

# P.I.T. STOP PORTFOLIO

AN AID TO HELP WITH "PROBLEMS IN T'FILLAH"

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Dear Fellow USYer,

PIT STOPS stand for "Problems in T'fillah", and are short explanations of T'fillot, customs, rituals, holidays, and Jewish practices. The PIT STOP Portfolio is a collection of PIT STOPS written by various members of New England Region United Synagogue Youth.

As USYers we must continually strive to learn more about our Judaism. Therefore, please use the PIT STOPS in this portfolio to enhance your chapter T'fillot, meetings and programs.

I hope you and your chapter members will benefit from this portfolio and will continue to seek a greater understanding and feeling for our tradition.

B'Shalom,  
*Charlie*  
Charlie Savenor  
NERUSY President

CS/dz

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P I T STOP - TALLIT

The Tallit, which may be made of wool, linen or silk, is worn at Schacharit and Musaf. In addition the leader of services wears a Tallit at Mincha and at Festival Maariv.

We do not wear the Tallit at night except at the Kol Nidre service. The Mitzvah in Bamidbar (Numbers), the fourth book of the Torah, says we must see the Tzitzit by natural light so we cannot wear a Tallit at night.

At each corner of the Tallit are Tzitzit. The Tzitzitare a combination of coils and knots that are all acting as symbols. For example, each Tzitzit has 7 coils followed by a knot, then 8 coils and a knot, then 11 coils followed by a knot, and finally 13 coils followed by a knot. (Using Gematrin, the representation of Hebrew letters by numbers, the coils spell "Adonai Echad" which means "G-d is One." In Gematria, Aleph equals one, Bet equals two, Gimel equals three, etc. The Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey of Adonai equal 26, and the Aleph-Chet-Dalet of Echad equal 13, which is the last number of coils of the Tallit.)

The Tallit is put on before the Tefillin. Before putting on the Tallit we say:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו מצוותיך וציוויך  
ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו מצוותיך וציוויך  
"Baruch ata Adonai Elohanu melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hitataif B'tzitzit."

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to enwrap ourselves in (a Tallit with) Tzitzit.

During the Vayomer (וַיֹּמֶר) paragraph of the Shema, we gather together the four corners of the Tallit and kiss the Tzitzit whenever the word Tzitzit is mentioned. We also kiss the Tzitzit a fourth time at the end of the paragraph when the leader chants "Adonai Elohechem Emet" ( ה' אלהינו אמין ).

Jeremy Pressman

"And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand and for frontlets between your eyes." This verse serves as the basis for the commandment to wear tefillin every weekday morning. The tefillin serve as a reminder of all the commandments on days when one is occupied by the mundane. For this reason, tefillin are not worn on Shabbat or holidays; they would just be an improper reminder of the physical when one is supposed to be concerned with the spiritual.

The actual physical construction of tefillin is that of leather straps attached to wooden boxes. Inside each box is a copy of the Shema in which the commandment for tefillin is found. The entire apparatus does not contain any metal. The reason for this is because metal symbolizes war and tefillin are meant to represent the spirituality of everyday life.

The lone Israeli soldier praying in middle of the desert at dawn depicts how tefillin can help to take one away from daily burdens and take one into the spiritual world of G-d.

David Farbman

P I T STOP ON WASHING ONE'S HANDS

The Ritual of washing one's hands and reciting a bracha takes place upon awakening in the morning and before eating bread. The act of hand-washing in the morning, besides its sanitary importance, symbolizes the dedication of your hands, or whole physical being to serve G-d.

The term "Netilat Yadayim," found in the blessing said after hand-washing, means "a lifting up" of the hands. When you wash your hands and recite the blessing before a meal at which bread is served, the gratification of our bodily need is lifted up to a higher level.

As you can see the purpose of hand-washing goes beyond cleanliness. One's hands must be clean before the ritual act of hand-washing. Therefore before washing your hands, you must remove all rings, jewelry, etc. so there are no barriers of dirt between your hands and the water.

