

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 18

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Rehov Kahanamin 54, Bnei Brac, Israel 03.616.6340
164 Village Path, Lakewood NJ 08701 732.370.3344 fax 1.877.Pirchei (732.367.8168)

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson

18

Shemoneh Esrei (continued)

The Seventeenth Bracha: *Retzei Hashem Elokeinu be'amcha Yisrael u'bisfilasam*

(Be pleased, Hashem our G-d. with Your Nation Israel and with their prayers)

רצה השם אלקינו בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם

רצה השם אלקינו בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך. ואשי ישראל ותפלתם. באהבה תקבל ברכון. ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך: , (יעלה ויבא וכו') ותחזינה עינינו בשובך לציון ברחמים: ברוך אתה השם. המחזיר שכינתו לציון:

This *bracha* is also known as the blessing of *Avodah* (Service of the Temple). With the *bracha* of *Retzei* we begin the final three *brochos* where we *take leave* of *Hashem* and thank Him for all that He has done for us. The final three *brochos* are considered one unit just like the first three *brochos*. This means that if one makes certain mistakes which affect the integrity of these *brochos* (i.e. forgetting *Ya'aleh V'eyavoh* on Yom Tov or Rosh Chodesh during the daytime); one must return to the beginning of *Retzei* in order to correct one's mistake.

Although we just finished the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu* where we ask *Hashem* to accept all our prayers, here in this *bracha* we beseech Him to act upon restoring His Divine presence amongst us as He did in the era of the first *Beis Hamikdash*. Even though an individual can develop a very close relationship with *Hashem* through prayer, it still cannot reach the heights of when *Hashem* will restore the glory and majesty of His reign. Thus we ask *Hashem* to rest His Divine Presence in the *Beis Hamikdash* once again. In this *bracha* we're not just asking *Hashem* to favor us when we pray, rather we are asking Him to show us His great love for us to the point where He is ready to rest His Divine Presence amongst us once again. The word *Retzei* רצה comes from the same root as *nutz* רוץ which means to run. When someone runs towards something it shows his strong desire and need to have that. So too we ask *Hashem* to be pleased with our prayer services to the point where his relationship and closeness gives us an urge to run (so to speak) to Him. This relationship is manifested by *Hashem* resting His Divine Presence amongst us as He did during the first *Beis Hamikdash*.

We mention in this *bracha* that *Hashem* should accept the *Ishei Yisrael* willingly. The simple translation of these words mean “and the Fire-offerings of the Jews should be accepted willingly.” The Tur¹ asks how is it possible to pray that *Hashem* accept the Fire-offerings which usually mean the sacrifices that are burned on the *mizbei'ach* (altar) if we have no *Korbanos* (sacrifices) nowadays? The Tur answers that since nowadays the daily *Tefillos* are instead of the *Korbanos*, we pray that *Hashem* should accept our prayers in the place of *Korbanos*. According to this interpretation, *Ve' Ishei Yisrael* is read ahead with *u'sefilasam se'kabeil beratzone* which means that the prayers which are like *Korbanos* should be readily accepted by *Hashem*.

The *sefer Emek Brachæ* adds that “and their prayer accept with love and favor - ותפלתם באהבה תקבל ברצון” cannot mean just that *Hashem* should listen to our prayers and accept them favorably since we already prayed for that in the previous *bracha* of *Shema Koleinu*. Rather, like the Tur pointed out, we are praying specifically that our prayers that nowadays take the place of Sacrifices (*Korbanos*) should be received favorably by *Hashem* as if it were an actual Sacrifice (*Korban*).

Alternatively, *Ishei Yisrael* refers to a Medrash. The Medrash³ states that *Micha'el* sacrifices the souls of *Tzaddikim* in Heaven on an altar. Accordingly, the term “*Ishei*” *Yisrael* means the “people” of Israel that are brought as sacrifices in Heaven. We pray that our prayers be accepted willingly as atonement for the *Bnei Yisrael*. According to this *Ve'Ishei Yisrael* is read with the previous stanza of *Ve'hasheiv es Ha'avodah*.

The commentaries explain this Medrash as follows. When the souls of these *Tzaddikim* (righteous individuals) are brought as a *Korban*, it means that these souls reached an extremely high level of spirituality, bonding them with their Creator, like the word *Korban* means - to be brought close. This is the most satisfying experience a person can attain and it is the ultimate reward of *Tzaddikim*.

Intimation רמז

There is a hint in the Torah that just as Aharon was the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), so too the *Malach* (angel) *Micha'el* is his counterpart in Heaven. The Torah writes when the *Mishkan* was first erected in the *Midbar* (desert)

¹ Simon 120

² Siddur *Tzelosa De'Avraham*

³ *Tosefos Menachos Daf 110a D"b U'Micha'el sar*

and Aharon was inaugurated as *Kohen Gadol*, at that time the *Malach* (angel) *Micha'el* became the *Kohen Gadol* in the Heavens. The verse states “Because today *Hashem* will appear to you”. In Hebrew, the words of this verse read כי ביום הזה השם נראה אליכם. The last two words of this *pasuk* have the same letters as *Aharon* (אהרן - נראה) and *Micha'el* (מיכאל - אליכם). This is hinted by the Torah right at the inauguration of the service in the Tabernacle!

