

PRACTICAL HORA'OS

A CLOSER
LOOK AT
SOME OF
THE REBBE'S
HORA'OS

SLEEPING LIKE A CHOSSID

Compiled By: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG
Written By: RABBI TZEMACH FELLER

לזכות
הילדה פייגה טאוֹבה
לרגל יום הולדתה כ"ד מנחם-אב
יה"ר שתגדל לתורה לחופה ולמעשים
טובים מתוך בריאות נכונה ושפע בגו"ר
לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר והוריה הי"ו

... a Jew serves Hashem not only through davening, Torah study, and doing Mitzvos, but also — to quote the Rambam — “with his eating and drinking . . . and in all his doings, even sleeping.” For a Jew must prepare himself before going to bed in a way that his sleeping is elevated thereby to the status of *avodas Hashem* — which is one of the reasons, indeed the deeper content, of *Krias Shema She'al Hamitta*.¹

With these words, the Rebbe informed us of the importance of treating our sleep not as a distraction, but as part of our service of Hashem. The following are a number of the Rebbe's *hora'os* regarding sleep.²

HOW LONG TO SLEEP

You write about the time you go to sleep and the time you rise, and ask my opinion as to whether it is appropriate, or if it should be changed.

The determining factor here should align with [the principles outlined] in the Alter Rebbe's *Hilchos Talmud Torah* with regard to a schoolteacher—that he not stay awake at night to the extent that he cannot teach effectively the next morning. It is understood that the same [principle] applies to your own Torah study.

People do not all require the same number of hours of sleep — it is dependent on the makeup of the body and on what one is accustomed to etc. — and the quantities the *Poskim* mention are based on the average and the majority, for the Torah addresses what applies to the majority. You need to determine the number of hours of sleep that you require, to ensure that when you wake up, you will be able to learn with proper comprehension. You should set times for going to sleep and waking up based on this. Of course, in any case, you must keep the times of saying *Krias Shema* in the morning, and this is especially important in the summertime [when the sun rises early and *sof zman Krias Shema* is earlier].³

During a *yechidus* in 5727 a *bochur* asked the Rebbe what time to go to sleep. The Rebbe replied,

At such a time that the entire following day will be as it should be.⁴

SLEEPING DURING THE DAY

Of course, sleep must take place at night (according to *nigleh* and *nistar*, and as is also seen in the nature of the world); only in unusual circumstances should one take a daytime nap ...⁵

EATING BEFORE BED

...You are certainly careful to ensure that your body is healthy. [Therefore] for two hours or an hour and a half before sleeping you should not eat or drink, *bli neder*. Obviously, the intention is that you avoid a large meal; a very light snack or drink is not of concern.⁶

SLEEPING WITH A YARMULKE AND TZITZIS

To the parents of a boy who had suffered health concerns the Rebbe wrote,

Certainly, he sleeps with a yarmulke on his head ...⁷

...Even while sleeping, you should wear a *tallis koton*, and you should check its *tzitziyos* [to ensure] that they are kosher, and [contain] eight strings each.⁸

Regarding what you wrote of the rumor - in my name - about leniencies in wearing a *tallis koton* at night — I don't recall having ever said that.⁹

YIDDISHE LULLABIES

In truth, the child's education begins before he can speak — as soon as the child is born. From that point, we must be careful and particular about what lullabies are sung to the child to calm him and put him to sleep. Though you might think that it doesn't matter what the song is, in truth, since we are talking about an infant who has a living *neshama*, and the *neshama* has open ears, the song has an impact on the *neshama*; it leaves a lifetime mark on the child. Therefore, the *minhag Yisroel* was to sing to newborns a song whose theme was the greatness of Torah, whose value is greater than any merchandise (די תורה איז די בעסטע סחורה), and more than any sweets (ראזשינקעס און מאנדלען) etc. As is well known, the Rashba wrote that a *minhag* of elderly Jewish women has all the strength of a "*minhag Yisroel* which is Torah."¹⁰

The *minhag* in Jewish homes for generations was that

children would be put to sleep in their cradles with a melody that states that "די תורה איז די בעסטע סחורה" — "Torah is the best commodity." Although this is a very young child, who doesn't yet understand anything, we put the child to sleep with the words "Torah is the best commodity," because the *neshama* understands.

