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תפילה בציבור
Participating In
A Primer For Those Preparing To Be Bnei Mitzvah

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Introduction To Lessons One and Two-Defining Jewish Prayer

The goal of Lessons One and Two is to teach students that the fixed text is not the only form of Jewish prayer. Students need to know that if they are confronted with a situation in which they wish to communicate with G-d, they need not wait until the time for the next prayer service arrives to do so. They can communicate with G-d at any time but preferably by following a formula developed by *הז"ל*. They also need to know how to respond when words escape them.

Knowing that alternate forms of Jewish Prayer exists is one response to the issues that arise out of reciting prayers that follow a fixed text; i.e. the words are often difficult to understand and the recital of the same prayers each day renders the words monotonous and said without thought.

These are the six additional forms of prayer that supplement the fixed text:

- A. Spontaneous Prayer;
- B. תפלה בעת צרה-Prayer In Times Of Difficulty;
- C. Non-Verbal Acts That Constitute Prayer;
- D. Vows;
- E. The Torah Reading;
- F. Personal Prayers Added To The Fixed Text.

One lesson includes a discussion of the fixed text as well. Students may find it easier to recite the fixed text after being taught that the fixed text represents *עבודה*, service to G-d; *תפלה* as a substitute for the *קרבנות*. *הז"ל* chose these words based on their belief that those were words that G-d looks forward to hearing each day. That we do not understand what all those words mean does not lessen its being words that G-d wants to hear. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is incumbent upon every Jew to make an effort to study the words of Tefila so that he understands the words that he is addressing to G-d.

Introduction To Lesson Three- The Obligation To Recite 100 ברכות Each Day

That the obligation to recite 100 ברכות opens the first page of the first Siddur, Seder Rav Amrom Gaon, and remained the opening section of commentaries to the Siddur throughout the period of the ראשונים, should be viewed as evidence that the rule is a key to understanding Tefila. What do we learn from that rule? That *הז"ל* structured our תפילות around ברכות; that the study of each ברכה begins with its התימה, the concluding ברכה, because the התימה presents the theme of the ברכה and that the התימה is the

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מטבע הברכה that Chazal fought very hard to preserve throughout Jewish history.

A simple exercise that students can engage in involves creating a list of the *ברכות* and the *התימות הברכות* that appear in a *תפילה*. Proceed to teach them the simple meaning of the words within those *התימות הברכות* and then help them identify the theme of each of those *ברכות*. This exercise should provide your students with a basic understanding of the *תפילות* that can be used as the foundation to proceed further into studying the *תפילות*.

This exercise will also clarify how variations developed within the *תפילות*. If you pay close attention to the variations, you will notice that rarely do those variations concern the *התימות הברכות* because Chazal fought to protect the *מטבע הברכה*, the *התימות הברכות*. They did not fight to maintain the wording of what is found in the middle of the *ברכות*. When you do find variations among the *התימות הברכות*, that is a learning moment. You need to ask why those variations developed. A good example of variations in the *התימות הברכות* that offer a learning opportunity are the changes that Ashkenazim make to several of the *ברכות* of *שמונה עשרה* during the *עשרת ימי תשובה*. Each variation can be explained and in explaining each variation, the students will gain a greater understanding of the *תפילות* of the *ימים נוראים*.

Introduction To Lesson Four-Individual vs. Communal Prayer

Why should a person strive to join with a group of ten men to recite the *תפילות*? The following comment by the *משנה ברורה* provides a short but succinct answer to that question:

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chail, 90, 9-If you have a choice of two synagogues, and one of them is a large congregation, it is a mitzvah to pray with the large congregation. The communal prayer that halacha is concerned with is Shemona Esrei; that ten people should recite it together. Many people erroneously believe that the purpose of congregating together is to hear Kaddish, Kedusha or Barchu. As a result all that they are concerned with is that there be ten people in synagogue. That is an error.

Simply put, when you pray in a group of ten men, you are not praying only for yourself nor solely for the ten or more people present. You are praying for *כלל ישראל*, the Jewish People. To gain perspective on what that means, consider the possibility, though not a very likely one, that your group of ten or more is the only group of ten or more praying for *כלל ישראל* at that moment.

Women who come to synagogue to pray need to be taught this lesson. Although in Orthodox synagogues, they are not counted toward meeting the minimum requirement of

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ten men, they too are part of that group and they too are praying for כלל ישראל once ten men are present.