Retzei

The *Poskim* (Rabbinical teachers)⁴ mention that there was a custom not to recite *Retzei* by *Mincha* except for *Mincha* on a day when we fast. Accordingly, they began the *bracha* with the words *Ve'Ishei Yisrael* instead of with *Retzei*. According to that custom, they obviously understood that *Ve'Ishei Yisrael* is read ahead connecting with the words *U'sefillasam tekabeil be'ratzone* (And their supplications You shall accept favorably) as explained above in the first explanation that *Hashem* should readily accept our prayers in the place of *Korbanos* or like the Medrash with *Micha'el*.⁵

The Tur mentions yet another explanation, that *Ve'Ishei Yisrael* is read as a continuation from *Ve'hasbeiv es ha'avodah* (and return the Temple Service) and also return the *Korbanos* (sacrifice services) – the *Ishei Yisrael*. Then we continue with a new prayer that *U'sefillasam tekabeil be'ratzone* (And their supplications You shall accept favorably).

The Closing Bracha for Retzei

The original closing of the *bracha Retzei* was *Baruch atta Hashem hamekabel Avodas ammo Yisrael Be'rachamim* (Blessed are You *Hashem* Who accepts the service of His nation Israel with mercy) as *Rashi* brings in *Berachos*⁶, or as *Rashi* writes in *Yoma*⁷ the closing was *Baruch atta Hashem she'oscha levad'cha be'yirah na'avod* (to You alone with fear we worship). The latter version is what *nusach Ashkenaz* still uses today on Yom Tov by *Mussaf* when the *Kohanim* go up in front of the congregation to *Duchen*⁸ (i.e. give the Priestly blessings of *Yevarachecha etc.* with raised hands - *Nesias Kapayim*). The closing

⁴ Tur and Beis Yosef Simon 120

⁵ Tur as explained by Beis Yosef

⁶ Daf 11b

⁷ Daf 68b

⁸ *Duchening*, *Nesias Kapayim* and *Birchos Kohanim* can be used interchangeably.

of the *bracha* changed to *Hamachzir she'chinasso leTziyone* (Who restores His Presence to Zion) only after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. Hence, this *bracha* originally was for the Service of the Sacrifices (*Avodah* of the *Korbanos*) when the *Beis Hamikdash* was still standing and *Ve'Ishei Yisrael* refers to the *Korbanos* brought in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Ya'aleh Ve'yavoh - Rise up and Come forth

בראש חודש ובחול המועד אומרים זה:
אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְאֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. יַעֲלֶה וַיָּבֹא וַיִּגִּיעַ. וַיִּרְאֶה וַיִּרְצֶה וַיִּשְׁמַע. וַיִּפְקֵד וַיִּזְכֹּר זְכוּרֹנוּ וּפְקֻדוֹנֵנוּ וְזִכְרוֹן
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. וְזִכְרוֹן מִשִּׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד עֲבָדְךָ. וְזִכְרוֹן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קְדֻשָׁתְךָ. וְזִכְרוֹן כָּל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. לְפָנֶיךָ.
לְפָלְטָה לְטוֹבָה. לְחַן וּלְחַסֵּד וּלְרַחֲמִים. לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם בַּיּוֹם:
בראש חדש - ראש החדש:
בפסח - חג המצות:
בסוכות - חג הסוכות:
הַזֶּה. זְכוּרֵנוּ הַשֵּׁם אֵל קִינֵנוּ בּוֹ לְטוֹבָה. וּפְקֻדָּנוּ בּוֹ לְבִרְכָה. וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ בּוֹ לְחַיִּים. וּבְדַבַּר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים חוּס וְחַנּוּן
וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ. כִּי אֵלֶיךָ עֵינֵינוּ. כִּי קֵל מְלֶכֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה:

(Be favorable *Hashem* our G-d towards Your people Israel and their prayer and restore the service to the Holy of Holies of Your Temple. The Fire-offerings of Your people Israel and their prayer accept with love and favor, and may the service of Your people Israel always be favorable to You. (Ya'aleh Ve'yavoh inserted here) May our eyes behold Your return to Zion. Blessed are You, *Hashem*, Who restores His Presence to Zion.)

The addition of the *Rise up and Come forth* (*Ya'aleh Veyavoh*) prayer is recited during the *Amidah* of *Rosh Chodesh* (the beginning of the New Month), *Yom Tov* and the intermediate days of the festivals of *Pesach* (Passover) and *Succos* (Festival of the Tabernacle). *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* is inserted into the *bracha* of *Retzei* (the first of the last three blessings of *She'mone Esrei*). In the case of *Rosh Chodesh* (The Festival of the New Month) that coincides with Shabbos, we recite it in the same place as by the weekday prayers (*Tefillos*). However, on Rosh Hashanah we do not recite it even though Rosh Hashanah is also *Rosh Chodesh*, the first day of the month of *Tishrei*.

There are a couple of reasons why it is inserted into the *bracha* of *Retzei*:

Rashi explains that in the *bracha* of *Retzei* since this *bracha* petitions *Hashem* to reinstate the Temple service to *Yerushalayim* and the *Beis Hamikdash* which would enable us to bring the sacrifice for Rosh Chodesh and the Intermediary Festival days as mandated by the Torah for those occasions.

Tosefos explains that in the *bracha* of *Retzei* we pray for the rebuilding of the Temple and *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* also contains a prayer for the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim* and the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The Nusach (version) of *Ya'aleh Veyavoh*

Ya'aleh Veyavoh is always tailored for the specific occurrence which it is commemorating by adding in and mentioning the appropriate calendar event (e.g. on *Rosh Chodesh* we say “On this day the beginning of the New Month” (*Bayome Rosh Hachodesh hazeh*) while on *Sukkos* one would say “On this day the Holiday of Sukkoth” (*Bayome Chag HaSukkos hazeh*).