The act of washing your hands is performed as follows: fill a large cup with water, then pour the water alternately over one hand and the other. It is customary to pour it over each hand three times. At this time you are trying to spiritually prepare yourself for the physical act of eating. When you are finished pouring the water over your hands, recite the following b'racha:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav,  
v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim. <sup>ברוך אתה יהוה המלך</sup>  
<sup>האלהים אשר קדשנו</sup>  
<sup>במצוותיו וציוונו</sup>  
<sup>לנטילת ידים.</sup>  
(Praised are You, Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified  
us with His commandments and has commanded us to wash our hands.)

Handwashing is performed prior to eating an "official" meal, a meal which begins by the eating of bread or Challah. Subsequently the act of hand-washing is directly linked to the Hamotzee. Therefore once you have said the b'racha for hand-washing, you should not talk until after you have said the Hamotzee and eaten some Challah.

Birkat Hamazon is the Grace after Meals. Of all the blessings that we say to fulfill religious duties, those said after meals are the only ones explicitly required by the Scriptures. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your G-d for the good land he has given you" - Deut. 8:10. This Biblical commandment can be fulfilled by reciting three blessings: for the food, for the land of Eretz Yisrael, and for Jerusalem with its Holy Sanctuary. In fact, the Talmudic name for the Grace is Shalosh Berakhot ("Three Blessings"). The Rabbis later ordained a fourth blessing expressing the goodness of G-d.

The first blessing is Birkat Hazan, the oldest and most universal of the blessings. It speaks of G-d providing food to sustain all the life he created. The Talmud says that the blessing for food was first given by Moses in gratitude for the manna the Israelites got in the desert. The second blessing, Birkat Haaretz, speaks of Eretz Yisrael, the Torah, and the Covenant of Circumcision, all of which G-d gave to Israel. The blessing for land was introduced by Joshua when he led the Israelites to Eretz Yisrael. The third blessing is Birkat Yerushalayim. Originally it expressed thanksgiving for Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash. Now it is a prayer that G-d will rebuild Jerusalem and his Holy Temple and restore the Davidic dynasty, all elements in Israel's redemption. King David initiated a blessing for Jerusalem when he established it as capital of the country. His son, King Solomon, who built the First Temple expanded on it by adding his gratitude to G-d for the "Great and Holy Sanctuary". "Amen" is said at the conclusion of this blessing to indicate the end of the Biblically required grace. It is the only time "Amen" is added to a blessing we recite ourselves. The fourth blessing, Birkat Hator V'hametir, was added by the sages shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple. At first the blessing was very simple - "Blessed be Thou, Lord our G-d, King of the Universe who is good and does good." Now it returns back to the idea of food. If you hear someone else reciting, you say "Amen" at the end of the blessing signifying the end of what is now the required text.

The Grace continues with a series of short petitions, both personal and national, that were gradually added. They are not obligatory, but it has become customary to recite them. Each one begins with "Harachaman" ("May the Merciful One"). On special occasions such as Shabbat, a wedding, or a meal celebrating a Brit Milah, appropriate petitions are added. Only one, the Guest's Prayer, has basis in the Talmud. Whenever you hear Harachaman petitions, you are supposed to say "Amen". It has also become customary to recite a short psalm before the Grace. Psalm 137, Al Naharot Barel, is said on weekdays. On Shabbat Psalm 126, Shir MaMaalot, is recited.

Normally, Birkat Hamazon is said to oneself. If three or more males over thirteen are dining together, the Talmud requires that one recite and the others respond. Zimun is the invitation to say Grace. It is done in two summonses by the leader. The first summons is "Rabotai, nevareich" ("Gentlemen, let us bless"). "Chaverai" ("Friends") may be substituted for Rabotai. The others respond. Then the formal invitation to Grace is said, and the others respond. The leader must always repeat the response. If a minyan is present "Eloheinu" ("Our G-d") is added wherever it is found in parentheses.