Introduction To Lesson Five-The Emergence Of The Synagogue

The synagogue represents the location where, on most occasions, תפלה בעיבור is conducted. The synagogue as an institution is not referred to in the תורה. How did the synagogue develop? Many view the synagogue as having developed as a substitute for the בית המקדש. That is an incorrect historical fact. There is evidence from both the גמרא and from archaeological discoveries that synagogues co-existed with the בית המקדש and that a synagogue was located within the בית המקדש. What was its function during that period? From the sources available to us, the primary function of the synagogue at that time was as a place where Jews congregated to perform קריאת התורה and לימוד התורה.

Knowing that the synagogue co-existed with the בית המקדש helps distinguish between the prayer services: i.e. תפלת מוסף, תפלת שחרית, etc. and קריאת התורה which can be defined as beginning when the ספר תורה is removed from the ארון קודש and concluding when the ספר תורה is returned to the ארון קודש.

That the synagogue began to play additional roles after the destruction of the בית המקדש provides the student with an important lesson in Jewish life; that a Jew should build his social network through attendance at a synagogue. In the Orthodox community we take it for granted that our children, once they marry, will choose to reside in a neighborhood based on which synagogue will provide them the social network in which they will feel comfortable. That being said, our children need to recognize that rule even before they marry. This rule should come in play when our students decide on where to attend college. They need to be encouraged to attend universities which have available to them venues for תפלה בעיבור and that there be a sizable number of students attending תפלה בעיבור. That will lead to our students having a healthy social life at the universities that they attend.

Introduction To Lesson Six-The Purpose Of קריאת התורה

קריאת התורה was the impetus that led to the creation of the synagogue and served as its primary function. An early example of the Jewish People congregating to listen to קריאת התורה is found in ספר נחמיה. Notice that this example of קריאת התורה was prompted by the people and not by the Rabbinic leadership:

נחמיה פרק ה-(א) ויאספו כל העם כאיש אחד אל הרחוב אשר לפני שער המים ויאמרו לעזרא הספר להביא את ספר תורת משה אשר צוה ה' את ישראל.

Translation: 1. And all the people gathered as one man in the open place before the Water Gate and they asked Ezra the Scribe to retrieve the Torah scroll of Moshe, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

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The Jewish People requested that Ezra retrieve the ספר תורה that משה רבינו had recorded and read portions to them. Why did they want to hear the words of the תורה? Because they wanted to renew their covenant to observe it.

קריאת התורה serves one of three functions:

1. On some days of the year, it serves as a תפלה.
2. It always serves as לימוד תורה.
3. It is always the opportunity for the Jewish People to accept anew the responsibilities of observing the תורה.

Introduction To Lesson Seven- The Origin Of Reading The הפטרה

Various theories are put forth to explain the reading of excerpts from the נביאים on שבת morning. Of greater importance are the ברכות that follow the הפטרה. They may represent one of the first תפילות that was recited as part of the synagogue service. Within those ברכות you will find the three elements that comprise שמונה עשרה, שבח, בקשה and הודאה. Of particular importance are the בקשות which call for the arrival of the משיח.

Particular attention should be given to the last ברכה, מקדש השבת, ברכה. It represents קדושת היום; the obligation to declare the sanctity of the day which we also fulfill by reciting the middle ברכה of שמונה עשרה on שבת and as part of קידוש על הכוס. That the ברכה is recited at the completion of the reading of the הפטרה on שבת and יום טוב but is omitted from the ברכות ההפטרה on a עינות ציבור confirms that its purpose is to fulfill the obligation of declaring the sanctity of the day. That opens the question why it is necessary to declare the sanctity of the day in the ברכות that follow the הפטרה even though we fulfilled that obligation by reciting the middle ברכה of שמונה עשרה.

Introduction To Lesson Eight- דבר שבקדושה-Its Origin And What It Represents

That certain prayers require the presence of a minimum of ten men is derived from the fact that ten men constitute an עדה. That means that they represent not only themselves, and not only the ten men present but they represent כלל ישראל, the Jewish People. Because they represent the Jewish People, they have an affirmative responsibility to perform קדושת השם בדברים, to sanctify the name of G-d by reciting certain words. To demonstrate that

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the words are being recited to fulfill the מצוה of קדושת השם בדברים, the words are introduced with a הזמנה, an invitation, pronounced by the שליח ציבור.

קריאת התורה, when it is recited in a group of ten, takes on the character of קריאת התורה. Both the מצוה of קריאת שמע and קריאת התורה performed by a group of ten men representing כלל ישראל, elevates those words to the level of קדושת השם בדברים. To demonstrate that we have elevated the sanctity of those מצוות, the שליח ציבור issues an invitation in the form of ברכו. For a similar reason, we change the wording of ברכת הזימון when ten men have eaten together.