The many languages that we mentioned here are each explained by the *Abudraham*. The *Abudraham* explains each one refers to another aspect or level of *Hashem* accepting our Prayer (*Tefilla*). This demonstrates the many levels that our *tefilos* need to penetrate in order to realize their full potential. The *Nefesh HaChaim*⁹ explains that until a *Tefilla* reaches its full potential, it can be circumvented by various prosecuting angels who may find fault in our prayers or in us not deserving to have *Hashem* fulfill our requests. The *sefer Shiras David* refers us to a verse recited by King Solomon (*Shlomo Hamelech*), *And may these words of mine that I have supplicated before Hashem be near to Hashem our G-d day and night that He may grant the just due of His servant and the just due of His people each day's needs in its day...*

From this verse we clearly see that the *Tefillos* (supplication) can be everlasting and have their effects for many years to come.

Similarly, the *Mabit*¹⁰ explains that our prayers on behalf of the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash* are not lost from generation to generation as eventually all the *Tefillos* will combine to become a huge *Tefilla* combined from so many parts that will finally effect to merit the final redemption.

With this concept we can understand a lot better the eight different expressions used here in the *Tefilla* of *Ya'aleh Veyavoh*.

Insertion into the Bracha of Retzei

Why does the *Tefilla* of *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* require such strong prayer more than any other part of *Tefilla*?

⁹ Nefesh HaChaim – R' Chaim Itzkovitz of Volozhin - **Born:** Volozhin, Lithuania, 1749. **Died:** Volozhin, Lithuania, 1821. **Notes:** Ethicist and Talmudist. One of the most prominent disciples of the Vilna Gaon, he founded a Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1802 and was its first Rosh Yeshiva. This Yeshiva which spread the methods of learning of the Vilna Gaon, became one of the most prominent Yeshivas ever. It is regarded as having changed forever the Jewish educational system in that it was based on lectures from leading Rabbanim and a set schedule of study, a pattern followed by Yeshivas to this day. Author of **Nefesh HaChaim**, a mussar (ethical values) compendium occasionally based on Kabbalah, which is regarded by many as meant to present the view of the Mitnagdim (those opposed to the approach of Chassidut) on the issues they found troubling in Chassidism.

¹⁰ *Sha'ar HaTefilla Chapter 17*

The answer to this may lay in some of the following considerations. Firstly, the thrust of the *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* prayer is a prayer for the ultimate redemption of the Jewish nation from its current lengthy exile. As noted above, to merit the final redemption we require much prayer and supplication. Additionally, there is an aspect of strict judgment during *Yom Tov* as well as on *Rosh Chodesh*. Rav Chaim Friedlander זצ"ל discusses this in his writings in the chapter *Avodah she'be'lev* page 263. There he explains that there is judgment on each of the *Yomim Tovim* for different things such as grain, fruit and other material goods. Additionally, *Rosh Chodesh* has this aspect of judgment as well in order to merit each month's specific resource of potential for excelling in various aspects of *Avodas Hashem* (service of G-d). We also know that the day before *Rosh Chodesh* is designated for fasting and prayer which is called the *Yom Kippur Katan* (minor *Yom Kippur*) Services.

Therefore, since these days are to some extent days of judgment, we require very intense prayer for our *Tefilla* to accomplish its maximum potential.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to recite this prayer during the prayer of *Retzei* which is a prayer that particularly asks that we should find favor in *Hashem's* eyes and that He willingly accepts all our prayers.

THE EIGHT EXPRESSIONS

Ya'aleh VeYavo contains 8 different expressions of our prayers "going up" and "being accepted" (go up, come, reach, be seen, accepted, heard, recalled and remembered). The Vilna Gaon relates that these are various stages our prayer must pass through before reaching *Hashem Throne of Glory - the Kissei Hakavod*. The Gemara in *Chagigah*¹¹ tells us in the name of *Reish Lakish* that there are seven different levels of heaven. They are: *Vilone, Rakia, Shechakim, Zevul, Ma'on, Machon and Aravos*¹². The Vilna Gaon explains that the 8 expressions correspond to these Seven Heavens. (The words *Ya'aleh* - recall and *Veyavoh* - remember, are counted as one expression). These Seven Heavens are like seven barriers that exist between Man and *Hashem* which our prayers must first pass through, one by one, as it climbs higher and higher towards *Hashem's* throne of glory. After the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, *Hashem* moved His Divine Presence further away from earth due to our many sins.

¹¹ *Daf* 12b

¹² Rav Schwab comments (page 508 towards the bottom of the page): The only one of these we can understand is *Vilone*, curtain, which refers to the physical universe, the sky. That separates us from the rest of the Heavens which are spiritual in nature and we do not understand what they are.

The Vilna Gaon explains that these eight requests represent very significant requests. They are:

1. “Let it rise up” - Remember Jerusalem (*Tehillim 137:6*).
2. “And come to You” – remember *Mashiach* (*Zechariah 3:8*).
3. “And reach You” –*Hashem* should remember to bring the dead back to life (*Daniel 12:12*).
4. “And be seen” – remember *Akedas Yitzchak*, the binding of Isaac on the alter (*Bereishis 22:14*).
5. “And be accepted” – remember the sacrifices we brought in the Beis Hamikdash (*Yeshayahu 56:7*).
6. “And be heard” – remember the study of the Torah (*Malachi 3:16*).
7. “And think about” – remember how You took us out of Egypt (*Shemos 3:16*).
8. “And remember” – remember the agreement You made with our forefathers (*Vayikra 26:45*).

Rav Shimon Schwab ז”ל notes¹³ that the terminology of “remember” is used particularly often in the *Ya’aleh Veyavoh* prayer. He asks, why do we say to *Hashem* to remember us and our forefathers and to remember *Mashiach* the son of David etc. when *Hashem* is not one that forgets; rather it is us human beings who are forgetful?