If a guest is eating with you, the Talmud says that he should lead Grace so he can bless the host (the Guest's Prayer). Rabbi Judah added more words to the basic Talmudic blessing. The first part is an indirect way of saying that the host should be blessed with a livelihood. The second part is a prayer that a man's wealth shouldn't cause him to eat in a way or live in a manner that will disgrace him in the after life.

The full Grace must be said only if bread is eaten. If it is not, there are two shorter forms. Berachah Acharonah ("The Concluding Blessing") is one paragraph that mentions all the central themes in the four blessings of the full Birkat Hamazon. It is said after eating food mentioned in the Torah as indigenous to Israel. The beginning of the blessing depends on what is eaten. Everything else is covered by Borei Nefashot. Under pressing conditions or for children, an abbreviated version of the Grace may be said. It contains all four blessings, but each of the last three is condensed.

P I T STOP - ON HAVING AN ALIYAH

The person with the Aliyah is called to the Torah either by Hebrew name or by Aliyah number. The one called to the Torah traditionally takes the shortest route up and the longest route back to one's seat in order to show an eagerness to be called to the Torah.

After kissing the Torah and taking hold of the rollers of the scroll, the person called to the Torah recites the blessing. The reader then reads the prescribed portion. Following the reading, the person called to the Torah kisses the Torah at the spot where the reader stopped, closes the Torah, and recites the closing blessing. The person called remains on the bima until the end of the next aliyah.

Jeremy Pressman



## P I T STOP - TORAH READING

We are about to take out the Sefer Torah and read several aliyot from this week's parsha. This practice started in the days of Ezra, about 450 BCE. Ezra realized that he had to bring the Torah to the people, and set up a public reading on Monday and Thursday, when all of the Jews were in Jerusalem for the marketplace. He additionally started the practice of reading on Shabbat in the synagogue, when the people were available for even more time.

The Torah reading was not always the way we know it to be, however. Originally, as the people could not understand the Hebrew, there would be a translator who would tell the people what the Torah said in their own language, usually Aramaic.

In addition to this, the Shabbat reading used to be broken into about 175 shorter readings, so that the Torah in its entirety would be completed in three years. Later, the Torah was re-broken into 54 sedrot, which we read today.

## P I T STOP - HAFTARAH

A Haftarah is recited after the Torah reading on Shabbat, holidays, and fast days. It consists of a portion from at least one prophet, and draws a parallel to the Torah reading, either in plot or in its message.

The person who receives the Maftir aliyah reads the Haftarah. There is one paragraph of brachot before the Haftarah, and four after it. The fourth, and final paragraph, discusses the holiness of the day, and thus is different according to the day on which it is recited.

Rabbi David Abudarham, of 14th century Spain, felt that the practice of reading Haftarat was introduced just before the Macabean revolt, 135 BCE. As the reading and studying of Torah was prohibited, the people read related sections from the Prophets. This tradition continued even when Torah reading was allowed once again.

Others feel that Haftarat were started to prove to the Samaritans, a group that only followed the Torah, that the Torah and rabbinical teachings were valid and holy as well. In either case, the practice of reading Haftarat has continued for over 1000 years, in both the Sefardic and Ashkenazic communities. There is a separate and distinct Haftarah for each parsha and holiday.

Reuven M Lerner  
METNY USY

THE SHEMA SECTION

The shema section begins at the "Barchu" (ברכו) when the Hazzan calls the congregation to worship.

At the morning service two blessings precede the Shema and one follows it. The preceding blessings are Yotzer Or (יוצר אור) which deals with the unity of G-d and אלהים אחד which talks of G-d as the giver of the Torah.

The Shema consists of three paragraphs: Shema, Ve-Hayah, Vayomer. The Shema accepts the rule of G-d and states the basic principles of Judaism. In Ve-Hayah we accept the responsibility of performing mitzvot. Vayomer reminds<sup>us</sup> of the exodus from Egypt and mentions the Tsitsit.

The prayer יי אלהים אחד closes the shema section.

