

מגן אבות / מעין שבע¹

The abbreviated form of *ליל שמונה עשרה*, *הזרת הש"ץ*, repetition of *שמונה עשרה*, that is recited on *ליל שבת*, known as *מעין שבע*, poses several issues: Why do we recite *מעין שבע* only on Friday nights? Is *מעין שבע* a form of *הזרת הש"ץ*? Why do we recite the opening *ברכה* of *שמונה עשרה* and the end of the middle *ברכה* of *שמונה עשרה* when *מעין שבע* contains within it abbreviated forms of all seven *ברכות* of *שמונה עשרה* of *ליל שבת*? What was the origin of this practice? Did the practice begin in *ארץ ישראל* or in *בבל*?

Two references to the practice appear in the *תלמודים*, one in the *תלמוד בבלי* and one in the *תלמוד ירושלמי*:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף כד' עמ' ב'—דאמר רבא: יום טוב שחל להיות בשבת, שליה ציבור היורד לפני התיבה ערבית אינו צריך להזכיר של יום טוב, שאילמלא שבת אין שליה ציבור יורד ערבית ביום טוב. הכי השתא התם, בדין הוא דאפילו בשבת נמי לא צריך, ורבנן הוא דתקוני משום סכנה.

Translation: For Raba said: On a Festival that falls on the Sabbath, the prayer leader who descends before the ark at the Evening Service need not make mention of the Festival, because if not for it being Shabbos, the prayer leader would not descend before the ark at the Evening Service on Festivals. On what basis can you compare these situations! Concerning repeating Shemona Esrei, it is not required by ritual law even on the Sabbath, and it was the Rabbis who instituted it on account of danger.

רש"י מסכת שבת דף כד עמ' ב'—שליו ציבור היורד ערבית – המתפלל ברכת מעין שבע קונה שמים וארץ מגן אבות בדברו.

Translation: The prayer leader who descends before the ark at the Evening Service—He is the one who recites the abbreviated form of Shemona Esrei in the following manner: Konay Shamayim V'Aratz Magen Avos.

משום סכנה – מוזיקין, שלא היו בתי כנסיות שלהן בישוב, וכל שאר לילי החול היו עסוקין במלאכתן, ובגמרן מלאכתן מתפללין ערבית בביתן, ולא היו באין בבית הכנסת, אבל לילי שבת באין בבית הכנסת, וחשו שיש שאין ממהרין לבא ושודיין לאחר תפלה, לכך האריכו תפלת הציבור.

Translation: Because of danger—Evil spirits. The synagogues at that time were not located within the residential areas. On weekdays, the general public was busy with their work and when they finished work, they would recite Tefilas Arvis at home and would not go to the synagogue. But on Friday nights, the general public would go to synagogue. Our Sages were concerned that some might not hurry to come to synagogue to be on time and would linger in synagogue after the others left. That is why our Sages instituted a practice that lengthened the service.

1. I would like thank Rabbi Dr. Dalia Marx and Rabbi Jack Kaufman for sharing their notes on *מעין שבע* with me.

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת ברכות פרק ה דף יא טור ד /ה"א-אמר רבי יוסי בר' נהיגין תמן במקום שאין יין שליה ציבור עובר לפני התיבה ואומר ברכה אחת מעין שבע וחותרם במקדש ישראל ואת יום השבת.²

Translation: Rav Yossi son of Rav said: We conduct ourselves here that when there is no wine available for Kiddush, the prayer leader descends to the ark and recites an abbreviated form of Shemona Esrei and ends the abbreviated form of Shemona Esrei with the Bracha of Mikadesh Yisroel V'Es Yom Ha'Shabbos.

Here is one further explanation of the סכנה that prompted the establishment of the practice of reciting מעין שבע:

אוצר המדרשים (אייזנשטיין) מנין עמוד 503- (י') למה אומרים ברוך מגן אברהם (מגן אבות) בלילי שבתות ואין אומרים אותו בימים טובים, מפני המאחרים שמא יבואו הלסטים ויקחו לבושיהם, מפני שהן יודעין בלילי שבתות ואינן יודעין בלילי ימים טובים.

