

ימים נוראים OF THE שמונה עשרה INTRODUCTION TO

The **ראש השנה תפילות** of **ראש השנה** present a glimpse into how early prayers were formed. Some clues are found in the following two **משניות**:

משנה מסכת ראש השנה פרק ד' משנה ה'—סדר ברכות: אומר אבות וגבורות וקדושת השם, וכולל מלכיות עמהן, ואינו תוקע; קדושת היום ותוקע; זכרונות ותוקע; שופרות ותוקע; ואומר עבודה והודאה וברכת כהנים, דברי רבי יוחנן בן נורי. אמר ליה רבי עקיבא: אם אינו תוקע למלכיות, למה הוא מזכיר? אלא אומר אבות וגבורות וקדושת השם, וכולל מלכיות עם קדושת היום, ותוקע; זכרונות ותוקע; שופרות ותוקע; ואומר עבודה והודאה וברכת כהנים.

Translation: This is the order of the Brachos of Shemona Esrei for Rosh Hashonah: Avos, Gevuros and Kedushas Hashem. He should include the verses that represent G-d's hegemony over the world within the Bracha of Kedushas Hashem but not blow Shofar after reciting this Bracha. He then recites the Bracha whose theme is the special sanctity of the day and blows Shofar; the Bracha that includes verses of remembrance and blows Shofar and the Bracha that includes verses about the blowing of the Shofar and blows Shofar. He then says the Brachos of Avoda, Hoda'A and Birkas Kobanim. That represents the opinion of Rabbi Yochanon son of Nuri. Rabbi Akiva challenged Rabbi Nuri's opinion: if he does not blow the Shofar after reciting the verses which represent the theme of the hegemony of G-d, then why say those verses? Instead he should recite the following: Avos, Gevuros and Kedushas Hashem. He should include the verses that represent G-d's hegemony over the world within the Bracha that portrays the special sanctity of the day and then blow Shofar. He recites the Bracha that includes verses of remembrance and blows Shofar and the Bracha that includes verses about blowing the Shofar and blows Shofar. He then says the Brachos of Avoda, Hoda'A and Birkas Kobanim.

משנה מסכת ראש השנה פרק ד' משנה ו'—אין פוחתין מעשרה מלכיות, מעשרה זכרונות, מעשרה שופרות; רבי יוחנן בן נורי אומר: אם אמר שלש שלש מכולן יצא. אין מזכירין זכרון מלכות ושופר של פורענות. מתחיל בתורה ומשלים בנביא; רבי יוסי אומר: אם השלים בתורה יצא.

Translation: He should recite no less than ten verses that portray G-d as king of the world; ten verses that portray G-d as remembering and ten verses that portray the role of the Shofar. Rabbi Yochanon son of Nuri said: if he recites three verses for each Bracha that is sufficient. He should not include verses that refer to G-d's hegemony, remembrance and the blowing of the Shofar that also speak of punishment. He should begin with verses from the Torah and end with verses from the Prophets. Rabbi Yossi says: If he ends with verses from the Torah, he has fulfilled his obligation.

Two points about these **משניות**. Notice that the three additional **ברכות** that were added to **שמונה עשרה** on **ראש השנה** consisted of **פסוקים**. No **חתימת הברכה** is mentioned. Second, notice that the **משניות** do not limit the addition of the three **ברכות** to **תפלת**. Arguably, the **משניות** stand for the premise that the three **ברכות** were added to the **מוסף**.

פירוש ספראי to ראש השנה of תפילות of all the שמונה עשרה of ראש השנה of ראש השנה points to the following משנה as evidence that the form of תפלת מוסף and תפלת שחרית were the same on ראש השנה for שמונה עשרה:

משנה מסכת ראש השנה פרק ד' משנה ז'—העובר לפני התיבה ביום טוב של ראש השנה השני מתקיע ובשעת ההלל ראשון מקרא את ההלל.

Translation: Whoever leads the services on Rosh Hashbonah should blow Shofar as part of Shemona Esrei of Mussaf. On days when Hallel is recited, Hallel should be said as part of Tefilas Shacharis.

Professor Safrai argues that the משנה needed to tell us that תקיעת שופר only takes place during תפלת מוסף because the שמונה עשרה for both תפלת שחרית and תפלת מוסף on ראש השנה were identical.

