

חזרת הש"ץ Repetition/Renewal of the Amida

1. Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Ha-Shana 33b, 34b

משנה: כָּשֶׁם שֶׁשְּׁלִיחַ צְבוּר חַיִּיב, כֹּךָ כָּל יַחֲדֵי וְיַחֲדֵי חַיִּיב...
גמרא: אָמַר לָהֶם רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: לְדַבְּרֵיכֶם, לָמָּה שְּׁלִיחַ צְבוּר יוֹרֵד לְפָנַי הַתִּיבָה? אָמְרוּ לוֹ:
כִּי לְהוֹצִיא אֶת שְׂאֵינוּ בְּקִי.

Mishnah: Just as the prayer leader is obligated [in the prayer of Rosh HaShana], so too, each and ...every individual is obligated in these prayers

Gemara: Rabban Gamliel said to the Rabbis: According to your statement, why does the prayer leader descend before the ark and recite the *Amida* prayer? They said to him: He does so to fulfill the obligation of one who is not an expert in prayer

2. Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 124:1, 3-7

(א) לאחר שסיימו הציבור תפלתן יחזיר ש"צ התפלה שאם יש מי שאינו יודע להתפלל...
...יכוין למה שהוא אומר ויוצא בו

(ג) קהל שהתפללו וכלם בקיאים בתפלה אעפ"כ ירד ש"צ וחוזר להתפלל כדי לקיים תקנת חכמים:

(ד) כשש"צ חוזר התפלה הקהל יש להם לשתוק ולכוין לברכות שמברך החזן ולענות אמן ואם אין ט' מכוונים לברכותיו קרוב להיות ברכותיו לבטלה לכן כל אדם יעשה עצמו כאלו אין ט' זולתו ויכוין לברכת החזן:

(ה) על כל ברכה שאדם שומע בכל מקום אומר ברוך הוא וברוך שמו:

(ו) ויענו אמן אחר כל ברכה בין אותם שיצאו ידי תפלה בין אותם שלא יצאו ובכוונה שיכוין בלבו אמת הוא הברכה שבירך המברך ואני מאמין בזה:

(ז) לא ישיח שיחת חולין בשעה שש"צ חוזר התפלה" ואם שח הוא חוטא וגדול עונו מנשוא וגוערים בו:

1) After the congregation finishes their prayer [i.e. the Amida], the prayer leader repeats the prayer, so that if there is anyone who does not know how to pray [the Amida], [that person] will pay attention to what [the prayer leader] is saying and fulfill [that person's] obligation through that...

3) A congregation which prayed [the Amidah] and all of them are experts in prayer [themselves] - nevertheless, the prayer leader should descend [to lead] and repeat the [Amida] prayer in order to maintain the decree of our Sages.

4) When the prayer leader repeats the [Amida] prayer, the congregation should be quiet, and focus on the blessings that the chazan is making, and respond "Amen." And if there are not 9 people who are focusing on [the prayer leader's] blessings, it is almost that [the prayer leader's] blessings are in vain. Therefore, each person should act as if there are not nine others [who are focusing] other [than that person], and should focus on the blessings of the chazan.

5) For every blessing that a person hears in any place, one says, "Blessed is [God] and Blessed is [God's] Name."

6) And they answer "Amen" after every blessing, both the [people] who already fulfilled their obligation to pray and those who did not; and the intention that one should hold in one's heart is: "The blessing that the blesser recited is true, and I believe in it."

7) One should not hold a mundane conversation at the time when the prayer leader is repeating the [Amida] prayer. And if [a person] converses [on common matters], [that person] sins, and [that person]'s transgression is too great to bear, and we rebuke [that person].

3. Tur, Orah Hayyim 124

וגם מחזיר התפלה כדי שיענו קדושה אחריו.

[The chazan] also repeats the *Amida* so that people will say the *Kedusha* after him.

4. Arukh Ha-Shulhan, Orah Hayyim 124

ודע דהטור כתב עוד טעם על חזרת שליח הציבור: משום קדושה, עיין שם. ונראה שהיה יכול לומר גם משום ברכת כהנים.

And know that the Tur gave another reason for the repetition of the *Amida*: Because of the *Kedusha*, see there. And it seems that he could have also said because of the Priestly Blessing.

