

אָרוֹן קוּדֵשׁ THAT PRECEDE THE CLOSING OF THE פְּסוּקִים

The paragraph that begins with the words: **ובנחה יאמר** needs special attention since it represents the words that we recite as we are about to close the **אָרוֹן הַקּוּדֵשׁ**. It is the last chance to take advantage of the special moments that we create through **קריאת התורה**. In the excerpts from the **כל בו** and the **ספר המחכים** that we previously reviewed, it was not clear what other **פְּסוּקִים** were recited, if any, in addition to the **פְּסוּק** of **יאמר**. In his **סידור**, **רב שבת סופר** (16th Century) provides the following:

ובנחה יאמר, שובה, י-י, רבבות אלפי ישראל. קומה י-י למנוחתך, אתה וארון עזך. כהניך ילבשו צדק, וחסידיך ירננו. בעבור דוד עבדך, אל תשב פני משיחך.

The **פְּסוּקִים** that come after the **יאמר** **ובנחה** are consecutive **פְּסוּקִים** from **תהילים**: **קלב', ח'–י'**. The following may be a possible source for reciting those **פְּסוּקִים**:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף ל' עמ' א'–אמר שלמה עשרים וארבעה רננות ולא נענה. פתח ואמר: (תהלים כד) שאו שערים ראשיכם והנשאו פתחי עולם ויבא מלך הכבוד, רהטו בתריה למיבלעיה, אמרו: (תהלים כד) מי הוא זה מלך הכבוד? אמר להו: ה' עוזו וגבור. חזר ואמר: שאו שערים ראשיכם ושאו פתחי עולם ויבא מלך הכבוד. מי הוא זה מלך הכבוד ה' צב-אות הוא מלך הכבוד סלה ולא נענה. כיון שאמר (דברי הימים ב' ו) ה' א-להים אל תשב פני משיחך זכרה לחסדי דוד עבדך, מיד נענה!

By the time of **רבי יעקב מעמדין** (18th Century), all the verses that we recite after reciting **יאמר** and **עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותמכיה מאשר: פְּסוּקִים** are in place. **משלי פרק ג'** **פְּסוּקִים** represent consecutive **פְּסוּקִים** but from **דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל נתיבותיה שלום**. They are recited in reverse order. Their inclusion may be related to the following:

ספר אבודרהם דיני קריאת התורה ד"ה והכל עולין–ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו מלך העולם אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים שנאמר (דב' ז, ו) ובך בחר ה' להיות לו לעם סגולה. ונתן לנו את תורתו שנאמר (שמות כד, ב) ויאמר ה' אל משה עלה אלי ההרה והיה שם ואתנה לך את לוחות האבן והתורה והמצוה אשר כתבתי להורותם. וכתוב (מלא' ג, כב) זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר צויתי אותו בחורב על כל ישראל חקים ומשפטים. וחזתם ברוך אתה י-י נותן התורה. ולא תקנו בברכה זו ראשונה חיי עולם נטע בתוכנו כמו שתקנו בשניה שאחר קריאת התורה לפי שאינה עץ חיים עד שיחזיק בה שנאמר (משלי ג, יח) עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה, אבל משהחזיק בה וקרא בה, מברכין חיי עולם נטע בתוכנו. ולכך צריך כל אחד מהעולים להחזיק הספר בידו בשעה שמברך. וראיה לזה מדאמרין בפ' לולב הגזול (סופ"ו) קורא ק"ש ולולבו בידו מתפלל ולולבו בידו קורא בתורה או נושא את כפיו מניה על

1. Although this source does not include the **פְּסוּקִים** that we recite, it is a source for reciting **פְּסוּקִים** that represent this theme.

גב קרקע וזהו כדי להחזיק ספר תורה ביד. ועוד ראייה אחרת מדאמרינן בב"ר (סופ"ו) לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפידך (יהושע א, ח) מלמד שהיה ספר תורה בחיקו של יהושע שאין אומרים הנה אלא למי שתופס החפץ בידו.

