

Unit 1. An Overview of the Shabbat Morning Service (for use with Siddur Eit Ratzon)

One way of telling where you are in Siddur Eit Ratzon is by looking at the footer at the bottom of each page. These name, in order, the major sections of the Shabbat morning service:

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| 1. Morning Blessings | pages 9-18 |
| 2. Songs of Praise | pages 19-40 |
| 3. The Sh'ma and its Blessings | pages 41-57 |
| 4. The Amidah | pages 58-74 |
| 5. Torah Service | pages 75-89 |
| 6. The Musaf Amidah (not always recited) | pages 90-102 |
| 7. Conclusion of Service | pages 103-108 |

The subsequent pages of the Siddur (pages 109-140) consist of prayers that are said on special occasions, the weekday Amidah, and Addenda. At the beginning of the Siddur, there is an Introduction and User's Guide.

Unit 1 provides brief discussions of the seven sections bulleted above, and an eighth section on the *Kaddish*, a prayer that appears in a number of different versions throughout the Siddur. Subsequent units will contain more detailed discussions of the first four sections and of the prayers for special occasions.

A brief but comprehensive summary of the structure of the Shabbat morning service can be found on the right side of page 7 of the Siddur, which may be read in conjunction with this discussion.

Glancing at the morning service, one might get the impression that it consists of an undifferentiated mass of repetitive prayers. However, that is far from the case: The prayer service has a very clear flow and reflects the deliberate design of its authors and compilers. Each of the first three sections of the morning service is intended to serve as preparation for the subsequent sections, and ultimately for the *Amidah*, a prayer that is said silently and standing, and that is choreographed as a personal audience with God.

1. Morning blessings.

The word “blessing,” *b'rachah* in Hebrew, has two meanings in the context of Jewish prayer. It refers both to the gifts we receive from God and to the statements that we make to acknowledge those gifts. (See the *Guidepost* on *Blessings* on pages 12-13.)

The morning blessings provide us with a structured way of reminding ourselves of all the blessings that we receive each and every day. For example, one of the *b'rachot* (plural of *b'rachah*) is: “Blessed are You, our God, Ruler of the universe, You straighten the bent” (second *b'rachah* on page 14). The first part of this *b'rachah* is a formula used in all *b'rachot*, acknowledging God as the source of all of our blessings. (The Hebrew in this

first part may be familiar to you, since it is used when we light candles for Shabbat, when we begin a meal, and on many other occasions: *Baruch Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam.*) The second part of the *b'rachah*, "You straighten the bent," is a phrase that is very concrete and, at the same time, very open-ended. The translation in this Siddur is intended to help us make a link between the surface meaning of the phrase and the other meanings it might have: "You straighten the bent, removing whatever pushes us down."

As a way to gain further understanding of this prayer, please try the following exercise. Close your eyes (after reading this paragraph) and let your head fall onto your chest. Then slowly raise your head until it is fully extended. Imagine that as you raise your head inch by inch the weight holding your head down is slowly removed. You can stand tall despite the difficulties of your everyday life. That is a blessing.

We often fail to recognize the blessing of being able to stand tall in the face of life's difficulties, and therefore rarely acknowledge it. The morning *b'rachot* remind us of this blessing and the many other blessings that we experience every day and often take for granted, and enable us to become aware of them and to acknowledge their source. None of us experiences our lives as perfect, but each of us can choose to focus either on what's going wrong or, instead, on what's good about our lives. The morning blessings help us move into the Songs of Praise with an attitude of gratitude.

Terminology

- *B'rachah* – blessing (plural *b'rachot*) – this term is used in two ways:
 - A blessing that comes to us from God
 - A statement that we make in acknowledgement of a blessing from God
- *Birchot haShachar* – the "morning blessings" are referred to in Hebrew as *Birchot haShachar*, which literally means "blessings for the dawn"; in ancient times, these were said privately, soon after awakening, and were not part of the synagogue service.
- Transliteration – a way of spelling Hebrew words phonetically in English, as in *b'rachah* – see page 149 for a key to pronouncing the transliteration

Questions for discussion

- What are some of the things that "push us down"? What resources do we have to help us remove them?
- The Talmud asks whether a person who is blind should say the *b'rachah* that speaks of God as "opening the eyes of the blind" (second last *b'rachah* on page 13). How would you answer this question?