...Why can't the mother just think about this content and have it transmitted to the child in this manner? It is because it must go through the child's ears, and through this, the *neshama* hears and absorbs it.¹¹

...Another *hora'ah* in the *chinuch* of *Yiddishe* children:

It was once the *minhag Yisroel* among Jewish women — and *halevai* they continue doing this now as well — that they would put their very small children to sleep singing that, while there are 'raisins and almonds,' "Torah is the best commodity."

In this *sicha*, the Rebbe goes on to relate the story of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Chananya¹², whose mother would bring his cradle to shul 'so that his ears cling to the words of Torah.'¹³ When the Mishna¹⁴ wants to praise him, it says, "Fortunate is she who gave birth to him," — Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Chananya is praised because he had such a mother. Since it says this in a Mishna, the Rebbe continued, it is certainly a *hora'ah* for each and every one of us.¹⁵

PREVENTING NIGHTMARES

It is well-known, and also alluded to in teachings of our sages, that a person sees [in a dream] only what is already in his thoughts — that dreams are a product of idle thoughts etc. that occur during the day. When the cause is lessened, the effect is lessened as well. Since there are also other causes for dreams (see Tanya ch. 29), you should be scrupulous regarding *Krias Shema She'al Hamitta*; that your body be pure by being careful to observe *Tevilas Ezra*; and that the *mezuzah* at the door to your room be kosher.¹⁶

PREVENTING NIGHT TERRORS

To the parents of a girl suffering from night terrors, crying in an unusual manner in the middle of the night, the Rebbe wrote:

Regarding your daughter's sleep, you should check all the *mezuzos* in your house. You should also place a picture of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, ה"מ near her bed before she goes to sleep. Continue to do this for a number of nights after she begins to sleep well.¹⁷



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PREVENTING INSOMNIA

The Gemara says that a person has to fall asleep [at least] every three days; this is how it is naturally. May Hashem lead you in a good path, that you should very soon be able to sleep normally. Check the *mezuzos* in your house as well as your *tefillin*, this is the main thing.¹⁸

GO TO SLEEP — DON'T SLEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING ELSE

While discussing the importance of the *Mivtzoim*, the Rebbe mentioned those who say they must first take care of their own health, and said:

“*Shlofgezunterheit*” — go to sleep in good health, but not in the middle of a *farbrengen*; not in the middle of learning; not in the middle of *avodas hatefilah*; not when he should be doing *mivtzoim*.

One complains that he doesn't have any energy because he didn't sleep at night. So because he misused the nighttime for things of dubious value, unnecessary things, he should do another undesirable thing: that another Jew should suffer, and should not receive what he needs [since he's sleeping instead of going on *mivtzoim*]?!
Sleep at night, when you should sleep ...¹⁹ **T**

1. Likkutei Sichos vol. 14 p. 451-2. Translated in Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe שליט"א vol. 1 p. 108.
2. Some of the sources cited here were compiled in Shulchan Menachem.
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 19 p. 89-90.
4. Sichos Kodesh 5727 vol. 2 p. 409.
5. Igros Kodesh vol. 12 p. 448.
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 4 p. 364.
7. Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 397. Translated in I Will Write It In Their Hearts vol. 5 p. 249.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 13 p. 29.

9. Igros Kodesh vol. 18 p. 436.
10. Toras Menachem vol. 56 p. 282.
11. Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 1 p. 112-3.
12. See also “Rebbi Yehoshua” - Derher Sivan 5784.
13. Yerushalmi Yevamos ch. 1 *halacha* 6.
14. Avos 2:9.
15. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 1 p. 246.
16. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 326.
17. From a handwritten *maaneh* dated 21 Teves, 5711.
18. Beis Chayeinu issue 29 p. 2.
19. Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 2 p. 163.