The basis for including of the פסוק **אל תעונו** is hard to trace. However the theme of the פסוק is clearly related. Special attention needs to be given to the last פסוק that we recite before the ארון קודש is closed, both because it is the last פסוק and because almost all present day נוסחאות recite it just before the ארון קודש is closed; i.e. השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם. Let us review what we find in a מחזור that was published in Rome in 1540:

לאחר שגמרו כל הקוראין את קריאתן נוטל חזן ספר תורה ומהדקו והקהל עומדין על רגליהם ואומר החזן קדיש על עילא; ואומר: אתה ה' לעולם תשב כסאך לדור ודור. למה לנצח תשכחינו תעזבינו לאורך ימים. השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם. והציבור גם כן חוזרים ואומרים השיבנו, וכן כולם: אנא רחום אל תפן לרשעינו, בינה הגיגינו, הושיענו כי לך עינינו ולך לישועתינו. רחם נא קהל עדת ישורון סלה ומחול עונם הושיענו א—להי ישעינו. הושיענו מושיענו כי לך עינינו ולך לישועתינו. הושיעה את עמך וברך את נחלתיך ורעם ונשאם עד העולם. וכשגוללין הספר אומר החזן יהי רצון לפני אבינו שבשמים.

It appears that the concept of reciting פסוקים from the end of איכה was accepted by all נוסחאות. However, it became limited to the last פסוק of איכה. The excerpt from the מחזור published in 1540 shares a similarity with what we recite as part of עשרת ימי עשרת ימי תשובה primarily because the עשרת ימי תשובה are an עת רצון. It is a time when the רבונו של עולם moves close to us and is available to accept our תשובה. Perhaps we recite the פסוק of: השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה as a reminder that the interval between הוצאת התורה and הכנת התורה is also a moment when the רבונו של עולם moves close to us and is available to accept our תשובה.

In נוסח תימן the final words that are recited during הכנסת התורה are a combination of a פסוקים and פיוט:

שובה למעונך. ושכון בבית מאויך.
כי כל פה וכל לשון יתנו הוד והדר למלכותך.
ובנחה יאמר, שובה, י-י, רבבות אלפי ישראל. השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם:

recommends that the following be performed during the recital of the paragraph of: ובנחה יאמר:

ובעת שנפתח הארון אומרים "ובנחה" ומשתחוים מול הספר תורה ומניחין אותה בארון באלכסון (ומי שאינו משתחוה [וסובר שאסור לעשות כבוד זה לספר תורה] מנדין אותו "שלחן הקריאה").

TRANSLATION OF SOURCES

א' עמ' ל' דף שבת מסכת בבלי תלמוד -When King Solomon built the Temple, he desired to take the Ark into the Holy of Holies, whereupon the gates stuck to each other. King Solomon uttered twenty-four prayers, yet he was not answered. He opened his mouth and exclaimed, 'Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall come in. The gates rushed upon him to swallow him up, crying, 'Who is the King of Glory?' 'The Lord, strong and mighty,' answered he. Then he repeated, 'Lift up your heads, O you gates; Yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. Selah'. King Solomon yet was not answered. But as soon as he prayed, 'O Lord G-d, turn not away the face of Your anointed, remember the good deeds of David Your servant,' he was immediately answered.

ספר אבודרהם דיני קריאת התורה ד"ה והכל עולין -Baruch Ata Hashem . . . Asher Bachar Banu Mi'Kol Ha'Amim as it is written (Devarim 7, 6): G-d chose to be for Him a Special people. V'Nasan Lanu Es Toraso as it is written (Shemos 24, 2): Hashem said to Moshe come to Me on this mountain, stay there and it will give you the stone tablets and the Torah and the Mitzvot that I wrote upon them for you to decipher and it is written (Malachi 3, 22): remember the Torah of Moshe my servant that I commanded to him in Horeb for all of Israel as laws and rules. He then concludes the Bracha by reciting: Baruch Ata Hashem Nosain Ha'Torah. They did not coin the opening Bracha with the words: Chayai Olam Natah B'Sochainu as they did in the concluding Bracha because the Torah is not a tree of life until the person holds it, as it is written (Mishlei 3, 18): it is a tree of life for those who grab hold of it. Once he has held the Torah and he has read from it, then it is appropriate to say: a way of life He implanted within us. Therefore each one who steps forward to read from the Torah must hold onto the Torah at the moment that he makes the Bracha. Support for this rule can be found in the Chapter entitled "the Lulav that was stolen" wherein it is written: while reciting Kriyas Shema, he must hold on to the Lulav, when he recites Shemona Esrei, his lulav should be held by him. However, when he reads from the Torah or he is blessing the people, he should place the Lulav on the ground. The reason for this is that he must use his hands to hold on to the Torah while reading from it. Another support can be found in Breishis Rabbah on the words: Lo Yamush Sefer Ha'Torah Ha'Zos Mi'Pei'Chah (Yehoshua 1,8) which teaches us that Yehoshua kept the Torah in his arms at all times. The word: Ha'Zeh is used only when the person is holding the object in his arms.

