

# P . I . T .    S T O P S

(Pauses in T'fillah)

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*P.I.T. Stops stand for Pauses in T'fillah and are short explanations of T'fillot, customs, rituals, holidays, and Jewish practices. Following is a collection of PIT STOPS mainly written by various members and alumni of NERUSY.*

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## DAILY SERVICES AND RITUALS

### Weekday Shacharit □□□□□□□□ by □Emily Sowalsky (class of 2002

In the days of the Temple, there were two korbanot ( □□□□□□□□ ), or sacrifices, each day; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. After the destruction of the Temple, the Kohanim felt it was necessary to replace the sacrifices with services at these appointed times. For this reason, we daven the Shacharit service in the morning and the Mincha service in the afternoon.

The focal points of the morning service are the Shema and the Amidah; however, Shacharit always begins with a few warm-up prayers called Birchot Hashachar, which come after Ma Tovu, since it is spiritually impossible to just "jump" into these prayers. During Birchot Hashachar, we thank G-d for giving us sight, giving us freedom and giving us strength to recite the blessings.

Pesukei DeZimra ( □□□□□□□□ ), or verses of song, contain many psalms strung together, bracketed by blessings, one at the beginning and one at the end. The blessing at the beginning is introduced by Baruch SheAmar ( □□□□□□□□ ) which celebrates G-d as the Creator. The blessing at the end is introduced by Yishtabach ( □□□□□□□□ ) and concludes this section with praise of G-d.

One of the psalms in this section is Ashrei ( □□□□□□□□ ) which describes the goodness of G-d and praises G-d. We arrive at the beginning of the Shema section which is marked by the Barchu ( □□□□□□□□ ). The Barchu calls together the Congregation, letting everyone know that it is time to concentrate, for the more serious prayers follow. The Shaliach Tzibur now calls out in a strong voice: Barchu et Adonai Hamvorach ( □□□□□□□□ ), Blessed is the Lord Who is to be praised. The Shaliach Tzibur bends at the waist at Barachu and then straightens up at Adonai. The congregation then replies, Baruch Adonai Hamvorach L'olam Va'ed ( □□□□□□□□ ), Praised be the the Lord Who is blessed for all eternity. This part of their service symbolizes the congregation saying, "We are all in agreement, now let us pray."

After two introductory blessings, we arrive at the Shema, the prayer truly representing our acceptance of of G-d's absolute power. While reciting the Shema, it is important that we clearly enunciate each word, not running the words together, for, when we recite the Shema, we are bearing witness to G-d's unity and declaring this to the world. The Amidah, or Shemonah Esrei, follows the Shema, almost immediately.

Upon completion of the Amidah, if it is Monday or Thursday we continue with a Torah service follows and three aliyot are read. Otherwise we conclude the Shacharit service with the Aleinu ( □□□□□□□□ ) and Adon Olam ( □□□□□□□□ ).

## **Mincha** □□□□□□ by **Emily Sowalsky (class of 2002)**

The shortest of the three daily services is Mincha. The name, Mincha, is derived from the daily sacrificial rituals that existed during the time of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The word Mincha implies a sacrifice, or gift offering. The proper time for Mincha is anytime after midday until sunset. Since the third service, Ma'ariv, is recited after sunset, the custom today is to recite Mincha just before sunset, pause briefly, and then recite Ma'ariv. On Shabbat, some congregations enlarge this pause for a short study session and light refreshments, known as Seudah Shlishit, the traditional third meal.

The Mincha service is comprised of three basic elements. They are psalm 145(Ashrei), the Amidah, and the Aleinu. The Shema is not included because, as we read in the prayer itself, it is to be recited "When you rise up and when you lie down." That is interpreted to mean that we only must recite the Shema in the morning and in the evening.

The Amidah is usually first recited privately, and is then repeated by the leader. Except for minor differences, the Amidah is exactly the same as that of the Shacharit service (one should note that the Shabbat Mincha Amidah is completely different).

At Mincha, on Shabbat afternoons, the opening section of the Torah portion for the coming week is read. Three aliyot are read. The recitation of Aleinu and the Mourner's Kaddish concludes the Mincha service.

## **Ma'ariv** □□□□□□ by **Emily Sowalsky (class of 2002)**

Ma'ariv, the evening service, may be recited any time after it grows dark. This service, unlike Shacharit and Mincha, does not derive from any Temple sacrifices. Also unlike the other services, there is no repetition of the Amidah. While there was a difference of opinion among the Rabbis of old with regard to the importance of the Ma'ariv service, there was and is no question about the obligation to recite the Shema in the evening. Ergo, the Ma'ariv service has become a daily practice.

Ma'ariv is introduced (except on Shabbat) by a short invocation which is an appeal for G-d's forgiveness. This is followed by the Chazzan's call to worship, the Barchu.

In Ma'ariv, as in Shacharit, two prayers are recited in between the Barchu and the Shema. The first prayer, Ma'ariv Aravim ( ), praises G-d for the order and the harmony of the heavenly bodies and the regularity of night and day. From a consideration of physical light, the second prayer, Ahavat Olam ( ) moves on to the spiritual light which G-d created in

the form of the Torah. It is a hymn in praise of the Torah and Torah study. It serves as a fitting prelude to the Shema, which immediately follows.

The prayers following the Shema continue the theme of the importance of Torah in our lives and conclude with a review of the great events which preceded the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

The second prayer following the Shema is Hashkivenu ( ). In it, we ask that G-d watch over us in the night and restore us to life in the morning.

