

RESOLVING A CONFLICT IN THE שבת MORNING PRAYERS

The number and variety of מי שברך prayers that we recite in synagogue on שבת morning pose a problem. In doing so, we are conducting ourselves in direct conflict with the rule that caused חז"ל to omit the 13 middle ברכות that we include in שמונה עשרה on weekdays from the form of שמונה עשרה that we recite on שבת. That rule is presented as follows:

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת וירא סימן א-אתה מוצא י"ח מתפללין בכל יום ואינן כלן לשבחו של הקב"ה אלא שלש ראשונות ושלש אחרונות ושתיים עשרה ברכות כלן לצורכו של אדם. ולפיכך אין מתפללין בשבת שמונה עשרה, שאם יהיה לו חולה בתוך ביתו נזכר ברופא חולי עמו ישראל והוא מיצר, והשבת נתנה לישראל לקדושה לענג ולמנוחה ולא לצער לכך מתפלל ג' ברכות ראשונות וג' אחרונות והמנוחה באמצע.

Translation: You find that a person recites 18 Brachos in Shemona Esrei each day. The theme of only the first three Brachos and the last three Brachos involve praise of G-d. The theme of the middle twelve Brachos of Shemona Esrei concern the everyday needs of Man. As a result, it is our practice to not recite all 18 Brachos on Shabbos because if one had a person at home who was ill, he would have that ill person on his mind when he would recite the Bracha of Rofei Cholei Amo Yisroel and he would become upset. Since Shabbos was given to the Jewish People as a day of holiness, joy and rest and not for the resolution of distressful matters, we recite the first three Brachos of Shemona Esrei, the last three Brachos of Shemona Esrei and the Bracha whose theme concerns resting on Shabbos in the middle.

Since we do not want to be reminded of our everyday problems on שבת, why do we include within our service on שבת morning, prayers for those who are ill? Why do we include prayers for the welfare of the local government and for the welfare of the State of Israel? The resolution to that conflict is found within the structure of our activities in synagogue on שבת morning. How do we identify the structure of our activities in synagogue on שבת morning? Here is a major clue. Every תפלה ends with קדיש תתקבל. On שבת morning the שליח ציבור recites קדיש תתקבל twice; once when he marks the conclusion of תפלת שחרית and once when he reaches the end of תפלת מוסף. How do we identify the beginning of תפלת שחרית and the beginning of תפלת מוסף? The beginning of תפלת שחרית is easy to identify. It begins with ברכות השחר. Identifying the beginning of תפלת מוסף requires a second clue. הצי קדיש marks the end of a section of the service. When we studied the origin of קדיש as part of תפלה, we reviewed a תשובה of an anonymous גאון who averred that when a group of ten Jewish males together complete the performance of a מצוה, they are entitled to recite הצי קדיש. As an example of one of those מצוות, the

1. That the מדרש תנחומא refers to שמונה עשרה as having 18 ברכות and not 19 is proof that מדרש תנחומא was composed in ארץ ישראל where they never deviated from reciting only 18 ברכות in שמונה עשרה.

cited the recital of פסוקי דזמרה מצוה. When ten men complete the מצוה of פסוקי דזמרה, they recite תחנון. After ten men complete חצי קדיש, which occurs after reciting תחנון, they recite חצי קדיש. Why does a group of ten men not recite חצי קדיש after completing the מצוה of קריאת שמע; i.e. after completing the ברכה of גאל ישראל? By right they should recite חצי קדיש at that point. However, they do not do so because of another rule; i.e. סמיכת גאולה לתפלה, linking the ברכה of גאל ישראל to שמונה עשרה. How do we know that חצי קדיש should have been recited after completing ברכות שמע and קריאת שמע? Because we do so during תפלת ערבית. Some view the placement of חצי קדיש before שמונה עשרה in תפלת ערבית as proof that the rule of סמיכת גאולה לתפלה does not apply to תפלת ערבית. Others view the recital of חצי קדיש at that point as being a remnant from נוסח ארץ ישראל, in תפלת ערבית, שמונה עשרה was recited before ברכות קריאת שמע and קריאת שמע. חצי קדיש would then be recited after completing ברכות קריאת שמע since that was the end of תפלת ערבית. Once the order of שמונה עשרה, קריאת שמע, ברכות קריאת שמע and then חצי קדיש was universally accepted as part of תפלת ערבית, it was no longer appropriate to recite חצי קדיש after קריאת שמע since that point in the service did not mark the end of the תפלה. In its place they recited חצי קדיש as a memorial to the original practice.