Jeremy Pressman

MOVEMENTS OF THE SHEMA

Since the shema is the origin of the mitzvot of Tefillin and of the Tsitsit of the the Talit, we have a number of special gestures.

As we say the opening line of Shema Yisrael we cover our eyes to prevent distraction. This was the custom of Rabbi Judah Hanasi.

U-keshartem (וקשרתם) and Veh-Hayah Le-to-tafet (והיו לטופטות) are both references to the mitzvah of Tefillin. As we say these words during the first paragraph of the shema, we touch the fingers of our other hand to the "shel Yad," or the Tefillin box on our arm. The gesture is repeated again when the same words appear at the end of the second paragraph.

The tsitsit are gathered before the shema during Ahavah Rabah (אהבה רבה) at Vihavianuh (והביאנו). During the third (3rd) paragraph of Vayomer (ויאמר) we kiss the Tsitsit each time the word Tsitsit is said. In addition we kiss the Tsitsit at the end of Vayone and finally when we say Ne-chmanim Vih-Nechimadin Lead (נאמנים ונחמדים).

Jeremy Pressman

## P I T STOP ON SHALOM ALEYCHEM

The Talmud teaches that two ministering angels - one good and one evil - escort a person home from the synagogue on the eve of the Sabbath. If a Jew arrives home and finds a kindled lamp, a set table and a made bed, the good angel says, "May it be G-d's will that it also be so next Sabbath." The evil angel is compelled to answer "Amen." But if not - then the evil angel says "May it be G-d's will that it also be next Sabbath, and the good angel must then say "Amen".

The Shalom Aleichem song is based on the above explanation. If every Jew is accompanied home by two ministering angels, then it is only proper that he greet them, bless them and seek their blessing.

David Farbman

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## P I T STOP - THE ASHREI

The Ashrei is an important prayer in Jewish liturgy. It consists of the verse 5 of Psalm 84 (1st line), the 15th verse of Psalm 144 (2nd line) and the entire 145th Psalm (everything following and including  $\text{יְהוָה הוֹדוֹת}$ ).

The prayer describes the goodness of G-d and praises him, saying that G-d's work surpasses our powers of comprehension. It also says that G-d's mercy encompasses all of His works.

This has implications in Jewish Ethics: G-d's mercy encompasses all of His works. Similarly, we should strive to have our mercy encompass His works.

The Ashrei so aptly states Jewish values that, as it is written in the Talmud, anyone who repeats this prayer 3 times daily has a guaranteed position in the world to come. It is recited during Shacarit twice, during P'sukey D'zimra and before Aleinu, and during Mincha.

The poem is written in acrostic form, but in modern day prayer books there is no line beginning with "Nun" - "נ". However, the Dead Sea Scrolls have a line beginning with "Nun" - "נ" "Ne-eman Elohim."

Rob Blecher

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## P I T STOP - ADON OLAM

Adon Olam, which means 'Eternal Lord', is a poetic hymn to G-d. The author is thought to be Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021-1058), a poet-philosopher from Spain. It consists of ten lines. The first six express the Jewish concept of G-d. The last four tells how a man of faith relates to G-d and of the trust he feels in Him. The last words - "G-d is with me, I shall not fear," are taken from Psalm 118:6, a passage of Hallel. In recent years, Adon Olam has gained popularity as a conclusion for Sabbath and festival services.

Stacy Faruwirth

## P I T STOP Yigdal

Yigdal is based on the thirteen articles of faith, better known as "Ani Ma'amin," which were written down by Maimonides (Rambam) in the twelfth century. Yigdal itself was probably written down by Daniel ben Judah, a judge in Rome who lived in the 13th century, although it is also ascribed to Immanuel ben Solomon. It is found in both Ashkenazi and Sefardi siddurim, although with a subtle change in both words and placement.

In the Ashkenazi version, which is recited in the daily Shacharit service, there are 13 lines, all of which rhyme. The Sefardim, however, include it only at the conclusion of the Friday night and festival Ma'ariv services, and include a 14th line. It is interesting to note that Hasidim do not say Yigdal at all.