Translation: What prompted the institution of the practice to recite Baruch Magen Avrohom (Magen Avos) on Friday nights and why is it not recited on the eve of Holidays? It was instituted for the benefit of those who came late to synagogue. Our Sages were concerned that robbers would attack those left in the synagogue and would steal their clothing. Our Sages instituted the practices for Friday nights and not for the eve of Holidays because the robbers were aware that Jews congregated in synagogue on Friday nights but were not aware that Jews congregated in synagogue on the eve of Jewish holidays.

From the following statement of the בעל ספר הרדים, a commentary on the תלמוד ירושלמי, we can conclude that the reasons given for the practice described in both תלמודים were the reasons why the practice was instituted in בבל, Babylonia:

פירוש מבעל ספר הרדים-תמן בבבל-שהיה בה מקומות שאין יין; והרי אמרנו למעלה שסומך על קדושת היום שבתפלת ערבית, דמצות תורה זכור את יום השבת, לקדשו בדברים בכניסתו וביציאותו, כיון שקדשו בדברים יצא. ומדרבנן אף על פי שקדש בתפלה אצרכוהו לקדש שנית איין וכיון דלא אפשר לקיים מדרבנן יקיים דאורייתא. ולפי שתפלת ערבית רשות ולכך לא הצריכו לש"ץ לחזור התפלה למי שאינו בקי. הכא דחובה קידוש ודין תורה, והרי אין לו יין ששכנו הקרוב אליו יקדש לו, הנהיגו ששלוח ציבור יחזור מעין שבע וחותרם בשבת להוציא את מי שאינו בקי.

Translation: The word "here" used in the Gemara was a reference to Babylonia. There were places within Babylonia where wine was not available. We already noted above that a person can rely on fulfilling the Mitzvah of sanctifying Shabbos by reciting the middle Bracha of Shemona Esrei in Tefilas Arvis of Friday night. It is a mitzvah, from the Torah, to remember Shabbos, to sanctify Shabbos through the recital of words, at the beginning of Shabbos and at the end of Shabbos. Once a person has sanctified Shabbos by reciting words, he has fulfilled his Biblical obligation to remember Shabbos. Our Rabbis instituted the practice to sanctify Shabbos again over wine even though it was already sanctified by reciting Shemona Esrei. In situations where one cannot sanctify Shabbos in accordance with the direction of the Sages, it is

2. According to this גמרא מעין שבע is not a form of חזרת הש"ץ but is a substitute for קידוש על היין, Kiddush over wine.

להבין את התפלה

sufficient to have sanctified Shabbos through Shemona Esrei. Since Tefilas Arvis is optional, it is not necessary to repeat Shemona Esrei in order to help those who do not know how to recite Shemona Esrei fulfill their obligation. On Friday night, it is a Biblical obligation to sanctify Shabbos in Shemona Esrei. When many could not rely on their neighbors having wine and including them in the sanctification of Shabbos over wine, it became necessary to institute the practice of the prayer leader repeating an abbreviated form of Shemona Esrei and end it with the Bracha of Mikadesh Ha'Shabbos to fulfil the obligation for the ones who did not know how to recite Shemona Esrei on their own.

The **בעל ספר חרדים** demonstrates how both **תלמודים** present the reasons why the practice was instituted in **בבל**, Babylonia. We also learn the following: As a result of the performance of our practices on Friday night, we fulfill both a **מצוה דאורייתא** of **קידוש** and a **מצוה דרבנן** of **קידוש**. The **מצוה דאורייתא** of **קידוש** is fulfilled with **דברים**, words; i.e. by reciting the middle **ברכה** of **עשרה** **שמונה עשרה** on **ליל שבת**. The **מצוה דרבנן** of **קידוש** is fulfilled with **קידוש על היין**.

If both references in the **תלמודים** are to **מנהג בבל**, what was the practice in **ארץ ישראל**? We know that the **שליח ציבור** recited **מעין שבע** as a form of **חזרת הש"ץ** in **ארץ ישראל** because the wording of **מעין שבע** follows closely the wording of **שמונה עשרה** as it was recited according to **מנהג ארץ ישראל**. Here are two examples: we open the **ברכה** of **מעין שבע** by reciting the opening words of **שמונה עשרה** as they appear in **ארץ ישראל**:
ברוך אתה יי, א-להינו וא-להי אבותינו, א-להי אברהם, א-להי יצחק, וא-להי יעקב,
הא-ל הגדול הגבור והנורא, א-ל עליון, קונה שמים וארץ

We also say: **מעין הברכות, א-ל ההודאות, אדון השלום**. Those words represent an abbreviated form of the **ברכה** of **מעון הברכות ועושה השלום** which was the **חתימת** **מנהג ארץ ישראל** in **שם שלום** of the **ברכה** of the **הברכה**.

