



Oseh Shalom

עושה שלום במרומיו...

HIGH HOLY DAYS
Order of Service
5783/2022

USER'S GUIDE TO THE MAHZOR PRAYER BOOK

By Emeritus Rabbi Gary S. Fink

What is a Mahzor?

The High Holy Days prayerbook is called a Mahzor. It is an anthology of Biblical texts, meditations and commentary, poetry and prose that spans four thousand years. It is meant to stimulate and guide your prayer.

The prayerbook is an important link to the feelings, hopes and experience of our ancestors. It also contains thoughts and writings which reflect the perspectives of our contemporary Jewish world.

On Contemplation, Reflection, and Meditation

Jewish prayer is both communal and individual. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we perform cheshbon ha-nefesh (introspection, or soul-searching) in a variety of ways. Some of you may find comfort, solidarity, and spiritual connection by participating along with the congregation, prayer by prayer, as we move through the order of service.

But prayer is not confined to the words of the Mahzor. During the service you may want to take time to meditate or reflect on personal "prayer of the heart." The themes contained in the Mahzor may bring your attention to an area of your life upon which you wish to reflect. We encourage you to pursue your individual thoughts and reflections, even as the congregation moves on to a different prayer. The prayer service can be especially fulfilling if we allow the mind and heart to lead us to meaningful areas of contemplation.

Some of you may wish to take time to read the commentaries on the lower half of each page. These commentaries provide guidance regarding the history and themes of the Hebrew prayers and often suggest ways to use the prayers as meditations.

Ultimately, prayer is a skill that needs to be developed and practiced in order for us to feel its full effect and receive its full benefit.

Active Prayer

Prayer is a participatory activity. It is not a passive experience. We gain the most when we invest ourselves in our prayer, or when we join our voices with those around us.

Oseh Shalom is a congregation that sings. The power of prayer can be felt most keenly when we sing together. The cantor's primary role is to lead us in song, not to perform for us — so follow the lead, raise your voice aloud and catch the spirit!

If you do not read Hebrew, please try to use the phonetic transliteration provided in the Mahzor. The sound of Hebrew prayer has power even for those who do not understand this ancient, sacred language.

On the Transliteration

A phonetic transliteration is provided for most Hebrew prayers that we sing. It allows everyone to participate in the singing of Hebrew prayer.

Please note that sometimes the letter “h” has a dot or line underneath. This is the symbol for the guttural sound that we say in the word, “L'chayim.” In some books, this sound may be rendered with a “ch.”

Most Hebrew words are accented on the last syllable. In some cases, however, the next-to-last syllable contains the accent. In our prayerbook, the next-to-last syllable is underlined whenever it is accented. If a transliterated word contains no underlining, the last syllable is accented.

You will find a more complete explanation of transliteration usage on pages xxiv-xxv in the prayerbook.

On Davening

Davening is an ancient style of worship. When we daven, we read aloud, but individually, at our own pace. You may daven in Hebrew or in English, whichever you prefer. It takes some practice to read aloud without being concerned with the reading of those around us. When the congregation daven, our voices produce a communal chant that serves as background to our individual prayer.

Footers

A guide to the liturgy can be found at the bottom of each page, in bold caps, next to the page number.

The bottom of the right-hand page usually indicates the service with which the prayer is associated. For example:

“**Birchot Hashachar / Morning Blessings**” and “**Pesukei Dezimra / Verses of Praise**” contain introductory prayers for the Morning Service on both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Maariv is the Evening Service,

Shacharit is the Morning Service,

Musaf is an additional portion of Morning Service,

Mincha is the Afternoon Service, and

Neila is the service for the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

On the left hand page, the text usually indicates the name of the prayer, and sometimes also indicates the section of the service.

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR ROSH HASHANAH

Kabbalat Hashanah p.23-58 (evening)

The introductory section of the Rosh Hashanah Evening service is Kabbalat Hashanah — Welcoming the Year. It contains poetry, psalms and song to prepare our spirits to enter the New Year liturgy.

Birchot Hashachar p.140 – 192 (morning)

The first introductory part of the Rosh Hashanah Morning service is Birchot Hashachar — Blessings of the Mornings. The prayers of the Birchot Hashachar express thanksgiving for the blessings we have and for the opportunity that each new day presents to bring tikkun to the world (to do good in the world).

