessings *Birchos Hashachar*⁴ and *Birkas HaTorah*⁵, the Torah blessings.

She should also recite the Parsha of the **Tomid** in Korbonos⁶.

The above are the parts of davening which a woman has an obligation to say. Below are the parts of davening in which she is technically exempt. If she is able to, it is encouraged to add even these parts to her davening in the order below.

Krias Shema: Technically a woman is exempt from reciting Shema since it is a time-bound positive Mitzvah. Poskim recommend that she recite at least the first line of the Shema each day in order to accept Hashem's Kingship⁷. The Levush requires Baruch Shem to also be said. A woman is not bound to recite Shema in its proper time.

She is also exempt from reciting the blessings before the Shema (*Birchos Krias Shema*)⁸.

Pesukei Dezimra: Whether a woman must say Pesukei Dezimra is subject to *machlokes*. Mishna Berura⁹ learns that since these verses are a preparation for the Shemoneh Esrei, women should recite them. The Alter Rebbe however exempts women from *Pesukei Dezimra*¹⁰.

The essential part of *Pesukei Dezimra* is *Ashrei*, together with the blessings of *Baruch Sheomar* recited beforehand and *Yishtabach* afterwards. The other Tehillim and pesukim are extra.

She is also exempt from the concluding Tefillos including; Tachanun, Ashrei-Uva Letzion, Shir Shel Yom, Ein Kelokeinu and Aleinu.

Again, if a woman is able to, it is commendable if she adds all of the above to her davening.

Other: There is a debate whether women are obligated to recite Musaf¹¹. When Musaf is recited, it would take precedence over Pesukei Dezimra based on the above view of the Alter Rebbe.

Hallel: A woman is exempt from Hallel.

Tekiyas Shofar: A woman is technically exempt from hearing Shofar. Nonetheless women have accepted upon themselves the Mitzvah of hearing Shofar. This is the minimum 30 sounds. They can be heard at home and need not be in Shule or as part of davening.

Yom Kippur Vidui: Sefer Hachinuch¹² requires women to recite the Vidui on Yom Kippur. She should recite Vidui at least once on Yom Kippur.

Davening at Home

During the week a woman will usually daven at home. On Shabbos, Yomtov and the Yomim Noraim whether to daven at home or Shule is a matter of personal choice. The decision largely rests on where she will be able to have more Kavanah. When davening at home, the following halachos of davening should be kept in mind;

- She should designate a specific place to daven¹³.
- If the direction of Mizrach is not known, she should direct her heart to Hashem¹⁴.
- She should not daven facing any pictures or tapestries which may disturb her Kavanah. One should not daven facing a mirror or picture¹⁵.
- One should daven in clothes which cover their body in a halachically acceptable manner. She

should dress in proper clothing to daven¹⁶ i.e. not pyjamas.

- She should wash her hands before davening¹⁷.
- Try to create a distraction-free environment. Make sure that the baby is soothed and other children are fed and occupied.
- One should preferably not hold a baby while davening the Amidah¹⁸. If the baby is crying or needs to be held she may do so.
- If a child who is eating solids has a dirty diaper, one may not daven in its presence¹⁹.

Interruptions: One should not interrupt their Amidah either by speaking, moving or gesturing.

If there is a possible situation of danger, *Sakanah*, one stops their Amidah straight away and may even talk if necessary²⁰.

If there is distraction which is affecting one's Kavanah e.g. children making noise, one may motion to be quiet. If this will not suffice one may move to another room and complete the Amidah there.

If a baby or child is crying, she may interrupt and (without speaking) move and soothe the baby or deal with the child and return to her Amidah.

If the break is long enough to complete the Amidah, one must go back to the beginning.

Davening at Shule with Kids

Some additional Halachos to keep in mind if you will be in Shule:

- One may not kiss their child in Shule²¹.
- Girls who will be going into the men's section should be dressed Tzniusly²².
- Halachos of disturbing and interrupting are the same as above.
- Young children who will make noise should not be brought into shule or should be taken out if they are making noise, so that they do not disturb the davening of others²³.

May Hashem answer all of our Tefillos, however much or little we manage, for a good year filled with blessings *begashmius uberuchnius* for our families and all of Klal Yisroel.

¹ 106:1. Based on the view of the Ramban. See Magen Avraham 106:2

² Based on Ramban. See Magen Avraham 106:2. This is the practise of Sefardim. The Chofetz Chaim's son writes that his mother rarely davened when her children were young on the advice of her husband.

³ Shulchan Aruch Harav 70:1 based on Magen Avraham.

⁴ Teshuvos Hageonim. Also implied by the Alter Rebbe

⁵ Shulchan Aruch Harav 47:10. Mishna Berura Biur Halacha *Nashim*

⁶ Mishna Berura based on Magen Avraham 47:14 requires a woman to recite all of the Korbonos. The Alter Rebbe requires only the Parshas Hatomid

⁷ Shulchan Aruch Harav 70:1 ⁸ *Ibid* ⁹ 70:2 ¹⁰ 70:1

¹¹ See Pinchas Halocha for the divergent opinions.

¹² Mitzvah 364 ¹³ Shulchan Aruch Harav 90:1, 18 ¹⁴ Shulchan Aruch Harav 94:4 ¹⁵ Shulchan Aruch Harav 90:22 ¹⁶ Shulchan Aruch Harav 91:1 and 91:6 ¹⁷ Shulchan Aruch Harav 92:5 ¹⁸ Based on Shulchan Aruch OC 96:1 ¹⁹ OC Siman 81 ²⁰ See Shulchan Aruch OC 104

²¹ Shulchan Aruch Harav 98:1

²² See Shulchan Aruch OC 75. From which age the requirement to dress tzniusly and until what age a girl is able to go into the men's section please refer to your community Rabbi.

²³ Shulchan Aruch Harav 98:1. Concerning Tekiyos see 592:8