In stating Rambam's 13 articles of faith in such a poetic manner, we admit that G-d is all-powerful and has created us, and has given us his Torah. The various tunes which have evolved show us the response of the world Jewish communities to this one t'filah.

Reuven M Lerner  
METNY USY

## P I T STOP ON THE 15 WORDS

The Yishtabach prayer ends with the Psukey D'zimrah section of the morning service. The theme of 15 is repeated twice in this prayer; there are 15 expressions of praise in the first half of the paragraph and after Baruch Atah Adoshem there are 15 words. This number alludes to the 15 Song of Ascents composed by David. Also 15 is the numerical value of the Divine Name consisting of the letter ך (Yud) and the letter ך . These letter were also used by G-d to create heaven and earth and therefore it alludes to the idea that everything is G-d's and He is its creator.

David Farbman

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## P I T STOP ON THE K'DUSHA

It is often asked why during the K'dusha we rise up on our toes during the recitation of the word Kadosh three times. There are two basic reasons, the second of which involves a Midrash (a short story to help explain the reasoning behind an act.)

The first is simple. When we rise up on our toes we are, in fact, raising our entire body. Thus, we get closer to G-d and feel his holiness (Kadosh). The second reason involves the story that when we recite the K'dusha, there are angels surrounding us. According to legend angels have no feet. In order to make ourselves like angels and, in turn, holy we rise up on our toes in order to imitate the footless angels.

So next time you make yourself three inches taller during the K'dusha, think about why you are doing it.

David Farbman

## P I T STOP - THE KADDISH

The Kaddish is a prayer written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. The five types of the Kaddish are each slightly different.

The Hatzi Kaddish or Half Kaddish is said after each section of a service is completed.

The Kaddish Shalem or Full Kaddish signals the end of the service. For example, it is one of the closing prayers in the Musaf service.

Mourner's Kaddish is said following the death of a parent, sibling, or child. It is also recited at the Yahrzeit service and the annual commemoration of the death, mourner's Kaddish never refers to death, but instead is an affirmation to faith in G-d and G-'ds way of justice.

The fourth type of Kaddish is Kaddish de Rabbanau or Rabbi's Kaddish. This Kaddish is said after studying or after reciting a legalistic (Halahic) passage.

The fifth type of Kaddish is the Kaddish L'hit chadita - Kaddish of renewal. This Kaddish is recited at funerals.

Jeremy Pressman

## P I T STOP - AMIDAH

The Amidah is the main prayer in every service. Amidah means standing, which is how the prayer is said. The Amidah contains all the basic components of prayer; praising G-d, petitioning him, and thanking him. Whenever the talmud refers to tefilah (prayer) it means the Amidah. Also, all the codes in Jewish law dealing with the "Laws of Prayer" relate only to the Amidah. Therefore, the obligation to pray 3 times a day could be fulfilled by reciting the Amidah 3 times a day.

The Amidah is also known as the Shmoneh Esrei, which means 18. When the basic formula for the prayer was composed in the 5th century B.C.E. it had 18 blessings. Sometime after the destruction of the 2nd temple a 19th blessing was added. The Sabbath and festivals' Amidahs contain only 7 blessings, though, except for Rosh Hashanah Musaf Amidah which contains 9 blessings.

The Amidah is broken down into 3 sections. The introductory section contains 3 blessings which praise G-d. The middle section contains 13 blessings which petition him. The closing section contains 3 blessings which thank him. This has been compared to a servant and his master. The servant praises his master, requests gifts, and then thanks him. The introductory and closing sections are always the same except during holidays when passages appropriate to the holiday are added.