The bundling of תפילות פסוקים that end with a ברכה is emblematic of several important תפילות. תפילת הלל in one example and פסוקי דזמרה is a second. קריאת שמע is a third example but it is more unique in that no ברכה needs be said either before reciting it or after reciting it in order to fulfill the מצוה of קריאת שמע. That fact may prove that the practice of reciting the פרשיות of קריאת שמע predates the recital of ברכות. No ברכות were added to קריאת שמע because the practice of reciting it without ברכות was entrenched. A similar situation may have existed with the הגדה. One fulfills the obligation of the מצוה of סיפור יציאת מצרים by reciting the פסוק of עבדים היינו or the פסוקים that begin ויאמר יהושע ארמי אובד אבי. It too is fulfilled without reciting a ברכה either before or after the פסוקים. Interestingly, the practice of reciting the ברכה of סיפור יציאת מצרים מצוה of קריאת שמע and the מצוה of גאל ישראל after both the מצוה of גאל ישראל was instituted and in both cases, the recital of the ברכה of גאל ישראל is not required in order to fulfill the underlying מצוה. Note should also be made of the fact that תחנון consists of a chapter of תהלים and that קדוש דסדרא is comprised solely of פסוקים.

That תפלה began as a bundling of פסוקים is a major thesis of the book: מקור הברכות by Zev Yavets. An English translation of the first chapter of his book, התפלה בימי קדם, Tefila In Ancient Times, is presented herewith:

At first, the Jewish People did not follow a general or fixed format in presenting their requests nor in giving thanks to G-d except as found in the following four texts; i.e. Birkas Kohanim (Bamidbar 6, 24-26); the words that were recited upon discovering an unidentified body equidistant between two cities (Devarim 21, 7-8); the reading upon bringing new fruits to the Beis Hamikdash (Devarim 26, 5-10) and the words to be said concerning tithes at the end of every third year in the Shemittah

cycle (Devarim 26, 13-15). The Torah mandates that those four prayers be said in the form provided by the Torah when fulfilling the obligations linked to them.

Except when reciting those prayers, a person could bless G-d and pray to Him “each one in accordance with his abilities; if he did so regularly, it is likely that he expanded on his supplications and requests. If he had trouble expressing himself, he would do the best he could, whenever he wished to (Rambam, Hilchos Tefila 1, 2-3).

Examples of these voluntary forms of prayers which our forefathers and ancestors composed when they felt the need to do so or when their hearts were moved to do so are readily found in our holy books: Bereishis 19, 18-20; 24, 12-14; 32, 10-13; Shemos 32, 11-13; 34, 9; Bamidbar 14, 13-19; 27, 16-17; Devarim 3, 24-28; Yehoshua 7, 7-9; Shoftim 10, 10, 15; 15, 18; 16, 28; Shmuel 1, 1, 11; 2, 1-10; Shmuel 2, 7, 18-29; Melachim 1, 3, 6-9; 8, 12-53, 56,-61; Melachim 2, 19, 15-19; 20, 3; Yirmiyahu 32, 17-25; Daniel 2, 20-23; 3, 32-33; 4, 34; 9, 4-19; Ezra 9, 6-15; Nehemia 1, 5-11; 9, 5-33; Divrei Hayamim 1, 17, 16-27; 29, 10-19; Divrei Hayamim 2, 1, 8-10; 6, 1-42; 14, 10; 20, 6-12 and the entire book of Tehillim, from start to finish. The Rambam continues: and such was the practice until the time of Ezra. Because the Jewish People were in exile during the era of Ezra and gave birth to children outside of Israel, the language their children spoke consisted of a mixture of languages. Each one spoke in a linguistically confused manner. Because of this problem, whenever they attempted to pray, they found themselves having difficulty expressing their requests or words of praise to G-d in an understandable form of Hebrew. Once Ezra and his administration took notice of this problem, they decided to compose a set of Brachos (Rambam, *ibid.*, 4). The Rambam specifically speaks of composing Brachos which later became the core of the Tefilos. The earliest group to engage in composing fixed texts for prayer was Ezra and his administration, the Men of the Great Assembly. They created four types of prayers, as the Talmud records: the Men of the Great Assembly composed for the Jewish People Brachos, Tefilos, Kedaishos and Havdalos (Brachos 32a). Although the Talmud enumerates four types of prayers, each followed an identical format; that of a Bracha or a set of Brachos. That was the case for the Tefilos, the Kedaishos and the Havdalos¹.

(Footnote: That explains why the Tractate of Talmud that focuses on prayer is named: Maseches Brachos.)

