Understanding the Shabbat Morning Service

A compilation of lectures from our Learner's Minyans 2009-2010

Congregation B'nai Torah, Olympia, WA

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Introduction to our Learner's Minyan

Over the years, our small congregation has offered a variety of learning opportunities. In the process we realized that very few of us really knew where our services and prayers came from, their history, development and variations. In that light in 2009 we began a series of lectures to address important individual prayers. The Learner's Minyan is scheduled for the 4th Shabbat of each month. The Siddur we use is Sim Shalom and all our talks are oriented to it and its page numbering. The structure of our service is:

1. A limited Pseukei D'Zemirot of about 20 minutes including singing.
2. A full Shacharit.
3. Instead of a Torah service, we read the entire parasha in English out loud and rotate readers among the congregants usually changing at each Aliyah. The Torah remains in the Ark.
4. Torah reading usually involves discussion.
5. The Haftorah is optional depending how long the Torah discussion goes. We start our services at 9:30 am and are done by noon with an unwritten rule that services will not last longer than noon.
6. At this point the Learner's Minyan lecture is given.
7. We then say a few of the special prayers for our government, Israel, etc and a prayer for the ill.
8. The Musaf Amidah is skipped although a number of our members say the Amidah to themselves upon the conclusion of services.
9. We then sing/say Ein Kelheinu, Mourner's Kaddish and Aleinu, have announcements and sing Adon Olam.
10. Kiddush and a Kosher Dairy Lunch follow.

The History of the Shabbat morning prayers

Lowell Cordas

According to Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals

Important Historical Reference Points:

First Temple 960 BCE until 586 BCE

Second Temple 516 BCE until 70CE

Sages or Men of Great Assembly according to Jewish tradition, an assembly of 120 scribes, sages, and prophets, in the period from the end of the Biblical prophets to the time of the development of Rabbinic Judaism at about 200CE. Some say the most important time within this period for the development of prayer is from the 5th BCE on to 200CE.

According to the Talmud,[Bava Basra 14b-15a, Rashi to Megillah 3a, 14a] much of the contents of the Tanakh (Torah, Nevi'im {prophets}, Ketuvim {writings}) were compiled by the "Men of the Great Assembly" by 450 BCE, and have since remained unchanged. Modern scholars are less certain, but some believe that the process of canonization of the Tanakh became finalized between 200 BCE and 200 CE. All Psalms (Tehillim) are in the Tanakh, in the Ketuvim section.

Mishnah completed around 200 CE

Talmud completted around 500 CE

Gaonim 6 to 11 Century CE

First known Siddur was created by Rav Amram ben Shoshana Gaon circa 875CE in Babylonia in response to a request from the Jews of Barcelona.

The Siddur of Saadia Gaon (892-942CE) is the earliest surviving attempt to transcribe the weekly ritual of Jewish prayers for weekdays, Sabbaths, and festivals (apart from the prayer book of Amram Gaon, of which there is no authoritative text). The text also contains liturgical poetry by Saadia, as well as Arabic language commentary. There is no known extant manuscript of the entire text, though there is a near complete manuscript in Oxford. Fragments have also been found in the Cairo Genizah. This prayer book apparently served as a basis for later efforts to codify the Jewish prayer ritual and set it down in writing and was imitated by later authors. An edition based on these manuscripts has been published by Davidson, Assaf and Yoel in Jerusalem in 1941. The Arabic portions are accompanied by translations into Hebrew in facing columns.

First mechanically printed Siddur, 1475

The earliest services consisted of some Psalms, some Berakhot, the Shema, and Amidah with some variations. At the time of the Sanhedrin in Yavneh following the destruction of the 2nd Temple, many more regulations were made including a more final form of the Shema and Amidah. At that time, only two daily services, shachrit and mincha, were mandatory. By 135 CE other benedictions were put into the Amidah and other prayers referring to the Temple destruction and yearning for redemption and national restoration.

Pg. 61 Mah Tovu composed of five biblical verses. 2 verses date to Rav Amram Gaon's Siddur.

Pg. 63 Both the blessing for our body and soul are found in the Talmud, Tractate Berakhot 60B

Pg. 65 These Berakhot are mentioned in the Mishnah

Pg. 66 Yehi Ratson was recited by Rabbi Yehudah Ha Nasi as a meditation when completing the Amidah and was also placed here because it resembles the previous Berakha in words and sentiment.

Pg. 68-70 Inserted in the Sim Shalom siddur by Rabbi Jules Harlow in 1985 to provide meaningful examples of Rabbinic writing to inspire us toward greater ethical living and to study of our texts.

Pg. 72 Psalm 92 Mizmor Shabbat attributed to the Levites of the First (?) Temple Psalms are among our oldest prayers. Sung in both Temples and in intervening times. They are attributed to King David by tradition but some are older and attributions are given to a number of authors. They were composed from prior to the First Temple until at least the early period of the Second Temple.

Pg. 81 Psalm 30 Mizmor Shir Hanukat Habayit Le David began to appear in the Siddur about the 17th Century although composed much earlier as noted in the introduction.

Pg. 82 Kaddish originally composed in the Aramaic. Attributed to the Sag es during the Second Temple period. One source indicated that the custom of using the Kaddish as the Mourner's prayer began in the Gaonic period. The reason was to attract people to services whose attendance was declining.

Pg. 83 Baruch Sheamar Attributed to the Men of the Great Assembly. It is composed of 87 letters whose numerical value (gematria) equals the Hebrew word PAZ which translates to "refined gold".

Pg. 84 Hodu a chant from Second Temple times taken from Chronicles.

Pg. 89 Psalm 90 Tefillah LeMoshe
One tradition says that David drew upon the writings of 10 Psalmists including Moses. According to the Radak, David found an ancient scroll written by Moses containing Psalms 90 – 100 which he incorporated into the Book of Psalms. The Radak was the Portuguese Rabbi David Kimhi, who lived from 1160 to 1235 and wrote commentaries on Bereshit, Prophets, Psalms and Chronicles as well as being a noted Hebrew grammarian. One way that Psalms are dated is by the type of Hebrew, David spoke a 10th century BCE southern Hebrew. None of the Hebrew in the Psalms matches that time. Psalm 137 comes from post exilic times. The superscriptions artribute Pslam 72 and 127 to Solomon. Psalms 50, 63 to 83 to Asaph. Psalms 42-49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 to the Sons of Korah. Psalm 80 is definitely written in a northern Hebrew.

Pg. 90 Psalm 91 Midrash says that it was composed by Moses on the day the Mishkan was completed. Others say by an unknown poet influenced by Moses. There is a generalized langage to psalms with similarities to

Ugartic poetry and cosntruction. Some liken Pslams to being the popular songs of their day that most would be familiar with.

Pg. 92 Psalm 136 Hodu Lashem Kitov. The recitation of Psalms became the first prayer service in Babylon following the exile.

Pg. 94 Psalm 92 from Second Temple times. In Temple times, Psalms were said by people who were dealing with individual problems. One commentator posits that specific Psalms were assigned to supplicants by an officer of the Temple who would find those that fit your situation.

Pg. 96 Ashrei Rabbi Yosi of the Talmud mentioned Ashrei in Tractate Shabbat section 118b. Likely from the beginnings of the Talmud period.
The first two lines are from Psalms sung in the 2nd Temple. In that Temple, Ashrei was sung as a call and response as we do today.

Pg. 97 Psalm 146 Halleluyah Halleli Nafshi. Pslams 1, 119 and 145 are considered the latest Psalms. Acrostic construction was used as a mnemonic device.

Pg. 102 Az Yashir Sung in First Temple times during Shabbat Mincha. Changed to Pseukei Zemirot in Gaonic times.

Pg. 104 Nishmat Kol Hai Known to precede Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra 1089-1164, Spain as he and Rabbi Yehudah Halevy wrote introductory pieces. Some attribute to Simeon ben Shittah of the First Century BCE, others to The Men of the Great Assembly. It is referred to in the Talmud.

Pg. 105 Hael Beteazumot written in the language of Rabbi Eliezer ben Kallir. A prolific author of prayers who live from 570 to 640CE in the near east, location unidentified.

Pg. 105 Shokhein Ad, based on Isaiah 57:15, only appears in Ashkenazic siddurim (includes Hassidic and Nusah Sfard) followed by Ran'nu Tzaddikim (Ps. 33:1).

Pg. 105 Uv'makhalot includes 9 synonyms for praise from Mishna Pes. 10:5.

Pg. 106 Yishtabach Attributed to a Solomon or possibly King Solomon and finished by an Abraham based on the wording of the prayer using the first letters of words. This was a common way in prayer writing for authors to insert their name using first letters of words.

Pg. 107 Borchu the summons to prayer based on a statement in Zohar that says, "all sacred acts require summoning". The custom to say at the end began with the Sephardim to accommodate those who came late and did not hear it earlier.

Pg. 107 Birkat Yotzer Or Derived from Is. 45:7 The Mishna (Ber. 1:4) ordains two blessings before Sh'ma and one after in the morning; two after in the evening.

Pg. 107 HaKol Yodukha – first text paragraph of very long first blessing before Sh'ma. Brings in themes of creation, resurrection, God's strength. Seen in Siddur Rav Amram Gaon, Mahzor Vitri, Kol Bo

Pg. 108 El Adon alluded to in Talmud, found in the Zohar and attributed to mystics of the 8th Century CE and introduced into the liturgy by the Gaonim.

Pg. 109 L'El asher shavat, a piyyut of unknown origin.

Pg. 110 Kedusha D'Brakha - David Abudraham (14th Cent Spain), the Kol Bo, and the Rosh (Rabbeinu Asher, 13th Cent Germany, Spain) attribute the Kedusha section to the need to emphasize that God did NOT relinquish control over the earth. All is at the will of God.

Pg. 111 Ahava Rabbah is the prayer that began the Priestly Service in the Temple.

Pg. 112 Shema developed from 6 century BCE to 200 CE. At one point it included the 10 Commandments.

Pg. 113 Ezrat Avoteinu is mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud Tractate Berakhot 1:9

Pg. 113 Emet Veyatziv referred to in both Mishnah and Talmud

Pg. 114 Tzur Yisrael mentioned in the Jersulem Talmud as part of Shema.

Pg. 115a Amidah Oldest Jewish Prayer along with Shema and possibly Aleinu. Began setting text at beginning of 2nd Temple. Finalized form by the end of the First Century CE by the Men of the Great Assembly.

Pg. 116 Kedusha Attributed to the Men of the Great Assembly

Pg. 117 Veshamru is said in both the Amidah and the Kiddush. It was added to give the Kiddush more substance. In the Talmud, it is stated that for Kiddush the blessing over wine is sufficient.

Pg. 120 Sim Shalom after the Kohanic group blessing for individual peace, this prayer for universal peace was developed in Temple times. The word "universal" is found in the siddur of Saadia Gaon and is included in the Conservative sidder.

Pg. 120 Elohai Netzor Last prayer said at the end of the silent Amidah. Added by Mar son of Ravina in the 4th Century CE.

Pg. 143 Mi Shebeyrakh attributed to Gaonim. In medieval France it was used only when called to Torah on Festivals then later added to Shabbat service. Rabbi Elijah Menachem of London in the 13th Century introduced it at the end of Torah service which has become the Conservative custom.

Pg. 146 Haftorah reading began during reign of King Antiochus who had banned the reading of the Torah in 165BCE

Pg. 148 Yakoom Pirkan attributed to two Babylonian Gaonim after the close of the Talmudic period around 200CE. Written in Aramaic.

Pg. 149 Avinu Shebashamayim composed by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel following its independence in 1948

Pg. 153 Psalm 29 Mizmor LeDavid

Pg. 154 Uvenoah Yomar found in the Kol Bo a collection of Jewish law and other topics from about 1490CE where we are instructed to say this prayer. Others think it is of earlier derivation.

Pg. 182 Ein Keloheinu Composed by Rav Amram a Gaon in 9th Century CE

Pg. 183 Aleinu Some say Joshua wrote after conquering Jericho. Others attribute to Rav Amora of Babylonia in the 3rd Century. Some attribute the second paragraph to Achan who live in the time of Joshua. Others say the Men of the Great Assembly were the authors. It became part of the daily prayers around 1300 CE.

Pg. 185 Anim Zemirot R. Yehudah Ha Chassid, 12th Century Germany. Inclusion in the service was opposed by Rabbi's Solomon Luria, Jacob Emden, Mordecai Jaffee and the Gaon of Vilna as it added too much length to the service but Rabbi Moses Isserles (1520-1572Poland) ultimately sanctioned it. Some today say it others do not for the original reason.

Pg. 187 Adon Olam attributed to Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058 Spain), Rav Sherirah Gaon (900-1001 Pumbeditha) or Rav Hai Gaon (939-1038 Pumbeditha). Some even attribute it earlier to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai (30-90) of the Talmudic period. In the Ashkenazi version there are10 lines. Various Sepahrdic versions exist of 12, 15 or 16 lines. The common melody was written by Eliezer Mordecai Gerovitsch (1844-1914) of Russia.

Yigdal was written by Dayyan (Judge) Daniel ben Yehudah of 14th Century Rome. Sometimes sung in place of Adon Olam, usually sung in Conservative synagogues on Friday night.

Kiddush was originally just the Blessing over wine. Attributed to Men of Great Assembly. The Talmud says that saying the Blessing suffices for Kiddush but additonal prayers were included as it seemed more suitable for Shabbat to expand the Kiddush some.