The Amidah is supposed to be said standing with your feet together, saying it quietly to yourself. You begin the Amida like the ancients would approach a king (because G-d is our king and we are approaching him to pray by taking 3 steps forward (if there is not enough room, take a few steps backwards first.) You are only supposed to bow 4 times during the Amida; at the beginning of the 1st blessing and the beginning of the last line of that blessing and the same for the 18th blessing. During the 6th blessing ('forgiveness') it is customary to beat lightly once on your chest when you say 'hatanu' (we have sinned) and 'pashanu' (we have transgressed.) This symbolizes that the heart is the source of temptation to transgress. You end the Amida like the ancients would leave a king: take 3 steps backwards before saying the last line and bow to the left, right, then middle while saying it. During the prayer, you are not supposed to interrupt your conversation with G-d except for the gravest emergency.

The Amidah is repeated out loud by the leader except during Ma'ariv. This tradition started because the Amida was repeated for the benefit of those who couldn't recite it properly. By listening and saying 'Amen' at the right times, they fulfilled their prayer obligation. It isn't repeated during Ma'ariv because originally the service was optional and the degree of obligation less, therefore repetition was unnecessary.

Stacey Frauwirth

P I T STOP - LIGHTING THE CANDLES ON SHABBAT

On Friday night, eighteen minutes before sunset, we light candles to usher in the Shabbat.

Once the candles are lit, the Shabbat has officially begun. We let the candles burn until they go out by themselves; we do not extinguish them manually.

Both men and women are obligated to light the candles. In the Shulhan Aruch it says that women are more obligated because they are more responsible for household chores. Nowadays, men and women often split household chores equally so we say that the obligation of candles is also equal.

Lighting the candles is the very last thing done to start the Shabbat. It's origin may be from when the last work done was preparing light for the holy day.

Customs on the number of candles to be lit vary. One is sufficient for the mitzvah, but people usually have at least two. One reason is to symbolize the illumination of more than one room on Shabbat. It says in the Shulhan Aruch that we should light one for zachor, remember and one for shomer, observe the Shabbat. Some people also light one extra candle for each child or for each member of the family.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד, ה' אלהינו יהוה אחד, ה' אלהינו יהוה אחד.

The b'rocha is...

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד, ה' אלהינו יהוה אחד, ה' אלהינו יהוה אחד.

Blessed art thou, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has made us holy by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

It is customary, when doing any mitzvah, to say the b'rocha before the act. This causes a dilemma in lighting the candles because once the b'rocha is said, the Shabbat is here. By then lighting the candles, we would have broken the Shabbat. To solve this, it is customary to light the candles, cover the eyes, and then say the b'rocha. Once the b'rocha is recited, our eyes are opened and it is if we are seeing the light for the first time. Actually, saying the b'rocha before the act.

Jodi Wilgoren



P I T STOP - KABBALAT SHABBAT

The T'fillah of Kabbalat Shabbat, which is recited Friday night before Ma'ariv is very special because we greet, or welcome, the Shabbat bride with a t'fillah consisting only of psalms.

Kabbalat Shabbat literally means "the welcoming of the Shabbat." The t'fillah originated in Safed during the 16th Century, where Kabbalistic scholars took the personification of the shabbat bride literally by marching around the borders of their city singing songs, welcoming the Shabbat. Another interpretation is that Kabbalat Shabbat is a service dedicated to the coming of the Messiah. We believe that when the Messiah does come there will be an eternal Sabbath. We see this echoed in "Lecha Dodi Lekrat Kalah Peni Shabbat Nekabalah". Translated into English means "Come my friend to meet the bride the Shabbat presence let us welcome". During the 16th century Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, wrote the Lichah Dodi which personifies the Shabbat as well as speaks about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the redemption of the Jewish people, and coming of the Messiah. During the last stanza of Lichah Dodi we turn around to the west to face the setting sun, which is a sign that shabbat has arrived.