2. Songs of Praise.

The section of the service known as Songs of Praise, *P'sukei d'Zimrah* in Hebrew, consists mainly of a selection from the biblical book, Psalms. The psalms are preceded by a *b'rachah* at the bottom of page 19 and are followed by one on pages 39-40; they

both refer to the psalms that they bookend as the “songs of David” since the tradition regards David as author of Psalms.

Both blessings refer to God as *chei ha-olamim*, the life of the universe. The progression from the Morning Blessings to the Songs of Praise reflects the idea that once we acknowledge our own blessings and recognize their source, we are able to see beyond ourselves and recognize that God animates the entire universe.

The theme that God animates the entire universe is reflected in the verse, “Your hand is always open, feeding every creature to its heart’s content (Psalms 145:16).” This theme is discussed in the *Perspective on God’s open hand* on pages 29-30.

This *Perspective* also discusses the problem raised by this and similar verses, that there are many who appear to have been left out when God’s bounty was distributed. It is suggested there that these verses are not meant to be taken literally, but rather describe “a spiritual positioning, an awareness and recognition that God’s blessings are always with us, and that if we turn toward God, we can see and experience those blessings.” When we look at the world around us, we can choose to focus on the chaos or, instead, choose to focus on the order. It is up to each person to choose the metaphors that he or she uses to understand our personal lives and the life of the universe.

The psalms tell us that God animates and sustains the universe and that, in response, the whole universe bursts into songs of praise. Psalm 148 on page 32 imagines a symphony of praise: “*Halleluyah!* Praise comes to Adonai from the heavens ... the sun and moon praise God, as do all the twinkling stars ... Praise comes to Adonai from the earth ... all mountains and hills ... all beasts, wild and tame, ... all peoples of the earth ... together they praise Your name” This symphony is accompanied with musical instruments in Psalm 150 (page 33) whose climax is “Let every single soul praise You! Let all that breathes praise You! *Halleluyah!*”

We are invited to join this symphony of praise.

Terminology

- Psalms – this is the English name of a book of the Bible (*T’hillim* in Hebrew) that consists of 150 psalms; all of the psalms are attributed to David, who was king of Israel in the tenth century before the common era, although some were clearly written at least four hundred years later, after the Jews were exiled to Babylon in 586 B.C.E. (For example, Psalm 137:1, “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, as we remembered Zion.)
- *P’sukei d’Zimrah* – “Songs of Praise,” the portion of the morning service that follows the Morning Blessings.
- *Chei ha-olamim* – in several places in the Siddur, God is referred to as the “life of the universe.”
- *Halleluyah!* – this consists of two words *ha-l’lu* and *Yah* – the latter is a name of God that occurs occasionally in the Bible and the former is the imperative form

of the verb that means to praise; *Halleluyah!* is thus properly translated, “Give praise to God!”

Question for discussion

- How would you interpret the verse, “Your hand is always open, feeding each creature to its heart’s content?”

3. The Sh’ma and its Blessings.

This section of the service begins with a call to prayer on page 42, and consists of three extended *b’rachot* surrounding the *Sh’ma*. The *Sh’ma* is a central declaration of Jewish faith: “Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.” The word “*Sh’ma*” is the first word of this statement and simply means “listen.”

There are many interpretations of what it means for God to be One, but the unity of God certainly precludes concepts of divinity involving multiplicity, such as notions of duality (e.g., separate forces of good and evil) or trinity, competing or complementary gods, or spirits that reside in all living beings or, even more broadly, in all objects.

It is true that the liturgy refers to many aspects or manifestations of God. The *Sh’ma*, however, insists that all of those manifestations are aspects of a single God, that “there is no other God” (see Deuteronomy 4:39, cited on page 105). We may understand or visualize God in many ways, but all of those understandings and visualizations are images of a single God.

Three major images of God are the focus of the three *b’rachot* that surround the *Sh’ma* – the first *b’rachah* (bottom of page 42 to page 48) focuses on God as the One who created us, the second *b’rachah* (pages 49-50) focuses on God as the One who loves us, and the third *b’rachah* (pages 54-57) focuses on God as the One who rescues and redeems us.

