

Exploring the Palace of Prayer: The *Shema* and Its Blessings

August 11, 2020 | 21 Av 5780

The Temple Congregation Ohabai Sholom

Assembled by: Ross Z. Levy

“Thus, Jewish prayer is guided by two opposite principles: order and outburst, regularity and spontaneity, uniformity and individuality, law and freedom. These principles are the two poles about which Jewish prayer revolves. Since each of the two moves in the opposite direction, equilibrium can be maintained only if both are of equal force.”

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Spirit of Jewish Prayer*

Keva (קבע)

Mishna Berakhot 4:1

“*Shacharit* [can be said] until midday...*Mincha* [can be said] until the evening...*Ma'ariv* has no set time.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God In Search of Man*

“Since there is a need for daily wonder, there is a need for daily prayer.”

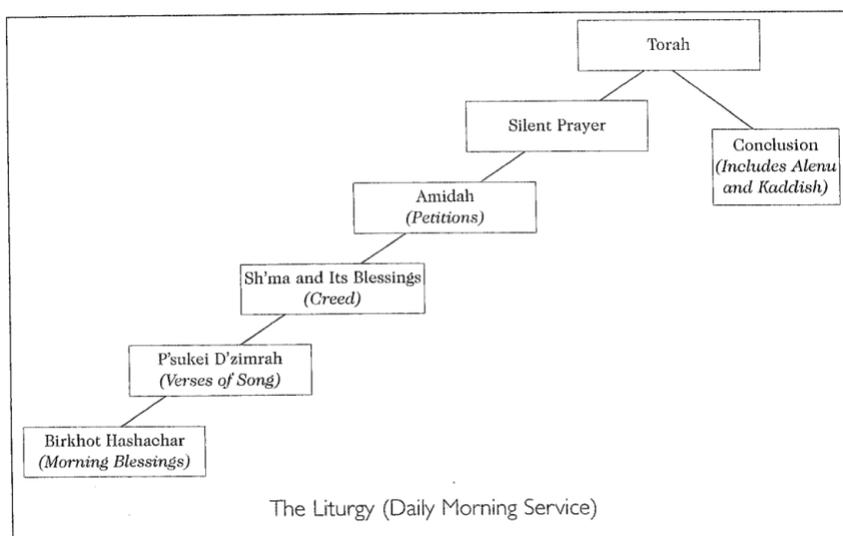
Kavanah (כוונה)

Mishna Berakhot 4:4

“Rabbi Eliezer says: One who makes their prayer set (קבע) [as though it is a burden], their prayer does not constitute pleading.”

Mishna Berakhot 5:1

“A person should not stand up to pray unless they are in a serious frame of mind. The old pious ones used to wait one hour before praying, so as to direct (שִׁיכְוִנוּ) their hearts toward the Eternal”



Liturgical rubric: “A rubric is any discrete building block of the service, sometimes a single prayer...and sometimes a whole set of prayers that stands out in contrast to other sets”
 (Larry Hoffman, *My People’s Prayer Book vol. 1*, 16)

Shema and Its Blessings (Morning Service):

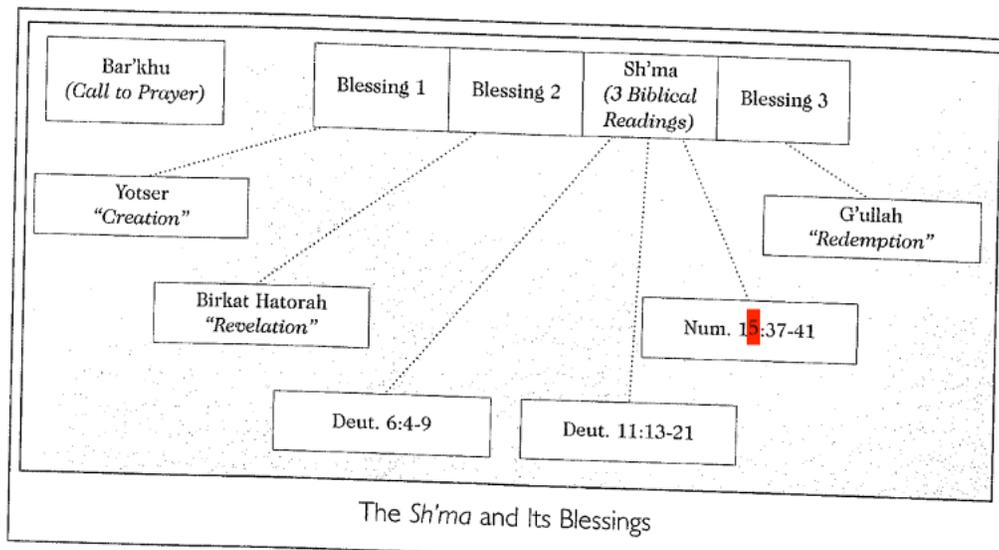
Deuteronomy 6:7

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָבוֹיָהּ וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם וּבְלִכְתּוֹתֶיךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשׁוֹכְבְּכֶם וּבְקוּמְכֶם:

“Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up”

Mishna Berakhot 1:4

“In the morning one says two blessings before it [*Shema*] and one after it, while in the evening one says two blessings before it and two after it, a long one and a short one.”



Deuteronomy 11:13-21 - And if you indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Eternal your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴ he will give the rain for your land in its season, ¹⁴ the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. ¹⁵ And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and ¹⁵ you shall eat and be full. ¹⁶ Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and ¹⁶ serve other gods and worship them; ¹⁷ then the anger of the Eternal will be kindled against you, and he ¹⁷ will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and ¹⁷ you will perish quickly off the good land that the Eternal is giving you. You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and ¹⁸ you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹ You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ²⁰ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Eternal swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Numbers 15:37-41 – The Eternal spoke to Moses saying: ‘Speak to the Israelites and instruct them to make for themselves fringes (*tzit-tzit/tzis-tzis*) on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; you shall look at it and recall all the commandments of the Eternal and observe them, so that you do not follow your hearts and your eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I the Eternal and your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God—I am the Eternal your God.