

HIST282/JWST234
Jewish History I

Rabbinic Liturgy: Terms and Structures

1. Terms

- **Liturgy**—Regularized pattern of worship, organized around calendar, time, ritual structures
- **Shema**—“Hear O Israel” (6:4) + additional Biblical passages readings
- **Berakhah** (Blessing)—a formulaic element in Jewish liturgy: a variant of “Blessed are you, God ... who ...”
 - Variations depending on context, purpose (e.g., accompanying a ritual act, eating, or formal prayer)
 - Can be single, or assembled in series (e.g., the **Tefillah**); a sentence or an elaborate prayer
- **Tefillah** (“The Prayer”; also ‘Amidah, “Standing Prayer,” or Shemoneh Esreh, “The Eighteen [Blessings]”—A series of *berakhot* (blessings) making up the most common element in liturgy.
- **Piyyut** (from Greek *poiesis*, poetry)—late antique and medieval practice of composing poetic versions of the statutory prayers

2. Structures

Shema

- Blessings before
- Three biblical readings (first begins “Hear [*Shema*], O Israel”)
- Blessing(s) after.

Tefillah

- Introductory blessings
- Variable blessings
 - Daily: 13 Petitionary prayers for total of 19
 - Sabbaths, festivals, etc. blessing(s) (usually one) special for that day
- Concluding blessings

Service	Shema	Tefillah	Read Torah
Morning (Shaharit)	✓	✓	M, Th, Sabbaths, Festivals, Fasts
<i>Festival addition (Musaf)</i>		✓	
Afternoon (Minhah)		✓	Sabbaths, Fasts
<i>Day of Atonement: Ne'ilah (closing of Temple gates)</i>		✓	
Evening (‘Arvit or Ma‘ariv)	✓	✓	

Contents of *Tefillah*
(Traditional Text, Ashkenazic Rite)

I. Introductory Blessings

a. *Fathers*. Blessed are you, Lord or God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, he great, mighty, and awesome God on high, who grants beneficences, and creates all, and remembers the beneficent acts of the fathers, and brings a redeemer for their sons' sons for his own name's sake. O King who aids, and saves, and protects. Blessed are you Lord, shield of Abraham.

b. *Resurrection*. You are mighty for ever, Lord, who revives the dead, and your saving power is great, who sustains the live beneficently, revives the dead with great mercy, supports the falling, heals the sick, frees the bound, and upholds his faithfulness to those sleeping in the dust. Who is like you, master of mightiness, and who can be compared to you, King who causes death and revives and causes salvation to sprout forth. And you are to be relied upon to redeem the dead. Blessed are you, Lord, reviver of the dead.

c. *Holiness*. You are holy, and your name is holy, and the holy ones [angels? Israel?] praise you daily. Blessed are you, Lord, the Holy God.

II. Intermediate Section

Daily: 13 petitionary blessings

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. knowledge | h. rule by God |
| b. repentance | i. against slanderers |
| c. forgiveness | j. reward for just |
| d. redemption | k. Jerusalem |
| e. healing | l. Messiah |
| f. productive year | m. Hear Prayer |
| g. ingathering of exile | |

Sabbaths and festivals: Day appropriate blessing (one prayer on New Year, 3 blessings)

Sabbath Day (extract). Moses rejoiced in his portion that you called him a faithful servant, when he stood before you at Mt. Sinai, and you lowered two stone tablets in his hands, and in them it is observance of the Sabbath is written, and so is it written in your Torah ... (Ex. 31:16–17 quoted)

Our God and God of our Fathers find our rest favorable. Sanctify us with your commandments and give us our portion in your Torah, sate us from your goodness and give us joy in your salvation, and purify our hearts to worship you faithfully. And give us as a heritage, Lord our God, your holy sabbath in love and favor, that Israel who sanctifies you might rest on it. Blessed are you, Lord, who sanctifies the sabbath.

III. Concluding Section

a. *God's return to Zion*. Favor, Lord our God, your people Israel and their prayers, and return the sacrifices to your temple, and accept [then] the burnt offerings of Israel and their payers with favor, and may the worship of Israel always be favorable before you. And may our eyes see your return to Zion in mercy. Blessed are you who restores his presence to Zion.

b. *Thanksgiving*. We give thanks to you, for you are the Lord our God and God of our Fathers for ever, rock of our lives, you are our protecting shield. From generation to generation we will give thanks to you, and tell your praises, for our lives that are given over to your hands, and on our souls that are on pledged to you, and for your miracles that are each day with us, and for your wonders and goodnesses that are at every time—evening and morning and noon. O good one, for your mercies are boundless, and merciful one, for your kindnesses that have not ceased, we ever hope in you. And for all these may your name be blessed and exalted, our king, always and forever, and all the living should give thanks to you and praise your name faithfully, O God our salvation and help. Selah. Blessed are you, Lord, whose name is good for it is fitting to give thanks to you.

c. *Peace*. Give, goodness, and blessing, grace, kindness, and mercy upon us and upon all Israel your people. Bless us, our father, all of us as one, with the light of your face, for by the light of your face you have given us, Lord our God, a Torah of life, love of kindness, and justice, and blessing, and mercy, and life, and peace. And may it be good in your eyes to bless Israel with your peace at every time and every hour. Blessed are you Lord, who blesses his people Israel with peace.