The themes of these three *b’rachot* are encapsulated in their closing phrases: “creator of the heavenly lights” (page 48), “You lovingly choose Your people Israel” (page 50), and “redeemer of Israel” (page 57). The *b’rachot* reflect three major historical themes in Judaism – creation, revelation, and redemption – but in the liturgy we see *personalized* versions of these *theological* and *historical* themes.

One of the most repeated patterns in the liturgy is the juxtaposition of two images of God: the God who created the world and the God who loves and cares for us. The authors and compilers of the traditional prayerbook are emphasizing that the God who created the world also cares about us, and that the God who cares about us also created the world. The personal God and the transcendent God are One. (See the *Guidepost* on page 108.)

The *Sh’ma* itself consists of three paragraphs from the Torah. The first (on page 51) focuses on our making the divine presence and commandments central to our lives. The second (on pages 52-53) describes the consequences of our rejecting the path prescribed

by the Torah. The third (on page 53) provides us with a practical way of remembering these notions, namely, to tie strands of yarn called *tzitzit* on the corners of our garments. The text underscores the importance of *looking* at the *tzitzit* and reminding oneself of God's expectations. A relatively new custom is to kiss the *tzitzit* each time the word is read (and at the close of the paragraph).

The closing phrase of the third paragraph of the *Sh'ma* – “Adonai is your God ... and that is True!” – also serves as a segue to the idea that God is our redeemer, that God can make a difference in our lives. This is discussed further in the commentaries on pages 54-57.

The closing phrase of the third *b'rachah* “redeemer of Israel” serves a segue to the *Amidah*. The Talmud tells us that there should be no separation between the close of this *b'rachah* and the *Amidah* so that when we move into God's presence, foremost in our minds is the idea that God can make a difference in our lives.

Terminology

- *Sh'ma* – literally, “listen.” The *Sh'ma* is a central prayer in the Jewish liturgy. In actuality the *Sh'ma* is not a prayer but a recital of three paragraphs from the Torah, as discussed above. Sometimes the *Sh'ma* refers to the six Hebrew words that constitute the essential declaration: “*Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil, Adonai E-lo-hei-nu, Adonai E-chad.*” Generations of martyrs, including Rabbi Akiva, have gone to their deaths with the six words of the *Sh'ma* on their lips.
- *Tzitzit* – these are strands of yarn (often referred to as “fringes”) that are tied to the four corners of our garments as a reminder of God's expectations. As our clothing changed and our garments no longer had corners, special rectangular garments were designed. The *tallit*, or prayer shawl, has *tzitzit* attached to its four corners. Many Jews wear a rectangular undergarment all the time that has *tzitzit* in the corners and a substantial hole through which one's head fits.

Questions for discussion:

- With which of the three metaphors for God in the three *b'rachot* are you most comfortable?
- With which of the three metaphors for God in the three *b'rachot* are you least comfortable?

4. The Amidah

The word “*Amidah*” means standing, and in this context, it means “standing prayer.” The entire prayer is said silently while standing in a respectful position. Two patterns are possible. In the traditional service, everyone recites the *Amidah* silently, after which the leader repeats the entire *Amidah* aloud. In many synagogues, in order to save time, the entire congregation chants aloud the first part of the *Amidah*, and the remainder is said silently.

The Shabbat and festival *Amidah* consists of seven *b'rachot*, three introductory *b'rachot*, three closing *b'rachot*, and a central *b'rachah* that focuses on the Shabbat or festival being celebrated. The introductory and closing *b'rachot* also serve these roles in the weekday *Amidah*, where there are 13 intermediate *b'rachot*.

The *Amidah* is structured as an audience with God, and the choreography reflects that perspective. At the beginning of the *Amidah*, we take three small steps forward, as if approaching God, as if stepping into God's presence. At the end of the *Amidah*, we take three steps backward, as if leaving God's presence. (Since taking three steps forward might likely cause us to bump into someone or something, the tradition is to take three small steps backward before stepping forward.)