Unique to the Saturday night Ma'ariv service is the inclusion of a small paragraph in the silent Amidah. It is prayer of Havdalah, which speaks of the separation between Shabbat and weekday. Following the silent recitation of the Amidah, the service concludes with Aleinu.

### **Tallit תפילין by Jeremy Pressman (class of 1987)**

The Tallit, which may be made of wool, linen, or silk, is worn at Shacharit, the morning service, and at Musaf, the additional service. In addition, the leader of the service wears a tallit at Mincha, the afternoon service, and at Festival or Shabbat Ma'ariv.

The only time that tallitot are worn at night is at the Kol Nidrei service. The mitzvah, or commandment, in Bamidbar ( , Numbers) says we must see the tzitzit ( fringes) by natural light so we cannot wear the tallitot at night.

At each corner of the tallitot are tzitzit. The tzitzit are a combination of coils and knots, each having a symbolic meaning. For example each tzitzit has 7 coils followed by 2 knots, then 8 coils followed by 2 knots, then 11 coils followed by 2 knots, and finally 13 coils followed by 2 knots. Using Gematria (the representation of Hebrew letters by numbers) the coils spell Adonai echad ( ) which means G-d is One. In Gematria, aleph (a) equals one, bet (b) equals two, gimel (g) equals three, etc. The yud-hey-vav-hey of Adonai equals 26 (i.e. 7+8+11, the first three sets of coils) and the aleph-chet-daled of echad equals 13 (the last set of coils).

During the Shema section of the service, we gather the four corners of the tallitot and kiss the tzitzit whenever the word tzitzit is mentioned (in the third paragraph). We also kiss the tzitzit at the end of the Shema and then again right before we release the tzitzit from our fingers.

## **Tefillin** by David Farbman (class of 1986)

"And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand and for frontlets between your eyes." This verse serves as the basis for the commandment to wear Tefillin very weekday morning. The Tefillin serve as a reminder of all the commandments on days when one is occupied by the mundane. For this reason, Tefillin are not worn on Shabbat or holidays; they would just be an improper reminder of the physical when one is supposed to be concerned with the spiritual.

The actual physical construction of Tefillin is that of two leather boxes, each affixed with leather straps. One box, called the Rosh (literally: head), is set on the forehead ("...frontlets between your eyes") with the leather strap wrapped around the head to hold the box in place. The second box, called the Yad (literally: hand) is set on the upper arm ("...a sign upon your hand"). The leather strap is wrapped around and down the arm 7 times, and then three times around the finger. There are several variations on how specifically the hand is wrapped according to tradition.

Inside each box is a copy of the verses of Torah in which the commandment for Tefillin is found. The entire apparatus does not contain any metal. The reason for this is because metal symbolizes war and Tefillin are meant to represent the peaceful spirituality of everyday life.

## **The Ashrei** by Rob Blecher (class of 1987)

The Ashrei, an extremely important prayer in Jewish liturgy, consists of verse five of psalm 84 (1st line), the 15th verse of psalm 144 (2<sup>nd</sup> line) the entire 145th psalm (everything following and including "T'hillah L'Daveed") and concludes with verse 18 of psalm 115.

The prayer describes the goodness of Hashem and praises Him, stating that G-d's work surpasses our powers of comprehension. It also states that His mercy encompasses all of His work.

This has implications in Jewish ethics: G-d's mercy encompasses all of G-d's works. Similarly, we should strive to have mercy encompass G-d's works.

The Ashrei so aptly states Jewish values that, as it is written in the Talmud, anyone who repeats this prayer 3 times daily has a guaranteed position in the world to come. Consequently, it is recited during Shacharit twice (during P'sukei D'zimra and before Aleinu) and during Mincha.

The poem is written in acrostic form, but in modern day prayer books there is no line beginning with "Nun." However, the version of the Ashrei in the Dead Sea Scrolls has a line beginning with "Nun," (Ne'eman Elohim."

**The Shema and Its Blessings** □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□  
*by Jeremy Pressman (class of 1987)*

The Shema section begins at the Barchu when the leader calls the congregation to worship. At the morning service two blessings precede the Shema and one follows it. The preceding blessings are Yotzer Or which deals with G-d as the Creator and Ahavah Rabah ( ), which talks of G-d's love for G-d's people and our reciprocal feelings.

The Shema consists of three paragraphs: Shema (includes V'ahavta), V'Hayah , and Vayomer . The Shema, the oldest part of the service, accepts the rule of G-d and states the basic principles of Judaism. In V'Hayah we accept the responsibility of performing Mitzvot.

By accepting this responsibility, we also accept the consequences. The paragraph discusses how we will be rewarded for acting properly, and also how we will be punished if we do not.

Vayomer reminds us of the exodus from Egypt and discusses the tzitzit. It is from this paragraph that we gain the basis and the purpose for wearing tzitzit. The purpose is so that we will be reminded of G-d's commandments, and will not be led astray.

In the morning service, there is one blessing after the Shema. The bracha Ga'al Yisrael ( ), which prays for the redemption of Israel, closes the Shema section.

**Movements of the Shema by Jeremy Pressman (class of 1987)**

Since the Shema is the origin of the Mitzvot of Tefillin and of the Tzitzit of the Talit, we have a number of special gestures. As we say the opening line of Shema Yisrael we cover our eyes to prevent distraction. Our concentration should be solely on the words of the Shema and on G-d. This was the custom of Rabbi Judah Hanasi.