Similarly when ten men perform a מצוה that involves learning or a Tefila jointly, they recite קדיש, a דבר שבקדושה that is introduced by an invitation from the שליח ציבור as well. A third example is קדושה in שמונה עשרה. The third ברכה of שמונה עשרה is known as קדושת השם. The wording of the ברכה is changed when the שליח ציבור repeats שמונה עשרה in order to fulfill the מצוה of קידוש השם בדברים. It too is preceded by an invitation, the opening line of קדושה. It is the Sephardic practice and the original Ashkenazic practice that the opening line of קדושה is recited by the שליח ציבור alone because that line represents the הזמנה.

Introduction To Lesson Nine- The Origin Of Reciting קדיש During The Prayer Service

The origin of the practice to recite קדיש between sections of the תפילות is shrouded in mystery. This is how one of the גאונים begins his answer to that question:

Concerning the origin of Kaddish that you asked, we can not trace the practice to a clear and definitive source found among our ancestors' writings. However, those who followed them based their recitation of Kaddish upon this verse (Va'Yikra 22, 32) And I will be sanctified within the people of Israel; and upon what our Rabbinic leaders extrapolated from the verse: that any prayer which results in the sanctification of the name of G-d must be recited only in a group of ten men. From these teachings we can conclude that when ten men congregate to perform a mitzvah, either for prayer or for the study of Torah, they must recite a prayer in which they sanctify the name of G-d.

The Gaon then proceeds to use that basis to explain the recital of קדיש between sections of the תפילות and why קדיש is recited at a funeral. The Gaon then proceeds to ask a very valid question: why do we recite קדיש at a funeral but not at a wedding. His answer is cryptic but can be explained.

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Students need to be taught that the recital of קדיש has nothing to do with death or mourning. In truth, it is a prayer for the hastening of the arrival of the משיח. They also must be shown that the origin of the practice of reciting קדיש at a funeral did not become the basis for a mourner to recite קדיש during his year of mourning.

Introduction To Lesson Ten- The Origin Of Reciting 'The Mourners' קדיש

That the basis for reciting קדיש between sections of the תפילות is not linked to the source for reciting the Mourners' קדיש is reason enough to teach twelve year old girls and thirteen year old boys the origin of the practice of reciting the Mourners' קדיש. Add to that the reality that most of us, if not all of us, will suffer a loss during our lifetimes that will require us to recite the Mourners' קדיש for eleven months. Teaching students the basis for the practice will prepare the students for that eventuality.

But perhaps the most compelling reason to teach students the origin of the practice to recite the Mourners' קדיש is that the practice itself began as a means by which males who were not eligible to act as שליח ציבור could recite a prayer intended to benefit their deceased parents during the year after their parent's demise. It also serves as a good example of how prayer customs developed.

Introduction To Lesson Eleven- The Role Of The שליח ציבור And Why The שליח ציבור Must Wear A טלית

The שליח ציבור serves several functions. He recites the ברכות aloud to permit those who cannot read the Hebrew prayers to fulfill their obligation by answering: אמן and he leads the congregation in reciting the responsive prayers. However, he serves two lesser known functions as well. It is his duty to keep the prayers interesting and it is his responsibility to act as advocate for the Jewish People.

He wears a טלית not as the fulfillment of the מצוה of ציצית but as a sign of respect, to create a barrier between the earthly world and the heavenly world. That is why many follow the custom of requiring the שליח ציבור to wear a טלית while leading the congregation in the recital of תפלת ערבית.

Introduction To Lesson Twelve- The Link Between Tefila And The Study Of Torah

Because our תפילות include so many פסוקים and פרקים from תנ"ך, is it fair to ask: were those excerpts from תנ"ך included intentionally or did it evolve by happenstance? When you break down our תפילות by section, you begin to recognize that חז"ל included those excerpts intentionally. Their intent was to provide that for those Jews who either do not have the time nor have the ability to study תורה, to fulfill the minimum obligation for studying תורה each day. In addition, חז"ל viewed תפלה and לימוד תורה as two sides of one coin and somewhat interchangeable- עבודה שב לב, service of the heart.

What is the link between תפלה and לימוד תורה? They are the means by which man draws himself close to G-d. The closer a person feels toward G-d, the more meaningful his prayers become. Perhaps Philo said it best:

Man's true function is to know G-d, and to make G-d known: he can know G-d only through His revelation, and he can comprehend that revelation only by continued study.