He suggests that the Hebrew word for remembering is זָכַר (*zachor*) which also means a “male”. In procreation, the male function is very fleeting yet it leaves a lasting effect. So too, the memory cells of the brain encounter an event that lasts maybe just a few seconds, yet it leaves an indelible mark on the brain that can recall the incident decades later!

We too have the ability to make an everlasting impression when we perform *Hashem’s mitzvos* even if they are only “small” deeds which last but a few seconds. Despite this, we can still lose their everlasting effects by sullyng ourselves with *Aveiros* (transgressions). Our Sages teach us *Aveirah mechabeh Mitzvah*; a sin can

¹³ Rav Schwab on Prayer, pages 507-508 (Artscroll/Mesorah 2003)

extinguish the “fire” of a *Mitzvah*¹⁴. In the *Ya’aleh* (“rise up”) *Veyavoh* prayer we ask *Hashem* that through *Teshuvah* our *Mitzvos* should “rise” again and be rescued from the *Aveiros* (sins) that once sullied them and prevented them from being an everlasting merit.

The World and its Fundamentals

Besides describing the Seven Heavens, the Gemara in *Chagigah*¹⁵ has a general discussion about creation. We will briefly mention some basic concepts concerning the creation and preservation of the world in order to help us appreciate the importance of Prayer, how it affects all the world’s underpinnings. Some of these concepts are *Kabbalistic* in nature and its details are beyond the scope of this work.

R’ *Yehudah* said in the name of *Rav* ten things were created on the first day:

- 1) Heaven, 2) Earth 3) *Tohu* – astonishment 4) *Bohu* – desolation 5) Light
- 6) Darkness 7) Breath 8) Water 9) The Length of Day 10) Length of Night.

There are four basic elements in our Physical world:

- 1) Earth 2) Wind 3) Fire and 4) Water.

These are further defined by:

- 1) Space 2) Time 3) Quantity and 4) Quality.

Lastly, our Purpose in life is to recognize the Creator which is symbolized through “Light”.

Those Righteous individuals who seek closeness to the Creator and the ultimate clarity of light and seek to break the barrier between Man and Heaven do so by spiritually perfecting themselves This light of perfection is reserved and comes to rest on those people who exert themselves in the learning of Torah and the concentration on their Prayers. The ultimate light is realized only by the soul when it departs this world. When the Messianic era will come, this light will be recognized by all the Righteous individuals of each generation. Conversely, those who do not seek the light or deny its existence will always live in darkness and frustration for having

¹⁴ Sotah 21a

¹⁵ *Daf* 12a

lost their single opportunity (when they were alive) to achieve the ultimate truth while coming close to the Creator which is the ultimate accomplishment and happiness.

According to the *Kabbalists*, there are ten things that played a significant part in the creation of the Universe at the behest of the Creator (otherwise known as *Sefiros* – *spiritual realms*). 1) *Kesser* 2) *Chochmah* 3) *Binah* 4) *Chesed* 5) *Gevurah* 6) *Tiferes* 7) *Netzach* 8) *Hod* 9) *Yesod* 10) *Malchus*. The explanation of each and every concept here goes beyond the scope of this work and it is usually studied by those who are erudite in their knowledge of the Talmud.

R' *Zutra bar Toviya* said in then name of *Rav*¹⁶ the world was created with ten things. 1) Wisdom 2) Insight 3) Understanding 4) Strength 5) Admonishment 6) Power 7) Righteousness 8) Justice 9) Kindness and 10) Compassion. These attributes coupled with the Physical properties and Spiritual attributes are what *Hashem* created the world with and the Laws with which we are governed within our role of seeking spiritual perfection and complete trust in the Creator.

The *Gemara* describes a debate that took place between the Academies of *Hillel* and *Shammai* as to what was the order of creation. According to the House of *Shammai* (*Beis Shammai*) Heaven was created first just like one creates the chair and then its footstool. it's the Praise of the Glory of G-d. According to the House of *Hillel* (*Beis Hillel*) Earth was created first like the bottom floor of a house is built before the upper floor. Their figurative argument can be explained as a fundamental argument about what is considered to be more central in creation. The House of *Shamai* (*Beis Shamai*) contends that the celestial spiritual beings are the main focus of creation, while the House of *Hillel* (*Beis Hillel*) contends that Mankind is central in creation. In the end, *Pirkei DeRebbe Eliezer* states that they reached a consensus on this issue after a Divine Presence rested upon them that Heaven and Earth were created at the same time. This is the opinion the *Gemara* proceeds to cite in the name of the *Chachamim* (Sages).

Whatever the order of creation was, be it Heaven first or Earth first or both at the same time, the Creator has provided mankind with physical and material capabilities as a mechanism and an opportunity to grow spiritually. Materialism was given to mankind as a means to be used to serve *Hashem*; not as a Goal in itself. One who indulges in physical and material pursuits for its own sake is overlooking the purpose

¹⁶ Chagigah 12a

of creation. Such involvement in materialism causes one to stumble and stray from the path of Torah.

The Eighteenth Bracha: *Modim anachnu lach*

(We praise You)

מודים אנחנו לך

The *Tur* explains¹⁷ that after the *bracha* of *Retzei* which represents the *Avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* (service in the Holy Temple) we say *Modim* which is related to Sacrifices (*Korbanos*) as in the verse (*pasuk*) *He who offers thanksgivings honors Me*¹⁸.

In this *bracha* we give *Hashem* thanks for everything that He grants us in life. The *Abudraham* explains that the word *Modim* can be translated in one of two¹⁹ ways. Either it means to praise, or it means to bow and humble oneself²⁰. As part of the closing three *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* we now thank *Hashem* for listening to our prayers. During *Chazoras Hashatz* (repeat of the *Shemoneh Esrei*) when the leader of the Prayers (*Chazzan*) recites *Modim*, the congregation says along with him another version of *Modim* that is called *Modim De'Rabbanan*²¹. The reason that the congregation recites *Modim* with the *Chazzan* in an undertone is because when showing gratitude one cannot do it passively. A servant can't give his master praise and thanks through a messenger; he must do it himself²².