Charlie Savenor

In The Afternoon

The briefest of the three daily and Sabbath services is Mincha. The name "Mincha," just like the Shacharit and Musaf, is derived from the daily sacrificial ritual of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. As it is used in the Bible, the word Mincha implies a gift-offering, a sacrifice. The proper time for Mincha is from after midday until sunset. Since the third service, Maariv, is recited after sunset, the custom today is to recite Mincha just before sunset, pause briefly and then recite Maariv. On Shabbat, some congregations make it a practice to enlarge the pause between the two services and use the time for a short period of study and some light refreshment - "Seudah Shlishit," the traditional third Sabbath meal.

There are three basic elements in Mincha. They are Psalm 145, the Amidah and Alenu. The Sh'ma is not included because, as we read in the prayer itself, it is to be recited: "When you rise up and when you lie down." That is understood to mean in the morning and evening only, not in the afternoon.

The Amidah is first recited privately and then repeated by the Hazzan. Except for minor differences, the Amidah is exactly the same as that of the Shacharit service.

At Mincha, on Sabbath afternoons, the opening section of the Torah portion of the following week is read. Three aliyot are distributed. This is followed by either a full repetition of the Mincha Amidah.

The recital of Alenu and the Mourner's Kaddish concludes Mincha.

Rabbi Bernard Rotman

## P I T STOP -MAARIV

Maariv or the evening service may be recited beginning from the time it grows dark. The service, unlike Shacharit and Mincha, does not derive from a Temple ritual. Unlike the other services, there is no repetition of the Amidah. While there was a difference of opinion among the Rabbis of old with regard to the importance of the Maariv service, there was no question about the obligation to recite the Sh'ma in the evening.

Maariv is introduced by a short invocation which is an appeal for forgiveness. This is followed by the Hazzan's call to worship, the Borechu.

In Maariv, as in Shacharit, two prayers are recited between Barchu and Sh'ma, the first prayer, "Maariv Aravim" praises G-d for the order and the harmony of the heavenly bodies, the regularity of night and day. From a consideration of physical light, the second prayer moves on to the spiritual light which G-d created in the form of the Torah. It is a hymn in praise of the Torah and Torah study. It serves as a fitting prelude to the Sh'ma which follows.

The prayers which follow the Sh'ma continue the theme of the importance of Torah in our lives and concludes with a review of the great events which preceded the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the triumphant deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery.

The second prayer following the Sh'ma is Hashkivenu. In it, the worshipper asks that G-d watch over him in the night and restore him to life in the morning.

What is unique about the Saturday evening service is the inclusion of a small paragraph in the silent Amidah. It is a prayer of Havdalah, which speaks of the separation between Sabbath and weekday.

## PIT STOP-Havdalah

Havdalah literally means a division or a separation. These divisions are described in the last part of the Havdalah service which speaks of the separation between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, and between the seventh day of rest and the six days of labor.

During the Havdalah ceremony we recite blessings over a cup of wine, a candle, and spices. An overflowing cup of wine is used as a sign that the coming week will provide an abundance of happiness, joy, and goodness. There is a legend that explains that the overflowing cup of wine wards off evil spirits. It was believed that these spirits could be bribed to stay away with this small amount of wine.

After we recite the prayer over the spices we sniff them in order to get rid of our sadness that will come when Shabbat is over and we begin to attend to our everyday affairs once again.

We originally used two candles during the Havdalah ceremony because the prayer for light uses the plural form. Today we use a braided candle with at least two wicks to supply the same effect. In addition the two wicks signify the bringing together of the separate lights lit on Erev Shabbat. The custom of cupping our hands to the light is in order for us to see the shadow of our hands and to make our own separation between light and darkness.

*Charlie Savenor*

## PIT STOP ON ROSH CHODESH

Rosh Chodesh is the day that marks the new month in the Jewish calendar. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar-solar calendar meaning that the length of the month is based on the rotation of the moon around the earth - but the lunar calendar is only 354 days long. If the calendar were marked only on the cycle of the moon - each successive year the holidays would be 11 days earlier. Can you imagine Chanukah in the summer or Purim in the dead of winter? The three major pilgrimage holidays - Pesach, Shavuot and Succot are also harvest festivals which correspond to specific seasons. Therefore, 7 years out of 19 are leap years and we add an extra month called Adar Sheni.