Keep in mind that voluntary prayer, the type that spontaneously arises from the heart and which is known by our Sages as requests for compassion (Brachos 10b), have never been eliminated from Jewish practice. The Talmud teaches us: Rabbi Eliezer would compose a new prayer each day; Rabbi Abahu would compose a new Bracha each day (Yerushalmi Brachos 4, 4). Anyone who was not able to compose a new prayer (Brachos 29; Yerushalmi, *ibid.*) was deemed by our Sages to be one whose prayers were being said by rote to the point that their prayers did not consist of supplications. In a similar fashion, Rabbi Mayer held: a person may fulfill his

1. It would also explain why שמונה עשרה consists of ברכות as well.

obligation to recite a Bracha by saying: how beautiful is this piece of bread; blessed is G-d who created it; how beautiful is this date, blessed is G-d who created it (Brachos 40b). Rabbi Hanna of Baghdad and other rabbis went to visit Rabbi Yehudah who was ill. They said to him: 'Blessed be the All Merciful who has given you back to us and has not given you to the dust'. Rabbi Yehudah said to them: 'You have absolved me from the obligation of giving thanks' (Brachos 54b). Even concerning other matters for which our Sages composed fixed Brachos, such as the Haggadah of Pesach, we find the following incident involving Rav Nachman: Rav Nahman asked his slave Daru: 'When a master liberates his slave and gives him gold and silver, what should the slave say to his master?' 'He should thank and praise him,' replied he. 'You have excused us from saying "Why is this night different?"' observed Rav Nachman (Pesachim 116a). And in each generation, Jews composed new songs of praise "like a spring that brings forth fresh water continuously (Midrash Tehillim 87). The piyuttim, songs and words of praise, that were freshly composed after the formation of the Siddur, are a small part of the new songs that were regularly being composed. Nevertheless, once Ezra and his colleagues began creating a fixed and orderly text for the prayers, their order became the foundation of what became known as "service of the heart" which was expanded and to which each generation added.

The first Brachos and Tefilos were primarily verses from Tanach and chapters of Tehillim. The form of Brachos as we know them today (Yerushalmi Brachos 1, 5) were not recited except at the end of a verse or group of verses. The Brachos often contained "subjects covered within the Torah" (Shabbos 115b). Included in the category of Brachos were chapters of Tehillim; for example: (Tehillim 120) In my difficult moment I call to To G-d and He responds to me; (Tehillim 121) I will direct my eyes to the mountains; (Tehillim 130) From the depths I will call to G-d; (Tehillim 103) Prayer for the poor man when he envelopes himself (all these are found as Brachos in Maseches Ta'Anis 15a). Also large excerpts from other Biblical sources such as: (Shmuel 1, 8, 37) When Famine shall befall your land; and (Yirmiyahu 14,1) The word of G-ds came to Yirmiyahu on the matter of the drought. At that time, they had not yet created a set format for Brachos. Instead they would add a short phrase after reciting verses or groups of verses that was described by the term: Bracha ending² (Footnote: and they would say the Bracha endings (Ta'Anis 15a). Even when the standard three word opening of Brachos was composed, it consisted of words borrowed from a Biblical verse: Baruch Ata Hashem (Tehillim 119, 12; Divrei Hayamim 1, 29, 10). Later, the Bracha ending became so important that it spawned a rule: if someone errs in reciting the words that come before the ending Bracha but does not err in reciting the ending Bracha, he does not have to repeat the Bracha but if he recites what comes before the ending Bracha correctly but errs in reciting the words of the closing Bracha, he need return