References

The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer by Macy Nulman
A Guide To Jewish Prayer by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz
Making the Most of Prayer by Rabbi Mordechai Potash
Or Hadash, a commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom by Reuven Hammer
Siddur Kol Yaacov by the Rabbinical Council of America (Art Scroll)
How to Read the Jewish Bible by Marc Zvi Brettler
How to Read the Bible by James Kugel
The Sabbath Service by B. S. Jacobson
Wikipedia

The Choreography of Praying
Incorporating our Bodies into *Tefila*
Customs and Laws of the Practice of Prayer

Rabbi Jaron B Matlow, MAJEd, MAJS, MEM *8 Shevat, 5770*

Everything that I will be presenting this morning is based on several things:

a) *Halakha* (Jewish law)

b) What is written in our *siddur* (*Sim Shalom*) {S} or other reference *siddurim* including Koren {K} (new Orthodox with translation/commentary from Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks), Artscroll {A}, Chabad {C} and V'ani Tfilati {V} (Masorti – Israel)

c) Things taught by the *Rebbe* at my seminary

d) Minhagim that I have observed at many Conservative congregations

According to the Talmud, it is customary to bow about 45^{o} only. There is no need to go further, and the Talmud states that people who bend 90^{o} or more are being pretentious.

Please do not take anything that I say as to be saying that what our congregation does is incorrect. Minhag HaMakom (the custom of a location) is a very important factor. For instances where what I teach contradicts the Minhag of our congregation, if the ritual committee finds some of these teachings compelling, they may wish to make changes. I am not, by doing this teaching, directing any changes or calling anything our congregation does as incorrect.

Section 1: *Birkhot HaShaḥar*

Page 65: *Birkhot HaShaḥar*

The tradition I've received is that we rise at the beginning of *Birkhot HaShaḥar* and remain standing until the bottom of page 65. This is related to the concept of arising in the morning. The CBT custom is to sit at the end of the *Birkhot HaShaḥar* (ha-notein laya'eif koaḥ.

Page 71; *Kaddish D'Rabbanan*

After text study there are various customs for this *Kaddish*. Some people say only mourners recite it. Others say that all who have studied a text recite it. I tend to follow that thought, and also, considering that I AM a rabbi, I do stand for this *Kaddish*, even if I'm not in mourning/Yahrtzeit. Of course, as with all *Kaddishim*, we only recite this *Kaddish* with a *Minyan*. For this *Kaddish*, as well as any other *Kaddish* (except the *Ḥatzi Kaddish*), on the *Oseh Shalom* line, there is a custom to bow, take three steps back as if

taking leave of the *Divine Presence*, then bow first left, then right then center[1] while saying the *Oseh Shalom.*

Page 82: *Mourner's Kaddish*

In most Orthodox shuls, only men who are saying *Kaddish* recite it. Neither the Rabbi nor the Reader say it. This, to me, was very uncomfortable when I was saying *Kaddish* for my father in his home town. In many liberal shuls, the custom is for all to rise and recite the *Kaddish*, for instance for remembering the 6 million. At CBT, we have a hybrid tradition – the Reader (and sometimes the rabbi as well), all mourners (men and women), and some others who choose to rise do so.

Section 2: *Pesukei D'zimra* (Psalm and song)

Page 83: *Barukh She'amar*: We rise for this prayer. According to the *Mishnah Berurah* 51:1, we hold our two front *tzitzit* during the prayer, and kiss them at the end of the final blessing. We sit after this blessing. Len Albert teaches the tradition that the total of the strings of the front *tzitzit* (16) plus the total of the knots on the front *tzitzit* (10) equals the Gematria of God's name: י =10, ה=5, ו=6, ה=5 for a total of 26.

Page 92: Psalm 136 (*Hallel Gadol)*: We rise when we recite this Psalm. This Psalm is called *Hallel Gadol* in the Talmud *(Pesaḥim 118a)* because it notes in the penultimate verse that God gives us sustenance. It is interesting to note that during the week, we do not recite this Psalm, but we recite Ps 100 – *Mizmor L'todah*, and we rise for that Psalm as well. That Psalm is not recited on Shabbat or Yom Tov because the *Todah* offering, a voluntary offering, was not offered on Shabbat or Yom Tov.

Page 96: Ashrei: There are different customs as to what one does during the last line of p. 96 (*Poteaḥ* et yadekha – You open Your hand): The Sephardic custom (according to the Seattle Sephardic *Siddur*) is to spread both palms upwards when reciting this verse. Others open their right hand at *Poteaḥ* (open) and kiss the hand at umasbi'a (and satisfy) to acknowledge God's feeding us. During the week, when wearing *Tefillin* there is a custom to touch the arm *Tefillin at Poteaḥ* and touch the head *Tefillin* at umasbi'a – again to signify the importance of this verse.

Page 101 *Vayevarekh David* – according to {S} it is customary to stand from here until the end of *Shirat HaYam* – the Song at the Sea, middle of page 103. There are those who remain standing until after *Bar'khu*, including Chabad.

Page 106: *Yishtabakh*: In Orthodox shuls, if you were not already standing you would rise here. In Conservative shuls, there are those who rise for *Yishtabakh* and those who

[1] Koren Siddur, p. 59

remain seated until *Bar'khu*. At CBT, we generally rise for *Yishtabakh*, remain standing for *Ḥatzi Kaddish and Bar'khu.*

Section 3: *Shaḥarit*

Page 107 – *Bar'khu*: The Reader recites the first line, bowing at the beginning and rising up immediately before saying *Adonai.* The congregation replies with the second line, bowing at *Barukh* and rising immediately before saying *Adonai.* The Reader then repeats the second line, bowing the same way. It is very important to be standing before we say God's name in the *Bar'khu.*

The general custom is to sit after *Bar'khu* for *Birkat Yotzer Or* (Praised are you… creating light and fashioning darkness…) and remain seated through *Shaḥarit* until before the *Amidah*. There are some congregations, however, who remain standing for the blessing and sit before "*Hakol Yodukha*".

Page 110 – *Kedusha d'Brakha*: This section has this name because of the verses "*Kadosh, Kadosh Kadosh...*" and *"Barukh kavod..."* which we see in the *Kedushah* in the *Amidah*. While during the *Kedusha* in the *Amidah* we go up on our toes, here we remain seated, and the Reader stands normally and does NOT go up on his/her toes.

Page 111 – *Ahava Rabah*: During this section, those wearing *tallitot* gather the four sets of *tzitziot* (fringes) together into their left hand (lefties take them into their right hand). This is nominally done at the point where we sing "*V'havi'einu l'shalom mei'arba kanfot ha'aretz".* The term "*arba kanfot"* which means "four corners" is used as a Hebrew name for the *Tallit Katan* that some wear all day. It also refers to the four corners of our *Tallitot*. This is a symbolic gesture acknowledging the need to bring peace to the entire (all four corners of the) world.

According to the Talmud, (*Berakhot 13b)* Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi would cover his eyes when reciting The Sh'ma to prevent distraction, and so we follow that practice, which is codified in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. This rule of covering our eyes applies to the first verse *Sh'ma Yisrael* and our right hand covers our eyes.

On Weekdays (not *Shabbat/Ḥaggim*) when we wear *Tefillin*, during the first two paragraphs of the *Sh'ma* when we say

וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת ׀ עַל יָדֶךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין ׀ עֵינֶיךָ.

Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and as a reminder above your eyes
(first paragraph)

וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם ׀ אֹתָם לְאוֹת ׀ עַל יֶדְכֶם, וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטָפֹת בֵּין ׀ עֵינֵיכֶם.

Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a reminder above your eyes
(second paragraph)

it is the custom (from the *Shulḥan Arukh)* to touch the *Tefila shel yad* (hand) and kiss your fingers as you say "upon your hand" and touch the *Tefila shel rosh* (head) and kiss your fingers as you say "above your eyes". Many people are conscious of this on *Shabbat* while not actually making this motion.

According to {A}, prior to the third paragraph, you should take the *tzitzit* into your right hand also (holding them with both hands) immediately before saying *Vayomer* (*Adonai* said to Moses).

In the third paragraph, in each of the three times you say ציצת (*tzitzit/*fringes) you take the *tzitzit* and kiss them. Many (especially Sephardic Jews) have the custom when it says: *U'ritem oto* (Look upon these tzitzit) of passing the *tzitzit* in front of their eyes as they say this.

According to the *Shulḥan Arukh*, there are two more points immediately after the *Sh'ma,* when we kiss the *tzitzit*; when we say:

1. *Adonai Eloheikhem Emet* at the end of the *Sh'ma* (middle of p. 113)

2. V*'kayamim, ne'emanim v'neḥemadim la'ad*, God's teachings are precious and abiding: they live for ever (2/3 of the way down p. 113, last line of second full Hebrew paragraph).

We then release the *tzitzit* and begin preparations for the *Amidah*.

Section 4: The *Amidah*

There are various traditions as to when one stands prior to the *Amidah* (p. 114). In most Conservative congregations, the custom is to rise at *Tzur Yisrael*, Rock of Israel, the last Hebrew paragraph on the page. {A} and {C} have you rise at *Mi khamokha*, and {K} has you rise at *T'hilat l'Eil Elyon* (Praises to God Supreme) {located at the □ at the end of the first paragraph}. Klein[2] also states that we rise here, and we also take the three steps back here.

In most places I've seen, people either step back at *Tzur Yisrael* or at the very end of p. 114.

As the Reader completes the final blessing on p. 114 (*Ga'al Yisrael*) you take three steps forward. The Reader customarily recites the last few words very softly so the Congregation does not respond with Amen, as there is supposed to be no interruption between *Ga'al Yisrael* and the start of the *Amidah*.

During the private Amidah (p. 115a/b) at the first and second *Barukh Atah* Praised are You, we bend our knees and bow. We rise and stand upright immediately before saying

[2] *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*

"Adonai". In the third blessing (*m'ḥayyei hameitim* Master of life and death) we do **NOT** bend our knees and bow. After finishing 115 we continue on 117.

On page 118, we bow at *Modim anaḥnu lakh* (We proclaim that You are) and rise and stand upright before saying "Adonai."

On page 119 at the blessing before the priestly blessing (*Barukh Atah...hatov shimkha...*Praised are you...the essence of goodness...) we bend the knees and bow then rise just as we did for the first two blessings on 115.

On page 120, at *Oseh Shalom* (end of third paragraph) one should bow, take three steps back, then bow first left, then right then center[3] while saying the *Oseh Shalom.*

At the completion of the silent *Amidah*, the Orthodox tradition is to stand in place until the repetition begins and then take three steps forward, stand through *Avot and Gevurot (*the beginning of the *Amidah*) and the Kedushah.

There are myriad other customs here, including taking the three steps forward after finishing, then standing in place for the repetition (I follow this custom); others sit after finishing then stand for the beginning of the repetition; others yet sit until *Kedushah*.

During the repetition we stand (or sit if that's your custom) as the Reader recites 115. The traditional practice is to remain silent, since this is the READER's repetition. Many, however, have the custom of joining in and singing along through some or all of this page.

During the *Kedushah*, when we say *Kadosh, Kadosh Kadosh* (Holy, holy, holy) we go up onto the balls of our feet each time we say the word *Kadosh*.

At *Barukh Kavod* (Praised is…) and *Yimlokh* (Adonai shall reign) {all bolded lines} we go up on the balls of our feet once.

At the completion of the *Kedushah*, we may be seated.

Page 118. During the repetition, at Modim, bottom of the page, while seated, we rise slightly and bow from our seats, returning to an upright position before reaching God's name. We read the inner column in smaller print during the repetition, while the leader reads the outer column in larger print.

On a regular Shabbat we go to p. 138 after the completion of the repetition for *Kaddish Shalem*. Some stand during this *Kaddish*, others don't. It just depends on the tradition you have learned.

[3] Koren Siddur, p. 495

Section 5: Torah Service

The Torah service starts on page 139. The person appointed to open the Ark should proceed to the Ark immediately so there is no delay in the service.

{A} and {V} state that we should rise at the beginning of the service. {K} and {S} state that we rise as the Ark is opened, at *Vay'hi binsoa*. I believe that CBT follows the custom as stated in {S}.

The service continues through to p. 141. where Torah scroll(s) is/are taken from the Ark, which is then closed. The Reader (and Torah holder if needed) turn and face the congregation for the *Sh'ma* and *Eḥad* lines, which the Reader recites and the congregation repeats. Before *Gadol*, the Reader (and carrier) turn to face the Ark for *Gad'lu*. We bow slightly at *Gad'lu* and then rise immediately before *LAdonai*. This third line is not repeated.

The Reader (and carrier) then proceed through the congregation with the Torah scroll(s) and congregants touch the Torah cover(s) with their *Tallit/ Siddur*/ hand and then kiss the whatever they touched the cover with, as a sign of honor to the Torah. Once the Torah scroll is securely placed on the Readers table [and second {and third if necessary} scroll(s) is/are placed securely in the stand(s)] we are seated for the Torah reading. (During the procession, the Torahs are carried towards the back, on the left side of the aisle facing the *Aron Kodesh* and then back to the table on the right side of the aisle.)