Even though the Shema is recited silently, we should say it loud enough for our own ears to hear, but not so loud as to disturb our neighbors. In the first paragraph, Uk-shartem ( ) and Veh-Hayu L'totafot ( ) are both references to the Mitzvah of Tefillin. As we say these words during the first paragraph of the Shema, we touch the fingers of our other hand to the Shel-Yad, the Tefillin box on our arm, or the Shel-Rosh, the tefillin box on our head, as appropriate. The gesture is repeated again when the same words appear at the end of the paragraph.

The tzitzit are gathered before the Shema during Ahavah Rabah at the phrase: V'havianu l'shalom may-arbah kanfot ha-aretz ( ). Literally this means: Gather us up safely from the ends of the earth. During the 3rd paragraph of the Shema, we kiss the tzitzit each time the word tzitzit is said. In addition we kiss the tzitzit at the end of the paragraph, and during the first paragraph after the reading of the Shema, following the words Umalchuto v'emunato la'ad kayamet ).

## **Amidah (אמידה) by Ora Warmflash (class of 2001)**

The Amidah is the central prayer in every service. It is recited while standing at attention, hence the name Amidah (literally meaning standing). It contains the three basic components of prayer: praising G-d, petitioning G-d, and finally, thanking G-d.

The Amidah is also known as the Shmoneh Esrei (vrag-vbuna), which means 18. This is because when the basic formula for the prayer was composed in the 5th century B.C.E. it had 18 blessings. Sometime after the destruction of the 2nd Temple, a 19th blessing was added. The most widely accepted theory as to which prayer is the nineteenth, is that the two prayers, "Boneh Yerushalayim ( )," and "Matzmiakh keren yeshua( )," were at one time, one blessing. They were, at some point, split up, and thus the nineteenth prayer was created. An exception to this is the Shabbat and Festival Amidahs. They contain only 7 blessings, except for the Rosh Hashanah Amidah which contains 9 blessings.

Whenever the Talmud refers to T'fillah (prayer), it is actually referring to the Amidah. Also, all codes in Jewish law dealing with the "Laws of Prayer" relate only to the Amidah. Therefore, the obligation to pray 3 times a day.

The Amidah can be broken down into 3 sections. The introductory section contains 3 blessings which praise G-d. The middle section contains 13 blessings which petition G-d. The closing section contains 3 blessings which thank G-d. This model of prayer has been compared to a servant and his master; the servant praises his master, requests gifts, and then thanks him.

The Amidah is traditionally said standing with your feet together facing towards Jerusalem. This is to imitate the angels who are said to have only one leg. We are told to say it to ourselves, just loud enough so we can hear ourselves, but quietly enough so as not to disturb your neighbor). We begin the Amidah in the same way the ancients approached a king (because G-d is our King and we are approaching G-d to pray) by taking 3 steps forwards to show our eagerness in approaching G-d. The first step is taken with the right foot. It is believed that strength comes from the right hand or right part of the body. Therefore, we begin



with the right to demonstrate strength and confidence in G-d and in our prayers.

We bow (at the knee and then at the waist) 4 times during the Amidah: at the first and second blessings, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> blessing (Modim), and finally, at the end of that passage (at the actual blessing).

During the 6th blessing, (asking for forgiveness) it is customary to beat lightly once on the chest when we say "chatanu ( )" (we have sinned), and once when we say "fashanu ( )" (we have transgressed). We are trying to scold ourselves. We need to acknowledge our behavior and change it

Just as we begin the Amidah, we end the Amidah like the ancients would leave a king: take three steps backwards before saying the last line, bow to the left, the right then middle while saying it (G-d is in every direction).

The Amidah is repeated out loud by the leader at every service except for Ma'ariv. This tradition started for the benefit of those who could not recite the Amidah for themselves. By listening and saying "Amen" at the proper times, they have fulfilled their prayer obligation. It is not repeated at Ma'ariv because originally, the service was optional and the degree of obligation less, therefore repetition was unnecessary.

If for some reason repeating the whole Amidah is not possible, just the first three blessings plus the Kedushah are said out loud. At Shacharit, the congregation joins the leader in the first three blessings and everyone continues silently after that. At Mincha, the congregation listens silently (responding with Amen where appropriate) as the leader chants the first three blessings, the Kedushah is recited, and then the congregation goes back to the beginning, and says the entire Amidah to themselves.

### **Kedushah (קדושה) by Ora Warmflash (class of 2001)**

The Kedushah is recited during every Amidah except for Ma'ariv, as long as a minyan is present. The congregation reads the first two lines of the kedusha, bowing to the left and right on the words "Zeh el zeh ( )." This symbolizes the angels calling to each other from the left and the right. The reader then repeats this, and the congregation follows with "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh ( )" "Holy, holy, holy." Each time we say kadosh, we lift our heels to show that we are striving to reach towards G-d's holiness with our entire bodies.

After finishing this line, the congregation reads the next line silently. The reader repeats the same lines, out loud, that the congregation just read. This pattern follows two more times: the congregation reads two lines, and the reader repeats them. On "Baruch ( )" and on "Yimloch ( )" we lift our heels once.

Once the Kedushah is completed, if a full repetition is being done, the congregation sits down and the leader continues to chant the rest of the Amidah out loud. If it is a Heichah Kedushah ( ), at Shacharit the congregation would have recited the first three blessings along with the leader, so all would continue silently. At Mincha, during a Heichah Kedushah, the leader has already said the first three blessing alone, so the congregation goes back to the beginning, while the leader continues silently.