Intimation רמז

The word *Modim* מודים has a numerical value of 100 (40 מ- + 6 ו- + 4 ד- + 10 י- + 40 ם-). This is a hint that we praise G-d daily with one hundred blessings.

¹⁷ Based on the Gemora *Megillah daf 18a*

¹⁸ Tehilim 50:23

¹⁹ The *Maharsha* to *Megillah daf 18a* explains the word to men "We confess to you"

²⁰ *Abudraham* page 115

²¹ See Lesson 13, page 198 & 200 regarding one who is in middle of *Krias She'ma* and its *brochos*, if he may interrupt to say *Modim De'Rabbanan*

²² *Ibid* page 128

The 100 Daily Blessings

King David (*Dovid Hamelech*) instituted that everyone should recite 100 blessings every single day. This was in response to a plague that broke out in his days where one hundred deaths would occur daily. *Dovid* saw with his *kabalistic* mystical powers²³ that the reason behind these deaths was because the Jews were not giving sufficient praise to *Hashem*. He therefore instituted that everyone should recite at least 100 blessings a day, to ward off this plague.

Bowing by Modim (the Knees or at the Waist)

There are different customs of how one should bow at the beginning of *Modim*. Many have a custom of just bowing by the waist without bending the knees. Others²⁴ have a custom (*minhag*) of bowing during *Modim* as they do by any other bowing by *Shemoneh Esrei*, bowing one's knees during *Modim* as by the other parts of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Either way, one must raise himself back up from his bowing position before reciting the Name of G-d.

Bowing by Modim De'Rabbanan

When the *Chazzan* recites *Modim*, the congregation recites the *Modim De'Rabbanan*. Some opinions maintain that one should bow both at its beginning and again at its end when saying "*Baruch*"²⁵. The *Shulchan Aruch Haran*²⁶ says to bow when saying the words "*al she'anachnu modim lach*".

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ז"ל said that when one bows by *Modim* one should be meticulous to bow towards *Mizrach* (East) just like by *Shemoneh Esrei*. He also contends that *Modim* should be recited only when standing. This is also the opinion of *Rav Ovadiah Yosef sblit"o*, יבלחט"ו.

Birchas Kohanim – Blessings of the Priests

Immediately after finishing the *bracha* of *Modim* individuals begin the final *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, *Sim Shalom* שים שלום (Establish peace etc.)

²³ *Levush* 46:1

²⁴ *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* Simon 17

²⁵ *Mishna Berura* 127:5, *Chayei Adam* 30:10

²⁶ 127:1

During the *Chazoras Hashatz*, the *Chazzan* recites by *Shacharis*, and during fast-days by *Mincha* as well, *Birchas Kobanim*, the three priestly blessings of *Yevarechecha*, (*May Hashem Bless you*) *Ya'eir* (*May Hashem Illuminate you*) and *Yissa* (*May Hashem turn [his presents] toward you*) These three Verses (*Pesukim*) are the blessings that the *Kobanim* would recite when blessing the Jewish people with their hands raised above their heads (*Duchening*). This was practiced daily in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* and is still the practice today in the Land of Israel. In the Diaspora the *Kobanim* only recite *Birchas Kobanim* on Yom Tov during *Mussaf*. The *Sephardic* Communities in the Diaspora recite *Birchas Kobanim* daily. During the rest of the year, the *Chazzan* would recite the above-mentioned verses (*Pesukim*) during *Chazoras Hashatz*. The *Chazzan* does not raise his hands to bless the congregation as this is not a form of *Birchas Kobanim*. Rather it is a prayer that *Hashem* should bless us with the blessings that are given to us when the *Kobanim* say these same verses (*Pesukim*).

The *Tur*²⁷ explains the reason that we insert *Birchas Kobanim* in the *bracha* right after *Modim* is because the verse (*pasuk*) states that after *Aharon* the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) finished bringing the *Korban* (sacrifice) he went to bless the people²⁸. We see that right after *Avodah* (service) is the proper time for *Birchas Kobanim*. Although *Birchas Kobanim* could have been placed before *Modim* right after *Retzei* which is in place of Sacrifices (*Korbanos*) the *Tur* explains that since *Modim* is also a type of Service (*Avodah*) as indicated by the verse (*pasuk*) *He who offers thanksgivings honors Me*²⁹, the two are kept together and *Birchas Kobanim* is only inserted afterwards.

Laws דינים

Some of the laws of *Duchening* or *Birchas Kobanim* that the *Chazzan* recites are as follows:

- ☞ It is recited during *Chazoras Hashatz* of *Shacharis*, *Mussaf* prayer
- ☞ On a Fast-day it is also recited by *Mincha*. On *Tish'a B'Av* it is not recited.
- ☞ On *Yom Kippur* it recited by *Ne'ilah* as well.
- ☞ In the house of a Mourner, it is commonly not recited.

²⁷ *Simon* 121 based on Gemora *Megillah* daf 18a

²⁸ *Vayikera* 9:22

²⁹ *Tehilim* 50:23

The Nineteenth Bracha: *Sim Shalom tova u'vracha ... al Yisrael amecha*

(Establish peace, goodness and blessings ... over Your nation Israel)

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה ... עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ

The final blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* is a blessing for peace and tranquility. This blessing follows the *Birchas Kohanim* which ends with a blessing of peace *Ve'yaseim lecha Shalom* וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם (and He shall give you peace).

The three blessings of *Birchas Kohanim* are alluded to in this *bracha*.