After the seventh '*Aliyah* most congregations rise (and the second scroll if necessary is placed on the table) for *Ḥatzi Kaddish*. If we are using more than one scroll, we do *Hagbah/Gelilah* for the first scroll, then call the *maftir*. If only one scroll is used *Hagbah/Gelilah* are done after the *maftir*. After the completion of *Gelilah* the scroll is either held in the lap of the person who did *Hagbah* or placed in the stand. After *Kaddish* and *Hagbah*, we are seated. For *Hagbah/Gelilah* for additional scrolls, we rise as before.

If it happens to be the Shabbat before *Rosh Ḥodesh* (new Hebrew month) we rise on p. 150, and the Torah scroll is held during the service.

We're then seated for *Ashrei*, p. 151. It is customary to sit during *Ashrei* because the verse is literally translated as "Happy/fortunate are those who are sitting in Your House" (the Temple).

On p. 153, we return the Torah scroll(s) to the Ark. Again, the person given the honor of opening the Ark should proceed to the Ark early, to be ready to open the Ark when the Reader is read to begin. We rise as the Ark is opened. During the chanting of Psalm 29 (*Mizmor L'David*) the Torah scroll(s) is/are paraded through the sanctuary in the **opposite** (go towards the back on the right side of the aisle facing the *Aron Kodesh* and returning on the left side of the aisle) direction from when it was brought out. We again touch the scroll(s) and kiss during the recession. After the scroll(s) is/are placed in the

Ark, we recite *Uv'nuḥa yomar* (Whenever the Ark…) on page 154. After the completion of this page we are seated, and the D'rash is usually given at this point.

Section 6: Musaf

Musaf begins with the *Ḥatzi Kaddish* (p. 155). Some people stand for *Kaddish*, others remain seated.

Traditional congregations do a full silent *Amidah* and then a repetition. In this case, they rise and everything works the way that it does in the *Shaḥarit Amidah.*

At CBT, we normally do a "*Hoiche Kedushah*" – we rise and start together with the Reader through *Kedushah* and then continue privately. Some go back to the beginning while others just continue with "*Tikanta Shabbat"* (You have established Shabbat) {top of page 158}.

According to Rabbi David Golinkin[4] there are several options. The two practiced at CBT by different people are:

> 1) The cantor recites the Amidah aloud until "*ha-el hakadosh*", with the congregation reciting along. The rest of the blessings are recited silently.
>
> 2) This custom is similar to No. 4 except that instead of reciting the first three blessings along with the cantor, the congregation answers "Amen" and Kedushah and then recites the entire Amidah silently.

I tend to follow custom 1. It is important to note that if you do custom 2, you do not sing along with the Reader on page 156b. Also, no traditional sources allow this for anything except *Minḥah* (the afternoon prayer), although many Conservative congregations even do this for *Shaḥarit* as well.

> Irrespective of which of the above modes you choose for the *Musaf Amidah*, the procedures for body motion are identical to those of the *Shaḥarit* service.

After the *Amidah* we have the *Kaddish Shalem* on page 181. Again many people sit for this while some stand. We remain seated for *Ein Keloheinu* on p. 182.

We rise for the *Aleinu* on page 183. The text of the prayer teaches us about the body movement during the prayer. We have the indented line "*Va-anaḥnu kor'im u-mishtaḥavim*". The word *kor'im* specifically means to bend the knees and the word

[4] http://www.responsafortoday.com/engsums/5_2.htm Rabbi Golinkin is the *Poseik* (decisor of Jewish) law for the Masorti Movement in Israel.

mishtaḥavim specifically means to bow. This is the traditional way to bend and bow during the *Aleinu*.

After *Aleinu* we have Mourner's *Kaddish*, page 184. This is done in the same fashion as the earlier Mourner's *Kaddish*.

There are some in the Congregation who would like to recite the *Hymn of Glory*, found on pp 185-6. If we were to chant this *Piyyut* (liturgical poem) we would rise, and the Ark would be opened at the beginning. The Hymn is sung responsively in Hebrew. The Ark is closed prior to the completion of the last four lines of the Hymn. After the Hymn of Glory, another Mourner's Kaddish would be recited.

After announcements by the President of the congregation, or his/her appointed representative, we conclude with *Adon Olam* on p. 187, seated. After completing *Adon Olam*, those wearing Tallitot remove and store them. It is customary to greet other people in the Sanctuary, shaking hands/ kissing/hugging as appropriate, and offering greetings such as "*Shabbat Shalom" or "Good Shabbos".*

We then proceed to the social hall where the Rabbi (or someone else if the Rabbi is not present) recites Kiddush and Motzi. We then enjoy our "Kosher Dairy Lunch".

Nusachot; Different Customs in Prayer

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Nusach (Hebrew: נוסח *nosaḥ*, modern pronunciation *nósakh* or *núsakh*) is a concept in Judaism that has two distinct meanings. One is the style of a prayer service (Nusach Temani, Nusach Ashkenaz, Nusach Sefard or Nusach Ari); another is the melody of the service depending on when the service is being conducted.

Contents

Meaning of term

Nusach primarily means "text" or "version", in other words the correct wording of a religious text or liturgy. Thus the *nusach tefillah* is the text of the prayers, either generally or as used by a particular community. In common use *nusach* has come to signify the entire liturgical tradition of the community, including the musical rendition. It

is one example of *minhag*, which includes traditions regarding Jewish customs of all types.

Prayer Services

Nusach Ashkenaz

Nusach Ashkenaz is the style of service conducted by Ashkenazi Jews, originating from central and eastern Europe. It is the shortest lengthwise (except for the "Baladi" Yemenite Nusach).

It may be subdivided into the German, or western, branch, used in western and central Europe including the United Kingdom, and the Polish/Lithuanian branch, used in eastern Europe, the United States and among Ashkenazim, particularly those of the Lithuanian rite, in Israel.

Nusach Sefard

This is the style of service used by some Jews of central and eastern European origins, especially Hasidim, who adopted some Sephardic customs emulating the practice of the Ari's circle of kabbalists, most of whom lived in the Land of Israel. Textually speaking it is based on the Sephardic rite, but in melody and feel it is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi.

Nusach Ari

This is a variant of Nusach Sefard, used by Chabad Hasidim.

Sephardi and Mizrachi Nuschaot

There is not one generally recognized uniform nusach for Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews. Instead, Sephardim and Mizrahim follow several slightly different but closely related nuschaot.

The nearest approach to a standard text is found in the siddurim printed in Livorno from the 1840s until the early 20th century. These (and later versions printed in Vienna) were widely used throughout the Sephardic and Mizrahi world. Another popular variant was the text known as *Nusach ha-Hida*, named after Rabbi Chaim Joseph David Azulai. Both these versions were particularly influential in Greece, Turkey and North Africa. However, most communities also had unwritten customs which they would observe, rather than following the printed siddurim exactly: it is easy, from the printed materials, to get the impression that usage in the Ottoman Empire around 1900 was more uniform than it really was.

Other variants include:

- the customs of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, based on an older form of the Castilian rite, with some influence from the customs both of Italian Jews and of Northern Morocco. This version is distinguished by the near-absence of Kabbalistic elements.
- Nusach Edot Hamizrach, originating among Iraqi Jews but now popular in many other communities. These are based on the opinions of the Ben Ish Chai and have a strong Kabbalistic flavour.
- Minhag Aram Soba, as used by Syrian Musta'arabim in earlier centuries (the current Syrian rite is closely based on the Livorno prints).
- the Moroccan rite, also related to the text of the Livorno prints but with a strong local flavour. This subdivides into the customs of the Spanish-speaking northern strip and the Arabic-speaking interior of the country.
- formerly, there were variants from different parts of Spain and Portugal, perpetuated in particular synagogues in Salonica and elsewhere, e.g. the Lisbon and Catalan rites.

Under the influence of the former Sephardi Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a common nusach appears to be emerging among Israeli Sephardim, based largely on the Nusach Edot Hamizrach but omitting some of the Kabbalistic additions.

Nusach Teman

A "Temani" nusach was the standard among the Jews of Yemen. This is divided into the *Baladi* (purely Yemenite) and *Shami* (Sephardified) versions.

Both rites are recited using the unique Yemenite pronunciation of Hebrew. Yemenite Jews, and some scholars, regard this as probably being the most authentic, and most closely related to the Hebrew of Ancient Israel.

Other Nuschaot

. There are the *Minhag Italiani* and *Minhag Benè Romì* used by some Italian Jews.

Closely related to these was the "Romaniote" rite[1] from Greece where there was an ancient, pre-Diaspora Jewish community. The only surviving Romaniote synagogues are in Ioannina and New York, and even these now use a predominantly Sephardic rite: there were formerly Romaniote synagogues in Istanbul and Jerusalem. (The customs of Corfu are a blend between the Romaniote and Sephardic rites.)

- There was once a French nusach, closely related to the Ashkenazi, which is now used only in certain towns in Northern Italy (see *Appam*).
- Distinct Persian[2] and Provençal[3] nuschaot also existed before being gradually replaced by the Edot Hamizrach and Spanish and Portuguese nuschaot respectively.

- *Nusach Eretz Yisrael*, a recent attempt at reconstructing the nusach of Eretz Yisrael in the Talmudic/Geonic period by Machon Shilo's Rabbi David Bar-Hayim. This reconstruction is based on the Jerusalem Talmud and documents discovered in the Cairo Genizah, and is published in the form of a siddur by Yair Shaki. Rabbi Bar-Hayim's Jerusalem followers use this nusach in a public prayer service held in Machon Shilo's synagogue.

It is said among some mystics that an as-yet undisclosed nusach will be revealed after the coming of Mashiach, the Jewish Messiah. Others say that the differences in nusach are derived from differences between the twelve tribes of Israel, and that in Messianic times each tribe will have its proper nusach.

Musical nusach

Main article: Religious Jewish music

The whole musical style or tradition of a community is sometimes referred to as its *nusach*, but this term is most often used in connection with the chants used for recitative passages, in particular the Amidah.

Many of the passages in the prayer book, such as the Amidah and the Psalms, are chanted in a recitative rather than either read in normal speech or sung to a rhythmical tune. The recitatives follow a system of musical modes, somewhat like the maqamat of Arabic music. For example, Ashkenazi cantorial practice distinguishes a number of *steiger* (scales) named after the prayers in which they are most frequently used, such as the *Adonoi moloch steiger* and the *Ahavoh rabboh steiger*. Mizrahi communities such as the Syrian Jews use the full maqam system.

The scales used may vary both with the particular prayer and with the season. For examples, there are often special modes for the High Holy Days, and in Syrian practice the scale used depends on the Torah reading for the week (see The Weekly Maqam). In some cases the actual melodies are fixed, while in others the reader has freedom of improvisation.

References

1. ^ *Siddur Tefillot ha-Shanah le-minhag kehillot Romania*, Venice 1523.
2. ^ Shelomo Tal, *Nosaḥ ha-Tefillah shel Yehude Paras.*
3. ^ *Seder ha-Tamid*, Avignon 1776.

Understanding the Shema

Larry Perrin

• Please turn to page 112 in the Siddur

• The Sh'ma is generally the first prayer a child learns and the last thing a person is supposed to say prior to leaving this world. When we say it, we cover our eyes to exclude outside influences and to place ourselves in the proper emotional state for intentional prayer. It is composed of two verses from Devarim (Duteronomy) 6:4–9, 11:13-21, and one from Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:37–41.

• It's a very old prayer and has been noted in the Talmud (Sukkot 42a and Berachot 13b) to have been prayed in the Second Temple which was destroyed in the year 70 CE. Then, the Sh'ma, was recited in a manner similar, in many ways, to its present form. According to the Talmud, this prayer was said along with the Ten Commandments by the Kohenim during a service held in the Chamber of Hewn Stones after the initial morning sacrifice (Tam. 5:1 and Ber. 11b). The people assembled in the Temple courtyard, and upon hearing the first word "Sh'ma" responded with "Baruch Shem k'vod….).

• Presently, the second verse "Baruch Shem..." which is rabbinic in origin is spoken in an undertone. Two reasons for this are suggested:

•• When Jacob lay on his deathbed and his 12 sons declared loyalty to G-d by reciting the Sh'ma, Jacob responded with the "Praised by the Name…" phrase but his voice was so weak that he could scarcely be heard.

•• The second explanation is that Moses, on Mt. Sinai, heard the ministering angels singing this phrase to G-d, and he brought it back to the B'nai Yisroel assembled at the foot of the mountain and taught it to them. The sages have compared this to the story of a man who stole a valuable ornament from a king and gave it to his wife on the condition that she only wear it inside the house. As sinful humans, we dare not say this phrase out

loud except on Yom Kippur, when we raise ourselves, free of sin, to the level of the angels.

When we read this prayer, we should know that there is a structure to it, which we should consider and which is very helpful in understanding it.

• The Sh'ma comes as close as possible to a declaration of faith in G-d as is present in Judaism. And, further, that we absolutely believe this statement.

• It presents three separate but interconnected themes:

A) Creation
B) Revelation
C) Redemption

which are presented in three parts:

Firstly: Affirming G-d's unity, loving G-d and learning Torah
Secondly: Accepting the Mitzvot , and
Lastly: Fulfilling the mitzvah of Tsitsit as a reminder of all the other mitzvot.

• If no minyon is present when the Sh'ma is recited, "El melich ne'emon (G-d is a faithful king)" is stated before beginning the prayer. It is **an acronym for amen** (aleph, mem and nun) and adding it to the Sh'ma brings the word count for the entire prayer to 248 which is equal to the number of positive commandments and also the number of bones the ancient rabbis thought comprised the human body.