**Reading of the Torah ( ) by Reuven M. Lerner (METNY)**

The practice of reading from the Torah three times a week began in the days of Ezra, about 450 B.C.E. Ezra realized that he had to bring the Torah to the people. Consequently, he set up a public reading on Mondays and Thursdays, which were the days that all of the Jews were in Jerusalem in the market place. He additionally started the practice of reading Torah on Shabbat in the synagogue.

The Torah was not always read the way it is today. Originally, as the people could not understand the Hebrew, there would be a translator who would tell them what the Torah said in the vernacular, which was usually Aramaic.

In addition to this, the Shabbat reading used to be divided into about 175 shorter readings so that the reading of the Torah in its entirety took three years. Later the Torah was redivided into 54 sedrot, portions, ). Many synagogues combine these two ideas by dividing each of the 54 sedrot into three parts. This process, called the Triennial Cycle, is uniform throughout the Conservative movement in that all synagogues that use the cycle are on the same one. This way, if one travels, one does not risk missing a part of the Torah reading which he would have otherwise heard at home.

**On Having an Aliyah ( ) by Jeremy Pressman (class of 1987)**

The person with the Aliyah is called to the Torah by both his/her Hebrew name and by Aliyah number. The one called to the Torah traditionally takes the shortest route up to the Torah and the longest route back to one's seat in order to show an eagerness to be called to the Torah.

After kissing the Torah where the reading is to begin with tzitzit or the scroll tie, and taking hold of the rollers of the scroll, the person called to the Torah recites the opening blessing. The reader then reads the prescribed portion. Following the reading, the person called to the Torah kisses the Torah, again in the manner described above, at the spot where the reader stopped, closes the Torah, and recites the closing blessing. The person called remains on the Bimah until the end of the next aliyah.

There are:

3 Aliyot- Shabbat Mincha, Mondays, Thursdays, Chanuka, Purim, and fast days;

- 4 Aliyot- Rosh Chodesh and Chol Ha'Moed (Pesach and Sukkot) (Chol Ha'Moed is the days during a holiday that are not yuntif);
- 5 Aliyot- Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot (when it is yuntif);
- 6 Aliyot - Yom Kippur, and
- 7 Aliyot- Shabbat morning

The number of aliyot is determined by the importance of the holiday; importance is determined by the severity of punishment, as prescribed in the Torah, for breaking the rules of that particular holiday.

### **The Kaddish (קדיש) by Amiel Hersh (class of 2000)**

With the exception of the final two lines of the full kaddish (which are written in Hebrew), the kaddish is written entirely in Aramaic. "To sanctify G-d's name publicly has been the historic duty of the Jew," (Donin, 216). This concept is called Kiddush Hashem (oav ause). The heart of this concept manifests itself most clearly, in the Kaddish in the line "Yehei Shmei rabba mevorakh l'olam ul'almei almay," ( ) (May G-d's great Name be blessed for ever and ever). This line is said as the communal response to those saying the Kaddish. Therefore, one requirement for saying the Kaddish is that a minyan be present.

The Kaddishim (plural) arise in different forms at different parts of the service. They serve almost as punctuation marks; semi-colons or periods. For this reason, the form varies depending upon what part of the service has been reached.

What is now referred to as the Chatzi ( ) Kaddish, or Half Kaddish, is the original form of the Kaddish. It is said after a service, or section of a service is completed (i.e. to indicate a subdivision). For example, it is said following the P'sukei D'zimra in the morning service, after the Amidah, and after the Torah reading. It is also said before the Amidah at Mincha, Ma'ariv, and Musaf services.

The Kaddish Shalem ( ) (originally known as Kaddish Titkabal), or Full Kaddish, usually signals the completion of the prescribed service. For example, it is one of the closing prayers of the Musaf service. It is also said after Hallel if there is a Musaf service to follow.

Kaddish Yatom ( ), or Mourner's Kaddish, is said following the death of a parent, sibling, spouse, or child (some also say it for those who perished in the Holocaust or for one who has passed on and does not have someone to say Kaddish for him/her). It is also said at the Yarzeit service, the annual commemoration of the dead, and at the Yizkor (rufzh) service. The Mourner's Kaddish never actually refers to death, but instead is an affirmation of unending faith in G-d.

The fourth type of Kaddish is Kaddish de Rabanan ( ) or Rabbi's Kaddish. This Kaddish originated in Babylonia (hence the reason it is said mostly in Aramaic) and was recited after the Rabbis completed their sermons. Now it is said after studying or reciting any Rabbinic material.

The fifth and final type of Kaddish is the Kaddish Lhit chadita, or Kaddish of the Renewal (the Burial Kaddish). The first paragraph of the standard Kaddish is replaced by a paragraph which discusses the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the Temple, the world-to-come, and the revival of the dead at that time. This Kaddish is recited at funerals, and when the study of a tractate of Talmud is completed.

### **Adon Olam (אָדוֹן אֹלָם) by Stacy Frauwirth**

Adon Olam, which means "Eternal Lord" is a poetic hymn to G-d. The author is thought to be Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021-1058), a poet-philosopher from Spain. It consists of ten lines: the first six express the Jewish concept of G-d while the last four tell how a person of faith relates to G-d and the trust he/she feels in G-d. The last words, "G-d is with me, I shall not fear \_\_\_\_\_)," are taken from Psalm 118:6, a passage of Hallel. In recent years, Adon Olam had gained popularity as a conclusion for Shabbat and festival services.