מהזור published in Rome in 1540: When the last of those who come forward to read from the Torah finish reading, the prayer leader takes the Sefer Torah in his arms and closes it. The congregation stands on their feet and the prayer leader recites Half-Kaddish. He then

recites the last three verses of the Book of Eicha. The congregation then repeats the last verse of: Hashevainu Hashem Eilecha and together they say: Merciful One do not turn towards our evil acts. Shower us with understanding. Save us because it is to You to whom we turn our eyes and to You we look to rescue us. Show mercy to Your people, forgive our sins, rescue us our Savior. Protect us our Rescuer because our eyes are turned to You and You are our Savior. Save Your people and bless Your People, bless your inheritance; be their shepherd, and carry them forever. When they roll the Sefer Torah, the prayer leader recites: Yihei Ratzon Liphnei Aveinu Sh’Ba’Shamayim.

רבי יעקב מעמדין -At the time that the Aron is opened they say: Oo’Vinuchu and they bow down towards the Sefer Torah and they place the Sefer Torah in the Aron diagonally. He who does not bow towards the Sefer Torah and thinks that it is prohibited to demonstrate this act of honor towards the Sefer Torah, should be ostracized.

SUPPLEMENT

THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO INSTITUTING תיקון
ליל שבועות

An Excerpt from *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer* by Stefan C. Reif, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pages 240-246.

In dealing with the development of the mystical approach to prayer in the period under discussion, scholars of today no longer adopt the unfavourable value judgement that was once characteristic of scientific Jewish studies and is to be found in textbooks on the history of Jewish liturgy that are still widely used. To regard such an approach as a 'negation of life, an escape from its realities' and to link it with 'misery and ... cultural decline', as Idelsohn did, is to fail to do justice to the independently valid part it played in the religious traditions of Judaism. Elbogen, of course, went even further in the negation of the Jewish mystical inheritance for the sake of modern theological polemic. He compared the influence of Issac Luria's kabbalistic ideas on the liturgy with an 'infectious disease' that spread widely and swiftly and he lamented 'the unparalleled esteem that it still enjoys among Jews who remain untouched by the spirit of modern religious movements'. It is now widely recognized that mysticism has had an effect on Jewish attitudes to worship from earliest times, that it deserves a fair and balanced assessment in that and other contexts, and that it simply is not historically accurate to dismiss the Jewish mystic as marginal to the normative practice. At the same time, the success achieved by Scholem and his school of students in putting Jewish mysticism back on the map has encouraged an unfortunate tendency to present kabbalah as in some way antithetical to *halakhab*. To argue such a case, except in a small minority of instances through Jewish history, is to deny the evidence of the vast majority of sources. Those who espoused the kabbalistic cause certainly applied it to the details of their daily lives but in the context of an adherence to the precepts of the halakhic system as they understood it. The authorities who favoured an overall approach that was somewhat drier or inclined towards the rational and philosophical nevertheless engaged in personal prayers that were not, as they were often aware, without their pietistic leanings. The truth is surely that in Jewish liturgical matters there has always been a tension between the mystical and the halakhic that sometimes succeeded in pulling in one direction, sometimes the other, and often brought about a compromise in the resultant practice. The *merkava* traditions of the talmudic period and their subsequent development in the *hekhaloth* literature of the geonic period centered on the angels, the celestial world, and the use of the ecstatic hymn and left their mark through such praises as the *qedushah*. It was, however, by no means that same set of factors that led each generation to express its preferences and before an account is given of the successful

impact the Safed mystics had on the prayer-book it may be useful to recall the mystical teachings that they had imported with them from Spain and some of the general developments in the intellectual history of the Jews in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that contributed to their success.