• If you look closely at the first stanza of the Sh'ma, you will notice that the ayen at the end of the first word (Sh'ma) is enlarged and that the daled at the end of the last word (Echad) is also enlarged. Taken together, ayen daled spells Aid which is the Hebrew word for witness, indicating that by praying this prayer, each of us affirms the obligation of "kabel ol malkhut shamayim" acceptance of the yoke of heaven.

There is an alternative explanation for the enlarged letters as well. If the ayen were mistaken for a aleph, the word would be pronounced as Sha'ma meaning "perhaps or maybe", indicating that "maybe the Lord etc", a blasphemy, and if the dalid were mistaken for a resh, the word would be acher meaning "other" which could be translated as "the LORD is another", a second blasphemy.
At this point we're still on the first sentence and there are at least two ways to translate it:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God! The LORD is One!" or
"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God — the LORD alone."

But no matter how we translate it, from the very first word the **Sh'ma** commands our attention. It's the kick in the pants demanding that we **listen** to what follows.

• The second verse is usually read in an undertone as a single sentence, but some rabbinic authorities have divided it into two sentences: Baruch Shem. And then Cavod malhuto le'olum voed. Translated as "Bless The Name" "His glorious kingdom is forever". As noted above, it is usually spoken in an undertone, except on Yom Kippur, when we say it out loud.

• Thus far we have covered only two lines, but I would like to take some time to discuss my understanding of these lines.

2 The word sh'ma is generally translated as hear. Modern Hebrew uses heek'sheev to mean listen. So, to me, Sh'ma means "listen up" or "yo" or the equivalent of a kick in the pants I mentioned before. Yisroel, of course, refers to all of us. So, it seems to me that this sentence is telling us to wake up and pay attention because what comes next is really, really important.

Adoni , which means my Lord, is code for the name of G-d (Yod Hay Vav Hay) which was only pronounced by the High Priest in the Holy of Holys on Yom Kippur. The modern Hebrew equivalent, Adon means Mr. In any event, we don't know how to pronounce the Tetragrammaton and it is forbidden to say it anyway. In the ancient world, if you could name a thing, you could control it and G-d is far beyond any semblance of our control particularly as we don't even know how to say G-d's name.

Echad, the final word of the second verse, means one and has been translated as "one" or "alone" or "singular". This is where, in my estimation, Torah meets quantum mechanics. Consider a Kabbalistic understanding of the formation of the universe: before the Beginning there was only G-d. When G-d decided to create this universe (probably not the first and certainly not the last) a space had to be created in which to place it. So G-d removed Himself (using anthropomorphic terms so that the concept will be meaningful to us) and a space was made. The creation of this space is called "TsimTsum in Kabalistic literature, meaning "a

contraction following a previous expansion." The idea is that God withdrew part of himself after creating the world to allow other things to exist.

Next G-d made the universe out of the only material which was in existence, Himself. My conception is that He put a pinch of "G-d stuff" into the space and the universe came into being, which is what we moderns call the Big Bang. So, I ask you, how are we different from a turnip if we are all made from the same "stuff"? Again, quantum mechanics, which notes that we are mostly empty space with a few quarks whizzing about in unpredictable orbits, just the same as a turnip. To my way thinking, what sets us apart is that humans have souls (several in fact). What ever a soul is, it hasn't been measured, captured or quantified in any way, yet here we are. We are self-

aware. How can this be? My only answer can be that
G-d has imparted to us this quality and has not to other animals or to objects. We affirm this statement every morning upon arising when we say the "Modeh ani" prayer.

• Let's continue with the second stanza: Baruch...

Bless "The Name", that is, bless G-d. Do we really think that G-d who created this universe from nothing needs our blessings? I don't. So how can we presume any value in blessing "The Name"? I believe that G-d really wants us to be kind to one another and that by doing so, we are performing the blessing of "The Name". Giving charity of any kind is a blessing. Helping our parents, our children, our neighbors and others in this world is blessing. Paying attention to the environment is a blessing. Making a good living which enables us to donate money to charity is a blessing. Learning and teaching is a blessing as well. To my mind, these blessings are worth more than the mere mouthing of words.

Lastly, consider the end of this sentence "le olam voed" which is translated as forever. However it means more than just forever in time, it also means forever in space, which as we are all aware is just a part of time (according to Einstein: space-time).

So what this phrase is telling us essentially, is that you **can't run** and you **can't hide**. G-d's kingdom is everywhere, so be careful what you do and what you say.

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• The second paragraph of the Sh'ma is the V'ahavtah which commands us to love G-d. I had a great deal of trouble with this concept until I learned that in this context, "love" is a technical term used in ancient Near-East documents referring to acceptance of treaty obligations (suzeraine- vassal relationships). Consider also that we are to take "these words" to our heart. Again, in the ancient Near-East, the heart was the receptacle of the soul. the place of thinking equivalent to our usage of "brain". We are also called upon to teach these words to our children, thus assuring continuity of the knowledge and recite them "in your home", "when you walk on the way", "when you lie down and when you rise up". Think what this means. It means essentially all the time we are awake from rising in the morning to lying down at night. All our waking time. Why should this be? Our sages have pointed out that covert references to the Ten Commandments are made by the Sh'ma, so here, we have the outline of how to live in this world. This is the "revelation" that I alluded to earlier.

• The third paragraph has several sections containing the promise of reward for serving God with all one's heart, soul, and might (Deut 11:13) and for the fulfillment of the laws. It also contains punishment for transgression. It also contains a repetition of the contents of the first portion -but this time spoken to the second person plural, (Where as the first portion is directed to the individual Jew, this time it is directed to the whole community, all us Jews). This section is very similar in construction to legal documents of the time

frame in which it was written down. It made the brit "covenant" with G-d understandable in the terms of law and contracts in place at that time. I guess that today we would consider it a type of "boiler plate". But is is still another part of "revelation".

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• The last paragraph concerns itself with Tzizit (fringes) and is the part referred to as "redemption" previously. The fringes are there to remind us of the exodus from Egypt (Pesach occurs next week) which is paradigmatic of Jewish faith that G-d will redeem us from all forms of foreign domination and oppression.

Consider this, the tzizit are comprised of four strings at each corner of the tallis. The strings are pushed through a hole in the tallis and so are doubled to eight strands. The strands are knotted so that there are five knots at each corner. The windings between the knots consist of seven, eight, eleven and thirteen wraps.

Together they teach us:

A) That G-d is one. The name of G-d is called the Tetragramation (which is Greek for "four letters" yod hay vav hay) which has the numerical equivalent (gematria) of 26. Consider the windings again, 7+8 is equivalent to yod hay and 11 is equivalent to vah hay. Thirteen is the numerical equivalent of echad (one). Therefore, the windings teach that G-d is one.

B) Another way of looking at tzitzit is to consider the gematria of the word tzitzit itself, which is 600 and by adding the 8 strands and the 5 knots we get 613, the number of the mitzvoth.

C) an unusual construction considers that the tzitzit have four stands doubled at each of the four corners which adds up to 32 strings. 32 is the gematrical equivalent of the hebrew word "lev" (heart) which is taken to mean that when we look at the tzitzit, we are looking at G-d's heart strings. Visual cues are necessary for a forgetful people.

I have to say that my understanding of the value of tzitzit has grown with age. As I have aged, I have become aware of my failing memory and the need to have some visible reminder of what I was supposed to remember. I leave my medications out to remind me to take them. I place notes to myself in places I know I will look so I won't forget them (such as to door to the garage, the driver's seat in my car, and on the kitchen counter). The tzitzit are G-d's way of reminding us, using very visual queues, concerning the oneness of G-d; reminding us of the requirement of following the mitzvot,and to remember and follow the Ten Commandments.

So here, at last, we have all three themes: Creation, Revelation and Redemption.

Shabbat Shalom

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"My People's Paryer Book Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries" Volume I The Sh'ma and its blessings.
The Wikipedia
Jewish Liturgy, A Comprehensive History by Ismar Elbogen JPS 1993

Understanding the Amidah

Stan Finkelstein

THE AMIDAH IS WITHOUT QUESTION ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PRAYERS IN OUR SERVICE.

I SUSPECT, MOST INDIVIDUALS, LIKE ME, HAVE RECITED THIS PRAYER 100’S IF NOT 1,000’S OF TIMES OVER THE YEARS. MOST OF US HAVE VERY LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE PRAYER, THE REASONS UNDERLYING THE PRACTICES, OR THE HISTORY OF THE AMIDAH. HAVING NOW STUDIED THE AMIDAH, MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACETS OF THIS PRAYER HAVE BEEN GREATLY EXPANDED.

AS AN ASIDE, FOR THOSE OF YOU WISHING TO GAIN A MORE IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMIDAH, THROUGH THE INTERNET THERE IS A WEALTH OF MATERIAL SIMPLY A CLICK AWAY.

WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE IN THIS DISCUSSION IS THE QUESTION OF WHAT IS THIS PRAYER CALLED THE AMIDAH; WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE PRAYER; WHY IS IT SO CENTRAL TO OUR DAILY OBSERVANCE; WHAT ARE ITS COMPONENTS; AND WHAT ARE THE PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRAYER?

THIS PRAYER IS KNOWN BY THREE NAMES: FIRST, IT IS AS WE KNOW IT, THE AMIDAH, WHICH TRANSLATED MEANS *STANDING*, REFLECTING THE FACT THAT WE STAND WHEN WE RECITE THE PRAYER.

SECONDLY, IT IS REFERRED TO AS THE SHEMONAH ESREH, WHICH MEANS *EIGHTEEN*, INDICATING THAT IT WAS ORIGINALLY COMPRISED OF 18 PRAYERS, THOUGH THERE ARE NOW 19.

THIRDLY, IT IS SOMETIMES SIMPLY REFERRED TO AS *TEFILLAH*, MEANING THE PRAYER, BECAUSE OF ITS STATUS AS THE PREEMINENT ELEMENT IN EVERYDAY JEWISH PRAYER. THE OBLIGATION, CODIFIED IN THE TALMUD, TO PRAY 3 TIMES EACH DAY IS SATISFIED BY THE TRICE DAILY RECITATION OF THE AMIDAH.

HISTORY OF THE AMIDAH

NOW, IN TERMS OF THE HISTORY OF THE AMIDAH, THE QUESTION IS WHERE DID THIS PRAYER ORIGINATE FROM? THE AMIDAH, IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM OF 18 BLESSINGS, DATES BACK TO ABOUT THE 5TH CENTURY, BEFORE THE COMMON ERA. IT WAS COMPOSED BY THE 120 MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOT CODIFIED UNTIL AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE IN THE 1ST CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA. SO WE HAVE OUR MAJOR PRAYER THAT DATES BACK ABOUT 2500 YEARS.

IN THE 2ND CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA THE ORIGINAL CODIFIED AMIDAH WAS MODIFIED TO INCLUDE A 19TH BLESSING. THAT 19TH BLESSING, ADDED UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF RABBI GAMLIEL THE ELDER, WAS INTENDED TO COMBAT THE THREATS TO TRADITIONAL JUDAISM POSED BY THE CAROTITE, SAMARITAN, SADDUCEE AND OTHER SECTS AS WELL AS BY JEWISH CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY. THE BLESSING IS INTENDED TO GUARD AGAINST HERETICS AND OTHER ENEMIES OF JUDAISM.

A FURTHER HISTORIC COMMENT RELATES TO THE ORIGINS OF THE 18, NOW 19 PRAYERS. EVERY BLESSING APPEARS TO HAVE ITS ORIGINS IN

THE TORAH, IN FORMS WHICH HAVE BEEN ALTERED FOR PURPOSES OF THE AMIDAH.

WHILE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ORIGINS OF THE AMIDAH, THE ONE THAT I'VE JUST DESCRIBED IS THAT WHICH IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED.

IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED, THAT THERE ARE MULTIPLE FORMS OF THE AMIDAH. THE AMIDAH THAT WE RECITE ON SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT WHICH IS SAID DURING THE WEEK. WE ALSO HAVE SLIGHT VARIATIONS FOR THE MUSSAF AMIDAH. ADDITIONALLY, THE AMIDAH THAT WE RECITE ON CERTAIN HOLIDAYS IS ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE TRADITIONAL WEEKDAY AMIDAH.

COMPONENTS OF THE AMIDAH

NOW, TURNING TO THE ELEMENTS OF THE AMIDAH, STRUCTURALLY, IT IS COMPOSED OF 3 BASIC PARTS.

THE FIRST ELEMENT, CONSISTING OF THE 1ST THREE PRAYERS, ARE BLESSINGS IN PRAISE OF GOD. THEY CONSIST OF AVOT, GEVUROT, AND KEDUSHAH HASHEM.

AVOT, ACHNOWLEDGES OUR PATERNAL ANCELSTORS; ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB. SOME CONSERVATIVE AND ALL REFORM PRAYERBOOKS ALSO ADD THE MATRIARCHS, SARAH, REBEKAH, LEAH, & RACHEL IN THE AVOT PRAYER.

GEVUROT, THE SECOND BLESSING, ACKNOWLEDGES GOD'S POWER OVER ALL OF NATURE AND HUMANKIND. WE PRAISE GOD FOR ALL THAT IS DONE ON OUR BEHALF.