Now that we have identified the two markers: חצי קדיש and קדיש תתקבל, let us note when we next recite חצי קדיש after the קדיש תתקבל recites חצי קדיש at the conclusion of תפלת שחרית on שבת. The חצי קדיש recites חצי קדיש twice; once after קריאת התורה and once after the ספר תורה has been returned to the ארון קודש. We can explain the need to recite חצי קדיש after קריאת התורה based on the fact that ten men completed the מצוה of קריאת התורה. By doing so, we also distinguish between קריאת התורה and קריאת הפטרה. Why do we then recite חצי קדיש after returning the ספר תורה to the ארון קודש? The חצי קדיש that is recited after returning the ספר תורה to the ארון קודש marks the end of a section of a service and the beginning of תפלת מוסף. The section of the service that is completed at that point is the section that began when the ספר תורה was removed from the ארון קודש. The section continued through קריאת התורה and the reading of the הפטרה and ended with the return of the ספר תורה to the ארון קודש. That section is not a תפלה. How do we know that it is not a תפלה? Because it does not end with קדיש תתקבל. It ends with חצי קדיש². The fact that we recite חצי קדיש after קריאת

2. The distinction between the two קדישים is our strongest proof that the סליחות that are recited before ראש השנה and during the עשרת ימי תשובה were composed to be a תפלה. We can therefore add: אשמורות, the name given to סליחות by נעילה and מנחה, מוסף, שחרית, ערבית; תפילות אחרות, רב עמרם גאון

להבין את התפלה

תפלת שחרית and תפלת התורה is a clue that the section of the service that falls between קריאת התורה מוסף is more than מוסף. Perhaps the best designation for this part of the service would be: עת רצון, a favorable time. We already encountered the term: עת רצון when we discussed the significance of Mondays and Thursdays. We also came across that term in our discussions about תפלת מנחה ספר. During the time that falls between the removal of the ספר תורה from the ארון קודש and the return of the ספר תורה to the ארון קודש we deviate from the rule that we should not disturb our enjoyment of שבת by recounting our personal difficulties because the period of time in which the ספר תורה is present among us is an עת רצון. What is the definition of an עת רצון? It is a time when G-d draws nearer to us. Because G-d moves closer to us during that part of the service, we are required to take advantage of that moment by asking for a resolution of our personal and communal difficulties. It would be disrespectful to not approach G-d with our personal needs once He has moved closer to us. In a similar manner the עשרת ימי תשובה are viewed as an עת רצון, favorable time. Because G-d draws nearer to us during those days, it would be disrespectful to G-d to not ask for forgiveness during those days.

That is one way to resolve the conflict between how we conduct ourselves during שמונה עשרה and how we conduct ourselves while the ספר תורה rests among us. A second way to resolve the conflict is by viewing the מי שברך prayers from a different perspective. It is natural to view the מי שברך prayers as having been composed to bring a positive resolution to individual and communal needs. That view ignores the fact that the מי שברך prayers include a financial component. Fund raising has been a fact of Jewish life since the construction of the משכן. It is quite evident that הז"ל were master fund raisers. They must have noticed that they received a higher return on their fund-raising efforts when they gave those who contributed something back; i.e. a ברכה. Perhaps the מי שברך prayers were initially composed as fund raising vehicles and not as prayers for the needs of the people. The ברכה may have been inserted later in order to encourage a better response.