As has previously been pointed out, the manuscript liturgies of the fifteenth century already being to show some small influence of the kabbalistic teachings that had been developed in Spain but it was never more than a small elite that applied them intensively to their lives. Following the example set by the schools in Provence and Gerona, and to an extent publicised by Nahmanides, the ideas of the thirteenth-century kabbalist, Abraham Abulafia, had laid the foundations with their expansion of the German Hasidic doctrine of the numerical value of words and letters into the special importance of their particular combination, their use of the doctrine of the ten *sefirot* and their 'practical' ideal of communion with G-d. Although it is not easy to draw direct parallels between his concepts and those of the Muslim Sufis, some points of contact have been established between Egypt, Spain and Safed that may ultimately demonstrate more of a dependence than can yet be adjudged. The more theosophical and meditative aspect was represented by Moses de Leon and the Zohar, with the emphasis on biblical exegesis, myth, mystery and sexual imagery. Common to all Spanish kabbalists was the central aim of *devequth* (= 'cohesion'), the blissful communion with God, at least some stages of which could be achieved by prayer with the required degree of devotion. Much, then, of what the Spanish kabbalists took with them at the Expulsion had been adumbrated in the teachings of earlier generations of mystics but it was to be a unique combination of circumstances that gave them the opportunity of incorporating many more of these teaching into the prayer-book than it had previously been able to absorb.

It is probably fair to say that there are rarely developments within any religious ideology and practice that are not motivated by a variety of factors rather than by one cataclysmic event and that it is a misguided pursuit of the latter that often sends scholars off in wrong directions. It has been a cultural thesis of much of this volume that the history of Jewish liturgy may best be understood by a reference not to one area of scholarship but to an analysis of the interplay of various influences at given periods in Jewish history. It should already have become apparent from earlier parts of this chapter that there were various reasons for the widespread acceptance by what may be called ordinary congregations of worshipping Jews of many aspects of what was at heart an elitist, ascetic and pietist expression of Judaism and that is one of the best examples of the kind of complicated historical phenomenon that is being proposed. In the realm of ideas, the Jews of Poland, Italy and Turkey were ready, for a move away from the purely scholastic and philosophically systematic to the more religiously personal and romantic. If Maimonides had previously represented the intellectual ideal, the less universal notions of such thinkers as Judah Ha-Levi came back into the limelight and current historians of ideas have traced the same tendency in all three major centres of Jewish population. If one may narrow down the more broadly philosophical to the more immediately theological, note has also been

taken of the renewed interest in the soul, the after-life and the cosmic spheres and the growing belief that human prayer could have a direct effect on all these. Whether or not a concern for the dead constituted the more popular expression of such lofty ideas, it came to play a greater part in liturgical formulation. As far as such formulation is concerned, a new mixture of Jewish populations brought an awareness that what had previously been viewed as the rite sanctioned by authority and tradition and exclusively applied in one area might be challenged by its equally valid alternative from another. There were even those who detected in alternative rites examples of texts that they regarded as worthy of emulation and the apparently increasing desire for introductory and concluding items also gave scope for the absorption of previously unfamiliar prayers. The development of trade, the consolidation of Jewish communities in greater numbers in major centres, the emergence of the Sefardi rite as the standard in more such centres, and the consequent contraction in the size of the Jewish world from the viewpoints of travel, accessibility and individuality, were the result of significant demographical change and the reason for remarkable liturgical adjustment. A new means of widely marketing such adjustment was available in the technical process of printing and the 'canonicity' of the *siddur* had been long enough established to encourage the acceptance of its printed form as an important element in decisions about future ritual. The success of the special community of Safed in establishing its social, economic and religious independence led to the production of a spiritual commodity that came to be neatly encompassed in the new volumes and easily made available to those who, for all the above-noted reasons, were hungry for its consumption.