KEDUSHAT HaSHEM, THE 3RD BLESSING, CONVEYS OUR RECOGNITION OF GOD'S HOLINESS.

THE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF THE 1ST THREE PRAYERS IS THAT THEY ARE 3 BLESSINGS IN *PRAISE OF GOD*.

THE MIDDLE 13 PRAYERS ARE DEEMED TO BE INDIVIDUAL PETITIONS ASKING GOD TO SATISFY ONE'S SPIRITUAL AND OTHER NEEDS. IN THESE 13 PRAYERS, WHICH MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THE WEEKDAY AMIDAH, WE ARE ASKING GOD TO GIVE US: KNOWLEDGE, REPENTENCE, FOREGIVENESS, REDEMPTION, HEALING, ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, PROVIDE FOR THE IN-GATHERING OF THE DISPERSED JEWS (RETURN TO ISRAEL), THE RESTORATION OF JUSTICE, THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL'S

ENEMIES (THE HERETICS), A PRAYER FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, THE RESTORATION OF JERUSALEM, AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH.

THESE 13 PRAYERS ARE DEEMED TO BE FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF INDIVIDUAL REQUESTS, AND IMPORTANTLY ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE SHABBAT OR HOLIDAY AMIDOT, BECAUSE ONE SHOULD NOT PETITION GOD ON THE SABBATH OR ON HOLIDAYS.

ON THE SABBATH AND HOLIDAYS THE 13 PRAYERS ARE REPLACED BY A SINGLE PRAYER THAT EMPHASIZES THE SANCTITY OF THE DAY.

BEFORE I MOVE TO THE LAST 3 PRAYERS, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT BRIEFLY ON WHAT IS THE 12TH PRAYER, REFERRED TO IN HEBREW AS BIRKAT HAMINIM. THIS IS THE PRAYER THAT WAS ADDED SOMETIME IN THE 2ND CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA AND THEREBY INCREASED THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PRAYERS IN THE AMIDAH TO 19.

BIRKAT HAMINIM REQUESTS THAT ISRAEL AND JUDAISM'S ENEMIES, THE WICKED AND HERETICS BE DESTROYED. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS PRAYER WAS INSERTED IN THE 2ND CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA AS REINFORCEMENT AGAINST HERETICAL SECTS AND AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

AS I SAID EARLIER, THIS LARGE COMPONENT OF THE WEEKDAY AMIDAH, THE 13 PETITIONS, ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE SHABBAT OR FESTIVAL AMIDAH, BECAUSE IT IS INAPPROPRIATE TO MAKE REQUESTS OF GOD ON THE SABBATH OR ON MAJOR HOLIDAYS. FOR THOSE DAYS, THE 13 PETITIONS ARE REPLACED BY A SINGLE, EXTENDED PRAYER REFERRED TO ***KEDUSHAT HAYOM***, MEANING SANCTITY OF THE DAY. IT INCLUDES 7 BENEDICTIONS. TRANSLATED IT IS:

> Our God and God of our ancestors! Be pleased with our rest; sanctify us with your commandments, give us a share in your Torah, satiate us with your bounty, and gladden us in Your salvation. Cleanse our hearts to serve You in truth; let us inherit, O Lord our God, in love and favor, Your holy Sabbath, and may Israel, who loves Your name, rest thereon. Praised are You, O Lord, who sanctifies the Sabbath.

THE FINAL 3 PRAYERS OF THE AMIDAH ARE PRAYERS OF THANKS. WE THANK GOD FOR RECEIVING OUR PRAYERS (AVODAH), FOR OUR LIVES, FOR THE WONDERS THAT ARE WITH US (BIRKAT HODA'AH), AND FOR PEACE (BIRKAT SHALOM).

THESE 3 CONCLUDING PRAYERS ARE THE SAME IN ALL OF THE FORMS OF THE AMIDAH.

NOW, RATHER THAN FOCUS ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WEEKDAY, THE SHABBAT AND FESTIVAL AND THE MUSSAF AMIDOT, I'D LIKE TO CONCLUDE BY BRIEFLY DISCUSSING SOME OF THE PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE RECITATION OF THE AMIDAH.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RECITING OF THE AMIDAH

FIRST, WE RECITE THE AMIDAH WHILE STANDING WITH OUR FEET TOGETHER. WE ARE DEEMED TO ASSUME THE POSITION OF AN ANGEL, AND THEREBY ENDEAVOR TO ATTAIN SPIRITUALITY AND TO FOCUS OUR THOUGHTS ON GOD.

SECOND, WHEN WE STAND WE FACE DUE EAST TOWARDS ISRAEL. WE ARE COMMANDED TO FACE TOWARDS THE HOLY ARK.

THIRD, WE TAKE THREE STEPS BACK AND 3 STEPS FORWARD BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER RECITING THE AMIDAH. THIS SYMBOLIZES APPROACHING GOD.

FOURTH, THE PRAYER SHOULD BE RECITED SILENTLY, WITHOUT INTERRUPTION. THE WORDS SHOULD BE AUDIBLE TO THE INDIVIDUAL BUT SHOULD NOT DISTURB OTHERS. THERE SHOULD BE NO DISTRACTIONS WHILE THE AMIDAH IS BEING SAID AND ONE SHOULD CONCENTRATE SOLELY ON RECITATION OF THE PRAYER. ONE SHOULD ACTUALLY THINK ABOUT THE PRAYER AS OPPOSED TO SIMPLY MOUTHING THE WORDS. WE SHOULD NOT GO THROUGH A BREAK-NECK

SPEED RECITATION, BUT ACTUALLY ATTAIN A LEVEL OF SPIRITUALITY WHEN SAYING THE AMIDAH.

FIFTH, WE BOW 4 TIMES DURING THE AMIDAH. WE BOW AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE FIRST BLESSING, AT THE *MODIM ANAHNU LAKH,* AND AT THE END OF THE LAST BLESSING WE BOW TO THE EAST, TO THE WEST, AND FORWARD. THE BOWING REPRESENTS HUMBLING ONESELF BEFORE GOD.

SIXTH, WE HAVE THE REPITITION OF THE AMIDAH—WHY? THE AMIDAH IS REPEATED WHEN THERE IS A MINYAN, EXCEPT FOR MAARIV. THE REASON FOR THE REPETITION WAS TO PROVIDE FOR THOSE UNABLE TO SAY THE AMIDAH TO HAVE A CHANCE TO BE INCLUDED IN HAVING SAID THE PRAYER THROUGH THE CHAZAN'S REPITITION, BY SAYING AMEN.

INTERESTINGLY DURING THE REPITITION, WHEN THE CHAZZAN SAYS THE 18TH PRAYER, THE PRAYER FOR THANKSGIVING, *MODEEM ANOCHNU LOK*, THE CONGREGANTS SAY A CORRESPONDING PRAYER, *MODIM D'RABBANAN*, THE THANKSGIVING PRAYER OF THE RABBIS, TO ENABLE THE CONGREGANTS TO THANK GOD DIRECTLY, AS OPPOSED TO THROUGH AN EMISSARY.

CONCLUSION

IN CLOSING, THERE ARE MANY MORE ASPECTS OF THE AMIDAH THAT ONE COULD DISCUSS. HOWEVER, THIS DISCUSSION FOCUSES ON THE HIGHLIGHTS; TO CONVEY A BIT OF THE HISTORY OF THIS PRAYER; ITS IMPORTANCE; THE COMPONENTS; AND THE REASON FOR MANY OF THE PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SAYING OF THE AMIDAH. FOR THOSE WISHING MORE DETAIL THERE ARE A NUMBER OF BOOKS WHICH DESCRIBE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE AMIDAH, AS WELL AS AN EXCELLENT WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE RELATING TO THE AMIDAH.

THANK-YOU

The Amidah, By Shira Schoenberg, Jewish Virtual Library – An online source

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To Pray as a Jew, Chapters 3 & 4, Rabbi Donin

UNDERSTANDING THE TORAH SERVICE

Lowell Cordas

History

In Exodus 24:3-4 Parasha Mishpatim "Moses went and repeated to the people of the Lord and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, 'all the things that the Lord has commanded we will do' Moses then wrote down all the commands of the Lord." Then in Exodus Ki Tissa, 34:31-32: "But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the chieftains in the assembly returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he instructed them concerning all that the Lord had imparted to him on Mount Sinai." And in Deuteronomy Parasha Va-Yeilekh 31:24, we read, "When Moses had put down in writing the words of this Teaching to the very end."

So, dating back to the time of Moses, our public readings differentiated the Jewish religion from other religions by keeping our sacred writings available to all instead of being accessible to priests and selected others only. With us, it has always been an imperative to hear and understand the words of the Torah and then to act accordingly.

Our next historical public reading of the Law appears when Joshua, after conquering the Canaanite fortress Ai, built an altar on Mt Ebal and inscribed on its stones a copy of the Torah of Moses. Then he read to the

people all the words of the Torah, the blessings and curses. This was done in the Valley of Schechem facing Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal. This is dated somewhere between 1200-1050 BCE.

The mitzvah of Torah reading was based on the Biblical commandment of *Hakhel* (Deuteronomy 31:10–13): "And Moses instructed them as follows: Every seventh year, the year set for remission, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your G-d in the place that he will choose, you shall read this Teaching aloud in the presence of all Israel. Gather the people-men, women, children, and the strangers in your communities- that they may hear and so learn to revere the Lord your G-d and to observe faithfully every word of this teaching. Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere the Lord your G-d as long as they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." It is believed that it was Deuteronomy, the final volume of the Pentateuch that was read to them. For evidence see the closing chapters of the Talmudic Tractate Sotah.

King Josiah (639-609 BCE) read the Book of the Covenant, likely just Deuteronomy, as it was recently discovered by Hilkiah the High Priest. He followed the instructions for Hakhel as explained above.

Prior to the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE, it is thought that the five books of the Torah were considered as individual books not treated as a single document. Following the destruction, the term Torah began to refer to the five books as a whole, not five individual books. This is substantiated in the Talmud Tractate Gittin 60a that states that the Five Books were given originally in separate scrolls, and later were issued as one continuous book.

Regular public reading, not the Kingly reading, of the Torah was introduced by Ezra the Scribe after the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonian captivity (c. 537 BCE), as described in the Book of Nehemiah, He gathered the people and read to them the Torah. What Ezra read is likely a prototype Pentateuch, all five at once. Thus. Torah reading became more frequent and the congregation themselves substituted for the King's role.

Ezra is traditionally credited with initiating the modern custom of reading thrice weekly in the synagogue. This reading is an obligation incumbent on the congregation, not an individual, and did not replace the *Hakhel* reading by the king. Three days apart was chosen because in Ex 15:22 the people traveled for three days in the wilderness with no water. Allegorically they also went three days without words of Torah which are symbolized by water. Hence we never read 3 or more days apart.

There were breaks in the practice, but since the Maccabean period in the 2nd century BCE, public Torah reading has been maintained continuously. Torah reading is discussed in the Mishna and Talmud, primarily in Tractate Megillah.

Another source substantiating the practice of regular Torah reading in the synagogue can be traced to at least about the second century B.C.E., when the grandson of Sirach refers to it a practice found in Egyptian synagogues; it must, therefore, have existed even earlier in Judea. Both Josephus and Philo refer to Torah reading in the 2nd Temple times as well.

As Hebrew became more and more the Loshen Kodesh, the Holy Tongue, it was used in religious rite solely. Aramaic became the common language. The Targum is the first recorded Aramaic translation of the Torah. This is mentioned in Talmud Tractate Megillah 9a. However, Aramaic versions predated this and are

referred to in Talmud Tractate Megillah 3:3. Rashi comments that these versions were memorized and not written down. In Talmud Megillah 3A, it refers to an Aramaic translation by Onkelos, a proselyte and nephew of Titus, at the time of the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 70CE. In the Yerushalmi Talmud Megillah 1:9, they reference the Aramaic translation of Aquilas, also a proselyte.

The two most important *targumim* for liturgical purposes are:

- Targum Onkelos on the Torah (The Law)
- Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Nevi'im (The Prophets)

These two *targumim* are mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud as *targum didan* ("our Targum"), giving them official status. In the synagogues of Talmudic times, Targum Onkelos was read alternately with the Torah, verse by verse, and Targum Jonathan was read alternately with the selection from Nevi'im (i.e. the Haftarah). This custom continues today in Yemenite Jewish synagogues. The Yemenite Jews are the only Jewish community to continue the use of Targum as liturgical text, as well as to preserve a living tradition of pronunciation for the Aramaic of the *targumim* (according to a Babylonian dialect). The two "official" *targumim* are considered eastern (Babylonian). Nevertheless, scholars believe they too originated in Palestine because of a strong linguistic substratum of western Aramaic. Though these *targumim* were later "easternized", the substratum belying their origins still remains.

In post-Talmudic times, when most Jewish communities had ceased speaking Aramaic, the public reading of Targum along with the Torah and Haftarah was abandoned. In Yemen, however, rather than abandoning the Aramaic Targum during the public reading of the Torah, it was supplemented by a third version, namely the translation of the Torah into Arabic by Saadia Gaon called the *Tafsir*. Consequently, in Yemen each verse was read three times; Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic.

The **Septuagint, the Koine Greek** version of the Hebrew Bible was translated in stages between the 3rd and 2nd Century BCE in Alexandria. It is the oldest of several ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean Basin from the time of Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE). According to the record in the Talmud, "'King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did'" Hence the Greek version. However, the Septuagint is not considered a fully accurate translation as difficulties arose with different translators, editions, and the differences between the Greek and Hebrew understanding of words.