In the first of the three introductory *b'rachot* (pages 58-59) we re-introduce ourselves to God, reminding God and ourselves of our historical and personal relationship. In the second (page 59), we remind ourselves of God's presence and power, exemplified by God's holding the keys to life, rain, and salvation. The third *b'rachah* speaks of God's holiness. When the *Amidah* is said silently, we say the version of the third *b'rachah* that appears on the bottom of page 61. However, when this part of the *Amidah* is said aloud by the entire congregation, we chant the expanded version of this *b'rachah* on pages 60-61 responsively.

An important phrase in the opening part of the *Amidah* is our reference to God as "our God and the God of our ancestors." In introducing ourselves to God at the beginning of the *Amidah*, we refer to God not only as the one whom our ancestors revered, but also as the One whom each of us has struggled to understand and to accept. Indeed, the reference to "our God" precedes the reference to "God of our ancestors" as if to underscore the importance of our forming our own understanding of God.

The central *b'rachah* of the *Amidah* begins on page 62. On Shabbat, we recite the top sections of pages 62-64 that discuss Shabbat, whereas on festivals (even if the festival is also Shabbat), we recited the bottom sections of those pages that focus on the festival. The closing phrase of this *b'rachah* speaks of God as the one who "sanctifies the Shabbat," who declares the Shabbat to be special and holy. In this Siddur the central *b'rachah* includes a new prayer* (pages 65-66) where we speak of our own individual circumstances and ask God for assistance; its closing phrase speaks of God as the one who "hears our prayers."

The three closing *b'rachot* of the *Amidah*, which focus, respectively, on worship, thanksgiving, and peace (*shalom*) appear on pages 65-73. The thanksgiving prayer is an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for all the blessings that we receive, and it is traditional for each person to add his or her own expressions of thanksgiving; you may incorporate into the traditional prayers the meditation on the bottom of page 68 or any of the special blessings on page 69 that seem appropriate. The closing phrase of this *b'rachah* (in the middle of page 70) speaks of God's essence as goodness and notes that "it is fitting to acknowledge, thank, and bow to You."

As we complete the *Amidah*, we recite the final *b'rachah* on page 71 and prepare to leave God's presence with a sense of *shalom*, or serenity, wholeness, and peace. This *b'rachah* can be followed either by the traditional closing prayer on pages 72-73 or by a new prayer* on the top of page 73 that focuses on how we can continue to bring God's presence into our lives, to live our lives in God's presence.

*These new prayers are discussed in the Unit dedicated to the *Amidah*.

Terminology:

- *Amidah* – the *Amidah* is the culminating prayer of each prayer service, where each person has an opportunity, as it were, to step into God's presence. It is recited, in various forms, three times every day, four times on Shabbat and festivals, and five times on Yom Kippur.

Questions for discussion:

- What are you most grateful for? How do you express that gratitude?
- In what areas of your life do you most need God's assistance? Can you express that need?

5. The Torah Service

The Torah service begins with the ceremony for opening the Ark on pages 75-77, after which the Torah is taken out of the Ark and, in many congregations, carried in a procession around the sanctuary. A striking feature of the Torah service is that only a few verses that are recited relate to the Torah itself; the sages recognized that the focus of our praise and adoration in the Torah service should be not the Torah, but God. (See *Guidepost* on page 75.)

The focus of the Torah service is the reading of a prescribed selection from the Torah, a scroll on which is hand-lettered the five books of Moses, also referred to as the Torah. The Torah is divided into about 50 weekly portions, so that over the course of the year the entire Torah is read. This annual cycle is followed in traditional congregations; many congregations, however, follow a triennial cycle in which the entire Torah is read every *three* years. However, whether synagogues follow the annual or triennial cycle, Jews everywhere in the world read from the same Torah portion each week.

The portion of the Torah that is read is divided into a number of sections and individual people (or groups) are called up for the reading of each section or *aliyah*. Those called up recite the initial *b'rachah* on page 79, stand by the reader as the scroll is read, and then recite the final *b'rachah* on page 79.

After the Torah is read, a number of special prayers (pages 80-83) are recited, including one for those called up for *aliyot* (plural of *aliyah*) and one for those in need of healing; these prayers are referred to by their initial words, "*mi shebeirach* – may the One who

blessed”. (See the *Guidepost* on *Mi Shebeirach* on page 80. Both the traditional and a new prayer for healing are on page 82.)

