



# Transporting Children Before or After *Shacharit*?

לעילוי נשמת  
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** I need to take our kids to daycare in the morning. I can do it either before *davening* or after a pre-*netz minyan*. Which is better?

**Answer:** Personal concerns can significantly affect the best choice for you. These include the impact on your wife's morning, your sleep needs, and the subjective quality of your *tefilla*. Since you do not raise these issues, we will focus on the generic halachic issues, starting with the issue of *davening* before *netz* (sunrise).

The optimal time to *daven Shacharit* is “as *vatikin*” – starting *Shemoneh Esrei* as the sun rises (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 89:1). One can fulfill the *mitzva* as early as *alot hashachar* (72 minutes or more before sunrise), but this is on the level of *b'di'eved* and is recommended only for those in extenuating circumstances, e.g., they must be on the road at the optimal time (ibid. 8). Soon

after *alot hashachar*, there is also a problem that it is, under normal circumstance, too early to recite *Kri'at Shema* and its *berachot* (ibid. 58:1,3), which is to precede *Shemoneh Esrei*. The starting time for *Kri'at Shema* is called *misheyakir*, some 50 minutes before *netz* (with variations due to various opinions and geographical adjustments). What is less clear (see Igrot Moshe, OC IV, 6; Minchat Yitzchak IX, 10) is whether *davening* at any time before *netz* is only *b'di'eved* (see Yalkut Yosef, OC 89:14) or is after *misheyakir* **fine**, and it is just less preferable than *vatikin* (Shut Pri Yitzchak I, 2). “Fine” can come in different gradations (see *Ishei Yisrael* 13:2).

The next question is whether and/or to what degree it is objectionable to get involved in an activity like taking children to daycare before *Shacharit*. Among the things that are forbidden before *Shacharit* is “involvement in one's affairs” and traveling (Berachot 14a; Shulchan Aruch, OC 89:3). Arguably, taking children to daycare is both. However, there are possible leniencies.

Taking care of children, intrinsically, and as help to one's wife, is likely an involvement of *mitzva* (see Halichot Shlomo, *Tefilla* 2:5; Living the Halachic Process, VII, H-1), which is permitted before *davening* (see Mishna Berura 89:36). This may apply to taking to good daycare. Also,

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there are indications that short trips are not considered traveling (see Living the Halachic Process VI, A-1). On the other hand, while simple help in the house with children might not be involved enough to qualify as **involvement** in affairs, presumably taking children to daycare is usually a formal and serious enough chore to be considered involvement. The Rama OC 89:3) cites an opinion that if one recites *Birchot Hashachar* beforehand, it is permitted to do tasks and travel. While we avoid relying on this alone (ibid.), *poskim* factor in reciting *Birchot Hashachar* first regarding borderline cases of activity (see Ishei Yisrael 13:23-24). There is also a possibility that if one has a set time for a *minyan*, then fitting in tasks before that time is permitted (Halichot Shlomo, Tefilla 2:(8)).

Putting our findings into perspective, neither *davening* between *misheyakir* and *netz* nor taking kids to daycare before *davening* is ideal, nor highly objectionable. It is often difficult to find sources and decide between two *b'dieved* situations. (That said, if one must do real work early, he should first *daven* even

before *netz* (Tefilla K'hilchata 3:(63)).) It is logical to consider subjective factors to help decide, and you can change schedules from day to day according to need. It may be worthwhile to consider how likely you are to come late to *minyan* if you take the kids first, or have to leave a little early if you take them later.

After weighing the factors, we suggest the following. If your community is like many, where main *minyanim* are in the pre-*netz* time slot (but *Shemoneh Esrei* is after *misheyakir*), at least during much of the year, and you sometimes attend such a *minyan* for convenience, it seems better to start the day by *davening* first with a clear mind. If you have set as a priority not to *daven* before *netz*, then take the kids first. ■

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