Pesukei Dezimra p. 194 – 276 (morning)

The second introductory part of the Rosh Hashanah Morning service is Pesukei Dezimra — Verses of Song. These prayers are mostly psalms and other Hebrew poems which express thanksgiving for the blessings in life and ask God to help us meet and overcome challenges and difficult times.

Shema Uverachot (Shema and blessings)

Maariv (evening) p.62-102 Shacharit (morning) p.278 – 322

In this section of the service, there are two prayers before the Shema itself, which is the central affirmation of Jewish prayer:

The theme of the first prayer is Yotzer Or — the light of creation and renewal (p.62 or 280-298).

The theme of the second prayer is Torah Or — the light of Torah and learning (p.72 or 300-302).

The main focus of Shema Uverachot is the Shema itself (p.76 or 312) — one simple but profound sentence which affirms God's oneness. The theme of the Shema prayer is Or Hashem — the light of God.

The next paragraph (V'ahavta, p. 76 or 304) directs us to commit wholeheartedly to God's ways, and to teach God's pathways to our children.

The following paragraphs contain Biblical passages which remind us to adhere to divine pathways. The final paragraph after the Shema prescribes the wearing of a fringed garment (tallit or prayer shawl) as a reminder of our ethical obligations in the world. (p.77-84 or 305-312)

After the Shema paragraphs, we recite one prayer during Shacharit (morning service) and two prayers in Maariv (evening service):

The theme of the first prayer after the Shema paragraphs is Or Tikkun — the light of tikkun and repair of our world (p.90 or 314-318).

In the Maariv (Evening) Service, an additional prayer is added to Shema Uverachot, whose theme is Or Shalom — the light of peace (p.92).

Amidah Maariv p.103–126; Shacharit p.324-332, 364-382; Musaf p.324-372, 668-674

The Amidah consists of seven prayers (referred to as blessings), recited individually. The number and theme of each prayer is indicated in the text. Sometimes we chant the first three prayers aloud, then continue individually. We may chant other excerpts from the Amidah as well. In the Rosh Hashanah Musaf (Additional) service, the Amidah contains special New Year prayers which are inserted among the seven blessings.

Traditionally, we read each of the Amidah prayers, many of which were written more than 1500 years ago. The seven blessings begin with Avot, a prayer of thanksgiving for the lives of our ancestors, then affirm God's creative power. The blessings conclude with a prayer for peace.

The Amidah can also serve as directed meditation. We can use the theme of each blessing, or a part of each prayer, as a guide for personal meditation.

The Amidah is also a time for individual reflection and “unguided” meditation.

During the Amidah, we pray as a community, but express our prayers in individual ways. For example, the Amidah blessings are written in the first person plural — the prayers are read as “we...” rather than “I...”

Torah Service p.464-606

In Judaism, study is as important as prayer. The reading of Torah provides a link with the world of our ancestors, and gives us an opportunity to draw Divine light from words of our tradition. The reading of Torah is followed by a Haftarah — a selection from one of the Prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible.

As you follow the Scriptural readings, please refer to the commentaries contained in the Maḥzor for a wide range of ideas, lessons and explanations drawn from the texts.

Shofar Service p.585-592

The shofar performs many functions. It is an ancient call to assembly and worship. It is a wake-up call that stirs the conscience. And it represents a call for personal liberation and freedom from oppressive bonds.

Malchuyot, Zichronot, and Shofarot p.612-666

Three special additions to the Rosh Hashanah service are inserted into the Musaf Amidah. Malchuyot contains prayers which reflect awe and humility as we acknowledge God as a “Higher Power” in the universe. Zichronot calls us and the Divine Presence to remembrance of times past. And Shofarot focuses on the sound of the shofar as a call to repentance and tikkun (healing of the world).

Concluding Prayers p.1196-1226

The Maariv service begins its conclusion with prayers whose theme is observance of Shabbat (p.132-137).

The concluding prayers include Aleinu, which expresses the uniqueness of Judaism and hope for a world of oneness, the Mourner’s Kaddish, and closing songs.

Guide to Greetings

Please note the Guide to Greetings on page 1230, which outlines the appropriate Hebrew greeting for the Holy Days.

