

# Your Turn: Exercises with Answers

*All five practice exercises from the guided-learning chapters, with the checks included*

## The five logical components

Statement

Question

Answer

Inquiry

Proof

### Chapter Eleven · The Opening Mishnah of Berachos

## Your turn: predict the Gemara's first question

You have now read the entire opening Mishnah. Before you turn to Chapter Twelve, spend two minutes on this. Do not look ahead.

The Mishnah opens with the words **מֵאִמָּתַי קוֹרִין אֶת שְׁמַע בְּעֶרְבֵין**, "From when may we recite the *Shema* in the evenings?"

Read that opening again as a critic would, not as a student. Two features of it are odd enough that a careful reader should stop on them.

1. The Mishnah asks *when* the obligation applies. What has it skipped over entirely?
2. The Mishnah discusses the evening *Shema* before the morning *Shema*. Why is that ordering worth questioning?

Write down both objections in your own words. Then open Chapter Twelve and see whether the Gemara's first two moves match what you wrote.

### What the Gemara actually does

1. It skipped over *whether* there is an obligation to recite the Shema at all — the Mishnah jumps straight to timing. The Gemara's first move (Chapter Twelve) is to ask exactly this: "To what is the Tanna referring, that he asks *From when?*" and to locate the source of the obligation in the verse "when you lie down and when you arise."
2. Jewish practice generally treats the day as beginning in the morning, so an evening-first Mishnah is the marked, surprising order. The Gemara's second move asks precisely this: if the later clause teaches the morning blessing first in its own internal structure, why does the Mishnah as a whole open with evening? The answer traces back to the same verse, which itself lists lying down (night) before arising (morning).

*Getting these right is not the point. Getting into the habit of interrogating the text before it is interrogated for you is the point, and it is the single skill that most separates a reader of Gemara from a learner of Gemara.*

### Chapter Twelve · The Opening Gemara (Berachos 2a)

## Your turn: label the moves

Four lines from this chapter, with their labels restored.

"To what is the Tanna referring, that he asks:  
*From when?*"

Question

תָּנָא הֵיכָא קָאִי דְּקָתְנִי  
מֵאִמְתִּי

"The Tanna refers to the verse, as it is  
written: *when you lie down and when you  
arise.*"

Answer

תָּנָא אֶקְרָא קָאִי דְּכָתִיב  
וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ

"If so, the later clause, which teaches *in the morning one recites two blessings before it* — there too let him teach evening first!"

Question

אִי הָכִי סִיפָא דְקִתְנִי בְּשַׁחַר  
מְבָרַךְ שְׁתֵּי לְפָנֶיהָ

"The Tanna opened with evening and then taught morning."

Answer

תָּנָא פִּתַּח בְּעֶרְבִית וְהָדָר תִּנִּי  
בְּשַׁחֲרִית

### Check

Question · Answer · Question · Answer. If you labeled the third line "Statement," look again at the word *i bachi* ("if so"): it almost always introduces an objection built on what was just conceded.

## Chapter Thirteen · The Sugya Continues (Berachos 2b)

### Your turn: track the reversal

This chapter contains a move the Gemara makes constantly and beginners routinely miss: it proposes a resolution, accepts it, and then *withdraws* it under pressure from a further source. Reconstruct that sequence without looking back.

1. The first *baraisa* (the poor man's meal) seemed to conflict with our Mishnah. What single equation did the Gemara propose to dissolve the conflict?
2. The second *baraisa* (R' Meir and the Sages) threatened that equation. Which of the two equalities did the Gemara keep, and which did it abandon?
3. The third *baraisa* (the five-way list) then forced a further reversal. What did the Gemara ultimately conclude about the poor man and the Kohen?

Now say in one sentence what would have gone wrong if the Gemara had kept its original answer.

### Check

(1) "The poor man's time and the Kohen's time are the same." (2) It kept poor man = Kohen and abandoned poor man = ordinary Shabbos-eve diners. (3) It reversed itself entirely: the poor man and the Kohen mark *different* times, with the poor man's later. Had it kept the original answer, R' Chanina's opinion would have been identical to R' Yehoshua's — yet the *baraisa* lists them as a dispute.

## Chapter Fourteen · The Watches of the Night (Berachos 3a)

### Your turn: label the moves

Four lines from this chapter, with their labels restored.

"One statement of R' Meir contradicts the other statement of R' Meir!"