Using a מי שברך prayer to produce a result appears in other contexts. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Frumkin on page לט' of his commentary to the סידור מקור הברכות presents the following:

ובפנקס גרמייזא כתב יד שנכתב בערך שנת תק"ן לאלף הקודם מובא שמה מי שברך לענינים הרבה . . .

Translation: In the Pinkas Gernayza, a handwritten manuscript, that was composed approximately in 1190, we find there forms of Mi Sh'Bairach prayers for several purposes.

מי שברך לנזהרים לדבר שיחת חולין

Translation: A Mi Sh'Bairach prayer for those who desist from holding idle conversations in synagogue.

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב משה ואהרן דוד ושלמה הוא יברך את כל הקהל

הנזהרים בלשונם חוצה מלדבר שיחת חולין משעה שמתחיל השליח ציבור ברוך שאמר עד גמר התפלה והנזהרים ועומדים על רגליהם מלצאת מבית הכנסת עד גמר כל התפלה וקדיש יתום. בשכר זה, המקום ישמרם ויצילם מכל צרה וצוקה וישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ידיהם ויברכם עם כל ישראל ונאמר אמן.

Translation: He who blessed our Forefathers, Avrohom, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Abaron, Dovid and Shlomo, should bless those within the congregation who are careful not to use their mouths for idle conversations from the moment that the prayer leader begins Baruch Sh'Amar until he completes the whole prayer service and those who are careful not to leave the synagogue until the end of the prayer services and the recital of the Mourner's Kaddish. As a reward for such conduct, may G-d guard them, save them from facing any difficulties and may G-d bestow upon them a blessing and success in whatever they undertake and bless them with all of the Jewish People. Let us say: Amen.

Is this prayer the secret weapon that could be deployed today to bring decorum to synagogues where decorum during the prayer services has been an issue and other methods of bringing about silence have failed? Probably not. We need to consider the embarrassment that instituting such a practice would bring to the synagogue. Instead, pulpit Rabbis who preside at synagogues with decorum problems may want to publicly discuss the fact that such a practice was used in synagogues to bring about proper conduct during services. They may want to add that such a practice probably caused embarrassment to the community. Perhaps the threat of instituting such a practice could, by itself, produce a positive affect.

It may be surprising to learn that the רמב"ם faced a decorum problem in his synagogue. His solution was to discontinue תפלה בלחש, the silent שמונה עשרה. By doing so, he forced his congregants to listen to the words of the שליח ציבור as he recited שמונה עשרה so that they could fulfill their מצוה of תפלה. Here is how he described the problem:

שו"ת הרמב"ם סימן רנו – ומה שהייב אותי לעשות זאת הוא, שהאנשים כולם בשעת תפלת שליח ציבור אינם משגיחים למה שהוא אומר, אלא מסיחין זה עם זה ויוצאין והוא מברך ברכה לבטלה כמעט, הואיל ואין שומע לה. וכל מי שאינו בקי, כאשר הוא רואה תלמידי חכמים וזולתם מסיחין וכחין ורקין ומתנהגין כמי שאינו מתפלל בשעת תפלת שליח ציבור, עושה גם הוא כזה אותו ענין.

Translation: What forced me to take such action was the fact that the congregants during the repetition of Shemona Esrei stopped paying attention to what the prayer leader was saying. Instead they spoke among themselves and walked in and out of the synagogue. This behavior caused the Brachos that the prayer leader was reciting to be Brachos said in vain since no one was listening to him. Those who did not know the prayers and should have been listening to the prayer leader in order to fulfill their obligation of reciting Shemona Esrei, seeing how learned men and others like them talked, coughed and spat, acting like they were not involved in listening to the repetition of Shemona Esrei, followed in their footsteps and acted in a like manner.