Joseph Jacobs, in an Jewish Encyclopedia article, notes that the transition from the triennial to the annual reading of the Law and the transference of the beginning of the cycle to the month of Tishri are attributed to the influence of Abba Arika, also known as "Rab," or "Rav," (175–247 CE), a Jewish Talmudist who lived in Babylonia, and who established at Sura the systematic study of the rabbinic traditions, which, using the Mishnah as text, led to the compilation of the Talmud. Thus it was there arranged that Deut. 28, Parasha Ki Tavo, should fall before the New-Year, and that the beginning of the cycle should come immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. This arrangement has been retained by the Karaites and by modern congregations."

By 600 CE presumably all the Babylonian community was reading all the Torah in a one-year cycle, while

in Palestine, it was still read on a 3 or even 3.5-year cycle. There this pattern lasted until the 12th Century CE. In Babylonia, the Torah was split into 54 sections. The size of the sections varying, containing anywhere between 30 and more than 150 verses. The Babylonian custom became the accepted norm for Orthodox and most Conservative Jews to this day. In early Palestine, the reading for Shabbat morning was divided into 155 portions and took three years to read. As late as 1170 Benjamin of Tudela mentioned Egyptian congregations that took three years to read the torah

When is the Torah read?

It was also in the Maccabean period that the Jews started reading from the Torah consecutively, reading on Shabbat afternoon, Monday, and Thursday from the point at which they left off the previous Shabbat morning. Then on the next Shabbat the portion is read in its entirety. These days were picked because Monday and Thursday were traditionally market days when Jews would gather to in the nearest towns to shop, trade and exchange news. Also, this way the people would never go for more than three days without getting spiritual sustenance from the Torah. This is based on the verse in Ex 15:22 where they traveled 3 days in the wilderness and did not find water. Allegorically, they did not find words of Torah which are symbolized by water. To this day Jews who have minyanim on those days read Torah.

This cycle of weekly readings is now set. Because the Hebrew Calendar varies from year to year, two readings are sometimes combined so that the entire Pentateuch is read over the course of a year. However in the current era many traditional, but not orthodox, and along with liberal congregations read a triennial cycle, where the first third of each Parasha is read one year, the second third the next year and the final third in a third year. This must be distinguished from the ancient practice, which was to read 1/3rd of the portion, then the next week the next third and so on in serial order regardless of the week of the year, completing the entire Torah in three (or three and a half) years in a linear fashion.

Order of precedence for special readings

When multiple special occasions occur at the same time, there is a standard order of precedence. Generally speaking, when major Jewish holidays occur on Shabbat the holiday portion is read, although divided into the seven portions for Shabbat rather than the number appropriate for the holiday. (There is a special reading for when Shabbat coincides with the Chol Hamoed (intermediate days) of Passover or Sukkot.) However, when Shabbat coincides with minor holidays, such as Rosh Chodesh (New month) or Hannukah, the regular reading for Shabbat is read, plus an additional reading (Maftir) relevant to the occasion. The additional reading is read from a second scroll if available. On rare occasions, such as when a Rosh Chodesh falls on a Shabbat that is also commemorating another occasion, such as Hanukkah or when one of the four special additional readings read prior to Passover, there are two additional readings and three scrolls (if available) are read.

The Ark and Scrolls

The Torah is kept in the Ark, known as the hekhal or Aron Kodesh. In many ancient synagogues, the Ark with the Torah was kept in a separate room and designated persons carried it in while people sang Va Yehi Binsoa.... The Torah itself is written on parchment and is mounted on two generally wooden rollers, known as atzei hayyim ("trees of life"). The Torah rolls on the atzei hayyim so that it can be rolled back and forth to the appropriate place. It is covered in a velvet cloth the Ashkenazic tradition that slips over the atzei hayyim. When the Torah scroll is to be read, the cover is removed. In the Sephardic and Mizrahi traditions

synagogue, the Torah is kept in an individual metal or wooden chest called a Tiq. The scroll is fixed permanently into the Tiq. The Tiq swings open to reveal the text for the Torah reading.

Taking Out the Torah

Many orthodox congregations continue the historical use of auctioning off honors for the benefit of the synagogue. In turn someone who purchases such an honor can then honor someone else by allowing him or her to do the honor. For example, I buy an honor and give it to Len because it is his birthday or anniversary. Honors are always sold in the lowest common denominator coin so that all can bid on the honors.

What are the honors?

If you attend a Sephardic synagogue, the auction is in Ladino. In my synagogue as a youth it was conducted in Yiddish. The first honor is opening the curtain and doors. This is called Petichah. The second honor involves putting on the crowns or Rimonim. The third honor carries the Torah to the Reader's Table, the Bima or Teba. The next honor is Hakamah or Hagba, the lifting of the Torah. In all non-Ashkenazic traditions, what we call Hagba is called Hakamah and is done before the reading. Finally, holding the Torahs while they are being unwrapped and is called in Ladino Tener. As each bid is won, the Hazzan offers a misheberach for that person. In many synagogues women are allowed to bid as well.

A preliminary prayer

The B'reekh Shemae is from the Zohar. It was added by the kabbalists because, when the Torah is read the gates of heaven are open, therefore this is an auspicious time for us to address our wants and needs.

Removing the Torah from the Ark

Removing and returning the Torah to and from the Ark are among the most ceremonial parts of the service. The honors of opening the Ark (called *peticha*) and taking out the Torah (*hotza'ah*) are given to worshipers; in some congregations, these two honors are combined and given to one person. When the Ark is open, the congregation rises out of respect. When the Torah is taken from the Ark, there is a procession in which the Torah is carried around the synagogue and people reach out to kiss it. On Shabbat and holidays, the ritual starts with several biblical and Talmudic verses recited out loud in unison. In Ashkenazi custom, these verses begin with the phrase "*ein kamocha baelohim adonai v'ain k'maasecha*" (There is none like Thee among the gods, O Lord, and there are no works like thine). In Sephardic, Mizrahi and Hasidic communities, they begin with the words "*ata haraita lada'at, ki hashem hu ha'elohim, ain od milvado*" (You have been made to recognize that the Lord is God; there is none besides him) and continue with "*Av harachamim*" (Father of mercy).

At this point, whoever is chosen to take out the Torah approaches the Ark. When the chazzan (prayer leader) begins "*Vayehi binsoa*" (When the ark would travel), this person opens the Ark doors. If it is a weekday, he immediately takes out the Torah. If it is Shabbat he waits until after the prayer "*Brikh shmei*" (Blessed is the Name), a personal prayer in Aramaic asking God to bless the Jewish people. On festivals, a Biblical verse listing the Thirteen Attributes of God and a prayer for personal welfare are inserted before *Brikh shemei*. The man or woman who removes the Torah scroll hands it to the chazzan and closes the Ark.

Not all the objects used are silver, and other metals, wood or ivory are sometimes used. The Torah scroll that is used generally has what is called a yad ("hand"), or pointer hung on a chain and draped over the atzei hayyim. The yad is used to point to the text as it is read, so that one will not touch the parchment itself. Often, there will be a breastplate hanging over the front of the scroll, reminiscent of the Urim Ve'Tumim breastplate that was worn by the high priest in the Temple. Finally, above the atzei hayyim there is often a keter ("crown"), which covers both, or two separate rimonim ("pomegranates"), which are meant to adorn the Torah scroll and show our veneration of it. Although Silver is the predominant metal used today, over time other metals, wood and ivory are sometimes used. The chazzan takes the Torah in his arms and says the phrase beginning "*gadlu lahashem iti*" (Exalt the Lord together with me). On Shabbat and holidays, he faces the congregation and this is prefaced with the verse of *Shema* and the verse beginning "*echad eloheinu, gadol adonenu*" (One is our God, great is our Lord). As the congregation responds with verses from Chronicles and Psalms praising God's greatness, the *chazzan* carries the Torah from the Ark to the *bimah*. Often, the synagogue leaders follow the Torah in a procession. Whereas the Ashkenazic scroll is laid down horizontally on the bimah during the Torah reading, the Sephardic/Mizrahi scroll rests vertically on its base throughout the Torah reading.

There are always at least three people on the *bimah* (raised platform from where the Torah is read). According to the Talmud, one should not stand alone to emphasize that G-d gave the Torah through an intermediary. The person on the bimah is also there to correct the reader's pronunciation and "*trop*" (also called *ta'amei hamikra*, meaning a series of musical notations that dictate the tune of how the Torah is read), since the Torah scroll has no punctuation or vowels. A *gabbai* (synagogue official) is also there to call people up to the Torah.

There are a few passages in the Torah read quickly and in a low voice. These passages, from the sections of *B'chukotai* and *Ki Tavo*, list the curses that befall those who do not observe the law.

The Torah Blessings and Aliyot

The Torah portions are divided into sections, called *Aliyot* (literally, "ascent"). The Mishnah describes the *Aliyot* saying that each aliyah must have a minimum of 3 verses. The Talmud adds that at a public reading, there must be 10 verses per *Aliyot*. Originally there was the one blessing at the beginning of the reading and then the second blessing at the end of the reading. In between each *oleh* (the one who is called for the *aliyah* read his portion. However, as time went on fewer people were able to read from the Torah. So each *aliyah* was given its own blessing set.

On Saturday mornings, there are seven *olim*, the maximum of any day, but more may be added usually to honor guests, by subdividing these seven *Aliyot*. In Sephardic congregations' *aliyah* #5 can be repeated or broken up into minimal sections. The number of *Aliyot* was decided by Ezra. It is forbidden to call up fewer than that number and, except for Shabbat and Simchat Torah (the last day of Sukkot), one can also not add *Aliyot*. When a festival or Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbat the readings are divided into seven *Aliyot* instead of five for holidays and six for Yom Kippur. There are four readings when Rosh Chodesh falls on a Torah reading weekday and on Hol Hamoed. Three are called for Shabbat afternoon, Hanukah, Purim. Yom Kippur afternoon, fast days and regular weekdays.

The procedure:

The procedure of each *aliyah* is the same. The *oleh* is called up the Gabbai by his Hebrew name and the name of his father. In Sephardi/mizrahi synagogues, the custom is to call someone by their Hebrew name as we do, but add their common last name. For example, I am Aryeh ben Yitzchak Cordas. This is done because the custom of naming after a living relative can create confusion when calling *olim*.

In most congregations, the *oleh* does not read the Torah aloud. In most western synagogues of all stripes, the oleh stands besides the reader, called a *ba'al k'ri'ah;* "one in charge of reading"; sometimes *ba'al ko're*. In some congregations the *oleh* follows along with the expert, reading in a whisper. According to Orthodox Judaism, the first *oleh* is a *kohen* (someone from the priestly caste) and the second a *levi*; the remaining *olim* are *yisr'elim* — Jews who are neither *kohen* nor *levi*. (This assumes that such people are available; there are rules in place for what is done if they are not.) The rest of the Aliyot are called by their number in Hebrew. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism have abolished calling by Kohen and Levi. People who are celebrating special occasions receive *Aliyot*: the groom and/or bride on an auf ruf, the Bar or Bat mitzvah, parent (s) baby girl naming on first Shabbat after birth, Shabbat yahrzeit, and dignitaries.

In all synagogues, it used to be the custom to rise when the Rabbi entered the synagogue and proceeded to his seat and then to rise again as the Rabbi was called to the Torah, but sit before he made the blessings. In Sephardic and Mizrahi synagogues the custom to rise for the Rabbi still exists. Also, in that tradition, when a family member goes to the Torah, the rest of the immediate family rises at least through each blessing. Some stay standing through the whole *aliyah* including the torah reading. If a patriarch, i/e, grandparent, is called, all descendents present rise. This can be quite a bunch of people.

Conservative Judaism Variations

Conservative Judaism generally follows practices for Torah reading similar to Orthodox Judaism except that:

In most but not all Conservative synagogues, women can receive an *aliyah* and/or can chant from the Torah out loud ("leyn").

In a minority of Conservative synagogues, women who are *Bat Kohanim* (daughter of a male Kohen) and *Bat Leviim* (daughter of a male Levi) can be called for the first and second *aliyah*. The Masorti movement in Israel, and some Conservative congregations in North America, permits only men to be called for the Kohen and Levite *Aliyot* even if women can be called for the other *Aliyot*.

Some Conservative synagogues do not call a Kohen or a Levite first at all, although Conservative Judaism as a whole retains some elements of special tribal roles.

Conservative synagogues that call women to the Torah generally hold a Bat Mitzvah ceremony for girls at the age of 13.

Some Conservative congregations use a triennial cycle, reading approximately a third of the Torah every year and completing the reading in three years.

Beginning the Torah Reading

The reader will point to the word that begins that *aliyah's* reading. The *oleh* will touch the margin area closest to that point with his tallit or the Torah mantle and will touch the tallit or mantle lightly to his lips. He should stand directly in front of the scroll with both hands on the handles, the atzei *hayyim*) projecting from the bottom. With the Torah scroll open, he recites the *Borchu* and the first Torah blessing. When reciting these Berachot, one does not look at the Torah since the blessing does not appear there. He then releases the left *eitz hayyim* and moves slightly to the right. While reading, the *oleh* holds the right handle.

