

Tefillah Part 5 – Amidah Continued & Avinu

Okay, so we are continuing our study on the Amidah, the Standing Prayer, the most important prayer in Judaism and it's interesting to note that it's format serves as a blue-print for all prayer. The first three blessings of the Amidah are praises, the middle portion are requests, and the final three blessings are thanksgiving in nature.

The Amidah prayer is neither deficient nor excessive in its format. It serves as the blueprint and backbone to all types prayer, indeed its original number of blessings, 18, corresponds to the number of vertebra in the human spinal cord¹. Even the nineteenth blessing, which was added later, corresponds to a smaller 19th vertebrae².

So we've asked for wisdom, then we've asked for the ability and resolve to achieve complete t'shuvah, we've asked for *Selichah* (forgiveness), redemption, health and then prosperity.

(Slide) 10th Blessing – Ingathering of the Exiles קבוץ גלויות *kibbutz galuyyot*

T'ka b'shofor godol l'chayrutaynu,
(Sound the great shofar for our freedom)

V'so nays l'kabaytz golu-yosaynu,
(raise a banner to gather our exiles)

V'kab'tzaynu yachad may-arba kanfot ho-oretz.
(and gather us together from the four corners of the earth)

Boruch ato Yahweh, m'kabaytz nidchay amo yisro-ayl.
(Blessed are You, Yahweh, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel.)

If you have a shofar, you may blow it in all four directions.

This petition style blessing focuses on the personal needs of the community and the nation of Israel as a whole. Many of the prophets console the nation reminding them of the promise of a future Ingathering of the Exiles. The text of this blessing is drawn from Isaiah 27:13; "And in that day a great shofar will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt shall return and bow down to Yahweh on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim."

¹ In Berachot 28b: To what do these eighteen benedictions correspond? R. Hillel the son of Samuel b. Nahmani said: To the eighteen times that David mentioned the Divine Name in the Psalm, Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye sons of might. R. Joseph said: To the eighteen times the Divine Name is mentioned in the *Shema*. R. Tanhum said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: To the eighteen vertebrae in the spinal column.

² These eighteen are really nineteen? — R. Levi said: The benediction relating to the Minim was instituted in Jabneh. To what was it meant to correspond? — R. Levi said: On the view of R. Hillel the son of R. Samuel b. Nahmani, to The G-d of Glory thundereth; on the view of R. Joseph, to the word 'One' in the *Shema*; on the view of R. Tanhum quoting R. Joshua b. Levi, to the little vertebrae in the spinal column.

Assyria and Egypt represent the two distinct exiles of Israel. Ashur (Assyria) means fortunate denoting an exile with freedom, a freedom that causes an exile of spirituality that comes about through assimilation. Egypt (Mitzrayim) means a 'narrow' or 'constricted place,' and in this exile the Jew is trapped, forced to abandon the Torah and assimilate.

"I will turn your captivity and gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you... and I will bring you back. (Jeremiah 29:14)"

Talmud states that "the day of the Ingathering of the Exiles is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created" (Pes. 88a, cf. Rashi to Deut. 30:3, "Great is the day of the Ingathering of the Exiles and it will come about with difficulty as though Elohim Himself will be obliged to grasp each one actually in his hand, each one from his place").

To truly appreciate this blessing the occupant must keep in mind that the natural home of an Israelite is The Holy Land. To dwell in the land securely, we must uphold the Torah. If we do not uphold the Torah in the land, it will spew us out. To be sufficiently prepared for the ingathering, one has to be willing to learn Torah observance and not become too comfortable with present surroundings no matter how safe and luxurious a dwelling may have become.

Yerushalayim has a heightened sensitivity to sin. Sin that might be tolerated here, is not tolerated in the Land.

(Slide) 11th Blessing – Restoration of Justice

Hoshivo shof'taynu k'vorishono v'yo-atzaynu k'vat'chilo, v'hosayr mimenu yogon va-anochi (Restore our judges as in earliest times and our counsellors as at first; remove from us sorrow and groan;)

Umloch olaynu ato, Yahweh, l'vad'cho b'chesed uvrachamim, v'tzad'kaynu bamishpot. (...and reign over us, You, Yahweh, alone, with kindness and with compassion, and justify us through judgement.)

Boruch ato Yahweh melech ohav tz'doko u-mishpot.
(Blessed are You, Yahweh, the King Who loves righteousness and judgement)

Throughout the Torah Israel are warned that the Land is not given to them unconditionally; rather, they must uphold the Torah in order to ensure a claim to the Land.

The opening chapter of the Book of Isaiah deals with the rebellion of Israel against Yahweh: "How has she (Yerushalayim) become a harlot? A city that was faithful and full of justice, wherein righteousness would lodge – but now murderers" (Verse 21) The Prophet then predicts the future: "I will restore your judges as at first and your counsellors as in the beginning; afterwards you shall be called City of Righteousness, Faithful City" (Verse 26)

Psalms 119, verses 137-144, explains that establishment of justice is the purpose of many of the commandments: "Righteous are you, O Adonai, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy. My zeal wears me out, for my

enemies ignore your words: Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts. Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. Your statutes are forever firm; give me understanding that I may live.”

“Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town Yahweh your Elohim is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly.” (Deuteronomy 16:18)

“You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your Elohim which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your Elohim; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant of them. (Ezra 7:25)”

This blessing is a pledge for a just society. Ultimately, we want to move toward a more Torah orientated society.

(Slide) 12th Blessing – Against Heretics

V’lamalshinim al t’hi sikvo (And for the slanderers let there be no hope;)

V’chol horish-o k’rega tova, (and may all wickedness perish in an instant;)

V’chol o-y’vecho m’hayro yikoraytu (and may all Your enemies be cut down speedily)

V’hazaydim m’haro t’akayr us-shabayr usmagayr v’tachni-a (The wanton sinners – may You speedily uproot, smash, cast down, and humble –)

Bimhayro v’yomaynu (speedily in our days.)

The twelfth blessing of the daily Amidah (Standing) prayer contains a blessing to swiftly remove and eradicate the heretic within the faith. The inclusion of this blessing is completely permissible within this order of service, because it is indeed an area in which divine assistance should be sought as heretics do pose a constant threat to a believer. At the time this blessing was included, there was a fear that the Netzarim sect’s influence would completely overshadow the faith and it was at one time directed toward this sect. Throughout history other forms of heresy have risen up and this prayer counters all such negative influences. Just because the initial composition of this blessing happened to be directed toward the Netzarim Sect (amongst others) shouldn’t mean that Netzarim today omit reciting it themselves, because it is not a question what the majority considers heresy, but what Yahweh considers heresy.

Today the blessing is structured in a non-specific way and is therefore not only permissible, but beneficial to be included in a Nazarene Israelite’s daily service of the heart.

External evil, is usually the result of us not dealing with internal evils within our fold.

(Slide) 13th Blessing – The Righteous

Once we pray for the downfall of the wicked, we now pray for the elevation and success of the righteous. So that we may flourish in an environment that is devoid of evil.

Al hatzadikim v'al hachasidim (on the righteous, on the devout,)
V'al ziknay am'cho bayt Yisro-ayl, (on the Elders of your people the family of Israel,)
V'al p'laytat sof'rayhem (on the remnant of their scholars,)
V'al gayray hatzedek v'olaynu (on the righteous converts and on ourselves -)

Yehemu rachamecho, Yahweh Elohaynu, (May Your compassion be aroused, Yahweh, our Elohim;)
and give goodly reward (v'tayn socher tov) to all who sincerely believe in Your Name;
and place our lot with them forever, and we will not feel ashamed, for we trust in You.
Blessed are You Yahweh, Mainstay and Assurance of the righteous.

"Al hatzadikim v'al hachasidim" A צדק tzedek is someone who is righteous, someone that does what he is supposed to do and a chasad is someone who does more than they are supposed to do.

Every generation of the nation of Israel has remnants from the previous generation of information in the Torah that allow the next generation to move on.

Scholars and sages from the last generation enable the current generation to stand on their shoulders and so on, until we've reached up to heaven.

"and give goodly reward" (v'tayn socher tov)

Allow us to receive goodness that is truly good. Sometimes goodness is clothed in a traumatic event or a difficult trial. We ask that we may be allowed to see the reward even if it's clothed in something that seems bad.

(Slide) 14th Blessing – Rebuilding Jerusalem

V'yirushola-yim ir'cho b'rachamim toshuv (And to Yerushalayim, Your city, may You return in compassion,)
V'sishkin b'sochoh ka-asher dibarto (and may You rest within it, as You have spoken;)
may You rebuild it soon in our days as an eternal structure, and the throne of David may You establish within in.

The physical and spiritual rebuilding of Yerushalayim is what is in mind here. This is a natural progression of the last blessing, because only in Yerushalayim can the righteous achieve his full potential. The city of Yerushalayim was not divided amongst the tribes, just like Washington DC does not belong to any individual State or Union, rather it belongs to the entire American people.

Even though Yerushalayim was packed with people during the three pilgrimage festivals, there was always lodgings available and no rent was charged.

(Slide) 15th Blessing – David Reign

The opening phrase of this blessing is based upon the verse, "In those days, at that time, I will cause a bud of righteousness to sprout forth from David, and he will administer justice

and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 33:15)” The coming of Moshiach is compared to a flower, which we ask Yahweh to cause to flourish. While man is limited in his vision, only seeing what is happening immediately to him and his environs, Yahweh is putting all the pieces together and creating the environment for Moshiach’s arrival.

The next three brachot are centred on thanksgiving.

(Slide) 16th Blessing - Acceptance of Prayer

Standing before Yahweh is a privilege. Bringing our requests to Him personally, and acknowledging that He alone has the capacity to grant these requests, is a form of praising Him.

At the conclusion of this blessing, we ask, “Do not turn us away empty-handed from before You, our king.” In effect, we are saying: Even if our merits are few, please do not reject our prayers completely; at least grant us part of our request (Avudraham).

(Slide) 17th Blessing – Restoration of the Temple Service

(Slide) 18th & 19th Blessing – Expressions of Thanks & Restoration of the Temple

In these final three blessings, we are thanking Yahweh for granting us the privilege of having an audience with Him.