Sim Shalom (Establish peace) corresponds to the final blessing *Ve'yasem lecha Shalom* (He will place peace upon you).

Ki be'ohr panecha nosatta lanu... (for with the radiance of Your Countenance You gave us...) corresponds with the blessing *Ya'eir Hashem panav eilecha* (*Hashem* should shine His radiant face towards you).

Borcheinu Avinu kulanu ke'echad (bless us, our Father, all of us together) corresponds with *Yevarechecha Hashem...* (*Hashem* should bless you).

The *bracha* of *Sim Shalom* is replaced with a similar *bracha* of *Shalom Rav* (An abundance of peace) which is said by *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv* according to *Nusach Ashkenaz* and only by *Ma'ariv* according to *Nusach Sefard*. The reason for reciting the version of *Sim Shalom* is because it relates to *Birchas Kohanim* as mentioned above. Therefore, it is recited only during a prayer that is fit for *Birchas Kohanim* such as *Shacharis* of any day. Additionally, *Sim Shalom* is said by *Mincha* of a fast-day, or *Shacharis* and *Mussaf* of a *Yom Tov* day. Any other day it is not recited by *Mincha* because *Birchas Kohanim* may only be recited by a *Kohen* who has not drunk a *Revi'is*³⁰ of wine. By *Mincha*, *Birchas Kohanim* would not be practiced since by that time of day it is likely that the *Kohen* drank a *Revi'is* of wine during the meal which invalidates him from reciting *Birchas Kohanim*.

Intimation רמז

The number of words in the *bracha* of *Sim Shalom* numbers 53 (or 54 according to those who add "*Chaim*" *Chen V'Chesed ve'rachamim*). The *Aruch Hashulchan* finds a verse that has the same amount of letters using a word that can be spelled with an extra letter or without one giving a total of 53 or 54 letters to that verse. It states in

³⁰ Approximately 3.5 - 4.2 fluid oz.

*Divrei Hayamim*³¹ *Ve'ru'ach lavsha es Amosaye rosh hashalishim lecha David*³² *ve'imcha ben Yishai shalom, shalom lecha ve'shalom...* (And a spirit enwrapped *Amosaye* the head of the officers. [We] are yours, David, and [we] are with you the son of Jesse! Peace! Peace unto you and peace... to your helper, for your G-d has helped you." And David received them and placed them at the head of the troop).

Sim Shalom... Aleinu (Establish peace...upon us)
שים שלום... עלינו

One of the commentaries on the Siddur³³ asks why we say this even when davening individually, since *Aleinu* - upon us, has no meaning if there is no one else there and we follow with the words *ve'al kol Yisrael amecha* (and upon Your nation Israel) right afterwards. Who is *Aleinu* referring to?

Rabbi David Goldberg *shlit"a* answers this beautifully in his sefer *Shiras David*. He explains that there is a *Halacha* that if someone cannot be in *shul* to recite *Shemoneh Esrei* together with a *minyan* (quorum of 10 males) one should at least time his *Shemoneh Esrei* to be at the same time as the *minyan* is davening in *shul*. If that's not possible, one should at least try to daven inside a *shul* even without a *minyan* present. If one cannot do either, then his prayer is not readily accepted until he joins the next time with a *minyan* in prayer. This is because a prayer is not accepted so easily unless it is with a *tzibbur* (congregation). Accordingly, when reciting the prayer of *Sim Shalom* (establish peace) the full affect of this prayer is when it is said together with a *minyan*. So even when praying alone, we use the term *aleinu* (upon us) since this prayer will come back to life the next time one is in the company of others who will help elevate the prayer which was once recited in private.

This is a beautiful lesson in *shalom* (peace) and *achdus* (unity) with all our brethren who join us in prayer, that only through our unified prayer represented by a *minyan* will all our previous individual prayers become elevated and readily accepted by G-d!

³¹ I Chronicles 12:18

³² Generally *David* is spelled with 3 letters (דוד) but here in Chronicles it is always with an extra letter *yud* (דודי) making it a total of 54 letters until the third time the word *Shalom* appears in the *pasuk*.

³³ *Dover Shalom* in *Otzar Hatefilos Siddur*

Borcheinu Avinu kulanu ke'echad be'ohr panecha

(Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance)

ברכנו כולנו כאחד באור פניך

The *Shibalei Haleket* writes that this *bracha* alludes to *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham our forefather) who is referred to as the “one”, a person who was “singular” in greatness. Perhaps it means that *Avraham Avinu* was the only person in the world who came to recognize the Creator on his own while living amongst a totally pagan society. In fact, *Avraham Avinu* is called by the name *Avraham ha'Ivri*, because the word *Ivri* connotes someone who is on one side while everyone else is on the other side opposing his view. According to this reference, not only does *Shemoneh Esrei* begin with the first *bracha* with its closing mentioning *Avraham Avinu* individually, *Magen Avraham* (The Protector of Abraham), but the final *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* also alludes to *Avraham Avinu* individually.

The reason according to our Sages that the first *bracha* ends with *Avraham Avinu* alone is because *Hashem* promised him that as a reward for leaving his home and birthplace at *Hashem's* bidding, he will merit to be singled out at the closing of the first *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Now we see that there is such an allusion at the closing of the last *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* as well.



The Me'ah Brochos (One Hundred Daily Blessings)

Simon 46:3

3. A person is obligated to recite daily at least one hundred blessings.

The *Tur* writes that there is an obligation to recite one hundred *brochos* (blessings), each day as the *Gemora* in *Menachos 43b* says:

Tanya (the *beraisa*³⁴ teaches): Rebbe Meir says, a person is obligated to recite one hundred brochos daily, as learned from the verse³⁵ “*Ve’atto Yisrael m’ob Hashem Elokecho sbo’el me’imcho, ki im le’yir’ab ob’see.*” So now, Yisrael, what (m’oh) does Hashem ask of you, only to fear Me. From this verse we see a hint to the one hundred brochos, blessings.