### **Shuckling by Ilana Garber (class of 1995)**

- Why do we dance when we hear music?
- Why are we often moved to clap our hands or tap our feet when we enjoy a song?
- Why do we parade the Torah around the synagogue, dancing and singing (especially on Simchat Torah)?
- Why do we do the Hora at celebrations?

The spirit of the music moves our spirits into becoming involved. Sometimes the spirit of prayer causes our bodies to get more involved. This is called shuckling. It is when one sways back and forth or side to side. We are moving our bodies to the rhythm of the prayer. As it is written, "All my limbs will speak to you."

Some other reasons for shuckling include keeping warm, staying awake, or keeping the circulation flowing, as the Jews did long ago when they prayed in unheated buildings. One should keep in mind, however, that especially during the Amidah and Kaddish, we need to keep our feet together as if we were angels (angels stood on one foot), therefore rocking back and forth will keep us balanced.

Shuckling should come naturally and should not be forced. If it doesn't feel right for you, then remember that spirituality is not measured by one's ability to shuckle. But if you do feel a difference, prayer might take on a whole new meaning to you.

### **Washing the Hands (וָאֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ) by Amiel Hersh (class of 2000)**

The ritual of washing one's hands and reciting a bracha takes place upon waking in the morning and before eating bread. The act of hand washing in the morning, besides its sanitary importance, symbolizes the dedication of your hands, or whole physical being to serve G-d.

The term "Netilat Yadayim," found in the blessing said after hand-washing, means "a lifting up" of the hands. When you wash your hands and recite the blessing before a meal at which bread is served, the gratification of our bodily level is lifted up to a higher level.

As you can see the purpose of hand washing goes beyond cleanliness. One's hands must be clean before the ritual act of hand-washing. Therefore, before washing your hands, you must remove all rings, jewelry etc. so there are no barriers of dirt between your hands and the water.

The act of washing your hands is performed as follows:

- 1) Fill a large handled cup with water.
- 2) Starting with the right hand, pour the water alternately over one hand and the other. (It is customary to pour it over each hand three times)
- 3) Say the bracha: "Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim."  
(Praised are You, Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to wash our hands.)

Besides the ritual washing before an "official" meal, there are other instances when we wash our hands ritually. They are:

- Before reciting prayers, particularly the shema.
- Before reciting Birkat Hamazon.
- The Levites wash the hands of the kohanim, before bestowing the "Priestly Blessing."

## **Birkat Hamazon (ברכות) By Stacey Frauwirth**

Birkat Hamazon is the Grace After Meals. Of all the blessings that we say to fulfill religious duties, those said after meals are the only ones explicitly required by the Scriptures: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your G-d for the good land G-d has given you" - Deut. 8:10. The Biblical commandment can be fulfilled by reciting three blessings: for the food, for the land of Eretz Yisrael, and for Jerusalem with its Holy Sanctuary. In fact, the Talmudic name for the Grace After Meals is Shalosh Berachot (שלוש ברכות), The Three Blessings. The Rabbis later ordained a fourth blessing expressing the G-d's goodness.

The first blessing is Birkat Hazan (ברכת הארץ), the oldest and most universal of the blessings. It speaks of G-d providing food to sustain

all the life G-d created. The Talmud says that the blessing for food was first given by Moses in gratitude for the manna the Israelites got in the desert. The second blessing, Birkat Ha'aretz ( ), speaks of Eretz Yisrael, the Torah, and the Covenant of Circumcision, all of which G-d gave to Israel. The blessing for land was introduced by Joshua when he led the Israelites to Eretz Yisrael. The third blessing is Birkat Yerushalayim ( ). Originally it expressed thanks-giving for Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash ( ). Now it is a prayer that G-d will rebuild Jerusalem and the Holy Temple and restore David's dynasty, all of which are elements in Israel's redemption. King David initiated a blessing for Jerusalem when he established it as capital of the country. His son, King Solomon, who built the First Temple, expanded on it by adding to it his gratitude to G-d for the "Great and Holy Sanctuary."

The fourth blessing, Birkat Hatov V'hametiv ( ), was added by the sages shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple. It begins with the praise of G-d as one "...who is good and does good." It concludes with the theme of food and sustenance.

The Grace continues with a series of short petitions, both personal and national, but they have become more of a custom to recite. Each one begins with "Harachaman ( )" which means "may the merciful one." On special occasions such as Shabbat, a wedding, or a meal celebrating a B'rit Milah ( ), a circumcision, appropriate petitions are added. It has also become customary to add Psalm 126, Shir Hama'alot ( ) on Shabbat and Festivals at the beginning of Birkat Hamazon.

When three or more adults dine together at the same table, they do not say Birkat Hamazon individually. The Talmud requires them to join together as a unit where one recites and the others respond. The one who recites invites the others to say Grace with the zimun (a summons to say grace), and the others must respond to this invitation. If there are ten or more adults, the word "Eloheinu," is added to the zimun.

If a guest is eating at the table, the Talmud says that he should lead Grace so that he can bless the host. Rabbi Judah added more words to the basic Talmudic blessing. The first part is an indirect way of saying that the host should be blessed with livelihood. The second part is a prayer that a person's wealth should not cause him to eat in a way or live in a manner that will disgrace him in the afterlife.

The Biblical commandment clearly says that Birkat Hamazon must be said only if one eats to the point of being full or sated without regard to what is being eaten. However, the sages decreed that since bread is the accepted basis of a meal, the full grace must be said only if bread is eaten. If a full meal is not eaten, there are two shorter forms of grace. B'racha Achrona ( ), the "Concluding Blessing," mentions all of the central themes in the four blessings of the full Birkat Hamazon. It is said after eating food mentioned in the Torah as indigenous to Israel. The blessing varies in places depending upon what has been eaten. If bread has been eaten, under pressing conditions (or for young children)

an abbreviated version of the Birkat Hamazon can be said. It contains all four blessings, but each of the last three is condensed.