2. This would explain the placement of the paragraph: ברוך ה' לעולם אמן ואמן after תהלים קנ' in פסוקי דזמרה.

and repeat the complete Bracha—the rule was stated thus: the determining factor is whether the closing Bracha is recited properly (Brachos 12a). A second rule: concerning all the Brachos, the words that come before the closing Bracha must match the theme of the closing Bracha (Yerushalmi Brachos 1, 5). The establishment of a format for the ending Bracha led to the institution of a basic rule of Brachos: the form of the Bracha must be recited as it was composed by our Sages (Brachos 40b). This meant that nothing less than that form could be recited. Rav added one more requirement when he held: any Bracha that does not include a reference to G-d's name is not a valid Bracha (Brachos 40b). In order that the ending Bracha be recognizable and that it not be confused with the verses that preceded it and thus, lose its significance, our Sages directed that a verse may not be used as a Bracha (Yerushalmi Brachos 1, 5). This meant that we may not use a verse as the complete Bracha. This rule led Rashi to hold that the verse: Baruch Ata Hashem Lamdeini Chukecha (Blessed are You G-d, teach me Your rules (Tehillim 119, 12) which was the model for the basic form of Bracha, did not itself constitute a Bracha and could not be recited as the Bracha before studying Torah which was a practice that some were following. Instead, they instituted the practice of preceding the closing Bracha with words that match the theme of the closing Bracha (Yerushalmi Ta'Anis 2, 3). For example, if on a fast day one wants to recite a closing Bracha after the chapter of Tehillim that begins: To G-d in my moment of trouble I called and He responded to me, and wants to include within the Bracha the words: “Shomei'A Z'Aka” (who hearkens to cries), he must add before the closing Bracha the line: He who responded to Shmuel at Mitzpah, He should respond to you and hearken to the sound of your cries on this day (Ta'Anis 15) (Footnote: Nevertheless we find that in some Brachos which contain all original wording composed by our Sages, in other words, Brachos that do not include a chapter of Tehillim, verses are recited just before the closing Bracha. For example, the verse: Go'Alaini Hashem, at the end of Emes V'Yatziv; Ki Fada Hashem Es Yaakov, at the end of Emes V'Emunah; T'Ranina Sifasei Ki Azamra Lecha in the form of Modim D'Rabbanan that was composed by Rabbi Bah son of Zavdei said Rav in the Jerusalem Talmud.) Even though the Brachos that are referred to in Maseches Ta'Anis appear to be among the first collection of Brachos composed and despite the role that the ending Bracha played in constituting the chapter of Tehillim that precedes it as a Bracha, it appears that at that time, the ending Bracha was viewed as being of secondary importance to the chapter of Tehillim included therein. The type of Bracha to which our Sages usually referred when they discussed Brachos were those that were composed to be Brachos, in which the form of Bracha is easily recognizable (Footnote: Yerushalmi Brachos 7, 2) and which included both G-d's name and a reference to His hegemony over the whole world; i.e. Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'Olam. This conforms with the ruling of Rabbi Yochanon, which was universally accepted, that anyone who recites a Bracha that is missing a reference to G-d's hegemony over the world has not said a valid Bracha (Brachos 40b). Concerning

this matter, Rabbi Tanchuma said: The basis for this rule is the following verse: I will exalt You, G-d and bless You” (Yerushalmi Brachos, 9, 1). That verse is viewed as describing the words: Baruch Ata Hashem as the essence of the Bracha. The distinct phrase that follows in each Bracha, for example: Ha’Motzei Lechem Min Ha’Aretz or Asher Kidishanu B’Mitzvotav Al Netilas Lulav, is known as the conclusion of the Bracha (Brachos 12a). (Footnote: According to the words of the Gemara we need to differentiate between the conclusion of the Bracha and the concluding Bracha. The conclusion of the Bracha is the name given to the end of each Bracha while the concluding Bracha is the second half of a long Bracha in which the concluding Bracha is missing G-d’s name (Elokeinu) and a reference to His hegemony over the world (Melech Ha’Olam).

Support for Yavetz’s view that the תפילות began as פסוקים or as פרקים from תנ”ך is found in the שמונה עשרה of ראש השנה and to a lesser extent in the שמונה עשרה of the שלש רגלים and for שבת. The challenge for Yavetz is to explain why the form of שמונה עשרה that we recite on weekdays is totally bereft of פסוקים; not even one פסוק appears therein. We can begin to mount a defense on behalf of Yavetz but pointing to two additions that we make every weekday to שמונה עשרה in הזרת הש”ץ that include פסוקים; i.e. קדושה and ברכת כהנים. We can also point to a פסוק that we include in עננו on public fast days and in the paragraph of נהם on תשעה באב. We can also point to the form of שמונה עשרה recited as part of מנהג ארץ ישראל. In it, the ברכה of השיבנו consisted of a (איכה ה’, כא’) השיבנו ה’ אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם: פסוק. חתימת הברכה. Perhaps the best evidence lies in the prayer that begins: ברוך ה’ לעולם: תפלת מעריב. We noted in Newsletters 6-28 and 6-29 that many view the 18 פסוקים found in the prayer to be substitutes for the 18 ברכות of שמונה עשרה.

If in fact the weekday שמונה עשרה did at first contain פסוקים even according to מנהג בבל, what happened to them? One possible explanation is that all the פסוקים were removed to avoid giving unintended support to the Karaite movement for whom the entire prayer service consisted of פסוקים. Since סדר רב עמרם גאון was composed about 100 years after the advent of the Karaite movement, we cannot be certain as to what wording was included in the text of שמונה עשרה before the challenge of the Karaite movement.