After the Torah is raised and wrapped, the person who has the final *aliyah*, referred to as *maftir*, chants the prescribed selection from the prophetic writings, referred to as the *haftarah*. This is preceded by the *b'rachah* on the top of page 84 and followed by the remaining *b'rachot* on pages 84-85. (See the *Guideposts* on page 84.)

Terminology:

- Torah – the word “Torah” refers to the five books of Moses that are considered the source of all Jewish teachings; “Torah” is also used to refer to all Jewish teachings based on the Torah. Finally, the “Torah” is also the scroll on which the five books of Moses are written and from which we read during the service.
- *Aliyah* – plural, *aliyot*. In the Torah service, people are “called up” for the reading of a section of the scroll. This is referred to as an *aliyah*, literally “ascent,” since the Torah is traditionally read on a platform that is higher than where the congregation sits.
- *Mi Shebeirach* – used to refer to a number of prayers that are said after (or during) the Torah reading that all begin with the phrase “May the One who blessed our ancestors also bless”
- *Maftir* – this is the last portion of the Torah reading. The person who is called up for *maftir* generally chants the *haftarah* afterwards.
- *Haftarah* – the prescribed prophetic reading that is chanted after the conclusion of the Torah reading.

Question for discussion

- One of the few verses in the Torah service that focuses on the Torah itself is Isaiah 2.3 that notes that “the Torah shall come out of Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem.” How do you think this verse was interpreted by the authors of the Torah service, and how might we interpret this verse today?

6. The Musaf Amidah

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the Rabbis transformed Jewish worship so that it was based on prayer rather than animal sacrifices. To maintain the link to past practice, they ordained that the daily prayers should correspond to the daily sacrifices.

Each of our daily prayer services – the morning service, the afternoon service, and the evening service – corresponds to the sacrificial services offered in the Temple. What all three services have in common is that the *Amidah* is recited.

Since an additional offering was brought on Shabbat and festivals, an additional set of prayers, called *Musaf*, literally, “additional,” is also traditionally said on those days. The main component of the *Musaf* service is the *Musaf Amidah* (pages 90-101), which is

similar to the *Amidah* said earlier in the morning service. The initial and concluding *b'rachot* are the same; only the central *b'rachah* is changed, with a greater focus on the sacrificial rites in the Temple. When the *Musaf Amidah* is said, the prayer on pages 29-30 is recited before the Torah is returned to the Ark.

Many congregations have elected not to recite the *Musaf Amidah* – in part because it largely repeats the earlier *Amidah*, in part because it focuses on sacrifices, and in part because it takes time that can be spent on other parts of the service.

Terminology:

- *Musaf* – literally, “additional”; the *Musaf* service on Shabbat and festivals consists primarily of a special *Amidah* that is recited in commemoration of the additional sacrificial offerings that were brought in the Temple on those days.

Question for discussion

- What arguments might be given for saying the *Musaf Amidah*? Which arguments do you find more compelling?

7. Conclusion of Service

The service concludes with a declaration of faith – referred to as *Aleinu* (pages 104-106) – that is second in importance only to the *Sh'ma*. The first section of the *Aleinu* prayer (pages 104-105) focuses on our responsibility (*aleinu* means “on us”) to recognize and acknowledge God’s presence in the world. The second section (page 106) articulates a vision that each of us is expected to live by, a vision of a world where God’s presence is universally recognized and acknowledged, a vision of a world whose flaws can and will be repaired. In that day, quoting the prophet Zechariah, “Adonai will indeed be One, and Adonai’s name will be One.”

Although the *Aleinu* prayer has a powerful universalist focus, its initial verses include the strongest statements in the liturgy of the chosenness of the Jewish people. Two alternative versions of these verses, as well as the traditional text, are provided on page 104, and the issue of chosenness is discussed in the commentary on pages 104-106.

The *Aleinu* prayer is preceded (on page 103) and followed (on page 108) by hymns. The closing hymn on page 108, referred to as *Adon Olam*, contains an eloquent statement that the Creator of the universe is indeed our personal God. (The Guidepost on page 108 was referred to earlier in this Study Guide.)