Question

קְשִׁיָּא דְרַבִּי מֵאִיר אֲדַרְבִּי  
מֵאִיר

"Two Tannaim, according to R' Meir."

Answer

תִּרִי תַנָּאִי אֶלִיבָא דְרַבִּי מֵאִיר

"What is R' Eliezer's opinion regarding the number of watches in a night?"

Inquiry

מַאי קְסַבֵּר רַבִּי אֶלִיעֶזֶר

"What is R' Eliezer counting with these signs?"

Question

מַאי קָא חֲשִׁיב רַבִּי אֶלִיעֶזֶר

## Check

Question · Answer · Inquiry · Question. The third and fourth are worth comparing closely. Both begin with *mai*, but the third opens a fresh investigation into a position not yet examined (Inquiry), while the fourth presses a difficulty against an answer already on the table (Question). The word alone will not tell you which; the surrounding movement will.

## Chapter Fifteen · The Gemara — Berachos 3b

### Your turn: the second Mishnah of Berachos (9b)

**Step 1.** Read the Hebrew aloud, slowly, twice. **Step 2.** Read the translation and think through what each clause is saying in your own words. **Step 3.** Note the label for each clause below. **Step 4.** Compare your answers to the three questions.

FROM WHEN MAY WE RECITE THE  
*SHEMA* IN THE MORNING?

Statement

מֵאִמָּתַי קוֹרִין אֶת שְׁמַע  
בְּשַׁחֲרִית

FROM WHEN ONE CAN  
DISTINGUISH BETWEEN  
*TECHEILES* AND WHITE. (*Techeiles*: the  
blue-dyed wool thread of *tzitzis*.)

Statement

מִשִּׁכִּיר בֵּין תְּכֵלֶת לָלָבָן

R' ELIEZER SAYS: BETWEEN  
*TECHEILES* AND LEEK-GREEN.

Statement

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר בֵּין תְּכֵלֶת  
לְכֶרֶתִי

AND ONE MUST COMPLETE IT  
UNTIL SUNRISE.

Statement

וְגוֹמְרָהּ עַד הַנֶּץ הַחֶמֶה

R' YEHOSHUA SAYS: UNTIL THE  
THIRD HOUR,

Statement

רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ אוֹמֵר עַד שְׁלֹשׁ  
שָׁעוֹת

FOR SUCH IS THE WAY OF  
PRINCES, TO ARISE AT THE THIRD  
HOUR.

Statement

שָׁכֵן דֶּרֶךְ בְּנֵי מְלָכִים לְעֲמוֹד  
בְּשֹׁלֶשׁ שָׁעוֹת

### Questions:

1. This Mishnah has exactly the same architecture as the one you learned in Chapter Eleven.  
Name the two things both Mishnahs establish, and identify which clause here does each job.
2. Why would the Mishnah mark daybreak by a person's ability to tell two colors apart rather than by naming an hour? Compare this to the Gemara's question in Chapter Fourteen about why R' Eliezer said "watch" instead of an hour.
3. R' Yehoshua's reasoning ("for such is the way of princes") already appeared in this book.  
Where, and what was it used to prove?

### Check your work

**Labels.** Statement (the opening question and the anonymous first opinion) · Statement (R' Eliezer's dissent on the threshold) · Statement (the deadline, and R' Yehoshua's dissent with its reason). A Mishnah is nearly all Statement; the Question-and-Answer machinery is what the *Gemara* brings to it. If that felt anticlimactic, that reaction is itself the lesson.

1. Both establish a start time and a deadline, with a dispute about each. Start: "from when one can distinguish *techeiles* from white," with R' Eliezer dissenting ("from leek-green"). Deadline: "until sunrise," with R' Yehoshua dissenting ("until the third hour"). This is the identical structure to the evening Mishnah: agreed subject, disputed boundaries.

2. Same reason the *Gemara* gave for "watch." A color threshold is a marker a person can actually use, standing where he is, without a clock. It also carries a second teaching in passing — that the morning *Shema* is bound up with *tzitzis*, whose threads are exactly what one is distinguishing. Compare the Mishnah's "when the Kohanim eat *teruma*," which likewise taught something extra *aggav orcheih*, in passing.

3. In Chapter Fifteen. R' Nasan invoked R' Yehoshua's principle that kings rise at the third hour in order to reconcile David's two verses while holding that the night has only three watches: six hours from midnight to dawn plus two hours of day equals eight, exactly two watches.