It has even been suggested by Elliott Horowitz that such a humble matter as the drinking of coffee had an influence on the acceptance of one of the practices of the Safed school of mystics and the convincing case that he has made indicates that the wider social sphere, what he calls the 'social history of piety', is another one that has to be taken into account in arriving at explanations of liturgical developments. Although there were precedents in the land of Israel and in Italy for prayer vigils at night and in the early morning, the fact is that it was the midnight *tiqqun basoth* championed in Luria's Safed, that succeeded in becoming the popular form of such piety in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although on such occasions as *Shavu'oth* and *Hosha'na Rabbah* it became customary to spend the whole night in prayer and study, the *tiqqun basoth* was generally adopted as a lengthening of the evening and it is Horowitz's thesis that the increase in the drinking of coffee and the opening of coffee-houses in the Holy Land and in Italy were major factors in the preference for staying up at night over rising at dawn. The introduction of this stimulant brought with its 'the emergence of a new perception of the night in which the hours of darkness could be shaped and manipulated by human initiative rather than condemn men to passive repose'. Thus it was that laments for the destruction of the Temple, prayers for the restoration of the Jews to their land, and the recitation of certain psalms, centred around the midnight hour, became a popular addition to the

catalogue of Jewish acts of worship in the form chosen by the *Ari* (the 'lion', i.e. 'Elohi Rabbi Yisbaq, R. Issac the 'divine').

There were, however, numerous other additions to the standard liturgy, many of them more popular than the *tiqqun*, that were bequeathed by these mystics that their later emulators and a brief survey of the major figures and the compositions their circles produced will demonstrate clearly the major impact that they made on the prayer-book. The impetus for the practical adoption of kabbalistic teaching in the Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian areas had come primarily from such outstanding leaders as David ben Solomon Ibn Avi Zimra (= *Radbaṣ*) and Jacob Berad, although it should immediately be stated that the former was antagonistic to the latter's messianistically inspired idea of reintroducing the ancient rabbinic ordination (*semikhab*). By the time that they settled in Safed as mature men around the middle of the sixteenth century, it already had a lively community of Ashkenazi, Sefardi and Italian Jews and had been growing for over half a century. Both Joseph Karo and Solomon Alkabetz had joined the community in the thirties of that century and the former's inspiration as a mystical visionary and the latter's poetry and mystical interpretations of the prayers exercised a profound influence on their pupil, Moses Cordovero, who married a sister of Alkabetz. Issac Luria, of mixed Ashkenazi-Sefardi parentage, had already studied with the *Radbaṣ* in Egypt, mastered the *Zohar*, adopted an intensely pietistic lifestyle and developed his own system of kabbalistic thought, but he took advantage of the few years that he had in Safed towards the end of his life to sit at the feet of Cordovero who, incidentally, was also the author of a commentary on the prayers. Luria also attracted to himself a whole circle of scholars and mystics and inspired them through direct contact with his personality and religiosity to study his system and spread his ideas. The most famous and active of his disciples, his 'Boswell' in fact, was Hayyim Vital whose *'Es Ha-Hayyim* is a vast collection of Luria's teachings parts of which, when taken together with his *Sha'ar Ha-Kanvanot*, provide a record of the Lurianic school's liturgical compositions and practices. Other leading figures in the remarkable community of that day were Moses Alsheikh, homilist and halakhic authority, and Eleazer Azikri whose daily life was devoted to cultivating the highest ideals of communion with God. As Alkabetz before him, he particularly favoured the recitation of the prayers at the graves of the righteous. In addition, the community was probably visited by Israel ben Moses Najara of Damascus, entitled by Schechter 'the mystical bard', during the period that his father was resident in Safed and no doubt had the benefit of hearing some of the poems he eventually published in the collection *Zemiroth Yisrael* that was one of the books printed in the kabbalistic centre itself, appearing there in 1587.

In attempting to establish the precise date and place for the incorporation into the prayer-book of each of the compositions that was either produced by the Safed mystic and their followers or at least given an increased significance of them, the researcher is in some difficulty. Although the general trend is clear and the specific items are fairly easily identified, if only from a comparison of prayer-books of the early sixteenth century with their counterparts of the mid-seventeenth, it soon becomes apparent that the basic analysis

of all the various rites during this period has yet to be done. Consequently, current scholarship may note the overall developments and hope that later research will fill in the details for the various communities. What is certain is that Scholem's claim that the Lurianic kabbalah was 'the last religious movement in Judaism, the influence of which become preponderant among all sections of the Jewish people in every country of the diaspora, without exception' is fully borne out by the liturgical sources.