We can also conclude from the failure of the **גמרא** to provide an explanation as to why the practice to recite **מעין שבע** began in **ארץ ישראל** that the practice began in **ארץ ישראל** first and for the reason that it was necessary to recite **שמונה עשרה** on **ליל שבת** as the fulfillment of the Biblical requirement to be **מקדש שבת בדברים**. The **שליח ציבור** recited **מעין שבע** so that those who did not know how to recite the **שמונה עשרה** of **ליל שבת** could fulfill their obligation by listening to the **שליח ציבור** and reciting **אמן**. That one purpose of reciting **מעין שבע** was to assist those who did not know how to recite the **שמונה עשרה** of **ליל שבת** is supported by the following:

תשובות הגאונים החדשות - עמנואל (אופק) סימן יח-והכי אמ' רב משה יחיד שטעה בלילי שבת ולא התפלל אתה קדשת כיון ששמע משליח צבור מגן אבות בדברו שהיא ברכה אחת מעין שבע ברכות מתחלה ועד סוף יצא ידי חובתו. והכי אמ' רב נטרונאי היכא דלא התפלל

שבע ברכות ושמען משליה צבור מגן אבות בדברו מרישא ועד סוף נפיק.

Translation: This is what Rabbi Moshe said: an individual who erred in the recital of Shemona Esrei on Friday night and did not recite the Bracha of Ata Kidashta as long as he listens to the prayer leader recite Magen Avos Bidvaro which is an abbreviated form of Shemona esrei from start to finish, fulfills his obligation. This is what Rav Notrani said: if he failed to recite the Shemona Esrei of Friday night and heard the prayer leader recite: Magen Avos Bidvaro from start to finish, he fulfilled his obligation.

Why did they not institute the practice of repeating the complete **שמונה עשרה** on Friday night? Our Sages were concerned that if the complete **שמונה עשרה** was repeated on Friday night, the public would extend the practice to the other nights of the week. By using an abbreviated version of **שמונה עשרה**, everyone recognized that they were following a practice that was meant to be limited to Friday night. That may further explain why in addition to reciting the abbreviated form of **שמונה עשרה**, we also recite the opening **ברכה** and close with the end of the middle **ברכה** of **שמונה עשרה**, as a safeguard that the practice not be adopted for **תפלת מעריב** of weekdays.

We might be able to draw one additional conclusion from this discussion. We may have uncovered another difference between **מנהג ארץ ישראל** and **מנהג בבל**. According to **מנהג ארץ ישראל**, reciting **שמונה עשרה** on Friday night was a **חובה**, mandatory, and not a **רשות**, optional, as it was on every other night of the week since it represented the Biblical requirement to be **מקדש שבת בדברים**. **מנהג בבל** apparently disagreed. It viewed the recital of **שמונה עשרה** on Friday night not as a **חובה**, mandatory, but as a **רשות**, optional. They must have considered **קידוש על היין**, Kiddush over wine, as the fulfillment of both the Biblical requirement to sanctify **שבת** through words and the Rabbinical requirement to sanctify **שבת** over wine. The practice of reciting **מעין שבע** in Babylonia began only as a result of one of the two concerns reasons cited above; i.e. danger or because of the unavailability of wine. Since they borrowed the practice of reciting **מעין שבע** from **מנהג ארץ ישראל**, they kept the wording as it was recited in **ארץ ישראל**.

One last point. Some follow the practice of omitting **מעין שבע** when the first night of **פסח** falls on Friday night. They justify that act by arguing that since the first night of **פסח** is a **ליל שימורים**, there is no need to be concerned about **סכנה**, danger. That practice apparently follows **מנהג בבל** and ignores **מנהג ארץ ישראל**. Query: why is no consideration given to the possibility that reciting **שמונה עשרה** on Friday night may be a **חובה**, mandatory, because there is an obligation to be **מקדש שבת בדברים** in **שמונה עשרה**? How do those who do not know how to recite **שמונה עשרה** fulfill their obligation if the prayer leader does not recite **מעין שבע**?