

Anyone who has a serious interest in understanding תפלה owes it to himself to purchase the סידור רב עמרם גאון, the first compilation of תפילות that was authored in the 9th Century, C.E. It feels comforting when his סדר תפילות matches ours. But when his סדר תפילות differs, it is exciting because he is challenging us to investigate when and why in Jewish History the change occurred. The תפילות of יום כיפור present us an opportunity to discuss two differences between the סידור רב עמרם גאון and our practices; in the recitation of פסוקי דזימרה and כל נדרי.

כל נדרי

Despite its popularity and renown, studying the תפלה of כל נדרי will give a student of תפלה a migraine headache. No one knows the origin of the תפלה. Its purpose is murky. And it leaves students of הלכה baffled. רב עמרם begins his discussion of כל נדרי by saying: ויש שעושיין כך and he closes his discussion by reporting: אבל שגרו במתיבתא שמנהג שטות הוא. This is the language of his version:

Dating the authorship of כל נדרי

Perhaps רב עמרם and רבינו תם provided us with some clues. When רב עמרם told us that ויש שעושיין כך maybe he was letting us know that the custom had just begun. And perhaps the reason that רבינו תם felt comfortable in changing the language was because it was a custom that was only then taking hold universally.

כל נדרי ואסרי, וחרמי, ושבועי, וקיומי דנדרנא ודאסרנא על נפשנא בשבועה, מיום הכפורים שעבר עד יום הזה הבא עלינו. בכלם חזרנא ובאנו לפני אבינו שבשמים, אם נדר נדרנא אין כאן נדר. אם אסר אסרנו אין כאן איסור. אם חרם חרמנו אין כאן חרם. אם שבועה נשבענו אין כאן שבועה. אם קיום קיימנו אין כאן קיום. בטל הנדר מעיקרו, בטל האיסור מעיקרו, בטל הקיום מעיקרו. אין כאן לא נדר ולא איסור ולא חרם ולא שבועה ולא קיום. יש כאן מחילה וכפרה ככתוב בתורתך ונסלח לכל עדת בני ישראל ולגר ולגר הנגר בתוכם כי לכל העם בשגגה. ואומר...שהחיינו.

The most noticeable difference between our version of כל נדרי and the version of רב עמרם lies in the phrase מיום הכפורים שעבר עד יום הזה הבא עלינו. Our version (pre-Artscroll) was מיום כפורים זה עד יום כפורים הבא עלינו לטובה. Our נוסח looks to annul vows that we might make in the future while the version of רב עמרם was meant to

annul past vows. The change in the language was instituted by רבינו תם in the 12th century. It was changed as a result of halachic concerns. You can find the full discussion in **מסכת נדרים דף כג' עמ' א, תוס' ד"ה: ואת**

דרשת ליה בפרקא. For a scholarly review of the history of **כל נדרי**, you can read an article entitled: **עבר ועתיד בנוסח "כל נדרי"** by Professor Naftali Wieder in his book: **התנגשות נוסח התפלה במזרח ובמערב**. Professor Wieder points out that since the time of **רב עמרם**, communities chose to follow one of four options: 1) omit **כל נדרי** 2) use the version that related to the vows of the past year 3) use the version that concerned future vows 4) use a version that sought to annul vows of the past year and the next year. The majority of communities followed **ר' תם**. In our time, many of us have recited two of those versions. The Philip Birnbaum edition of the **מהזור** used the version that related only to future vows. The Artscroll edition includes a version that refers to both past and future vows. The notes provided by both the Artscroll and the Birnbaum editions provide a good place to start learning about this prayer.

פסוקי דזמרה ביום כיפור

After the prayer of **הודו**, **רב עמרם** placed the following chapters of **תהילים**: 17, 19, 25, 33, 32, 34, 51, 90, 65, 135, 85, 86, 103, 104, 121, 124, 130 and 136. The following chapters are not part of our version of **פסוקי דזמרה**: 17, 25, 32, 51, 65, 85, 86, 103, 104, 121, 124 and 130. What **רב עמרם** did in adding to **פסוקי דזמרה** was not unique. We add to our version of **פסוקי דזמרה** on **שבת ויום טוב** **פסוקי דזמרה** on **יום כיפור** was merely following the rule that **פסוקי דזמרה** should prepare one for the prayer of that day. The question therefore is not why did **רב עמרם** add to **פסוקי דזמרה** but why do we not tailor our version of **פסוקי דזמרה** to prepare ourselves for **תפלת יום כיפור**.

WHICH VOWS?

כל נדרי presents issues because it is an attempt to disaffirm vows in a public arena. Birnbaum in his **מהזור** hinted to another purpose. *This prayer acquired intense significance during the period of Spanish persecutions where some hundred thousand Jews were forced to forswear their faith and adopt a new religion. Many of these attended synagogue in secret at the risk of their lives and used the **כל נדרי** text as a form of renouncing vows imposed upon them by the Inquisition.* Perhaps the purpose of **כל נדרי** is to remember those Jews who lived in such difficult times when they had to choose between life and conversion. Maybe **הז"ל** wanted us to begin **יום כיפור** recognizing how lucky we are to live in a time when we do not have to choose between life and conversion.

גמר התימה טובה!