When the reader completes that portion, the *oleh* again holds both *eitz hakims*, rolls the two sides of the scroll together and recites the second blessing. At this point the Torah is covered, as it should not be open when not saying words of Torah. The contention is that it is an affront to the Torah having it listen to extraneous matters. Lastly, it avoids conversation that might shame the Torah. The next *oleh* is called to the Torah and the gabbai may recite a personalized blessing (*mi she'beirakh*) inserting the Hebrew name of the oleh. The Hagomel blessing is added when an individual has recovered from a serious illness, been released from prison, returned safely from a sea voyage, traveled safely through a desert, returned from a combat zone and safely completed a trip by air. When a boy has a bar mitzvah, after he recites the second Torah blessing of his *aliyah*, his father says a special blessing. The *oleh* should remain on the *bimah* until the following *oleh* completes the second blessing then return to their seat. There is a custom to ascend the *bimah* from the right side and descend from the left when the Torah is red facing the Ark. It is also traditional to take the shortest route from one's seat to the bimah and a longer route going back, in order to show respect for the Torah by demonstrating excitement at approaching the Torah and hesitation at leaving it.

Reading the Torah

There was originally 8 different cantillation forms. Today there are five: Yemenite, Ashkenazic, Middle eastern which include North African, Jerusalem Sephardic, And Northern Mediterranean. Many consider the Yemenite trope to be closest to what was used in ancient Babylonia.

You may have noticed that certain letters in the Sefer Torah script are ornamented with tiny "crowns". The *halacha* (law) is that the Hebrew letters *shin* (ש), *ayin* (ע), *tes* (ט), *nun* (נ), *zayin* (ז), *gimel* (ג), *tzaddi* (ץ) all must be crowned with *taggim*. A Tag is Aramaic for a crown. I asked Rabbi Lauffer of "ask the Rabbi.org for the purpose and reason behind and this is his response: "As to the reason, well the only reason I have found is brought down in Kabalistic sources and is somewhat esoteric. These seven letters are letters used in compiling names of the three evil angels, "Satan" "Az" and "Getz", the lines above the letters are not symbolizing crowns but three swords, and the swords symbolically weaken the evil power contained in these letters". I looked elsewhere only to find other esoteric answers. I cam make an assumption that the real reason for these Taggim has been lost to history, but likely were there for a valid and practical reason.

Hagbah and Glilah

The verse "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people" is cited for the source of Hagba and Hakamah. Ezra stood on a raised platform above the people when he raised the Torah so that all could see the writing. (In Neh. 8:5 we find the biblical precedent). As he opened it the people stood, so we do the same to this day. In Sephardic and Mizrahi congregations the scroll is raised (Hakamah) prior to reading the Torah. It is shown to the four directions turning counter clockwise. The Ashkenazic custom is to lift (Hagba) after the Torah is read. The person who lifts the Torah traditionally opens at least three columns of the scroll before raising it up as high as possible, and then slowly turns clockwise to show the script to all assembled. This allows everyone in the congregation to see the text and proclaim v'zot ha-Torah (this is the Torah that Moses placed before the Children of Israel by the hand of Moses according to the command of G-d); (Deut. 4:44). In addition, in the Ashkenazic rite there is the addition of a second verse, "at the Lord's bidding through Moses" (Num. 9:23). Although now everyone at an Ashkenazic service says both verses together, at one time only the person who raised the Torah may have recited the first line, while the second was the congregational response. Some worshipers raise the edges of the tallit toward the script and then

kiss the tzitzit, though the halachic requirement is merely to bow toward the open Torah.

Then another person (the golel) rolls it tight being sure to place a seam between the two halves, puts on the tie (gartel) about 2/3rds of the way up from the bottom of the scroll, places the cover over it and places the yad and crowns on. An article in Wikipedia suggests that the custom of *Hagbah* dates back to the seventh century. The Talmud does not appear to separate the Hagba and Glilah task referring primarily to Hagba (Tractate Megillah 32a). Indeed, at one time, the person who received the last aliyah may have performed both of these duties. Likely, after the Torah was lowered it was laid on the Bima and tied there by the person who did Hagba. However, having one person responsible for both holding the Torah and tying the binder around the scroll could be fraught with hazard and presumably led to the decision to share the honor between two people. Although these activities do not require the recitation of a blessing, Hagbah and Glilah are considered religiously significant roles. Some Rabbis viewed the honor of Glilah as having the spiritual reward of all the Aliyot combined, and thus this task was traditionally reserved for the most distinguished members of the congregation. Children are often given this task. However, over time, Hagbah became the more coveted task.

In Western Sephardic congregations there were special groups of individuals – levantadores ("master lifters" of the scroll)--who were exclusively honored with the role of Hagbah so as to minimize the danger of dropping the scroll or handling it in a degrading way. Practically, A large Torah in an ornamented wooden Tiq could be quite heavy and needed a strong guy to lift it. In modern Sephardic congregations, Glilah is generally performed by one of the gabbaim standing on either side of the Torah reader.

The Maftir and Haftorah

The only *aliyah* that is different is the *Maft*ir, the last *aliyah* at *shachrit* on Shabbat and holidays, and at *mincha* on fast days. This *aliyah* is not counted as part of the official number of *Aliyot*. The *Maftir* is usually the last few verses of that week's Torah portion. On festivals and certain special Shabbatot, the *Maftir* is a different reading from another part of the Torah. Unlike the other *Aliyot*, a boy under thirteen years old can be called to read the *Maftir*. However, it is generally considered a significant honor to receive this *aliyah*, and it is often given to someone important in the synagogue or one who is celebrating a special event. The person who receives the *Maftir* generally also recites the *Haftorah* (literally "concluding portion", meaning a reading from the Prophets said on Shabbat and holidays) and the blessings that go with it. The *Haftorah* and *Maftir* are connected to show that the books of the Prophets are rooted in the Torah and cannot be learned independently from the Torah.

The custom of reading the *Haftorah* predates the Talmudic period. No one knows for certain the origins of reading the *Haftarah*, but several theories have been put forth. The most common explanation, accepted by some traditional Jewish authorities is that in 168 B.C.E., when the Jews were under the rules of the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, they were forbidden from reading the Torah but he did not extend this ban to the Prophets. So, we Jews made do with a substitute from the Prophets. When they were again able to read the Pentateuch, they kept reading the *Haftarah* as well.

An alternative explanation, offered by Rabbis Reuven Margolies and Samson Raphael Hirsch, is that the *Haftarah* reading was instituted to fight the influence of those sects, primarily the Samaritans, in Judaism that viewed the Jewish Bible as consisting only of the Pentateuch.

But all offered explanations for the origin of reading the *Haftarah* have unanswered difficulties.

Certainly the *Haftarah* was read — perhaps not obligatorily or in all communities — as far back as circa 70 CE: The Talmud mentions that a *Haftarah* was read in the presence of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, who lived at that time.

The *Haftorah* is selected because of a thematic relationship to the weekly Torah reading or to that day or time period. Often, early on, the Haftorah readings varied greatly from community to community.

There is a single blessing before the *Haftorah* that praises the prophets of Israel and affirms the truth of their message. There are four blessings after the *Haftorah*. The first emphasizes God's truthfulness and his faithfulness in fulfilling His prophecies. The second is a prayer for the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, a message that all the later prophets conveyed. The third is a prayer for the fulfillment of the prophecy that Elijah should bring us the news of the Messiah and the restoration of the House of David. The final blessing is one of thanksgiving for the Torah, for the privilege of worshiping God, for the prophets, and for the Sabbath. It mentions the hope that all of humanity will one day bless God's name. One theory for the reason behind these blessings is that they were instituted in reaction to the Samaritans, a sect that rejected the sanctity of the Books of the Prophets, and the blessings affirm that our beliefs are different from those of the Samaritans.

At one time, it seems that there was a cycle of readings from the Psalms possibly at the same time as the Haftorah.

Putting Back the Torah

We begin the process of returning the Torah to the ark by saying a prayer for our congregation based on an ancient Babylonian prayer and then one for our community which is based on a verse in Jeremiah 29:7. Then a prayer for our government based on Pirke Avot 3:2, a prayer for the State of Israel since 1948 which was authored by the Chief Rabbinate, a prayer for peace put in by the conservative movement in 1972 and a personal mediation first placed in Sim Shalom in 1985.

Rabbi Hillel the second in 385 CE fixed the calendar in its final form. This allowed for knowing in advance when Rosh Chodesh would be which then fixed the Rosh Chodesh prayer announcement we find in next in the Torah service.

The Av harahmim prayer was added in 12th Century Germany following the destruction to the Jewish Communities that the Crusaders wrought. Varying customs dictate what days to say this prayer.

Ashrei is read next. The ark is opened and the Yehalelu is said.

Mizmor Le David is then sung as the Torah is carried around. This psalm was added to the service to accompany the procession. This particular psalm is interpreted as a description of the Revelation at Mt Sinai. Tradition says that King Solomon composed this psalm and recited it when carrying in the Ark to the newly dedicated Temple.

As the Torah is being returned, the congregation recites the continuation of a Biblical passage that is recited

when the Torah is taken from the ark and concludes with a passage from Lamentations.

Finishing a book of Torah

When one completes the reading of one of the five books of Moses, the congregation stands and says the phrase "*Hazak, Hazak, v'nithazek*" (Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened). This is encouragement to continue with the reading of the next book and to return again to the previous one.

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Understanding Psalms/Tehillim

2010 Rabbi Jaron Matlow, MAJEd, MAJS, MEM 14 Tammuz 5770

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms
[1] Page numbers refer to Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals 1998

Book of Psalms –Tehilim– part of the Writings/Ketuvim section of Hebrew Bible/Tanach

- Many have attributions to/for/by/about King David, but it is not clear that all (if any) were actually written by him. Others have attributions to/by/for/about Moses, b'nei Korah, etc.
- Some are over 100 verses (e.g. 119 is 176 verses long), some are as short as just 2 verses (117).
- Used in prayer, study, comfort, times of stress, times of joy, mourning, etc.
- Genres can be broken down in several ways:[5]
  - Hymns
  - Lament/Complaint Psalms
  - Royal Psalms
  - Thanksgiving Psalms
  - Wisdom Psalms
  - Smaller Genres and Mixed Type

OR

  - Songs of Zion – Psalms 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, 134;
  - Historical Litanies – Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, 136;
  - Pilgrim Liturgies – Psalms 81, 21;

- Entrance Liturgies – Psalms 15, 24;
- Judgment Liturgies – Psalms 50, 82;
- Mixed Types – 36, 40, 41, 68

Types based on liturgical use:

- *Shir* or song: It means the flow of speech, as it were, in a straight line or in a regular strain. This title includes secular as well as sacred song.
- *Mizmor*: song set to music, often accompanied by musical instruments
- *Tehillah*: Praise – 145 and others. Singular form of *Tehillim*, Hebrew name for book of Psalms. Comes from same Hebrew root as Halleluyah.
- *Mikhtam*: an unknown designation used in 6 Psalms
- *Shiggaion*: another unknown designation; Psalm 7 and Ḥabakkuk 3 bear the title.

Parts of service where Psalms are recited:

Shaharit (Morning service):

- Pesukei D'Zimra –
  - PDZ has collections of verses from all Tanakh including Psalms (referred to as *Lekeţ Pesukim* in Hebrew). These collections are common to all morning services.
  - Weekday only a few:
    - 30 (Mizmor Shir Hannukat Ha Bayit) (p. 81)[6]
    - 100 (Mizmor L'Todah) (p. 205)
  - Shabbat/Yom Tov:
    - 19: For the leader a song of David (p. 87
    - 34: A Psalm of David who feigned madness (p. 88)
    - 90: A prayer of Moses, man of God (p. 89)
    - 91: Dwelling in the shelter (p. 90)
    - 135: Halleluyah! Praise God's glory (p.91)
    - 136: Hallel Gadol/Praise Adonai for God is Good (p. 92)
    - 33: Sing to Adonai (p. 93)
    - 92 A song for Shabbat (p. 94)
    - 93: Adonai is sovereign (p. 95)
  - All conclude with the final 6 – 145 (Ashrei) (pp 96, 7) through 150 (p. 100) (Hall'lu Eil B'kodsho) Note: Ashrei is recited 3 times every day
- Psalm 130 – A song of ascents: From the depths I called You – After Yishtabah, before Bar'khu on Ten Days of Repentance (p. 254)
- Hallel (113-118) – after Amidah, on Regalim including Hol HaMo'ed, Rosh Hodesh, Hannukah (pp. 132-137)
  - On RḤ, last 6 of Pesah, first parts of 115, 116 left off – referred to as *"Ḥatzi Hallel"* or "Half Hallel"
- Torah service: (pp. 139ff)
  - Verses from 34, 99 included in taking Torah out
  - On returning Torah:
    - 29: A Song of David, Acclaim Adonai (Shabbat);

- 24 A Song of David: The earth and its grandeur (weekdays: regular, holidays, Rosh Ḥodesh)

- Second Ashrei: (pp. 151-2) said before returning Torah on Shabbat/Yom Tov/Rosh Ḥodesh (all are days where Musaf is said. On weekdays, recited after Torah service (if there is one), as part of the concluding section of the service.
- Shir shel yom/Song of the day: Each morning we recite a different Psalm of the day. In some places said in PDZ, others after Shaharit Amidah, others as part of concluding service, after Aleinu
  - Sunday: 24: A Psalm of David – The earth and its grandeur (p. 73)
  - Monday: 48: A song: A Psalm of the sons of Koraḥ (p. 74)
  - Tuesday: 82: A Psalm of Asaph (p. 75)
  - Wednesday: 94: God of Retribution (ends with 95:1-3) (pp. 75,6)
  - Thursday: 81: For the leader, upon the gittih: a Psalm of Asaph (p. 77)
  - Friday: 93: Adonai is sovereign (p. 78)
  - Saturday: 92: A song for Shabbat (p. 72)
  - Ḥanukkah: 30: A Psalm, a Song for the dedication of the House (p. 81)
  - Psalm for the Penitential Season: 27: Adonai is my light and my help (p. 80)
  - Psalm for Rosh Ḥodesh: 104: Let all my being praise Adonai (pp. 78, 9)

Taḥanun, the weekday Penitential services include paragraphs with selections from Psalms; 6(2-11) Adonai do not rebuke me (both Shaḥarit and Minḥa). These are recited immediately after the Amidah on regular weekdays.