5. Responsa of the Radbaz, IV:1165

וכן העיד עליו רבי אברהם בנו ז"ל... כבר נודע ונתפשט ונתפרסם מה שתיקן אבא מארי ז"ל והסכימו עמו כל תלמידי חכמים שהיו בדורו וכל היושבים בבית מדרשו והוא שראה שחזרת שליח צבור התפלה בקול רם אחר שהתפלל בלחש לא יקשיבו אליה כל העם לשמוע ממנו באימה ויראה וענוה בעמידתם לתפלה אלא מספרים זה עם זה בשיחה בטלה... יש בזה מכשול עון גדול לפי שסיפור העם בעוד ששליח צבור מתפלל ואינם מקשיבים ביראה ומוסר יש בו זלזול כבוד שמים... וסבת זה הוא שהם אומרים שכבר יצאו ידי חובתם בתפלת הלחש ואין להם עסק בחזרת התפלה ולכן התקין שיגביה שליח צבור קולו בתפלתו בתחלה... להוציא את שאינו בקי ושאר העם יתפללו אחריו להוציא עצמן ויאמר קדושה בברכה שלישית והעם עונים אחריו ויתפללו כולם ביחד עד שיסיימו התפלה כאחד.

Rabbi Avraham, [Maimonides'] son, said about him... My father's enactment has become well known and spread and become famous, and all of the scholars of his generation and all who sat in his study hall agreed with him. He saw that when the chazan repeated the *Amida* out loud after the silent *Amida*, people do not listen to [the repetition] with fear, awe, and humility while they stand in prayer, but rather speak idle chatter... This is a great stumbling block, because people

speak while the chazan is praying and do not listen to him with awe and morality. This ridicules the honor of heaven (*kevod shamayim*)... The reason that they give is that they already fulfilled their obligation with the silent *Amida*, and they have no need for the repetition of the *Amida*. Therefore, [Maimonides] enacted that the chazan should raise his voice at the beginning of the *Amida*... in order to fulfill the obligation of anyone who is not an expert, and the rest of the people will pray to themselves to fulfill their own obligation, and he should say *Kedusha* at the third blessing, and the people should respond, and then they should all pray together until they finish the *Amida* together.

6. Kaf Ha-Hayyim, Orah Hayyim 124:2

בימי רבינו האר"י ז"ל ניתנה רשות לגלות וגילה הסוד של החזרה שמעלתה יותר גדולה מן הלחש ושניהם חובה... ולכן האר"י ז"ל בחזרת הש"ץ היה עוצם עיניו ושומע ומתכוין לדברי הש"ץ... ולכן אין לבטל החזרה בשום פעם.

In the days of the Arizal, permission was given to reveal, and the secret of the repetition [of the *Amida*] was revealed, that its greatness is higher than the silent *Amida*, and both are obligatory... Therefore, the Arizal would close his eyes and listen, focusing on the words of the chazan... Therefore, the repetition [of the *Amida*] should never be nullified.

7. R. Avi Weiss, *Holistic Prayer*, 162-163

This intensely private moment [of the silent *Amida*] is followed by the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, which reminds us that no matter how personal our needs may be, we are part of a larger peoplehood, its celebrations and challenges. Thus, the repetition is not the prayer of an individual, but a prayer of collective "individuality." The leader of the service becomes the embodiment of all those assembled. Disparate people, coming from different places with different needs, pause, reflect, and join, becoming a collective whole – a "unity of souls."

It may be best to use a term other than the "repetition of the *Shemoneh Esreh*" to describe the leader's reading of the *Amida*. Repetition has its value. Winston Churchill purportedly said, "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em, tell 'em, and then tell 'em what you told 'em." Still, the term repetition is problematic, as congregants may feel there is no need to listen, since the *Shemoneh Esreh* has already been said. Rather, this part of the service should be viewed as a "renewal of the *Shemoneh Esreh*." While the words are nearly the same as the silent one, they are new, as we mentally focus on community rather than individual.

8. R. Soloveitchik, "The Community," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* (1978), 19

When the I becomes aware of his being responsible for the well-being of the thou... a new community emerges: the community of prayer. What does this mean? It means a community of common pain, of common suffering. The Halacha has taught the individual to include his fellow man in his prayer. The individual must not limit himself to his own needs, no matter how pressing those needs are and how distinguished he is. Halacha has formulated prayer in the plural.

9. R. Dov Singer, *Prepare My Prayer, Recipes to Awaken the Soul*, p.132

Communal prayer is not an individual's prayer said amongst others. Rather it has a character and quality all its own.

The key offering of communal prayer
Is the ability to open our hearts to see ourselves
Not as private people
But rather as part of an entire organism
To release us from the hold we have on ourselves, on our needs.
It is not by chance that our prayer is worded in the plural
Because prayer's main tenant is the inner ability to rise
Above our solitude
And be part of a whole, one with the community.
The first gate of connection to the community of which we are part
Is to fill our heart with love.

10. R. Hayim Vital, Introduction to *Shaar HaKavanot*

Before a person sets his prayer in the synagogue... he should accept on himself the commandment of "And you should love your fellow as yourself," and have in mind to love every Jew as himself, for through this, his prayer will include all the prayers of Israel and can rise up high and give fruit.

11. R. Avi Weiss, *Holistic Prayer*, 163, fn.41

The silent *Amida*, the *Amida* of the murmuring voice, may be an example of "prayer as reliance" – when the human being stands submissively before God, dependent upon Him. The repetition of the *Amida*, the *Amida* of words, may reflect "prayer as responsibility" – when the human being asserts his or her role in helping God redeem the world.