The other short blessing is "Borei Nefashot" said after any other food besides bread or anything made from the seven species, is eaten.

### **T'filat Haderech (תפילת הדerech) by David Farbman (class of 1986)**

T'fillat Haderech is a prayer which is said before one makes a journey (more than 3 miles). It is important to recognize G-d's dominion over all of our actions and G-d's regard for safety over all of our journeys.

The prayer consists of a request to G-d to lead us on the path of peace and "make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness and peace." It specifies to G-d to protect us from ambush, robbers, and wild animals. In the original text following the blessing, which praises G-d for hearing prayers, there are four statements. The first tells of Jacob's safe journey to Nacharayim, the second tells G-d of how we long for the Lord's salvation; the third is a statement by G-d to the Children of Israel granting them an angel to lead them to Israel, and the final sentence is a proclamation that G-d will give might to G-d's nation, G-d will bless G-d's nation with peace. These last 4 verses are not usually recited out loud.

The halacha (הלכה), Jewish law, about saying the T'fillah is that we say this prayer every day we travel, and once a day when on a multi-day journey. In a group, one member recites the blessing and the others respond with, "Amen." It is customary to say it standing unless it is unsafe.

The concept of T'filat Haderech is not so much that we make a supplication to G-d for a journey, but that we ascertain G-d's omnipotent presence in the Universe and we are therefore thanking G-d for G-d's graciousness to us.

## **SHABBAT AND FESTIVALS**

### **Lighting the Candles on Shabbat (תפילת הדerech)**

*By Jodi Wilgoren (class of 1988)*

On Friday night, eighteen minutes before sunset, we light candles to usher in the Shabbat. Once the candles are lit and we have said the bracha, Shabbat has officially begun. We let the candles burn until they go out by themselves; we do not extinguish them manually. Every Jewish household should have candles lit on Shabbat. Therefore, both men and women are obligated to light candles. In the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law: prepared in 16th century by Joseph Caro. Today it is the authoritative code of Jewish Law) says that women are more obligated because they are traditionally more responsible for household chores. Nowadays, men and women often split household chores so we say the obligation of lighting the candles is also equal.

Customs on the number of candles to be lit vary. One candle is sufficient to fulfill the mitzvah but people usually have at least two. One reason is to symbolize the illumination of more than one room on Shabbat. It says in the Shulchan Aruch that we should light one for zachor ( ), which means to remember, and one for shamor ( ), which means to guard or observe, so that we will be reminded of the commandment to remember and to observe the Shabbat (the Ten Commandments are found in two places in the Torah. In one place it says to remember Shabbat, in the other it says to guard Shabbat). Some people also light one extra candle for each child or for each member of the family.

It is customary, when doing any mitzvah, to say the bracha before the act. This causes a dilemma in lighting the candles because once the bracha is said, Shabbat is here. By then lighting the candles, Shabbat would have been transgressed. To solve this, it is customary to light the candles, cover the eyes, and then say the bracha. Once the bracha is recited, our eyes are uncovered and it is as if we are seeing the light for the first time. In this way, we are figuratively saying the b'oracha before we act.

### **Kabbalat Shabbat (קבלת שבת) by Charlie Savenor (class of 1987)**

The t'fillah of Kabbalat Shabbat, which is recited Friday night before Ma'ariv, is very special because we greet, or welcome, the Shabbat bride. We do this by reciting six psalms, one to symbolize each day of the week, and culminate with Lecha Dodi, a poem which champions Shabbat as the Shabbat bride.

Kabbalat Shabbat literally means the welcoming of the Shabbat. The t'fillah originated in the city of Tzafat in Israel in the sixteenth century, where Kabbalistic scholars took the personification of the Shabbat bride literally by marching around the borders of the city singing songs, welcoming the Shabbat. We hear this echoed in,

Come my beloved to meet the bride, the Shabbat presence let us welcome.



During the sixteenth century, Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz wrote the Lecha Dodi which personifies the Shabbat as well as speaks about the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the redemption of the Jewish people. During the last stanza of Lecha Dodi we turn around to face the entrance to the synagogue (or the door through which we entered the sanctuary or davening place), so that we can also welcome the Shabbat bride, indicating that Shabbat has arrived.

### **Yigdal (יִגְדָל) by Reuven M. Lerner (MWTNY)**

Yigdal is based on the thirteen articles of faith, better known as Ani Ma'amin, which were written down by Maimonides (Rambam) in the 12th century. Yigdal itself was probably written down by Daniel ben Judah, a judge who lived in Rome in the 13th century (although it is also ascribed to Immanuel ben Solomon). This hymn is omitted from Hasidic rite siddurim, because they do not believe that the Jewish faith can be reduced to just thirteen principles. It is also omitted from Sephardic siddurim.

In stating Rambam's 13 articles of faith in such a poetic manner, we admit that G-d is all-powerful and has created us, and has given us the Torah. The various tunes which have evolved show us the response of the world Jewish communities to this one t'fillah.