Minḥa (Afternoon service) begins with Ashrei every day except Yom Kippur, where it is part of Ne'ila.

Ma'ariv(Evening Service)

- Regular weekdays do not normally include Psalms
- Shabbat – *Kabbalat Shabbat*:
  - 95 – L'ku neran'na (p. 15)
  - 96 – Shiru LAdonai (Acclaim Adonai) (p. 16)
  - 97 – Adonai is Sovereign! Let the world rejoice (p. 17)
  - 98 – Shiru LAdonai (God has worked wonders) (p. 18)
  - 99 – Adonai is sovereign, nations tremble (p. 19)
  - 29 – A song of David (p. 20)
  - 92 – Song of Shabbat (p. 23)
  - 93 – Adonai is sovereign, crowned with splendor (p. 24)

Other places Psalms are recited:

Birkat HaMazon: Begins with 137 – By the rivers of Babylon (regular weekdays); 126 – A song of ascents when Adonai will return the captivity of Zion (Shabbat, holidays, Rosh Ḥodesh, Ḥannukah, etc)

Illness: It is common to recite various Psalms over someone who is very ill.

Death:

- *Shomerim*, the people who accompany the *niftar* or deceased, read from Psalms until the funeral begins, and when escorting the *aron*, casket.
- Most famously: 23: A Psalm of David – The Lord is my shepherd (funeral and Yizkor)
- At the funeral, selections from others including
  - 15: Do we deserve to enter God's sanctuary
  - 18: With the loyal, You deal loyally
  - 34: Come my children and listen carefully
  - 33: A monarch is not delivered by a large force
  - 103: As a father has compassion for his children
  - 61: From the end of the earth I call to You
  - 55: I said, O that I had the wings of a dove!
- Shiva minyans
  - 49: For the conductor, Hear this truth, all peoples.
  - Alternative (on days Taḥanun not said): 42: As the deer calls longingly for the brooks of water...
  - 16: A Mikhtam for David, Protect me, O God.

Dedication of a new house (Fixing the Mezuzah): 30: A Psalm, a Song for the dedication of the House (p. 81)

All of the Psalms mentioned above in the fixed liturgy were chosen for their themes.

E.G. 30 – Dedication of the House works for Ḥanukkah and dedicating a new house.

92: A Song for the Shabbat

At the same time, Psalms also work for prayers of the heart – special times of need, joy, struggle, emotion, etc.

For a headache, 3: The reader says that God 'protects me and lifts up my head' – this reference to lifting up the head is the genesis of this context.

A particularly powerful emotional Psalm is 22, for times of Anger. Many are surprised that one can acknowledge anger with God, but this Psalm tells it like it is – **<u>My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?</u>** The sheer pain that is expressed here is very poignant.

For times of danger or trouble, one might recite 26, a plea to God for protection. The speaker brings a tone of "I have been faithful to you God, so you must keep faith with me."

For various illnesses, 84: "My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God"

For hope, 121: I lift up my eyes, where will my help come from? From God, maker of Heaven and Earth

Chaplains and other caregivers often reflect on 147: "(Adonai) heals the broken hearted binds up their wounds."

Suggested reading:

for thou art with me by Samuel Chiel and Henry Dreher:
This book uses selected Psalms to guide reflections, meditations, etc for people who are ill or otherwise in need of healing. The commentaries on the Psalms help such people find meaning in the midst of pain.

My People's Prayer Book; Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed.

In various volumes, Psalms are explored in the framework of the liturgy (e.g. Psalms in Kabbalat Shabbat are explored in Vol 8 on that topic). This series uses a format similar to the Talmud to bring in various modern commentaries and outlooks on prayer, including all the Psalms included

Understanding the Aleinu

Sue Cordas

I chose to read and write about this prayer for many reasons. As one begins to learn the service, you realize that Aleinu is everywhere – in daily, shabbat and High Holy day services. One day several years ago, my shul buddy suddenly read the English translation of the beginning of Aleinu and was horrified at what she saw as arrogance. I later learned that she was not the only person upset about the words in Aleinu, but many words have been taken out and then reestablished over the years. As I have been studying this, I have found out that for a prayer that is so ubiquitous, it is also a prayer that has been controversial.

The English Translation of Aleinu From the Jewish Virtual Library says:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to acclaim the greatness of the One who forms all creation. For G-d did not make us like the nations of other lands, and did not make us the same as other families of the Earth. G-d did not place us in the same situations as others, and our destiny is not the same as anyone else's. And we bend our knees, and bow down, and give thanks, before the Ruler, the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed is G-d. The One who spread out the heavens, and made the foundations of the Earth, and whose precious dwelling is in the heavens above, and whose powerful Presence is in the highest heights. Adonai is our G-d, there is none else. Our G-d is truth, and nothing else compares. As it is written in Your Torah: "And you shall know today, and take to heart, that Adonai is the only G-d, in the heavens above and on Earth below. There is no other."

Therefore we put our hope in You, Adonai our G-d, to soon see the glory of Your strength, to remove all idols from the Earth, and to completely cut off all false gods; to repair the world, Your holy empire. And for all living flesh to call Your name, and for all the wicked of the Earth to turn to You. May all the worlds' inhabitants recognize and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue must swear loyalty. Before You, Adonai, our G-d, may all bow down, and give honor to Your precious name, and may all take upon themselves the yoke of Your rule. And may You reign over them soon and forever and always. Because all rule is Yours alone, and You will rule in honor forever and ever. As it is written in Your Torah: "Adonai will reign forever and ever." And it is said: "Adonai will be Ruler over the whole Earth, and on that day, G-d will be One, and G-d's name will be One.

History

There is no doubt that this prayer is old, but there is a difference of opinion as to how old and who the author was.

One view is that the prophet Joshua composed Aleinu after conquering Jericho. Being a loyal servant of G-d, he wished to praise Him and cause the Jewish people to remember that they are different from the nations of the world. After seeing the nations of the world worshiping the sun and constellations, he lifted his hands towards the heavens, and with great fear and trepidation, said "Aleinu Lishabe'ach - look G-d, how special

Your nation is. They worship only You."[4] Accordingly, the prayer of Aleinu must be said with humility, intense concentration, and fear of Heaven (one should always try to have special Kavanah when saying it).

Other explanations have been offered as to how we know that Joshua composed Aleinu. The most widely accepted is that the first letter of each of the first four verses spells out the name Hoshea (backwards), his name until G-d changed it to Joshua. Due to his great humility, he continued to use Hoshea, even after G-d changed it.

The Chidah, Rav Chaim Yosef David Azulai, offers an explanation that Joshua was from the tribe of Joseph, who, in being blessed by his father Jacob, was compared to a shor (ox). - Shor and Aleinu Lishabe'ach have equal numerical values (506).

Another proof lies in the fact that Joshua did not have the innate ability to conquer Jericho alone. Therefore, G-d instructed Joshua to circle Jericho once every day for seven days. On the seventh day he was commanded to circle seven times, then sound the shofar. Miraculously, the protective wall around the city fell, allowing the Jewish people to take the city as G-d had commanded. Each time Joshua circled the city, he said a set of names from the forty-two-letter name of G-d. The numeric value of Aleinu Lishabe'ach is the same as the first set of names aleph, beis, gimmel – yud, sof, tzadi (506).

Most scholars, however, credit Rav, a third century Babylonian sage, with writing Aleinu. Certain phrases which occur in the prayer, such as "the supreme Sovereign of sovereigns" and "the Holy One, blessed be" are rabbinic phrases, and would not have been used by Joshua. Also, it is more likely to have originated during the Second Temple period when the struggle between Judaism and Hellenism was at its peak. It is as clear a statement of the difference between Judaism and Idolatry as found in any liturgical writings.

The age of the prayer is said to be shown by the fact that it contains no mention of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. More modern scholars also note that the style does not have any of the usual liturgical formulas of the later rabbinic period and does not use the specific forms of worship found in the Psalms. It considered to be an original, unique and magnificent creation of unknown writers. The Sultan Selim read the prayer in a Turkish translation of the Jewish Prayer Book. He was so impressed that he said, "truly this prayer can serve for all purposes; there is no need of any other prayer."

The literal meaning of the phrase, "V'anachnu kori-im umishtachavim," is, "We bend the knee and prostrate ourselves. . . ." In fact, the Aleinu began as a Rosh Hashanah prayer, and on the High Holy days many Jews do prostrate themselves. When the Aleinu was added to the daily, shabbat, and festival liturgy in the early medieval period, this full prostration was considered inappropriate, and bowing was substituted. Kneeling is retained in modern Judaism for some, but only on the High Holy Days — once on each day of Rosh Hashanah (when the Aleinu prayer is recited during the Amidah), and four times on Yom Kippur — again, once for Aleinu, and three times during a central portion of the service when the details of the Avodah, the High Priest's service in the Temple are recited.

Controversy:

Throughout the years, there have been many controversies and changes to Aleinu.

The earlier form of this prayer contains an additional sentence:

"For they worship vanity and emptiness, and pray to a god who cannot save." This is a quote from Isaiah 45:20. When reciting this line, some Jews used to spit, because "emptiness" and "spit" share the same Hebrew consonants (*r-i-k*). Some synagogues were even constructed with special spittoons in their pews, designated for this part of the service. Many different sects within Judaism have eliminated various verses in the prayer over time. Many Ashkenazi and Reform prayer books have removed the verse "la-hevel va-rik" (vanity and emptiness), because its numerical connotation equals that of Jesus and Muhammad. In the Middle Ages these words were censored, since the church believed they were an insult to Christianity. Omitting them tends to give the impression that the Aleinu teaches that we are both different and better than others. The actual intent is to say that we are thankful that G-d has enlightened us so that, unlike the pagans, we worship the true G-d and not idols. There is no inherent superiority in being Jewish, but we do assert the superiority of monotheistic belief over paganism.

For centuries Jews in Eastern Europe were attacked by the Church if caught reciting this verse in the *Aleinu* prayer. However, most Sephardic and Israeli *siddurim* leave this verse in. Nearly all Reform congregations have eliminated the verse "for G-d has not made us like the nations of the land." During the establishment of the Reform movement, many Jews sought the complete integration of the Jewish people into their mother country. This verse was extracted as a result of the proclamation that the Jewish people were the "Chosen

People" and unlike other citizens. In the Diaspora, Jews did not want to be singled-out in society, merely because they were Jews.

Some Orthodox Rabbinical authorities, prominently the 19th century Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Leib Diskin (*Maharil Diskin*), have argued that the disputed phrase should be recited in communities that previously omitted it.

Other variations

Reform and other communities rephrase the opening to make it read more positively. For example, the British Reform version borrows words from the blessings over the Torah, and begins "It is our duty to praise the Ruler of all, to recognize the greatness of the Creator of first things, who has chosen us from all peoples by giving us Torah. Therefore we bend low and submit." Reconstructionist Judaism also follows that formula.

The martyrs

Because of the firm proclamation of the Divine Unity in Aleinu, it was a favorite prayer of Jewish martyrs, to be said as they were dying. The story of many Jewish martyrs who died at the stake in the city of Blois, in France, in the year 1171 was reported by an eyewitness. "As the fire was consuming them, the death of the saints was accompanied by a song resounding through the stillness of the night, causing the churchmen who heard it from afar to wonder at the melodious strains. The like of which they had never heard before. It was ascertained afterwards that the martyred saints had made use of the Aleinu as their dying song."

Random Facts and possibilities

We sing this Hebrew version of the *Aleinu* to a tune that many consider to be the "traditional" melody for that prayer. In fact, the tune was not promulgated at Mount Sinai or even in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. It was written in the nineteenth century. Salomon Sulzer. (March 30, 1804, - January 17, 1890, Vienna) was an Austrian *hazzan* and the composer of *Aleinu*. Many of Sulzer's pieces remain synagogue standards, including the familiar tunes for *Shema*, *Hodo Al Aretz*, and *Ki Mitziyon*. And it is interesting to note that virtually all of Sulzer's music in popular use is in three-quarter time, reflecting his affinity for the

waltzes of his native Vienna.

According to 2 sources, that are both Chabad based, everyone should be familiar with the prayer. They say that there is a Jewish Law which requires that when it is recited in the synagogue, everyone should join in, even if one has already said it, or just happened to walk into the synagogue at that time.

A friend of mine has also been studying the Aleinu recently. She said that during her research, when she asked people their thoughts about Aleinu, almost everyone said they mostly think of it as an indication that lunch will be happening soon.

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