Rashi *Rashi* explains the Hebrew word “*m’ob*” (what), is closely related to the word “*me’ab*”, which means one hundred. Thus, the *pasuk* reads, *Hashem* desires of you one hundred.

Tosefos *Tosefos* says in the name of *Rabbeinu Tam* that the Hebrew word “*sbo’el*”, which usually is spelled, *shin, alef, lamed, is written here, shin, vov, alef, lamed*. The additional **vov**, brings the letter count of this verse to exactly one hundred.

In Dovid Hamelech’s time, one hundred people were dying daily The *Tur* goes on to quote *Rav Natre’na’ee Gaon* that says that in the time of *Dovid Hamelech* (King David), a plague broke out, claiming the lives of one hundred individuals daily. He investigated the matter through spiritual means, and verified by *ru’ach bakodesh*, (a holy revelation), that this was due to the lack of blessings recited by the Jewish nation. Therefore, he instituted that each person should recite at least one hundred blessings daily to hold off these deaths. This is hinted in the verse³⁶ *u’ne’um hagever bukam ol* (and the words of the man who (was) established on high). The numerical value of “*ol*” (*ayin*=70 *lamed*=30) is one hundred. This refers to *Dovid Hamelech* establishing the one hundred daily blessings. It was *Dovid Hamelech* who

³⁴ A compilation of Talmudic laws similar to those of the Mishna

³⁵ Devarim 10:12

³⁶ Shmuel II 23:1

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instituted that everyone should recite the 100 *brochos* daily. The above verses (*Pesukim*) are where he found support (a hint) for his idea.

A list of the One Hundred Daily Blessings

The Beis Yosef lists the daily blessings as follows:

Blessing	Number of Blessings
<i>Birchas Hama'apil</i> (The blessing said when reciting <i>krias She'ma al hamitab</i> , the bedtime Shema)	1
<i>Netilas Yadayim</i> (washing hands)	1
<i>Asher Yotzar</i>	1
<i>Birchos Hashachar</i> (from <i>Elokaye Neshama</i> until <i>Gomeil chasodim tovim le'amo Yisrael</i> , without <i>Hanosein layo'eif ko'ach</i>)	15
<i>Birchos HaTorah</i>	3
<i>Tzitzis, Tefilin, Boruch She'omar, Yishtabach</i> (Other <i>Poskim</i> count <i>Tefillin</i> as 2 <i>brochos</i>)	4
<i>Birchos Krias She'ma Shacharis (morning)(3), Maariv (evening)(4)</i>	7
<i>Shemoneh Esrei (3 x 19)</i>	57
<i>Two meals each of: Netilas Yadayim, Hamotzee, Birchas Hamazone (4), Borei Pri Hagefen, Al Hagefen</i> (This is according to the custom of reciting <i>Birchas Hamazone</i> over a cup of wine)	16
GRAND TOTAL	105

Shabbos: List of Brochos (changes to the above List)

Blessing	Change in the Number of Blessings
<i>Shemoneh Esrei</i>	-36
<i>Tefillin</i>	-1
<i>Me'ein Sheva (Friday night short form Chazoras Hashatz- Review of Tefilla by the Chazzan)</i>	+1
<i>Mussaf</i>	+7
<i>Kiddush</i>	+1
<i>Extra meal</i>	+8
GRAND TOTAL	85

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Magen Avraham The Magen Avraham³⁷ makes some amendments to the figures given by the *Beis Yosef* based on some *halachic* differences (some examples were noted in the list).

The Friday Night

Short Form Chazoras Hashatz (repeat of prayer) The Magen Avraham³⁸ asks a question on the *Beis Yosef's* inclusion of the *bracha* of *Me'ein Sheva* on Friday night. He argues that if this is included, why not include the *chazoras hashatz*³⁹ (the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*). Because of this difficulty the Magen Avraham is forced to answer that perhaps it can only work here, since the individuals don't say this *bracha*. The Mishna Berura⁴⁰ rules that if necessary, one can answer to the *brochos* for *Krias haTorah* and the *Maftir*.

Ben Ish Chai The *Ben Ish Chai* to *Parshas Vayeishev*⁴¹ states very briefly that there is an obligation to recite one hundred blessings daily. On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* (Holy days) we have fewer blessings to say because of the shorter "*Shemoneh Esrei*". One should try to make up the difference by reciting blessings for various foods and for sweet smelling spices.

A More Current List The following list is from an *Ashkenazic* source to illustrate a more current list of *brochos* based on the *Ashkenazic* custom. Please note that certain discrepancies in the numbers are based on *halachic* differences such as the amount of *brochos* over *Tefillin*, *birchos haTorah* etc.

**The Steipler Gaon
ז"ל**

The list is found in the *sefer Karyano D'igarta*⁴² from the *Steipler Gaon ז"ל* page 149.