### **Shalom Aleichem (שְׁלוֹם אֵלֵיכֶם) by David Farbman (class of 1986)**

The Talmud teaches that two administering angels - one good and one evil - escort a person home from synagogue on the eve of Shabbat. If a Jew arrives home from the synagogue and finds a kindled lamp, a set table, and a made bed, the good angel says, May it be G-d's will that it also be next Shabbat. The evil angel is compelled to answer, Amen. But if not - then the evil angel says, May it be G-d's will that it also be next Shabbat, and the good angel must then say, Amen.

The Shalom Aleichem song is based on the above explanation. If every Jew is accompanied home by two administering angels, then it is only proper to greet them, bless them, and seek their blessing.

### **Haftarah (הַפְּתָרָה) by Reuven M. Lerner (METNY)**

A Haftarah is recited after the morning Torah reading on Shabbat, holidays, and on the fast days of Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av. On all other fast days. There is no Haftarah in the morning, but there is one in the afternoon. The Haftarah consists of a portion from the Book of Prophets ), and draws a parallel to the Torah reading, either in plot or in

message. Consequently, there is a separate and distinct Haftarah for each parsha and holiday.

The person who receives the Maftir aliyah reads the Haftarah. There is one paragraph of brachot before the Haftarah and four after it. The fourth, and final paragraph discusses the holiness of the day, and thus is different according to the day on which it is recited.

Rabbi David Abudarham, of 14th century Spain, felt that the practice of reading the Haftarah was introduced just before the Maccabean revolt, 135 B.C.E. As the reading of the Torah was prohibited, the people read related sections from the prophets. This tradition continued even when Torah reading was allowed once again.

Others feel that the reading of the Haftarah was instituted against the Samaritans, who denied the canonicity of the Prophets (except for Joshua), and later against the Saducees. In either case, the practice of reading the Haftarah has continued for over 1,000 years in both Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities. However, the length of the reading sometimes varies from one community to another.

### **Shabbat Mincha (שבת מנחה) by Rabbi Bernard Rotman**

The briefest of the Shabbat services is Mincha. The name, "Mincha," just like Shacharit and Musaf, is derived from the daily sacrificial ritual of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. As it is used in the Bible, the word Mincha implies a gift offering, a sacrifice. The proper time for Mincha is from after midday until sunset. Since the third service, Ma'ariv, is recited after sunset, the custom today is to recite Mincha just before sunset, pause briefly, and then recite Ma'ariv. On Shabbat, some congregations make it a practice to enlarge the pause between the two services and use the time for a short period of study and some light refreshment. This is called Seudah Shlishit, the traditional third Shabbat meal.

The Shema is not included because, as we read in the prayer itself, it is to be recited "when you rise up and when you lie down." That is understood to mean in the morning and evening only, not in the afternoon.

The Amidah is usually first recited privately, and is then repeated by the leader. Except for minor differences, the Amidah is exactly the same as that of the Shacharit service (one should note that the Shabbat Mincha Amidah is completely different).

At Mincha, on Shabbat afternoons, the opening section of the Torah portion of the following week is read. Three aliyot are distributed. This is followed by the Amidah.

The recitation of Aleinu and the Mourner's Kaddish concludes Mincha.

**Musaf (מוסף) by Daniel Silverman (class of 1995)**

The Musaf service, which literally means the Additional Service, is recited on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and festivals, after Shacharit. The reason for this service, like the other basic three services, is derived from the days of sacrifice at the old Temple in Jerusalem. On those designated days, an additional sacrifice was brought, called the Musaf.

As would be expected, since the Amidah has replaced sacrifices, the Musaf service consists of the Amidah, with slight variations from the other versions. It is concluded, depending upon custom, with Ein Keloheinu, Aleinu, Mourner's Kaddish, and Adon Olam.

**Havdalah (הבדלה) by Charlie Savenor (class of 1987)**

Havdalah literally means a division or a separation. These divisions are described in the last part of the Havdalah service which speaks of the separation between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, and between the seventh day of rest and the six days of labor. Havdalah is recited twice. Once during the Ma'ariv Amidah and again in a special ceremony.

Unique to the Saturday night Ma'ariv service is the inclusion of a small paragraph in the silent Amidah. It is a prayer of Havdalah, which speaks of the separation between Shabbat and weekday.

During the Havdalah ceremony which follows Ma'ariv, we recite blessings over a cup of wine, spices, and a candle. An overflowing cup of wine is used as a sign that the coming week will provide an abundance of happiness, joy, and goodness. There is a legend that explains that the overflowing cup of wine wards off evil spirits. It was believed that these spirits could be bribed to stay away with this small amount of wine.

Shabbat is said to have a spice all its own. In order to sustain ourselves until the next week when the spice of Shabbat will return, after saying the blessing over the fragrant spices, we sniff them to tide us over.

We originally used two candles during the Havdalah ceremony because the prayer for light uses the plural form. Today we use a braided candle with at least two wicks to supply the same effect. In addition the two wicks signify the bringing together of the separate lights lit on Erev Shabbat. The custom of cupping our hands to the light is in order for us to see the shadow of our hands and to make our own separation between light and darkness. Also, it is customary to spread one or both hands toward the flame and momentarily examine the palms of the hand or the nails of the fingers. This is done to derive some use from the light over which the blessing is recited.

**Rosh Chodesh (ראש חודש) by Debbie Starr (class of 1986)**

Rosh Chodesh is the day that marks the new month in the Jewish calendar. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar meaning that the length of the month is based on the rotation of the moon around the earth - but the lunar calendar is only 354 days long. If the calendar were not adjusted to the cycle of the sun, each successive year the holidays would come 11 days earlier. Can you imagine Chanuka in the summer or Purim in the dead of winter? The 3 major pilgrimage holidays, Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot are all harvest festivals, so their observance must correspond to specific seasons. Therefore, 7 years out of 19 are leap years and we add an extra month called Adar Sheni.