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR YOM KIPPUR

Kol Nidrei (evening) p. 692

The Kol Nidrei prayer brings our attention to the previous year. It begins the process of hitbonenut (introspection), which characterizes the spirit of Yom Kippur. The Kol Nidrei service is the only evening service during which we wear a tallit.

Birchot Hashachar (morning) p. 140 - 192

The introductory part of the Yom Kippur Morning service begins with Birchot Hashachar — Blessings of the Mornings. The prayers of the Birchot Hashachar express thanksgiving for the blessings we have and for the opportunity that each new day presents to bring tikkun to the world (to do good in the world).

Pesukei Dezimra (morning) p. 194 - 276

The next introductory part of the Yom Kippur Morning service is Pesukei Dezimra — Verses of Song. These prayers are mostly psalms and other Hebrew poems which express thanksgiving for the blessings in life and ask God to help us meet and overcome challenges and difficult times.

Shema Uverachot: (Shema and Blessings) Maariv (evening) p. 707-732; Shacharit (morning) p. 278 – 322

In this section of the service, there are two prayers before the Shema itself, which is the central affirmation of Jewish prayer:

The theme of the first prayer is Yotzer Or — the light of creation (p.710 or 280-298).

The theme of the second prayer is Torah Or — the light of Torah (p.712 or 300-302).

The main focus of Shema Uverachot is the Shema itself (p.714 or 304) — one simple but profound sentence which affirms God's oneness. The theme of the Shema prayer is Or Hashem — the light of God.

The next paragraph directs us to commit wholeheartedly to God's ways, and to teach God's pathways to our children.

The following paragraphs contain Biblical passages which remind us to adhere to God's pathways. The final paragraph after the Shema prescribes the wearing of a fringed garment (tallit or prayer shawl) as a reminder of our ethical obligations in the world. (p.715-722 or 305-312)

After the Shema paragraphs, we recite one prayer during Shacharit (morning service) and two prayers in Maariv (evening service):

The theme of the prayer after Shema is Or Tikkun — the light of healing our world (p.724-728 or 314-318).

In Maariv, an additional prayer is added whose theme is Or Shalom — the light of peace (p.730).

Amidah Maariv & Shacharit p. 740-774; Musaf p. 868-892; 948-980; 994-998

The Amidah consists of seven prayers (referred to as blessings), recited individually. The number and theme of each prayer is indicated in the text. Sometimes we chant the first three prayers aloud, and continue individually. We may chant other excerpts from the Amidah as well. In the Yom Kippur Musaf (Additional) service, the Amidah contains special prayers for forgiveness (Selichot, p. 948-952) which are inserted into the seven blessings.

Traditionally, we read each of the Amidah prayers, many of which were written more than 1500 years ago. The seven blessings begin with Avot, a prayer of thanksgiving for our lives of our ancestors, then affirm God's creative power. The blessings conclude with a prayer for peace.

The Amidah can also serve as directed meditation. We can use the theme of each blessing, or a part of each prayer as a guide for personal meditations.

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During the Amidah, we pray as a community, but express our prayers in individual ways. The Amidah blessings are written in the first person plural — the prayers are read as “we...” rather than “I...”

Torah Service Shacharit (Morning) p.464-606 Mincha (Afternoon) p.1038-1072

In Judaism, study is as important as prayer. The reading of Torah provides a link with the world of our ancestors, and gives us an opportunity to draw Divine light from words of our tradition. The reading of Torah is followed by a Haftarah — a selection from one of the Prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible.

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Yizkor Service p.1005-1034

We remember family members, friends, martyrs and others who have died throughout the years.

Avodah Service p.858-864; 894-896; 982-992

The three parts of the Avodah service are creatively interpreted and inserted into Musaf. The Avodah is a recollection of the ancient rite in which the sins of the people were symbolically cleansed.

Concluding Prayers p.1196-1226

The concluding prayers include Aleinu, which expresses the uniqueness of Judaism and hope for a world of oneness, the Mourner's Kaddish, and closing songs.

Mincha (Afternoon) & Neila (Yom Kippur Concluding) Service p.1038-1229

The Mincha service begins with a martyrology (p.897-946), during which we remember those who gave their lives to the sanctification of God's name.

We end Yom Kippur with Havdallah, a ceremony that punctuates the end of a festival with hope for the future.

Guide to Greetings

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