³⁷ S"K 8, see also Darchei Moshe

³⁸ S"K 8

³⁹ The *chazran's* repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*

⁴⁰ S"K 14

⁴¹ *Shana risbona, se'if 14*

⁴² Vol. 1, letter 134

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Blessing	Number of Blessings
<i>Tzitzis</i>	1
<i>Tefillin</i>	2
<i>Netilas Yadayim (washing hands)</i>	1
<i>Asher Yotzar</i>	1
<i>Birchos Hashachar (from Elokaye Neshama until Hagomeil chasodim tovim le'amo Yisrael, without Hanosein layo'eif ko'ach)</i>	16
<i>Birchos HaTorah</i>	2
<i>Baruch She'omar, Yishtabach</i>	2
<i>Birchos Krias Shema Shacharis (morning)</i>	3
<i>Birchos Krias Shema Maariv (evening)</i>	4
<i>Shemoneh Esrei (3 x 19)</i>	57
<i>Al Netilas Yadayim, Hamotzee, Birchas Hamazon (morning)</i>	6
<i>Al Netilas Yadayim, Hamotzee, Birchas Hamazone (evening)</i>	6
<i>Hama'apil</i>	1
GRAND TOTAL	102

Shabbos List of Brochos:

Blessing	Number of Blessings
<i>Tzitzis</i>	1
<i>Netilas Yadayim</i> (washing hands)	1
<i>Asher Yotzar</i>	1
<i>Birchos HaTorah</i>	2
<i>Birchos Hashachar</i>	16
<i>Baruch She'omar, Yishtabach</i>	2
<i>Birchos Krias Shema Shacharis</i> (morning)	3
<i>Birchos Krias Shema Maariv</i> (evening)	4
<i>Shemoneh Esrei</i> (4 x 7)	28
<i>Al Netilas Yadayim, Hamotzee, Birchas Hamazone</i> (Friday night, Shabbos morning, Shabbos afternoon)	18
<i>Kiddush</i> (Friday night)	2
<i>Kiddush</i> (Shabbos Day)	1
<i>Hama'apil</i>	1
GRAND TOTAL	80

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There is also an additional *bracha* by *Ma'ariv* during the week, for those who say *Boruch Hashem le'olam etc.* before *Shemoneh Esrei*.

How to make up the Shabbos Shortfall

The *Gemora* in *Menachos 43b* states:

Rav Chiya brei d'Rav Avia b'shabbata w'yomei tovei to'rach umemalei le'hu be'asparmekei ume'gadei. Rav Chiya brei (the son) d' (of) Rav Avia would fill the missing brochos (Rashi- the amount missing from the required one hundred), on Shabbos and Yom Tov, with sweet smelling spices and delicacies (Rashi- which require brochos over them).

From this *Gemora* we see, that any type of *bracha* can be valid for the fulfillment of the one hundred *brochos*, even *birchos hanebenin*⁴³ for smelling spices and eating delicacies.

⁴³ *Brochos* for partaking in material pleasures

Questions:

- 1) What does it mean that the final 3 *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* are like one unit?
- 2) What does the word *Retzei* (רצה) have to do with the word *Rutz* (רוץ)?
- 3) If *Ishei Yisrael* refers to *Korbanos* (sacrifices), why do we continue saying it nowadays?
- 4) On which *Rosh Chodesh* do we not say *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* for *Rosh Chodesh*?
- 5) Why is *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* inserted by *Retzei* of a weekday *Shemoneh Esrei*?
- 6) What value does our *Tefilla* for the *Beis Hamikdash* have if it's not rebuilt in our own lifetime?
- 7) What does the Vilna Gaon explain the reason for the 8 expressions used in *Ya'aleh Veyavoh*?
- 8) Why is it necessary for all to respond to *Modim* if we could just be *yotzei* by listening?
- 9) Who instituted the 100 *brochos* and for what purpose?
- 10) Where is the proper place to recite *Birchas Kohanim*?
- 11) On which days do different communities *duchen*?
- 12) We find a specific reference to *Avraham Avinu* in the first *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Where do we find a specific reference to *Avraham Avinu* at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei*?

Answers:

- 1) It means that if someone makes a mistake in the second to last or final *bracha*, which would invalidate the *Shemoneh Esrei*, one must rectify it by starting back at the beginning of *Retzei*.
- 2) *Retzei* means that *Hashem* should be so pleased with us that he returns His Divine Presence and dwells amongst us again. This is brought out by us running towards Him seeking His love by showing our own desire to do His will.
- 3) Either it refers to our *Tefillos* that are in place of *Korbanos* nowadays. Alternatively, it refers back to the service of *Korbanos* should be returned to us as well together with the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*.
- 4) On Rosh Hashanah.
- 5) Since on the days *Ya'aleh Ve'yavoh* there is a *Korban* brought especially for that day. *Retzei* is a prayer for the Service of the *Beis Hamikdash* to be reinstated. Alternatively, we place it in the prayer of *Retzei* since it has a prayer for the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash* just like the prayer of *Ya'aleh Ve'yavoh*.
- 6) The *Mabit* says that the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash* requires much merit. All the *Tefillos* of the generations will combine to eventually bring *Mashiach* and the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*.
- 7) He explains that the 8 expressions represent different important remembrances we ask *Hashem* to remember for our merit. It also represents the 7 Heavens that our *Tefillos* must pass through before reaching *Hashem's* Throne of Glory.
- 8) Since *Modim* is said to show our appreciation to *Hashem* for all that He does for us, it is only fitting that we do it personally and not through another party.
- 9) *Dovid Hamelech* instituted that it should be recited daily to protect us from dying as 100 people were dying daily in his generation.
- 10) It is inserted at the beginning of the final *bracha Sim Shalom* right after the completion of the *bracha Modim*.
- 11) The *Sephardic* communities *Duchen* daily during *Shacharis* and *Mussaf* prayers. This is the custom in Israel today as well even amongst *Ashkenazim*. Outside of Israel, we only *Duchen* on festivals during the *Mussaf* prayers (except for *Simchas Torah* where it is done by *Shacharis*).
- 12) *Borcheinu Avinu kulanu ke'echad* (Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance). The *Shibalei Haleket* writes that this *bracha* alludes to *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham our forefather) who is referred to as the "one", a person who was "singular" in greatness.