Before there was a fixed calendar, Rosh Chodesh was determined by the sighting of the New Moon. The first person to see the New Moon would present himself before the Sanhedrin, the court, and they would declare a new month. Because the moon completed its cycle in 29 and one-half days, some months the moon would not appear until the 30th day. Today the months of Tishrei, Shevat, Adar I (in a leap year), Nissan, Sivan, Av, and sometimes Kislev and Cheshvan all have 30 days. Rosh Chodesh is celebrated on the 1st day of each month but when the preceding month has 30 days, Rosh Chodesh is also celebrated on the last day of the preceding month.

In the old days, Rosh Chodesh was a major festival, but there was no ban on working. It has, however, been labeled a Woman's Holiday so they do not have to work. The reason is that this is a reward for their actions in the desert. When Moshe was on Mt. Sinai, the men approached their wives and asked for their jewels in order to build the golden calf. The women did not give in, so G-d gave them a holiday in their honor.

### **Rosh Chodesh Hallel (חֲדָשִׁים וְחֻלְדָּוִת) by Debbie Starr (class of 1986)**

Hallel is a collection of six psalms or Hymns of Praise, written by King David. Most are joyous, so Hallel is reserved for happy holidays and celebrations. These days are Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot (the Shalosh Regalim, better known as the Harvest Festivals), Chanukah, and Rosh Chodesh. The theme of Hallel is summed up by a line found in Psalm 118, "This is the day the Lord G-d has made; let us rejoice and be happy in it."

On Rosh Chodesh, we do not abstain from work and so it is not considered a major holiday. For this reason, Hallel is not prescribed to be said, on these days. The tradition of saying Hallel on Rosh Chodesh began in Babylonia, so to remind us of its non-obligatory manner, we omit the first 11 verses of both Psalm 115 and Psalm 116. This is commonly referred to as either Half Hallel, or abridged Hallel. Maimonides said that the blessing also should not be said, because it is a custom, but his ruling stuck only with Sephardic congregations, and most Ashkenazic congregations do say the bracha.

### **Ya'aleh V'Yavo (יָאֵלֵךְ וַיָּבֹאוּ) by Debbie Starr (class of 1986)**

During Rosh Chodesh we add the prayer Ya'aleh V'Yavo into every Amidah except Musaf. Some rabbis say that the prayer depicts the action of bringing a sacrifice to the altar:

- ascent
- come forward
- stand near
- appear
- let it be accepted
- let him be heard
- let it be recorded
- let it be remembered

Today sacrifice has been replaced by prayer so Ya'aleh V'Yavo serves two purposes: to remind us of the sacrifice procedure and to lay a format for our prayers.

### **Chanukah Hallel (חַנּוּכָה הַלֵּל) by Ilana Garber (class of 1995)**

The Babylonian Talmud states that we should make Chanukah a Yom Tov with regard to praise and thanksgiving. This does not mean it should be a day like Sukkot, Pesach or Shavuot. The words of praise refer to the Hallel service, which is recited every Shacharit during Chanukah. We stand as we recite Hallel and as we praise G-d. Unlike on Rosh Chodesh, when only half of Hallel is recited, on Chanukah we recite the entire Hallel service.

### **Al Hanisim (אֶל הַנִּסִּים) by Ilana Garber (class of 1995)**

When we celebrate Chanukah, Purim, and Israel's Independence Day, we have several additions to our services. On these days we thank G-d for the miracles that have occurred for the Jewish people. For this reason, we add Al Hanisim to the Amidah and to Birkat Hamazon. In it, we praise G-d for the miracles, the salvation, the mighty deeds, and the victories that were given to us in days gone by, and in this time.

SUPPLEMENT (From United Synagogue):

As we recite the Al Hanisim, the prayer giving thanks for the miraculous deliverance of our ancestors, we reflect on the light that burns so dimly for our brethren in the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, Syria, and other captive nations. May we, in remembering them, strengthen their resolve to preserve Judaism in a society which seeks to extinguish its precious light. May this light grow brighter as we add candles to our Chanukah menorah ( ), for our fellow Jews wherever they are denied the privilege of celebrating the festivals and holidays of our people. Am Yisrael Chai, the People of Israel will live!

## Counting the Omer (ספירת העומר) by Rabbi Nechama Goldberg

Omer refers to an offering from the new barley crop which was brought to the ancient Temple in Jerusalem on the 16th of Nisan, the eve of the second day of Pesach. Omer now describes the period between Pesach and Shavuot. By counting the days of this period, we recall the liberation from slavery and the gift of the Revelation of the Torah, commemorated by the festival of Shavuot.

The journey from initial liberation to the full expression of freedom does not happen all at once. Emancipation from the bonds of habit, greed, laziness or selfishness takes discipline, persistence, and courage. The period of counting the Omer is our time to grow in our freedom as Jews, a freedom to participate in people's ancient covenant with G-d, to connect ourselves with the cycles of the seasons, of agriculture, of nature, and to link ourselves to the sanctity of the Land of Israel, and its well-being.

Each evening, we say the bracha, followed by the appropriate number for the twenty-four hour period. It is traditional not to announce the number of the day out loud until after it was been properly recited in Hebrew with the blessing.

Additionally, it is traditional for one chapter of Pirke Avot (The Teachings of the Sages) to be read, on each of the six Shabbatot between Pesach and Shavuot.