Terminology:

- *Aleinu* – the *Aleinu* prayer is a declaration of faith that is recited at the end of each prayer service. It was originally said only on the high holy days, but, presumably because of the powerful vision it contains, it was imported into the daily services. The name of the prayer is just its first word, *Aleinu*, which means “on us,”

translated here as “What we must do is praise the Ruler of all and give glory to the Creator”

- *Adon Olam* – this hymn is at the end of the service and is often sung quickly and loudly. However, it summarizes some major themes of the service, and should be sung quietly and reflectively. The final two verses speak of our relationship with God, and of the resource that God can be in our lives. It closes with an eloquent statement of trust and faith – “Adonai is with me, I am not afraid.”

8. Kaddish

The *Kaddish* is a prayer that may be recited up to eight times during the course of the service. Its main function is to separate the different sections of the service. What is called *Kaddish Shaleim*, literally, “*Complete Kaddish*,” is recited at the conclusion of each *Amidah*, in this Siddur on page 74 after the *Shacharit Amidah* and on page 102 after the *Musaf Amidah*. (See the *Guidepost* on page 74.)

A shorter version of the *Kaddish* called *Chatzi Kaddish*, literally “*Half Kaddish*,” is recited at the conclusion of the Songs of Praise (page 41), the conclusion of the Torah reading (page 82), and the conclusion of the Torah service (page 89).

An expanded version of the *Complete Kaddish* is called *Kaddish d’Rabbanan* (see page 102 and the *Guidepost* there) and is said after Torah study; it may be recited after study of the verses on page 10-11, or it may be recited if the congregation has a period of Torah study or discussion after the reading from the Torah scroll.

Another version of the *Kaddish* is known as *Mourner’s Kaddish*. This is recited by those who are in a period of mourning or on (or near) the anniversary of the death of a relative. This is recited just before the conclusion of the service (page 106), and, in some congregations, is also recited just before the Songs of Praise (page 18).

Thus a service may include the *Complete Kaddish* twice, the *Half Kaddish* three times, the *Kaddish d’Rabbanan* once, and the *Mourner’s Kaddish* twice.

The *Mourner’s Kaddish* is also recited at the Yizkor Service (pages 120-124), a memorial service that is said once on each of the three festivals and on Yom Kippur.

The *Kaddish* is written in Aramaic, the language spoken by the most influential Jewish community during the period when the prayerbook was being compiled. The *Kaddish* is designed for communal response, and is therefore only recited when a minimum of ten adults, or “*minyan*” is present. The Hebrew word “*minyan*” means simply “quorum”, or, more literally, “count.” The congregational responses in the *Kaddish* are in boldface.

What is in the *Kaddish*?

The *Half Kaddish* is a hymn of pure praise to God (see the commentaries on page 41); it praises God using perhaps every Hebrew word that suggests praise, yet notes that God's greatness and holiness are beyond all of the songs of praise that human beings can utter. It is a "Wow!" and a "Thank You, God" that appropriately concludes each part of the prayer service.

The other versions of the *Kaddish* all conclude with two additional and parallel verses that pray for peace, one in Aramaic and one in Hebrew.

Since the *Complete Kaddish* follows the *Amidah* which, as noted above, is structured as an audience with God, it includes a verse (just before the prayers for peace) asking that God hear all of our prayers.

Since the *Kaddish d'Rabbanan* follows Torah study, it includes a verse (just before the prayers for peace) asking for blessings for all those who study and teach Torah.

The *Mourner's Kaddish* consists of the *Half Kaddish* together with the prayers for peace. It makes no mention of death or mourning. It reminds us that one should affirm faith in God in times of sorrow as well as in times of joy. Saying *Kaddish* helps us keep alive the memory of those who have died and maintains the link that we have with them and with preceding generations. (See the commentaries on page 107 for discussion of the *Mourner's Kaddish*.)

Terminology:

- *Kaddish* – a prayer that is recited often during the prayer service; four different forms appear in the Siddur: *Half Kaddish*, *Mourner's Kaddish*, *Complete Kaddish*, and *Kaddish d'Rabbanan*, in order of magnitude.

Question for discussion

- Mourners often refer to the idea of saying *Kaddish* "for" someone, although the *Kaddish* itself makes no reference to death or mourning. Why do Jews in mourning nevertheless think that it is important to recite this prayer?