Before there was a fixed calendar, Rosh Chodesh was determined by the sighting of the New Moon. The first person to see the moon would present himself before the Sanhedrin, the court and they would declare the new month. Because the moon completed its cycle in 29½ days, some months the moon would not appear until the 30th day. Today the months of Tishrei, Shevat, Adar I in a leap year, Nissan, Sivan, Av and sometimes Kislev and Cheshvan, all have 30 days. Rosh Chodesh is celebrated on the first day of the new month but when the preceding month has 30 days, Rosh Chodesh is also celebrated on the last day of the preceding month.

Debbie Starr

### ROSH CHODESH MUSAPH

There is a special Amidah for Musaph on Rosh Hodesh. When Rosh Hodesh falls on a weekday we recite the same Amidah. The special Amidah is similar to the Amidah for the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. In the old days Rosh Hodesh was a major festival but there was no ban on working; Rosh Hodesh was a women's holiday so women did not have to do any work. This was a reward for their actions in the desert. When Moshe was on Sinai, the men approached their wives and asked for their jewels in order to build the golden calf. The women would not give in, so G-d gave them a holiday in their honor.

Debbie Starr

P I T STOP - ROSH CHODESH - Ya'aleh V'Yavo

During Rosh Chodesh we add the prayer Ya'aleh V'Yavo into all the Amidot except Musaph.

Some Rabbis say that the prayer depicts the action of bringing a sacrifice to the altar:

ascent

come forward

stand near

appear

let it be accepted

let him be heard

let it be recorded

let it be remembered

Today sacrifice has been replaced by prayer so the Ya'aleh V'Yavo serves two purposes; to remind us of the sacrifice procedure and to lay a format for our prayers.

Debbie Starr

ROSH CHODESH HALLEL

On Rosh Hodesh, we recite the Hallel but we omit the first eleven verses of both Psalm 115 and Psalm 116 which are found on the bottoms of pages 111 and 112. We leave these out to remind us that reciting Hallel on Rosh Hodesh is a tradition. Maimonides said that the blessing should not be recited but most Ashkenazic congregations say the bracha nonetheless.

Hallel is a collection of Psalms or "Hymns of Praise" written by King David. Most are joyous so Hallel is reserved for happy holidays and celebrations. The theme of Hallel is summed up by a line in Psalm 118, "This is the day the Lord G-d has made; let us rejoice and be happy in it."

Debbie Starr

## PIT STOP - T'FILAT HADERECH

T'filat Haderech is a prayer which is said before one makes a journey (more than 3 miles). It is hard to recognize G-d's dominion over all our actions and His regard <sup>for</sup> safety over all our journeys.

The prayer consists of a request to G-d to lead us on the path of peace and "make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness and peace." It specifies to G-d to protect us from ambush, robbers, and wild animals. Then following the blessing, praising G-d for hearing prayers there are 4 statements. The first tells of Jacob's safe journey to Nacharayim, the second tells G-d of how we long for the L-rd's salvation, the third is a statement by G-d to the Children of Israel granting them an angel to lead them to Israel and the final sentence is a proclamation that "Hashem will give might to His nation, Hashem will bless His nation with peace."

The halacha about saying the T'filah is that in you say this prayer every day you travel and on a multi-day journey once each day. In a group one member recites the blessing and the others respond Amen. It is customary to say it standing unless it is unsafe.

The concept of T'filat Haderech is not so much that we make a supplication to G-d for a journey, but that we ascertain G-d's omnipotent presence in the Universe and we are thanking him for his graciousness to us.

### WAYFARER'S PRAYER

May it be Your will HASHEM, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers that You lead us toward peace. "Emplace our footsteps toward peace, guide us toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace." May you rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush, bandits, and evil animals along the way, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our every handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our supplication, because You are G-d Who hears prayer and supplication. Blessed are You, HASHEM, Who hears prayer.

David Farbman  
NERUSY