12. R. Avi Weiss, *Holistic Prayer*, 164

Prayer is song; prayer of prayers – song of songs. This is the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the *Amida*, what the rabbis call *tefilla*. Using the metaphor of melody, the *Shemoneh Esreh* said aloud by the leader of the service can be called "The Higher-Octave *Amida*." The musical cycle contains seven notes, popularly sung do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti. There is, however, an eight note – do. The eighth is the same as the first, except that it is sung one octave higher. Thus, the *Keli Yakar* maintains, "All of Moses' songs begin with *Az* (Then)," a Hebrew word with the numerical value of eight, as the songs were all- encompassing, all-inspiring, going beyond the seven-note scale, reaching a higher plane.

The communal *Shemoneh Esreh* represents the next cycle, this higher octave. It is similar to the silent *Amida*, and yet it is significantly different. It is higher, as it manifests the yearnings, the hopes, the aspirations, the angst and dreams not only of the individual, but of the whole Community of Israel. The communal *Shemoneh Esreh* rides the back of the silent one, becoming the prayer of the higher octave, "The Higher-Octave *Amida*."

13. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 92a

Anyone who asks for compassion [from Heaven] on behalf of another
And he requires the same thing
He is answered first.
As it is written: "And the Lord changed the fortune of Job When he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10).

14. R. Dov Singer, *Prepare My Prayer, Recipes to Awaken the Soul*, 221

It is often very difficult for us to pray for ourselves with all of our might
We get all complicated:
I'm not comfortable asking, I don't really deserve it, I can deal with it on my own.
There is something freeing about praying for another:
It's not me – it's my friend
I'm not doing this for myself.
And this allows me to put all my strength into the prayer.
By asking my friend to pray for me,
I release my grip on the problem,
And give it over to my friend.
Somebody else is carrying my baggage
Relieving me of the weight for a moment.
I'm not alone.
When I pray for a friend, I am essentially expressing my readiness to take their troubles from
them,
To take responsibility for them for a while, to deal with things for them.
I reach out a hand,
And pray.

15. Chana Friedman Uhlman, *Everyone Needs*

כָּל אָדָם צָרִיךְ מִיִּשְׁהוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עִבּוּרוֹ.
מִיִּשְׁהוֹ לְהַגּוֹת שְׁמוֹ בְּשִׁפְתָיִם
שֶׁל אֲמוּנָה וְתִקְוָה וְחַיִּים,
לְהַחֲיוֹת מִיִּשְׁהוֹ אֲחֵר.
וְכָל אָדָם צָרִיךְ לֵב לְהַנִּיחַ עָלָיו יָדַיִם
שֶׁל אֲמוּנָה וְשֶׁל בְּרָכָה,
וְכָל אָדָם צָרִיךְ זולָת,
וְצָרִיךְ לְצִאֵת וּלְהַכְנִיס,
וּבְעֵקֶר לְצִאֵת מֵעֲצָמוֹ,
וּלְשַׁכַּח אֶת עֲצָמוֹ.
וְכִמָּה לְהַכְנִיס וְכִמָּה לְהִיּוֹת
מִיִּשְׁהוֹ אֲחֵר -
לְשַׁעֵה, לְיוֹם, לְבִכּוֹ.
לְהִיּוֹת מִיִּשְׁהוֹ אֲחֵר.
כָּל אָדָם צָרִיךְ לְעֵמֶד בְּפָנָי אֱלֹקָיו וּלְצַעֲקוֹ:
דֵּי, וּמִסְפִּיק, הַנִּח לּוֹ, הַנִּח לּוֹ,
הוּא זָהָב נְדִיר, הוּא אָבִן יְקָרָה,
הוּא בֶן שְׁלֵה, יְחִיד וּמְיֻחָד.
תֵּן לוֹ טוֹב נְרָאָה וְנִגְלָה,
תֵּן לוֹ גַּם, תֵּן לוֹ גַּם,
לְהִיּוֹת מְסֻגָּל לְהִתְפַּלֵּל.
עֲזֵר לוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל

עבור מישהו אחר.

Everyone needs someone to pray for him.
Someone whose lips will utter his name
In faith and hope and life, to revive someone
Else and everyone needs a heart on which to place hands
In faith and blessing, and everyone needs someone else
And needs to go out and go in and mainly to go beyond
And forget himself and for a bit to go in and for a bit to be
Someone else for an hour, for a day, for a cry.
To be someone else.
Everyone needs to stand before his God
And to cry out enough, no more
Let him be, let him be, he's pure gold,
He is a precious gem, he is Your Son,
Your one and only,
Give him good, visible and revealed, give him also,
Give him also, the ability to pray.
Help him pray
For someone else.