

RAMBAM, Laws of Prayer Chapter 1

1. It is a Mitzvat 'Aseh [Mitzvah of commission] to say T'fillah every day, as it says: "And you shall worship YHVH your God" (Shemot [Exodus] 23:25). From oral tradition we learn that this *Avodah* (worship) is T'fillah, as it says "...and to worship Him with all of your hearts..." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 10:12), the Rabbis said (BT Ta'anit 2a): What sort of *Avodah* is there with the heart? - T'fillah. The number of [daily] T'fillot is not mandated by the Torah, nor is the liturgy of T'fillah mandated by the Torah, nor does T'fillah have a set time from the Torah.

2. Therefore, women and [non-Jewish] slaves are obligated in T'fillah, since it is a Mitzvat 'Aseh (Mitzvah of commission) which is not time-bound. Rather, the obligation of this Mitzvah is as follows: that a person should *mit'hanen* (plead) and *mitpalel* every day and tell the praise of haKadosh Barukh Hu (the Holy One, Who is Blessed), then ask for his needs which he needs by requesting and pleading and then give praise and thanks to God for the good which He has granted him, each person according to his ability.

3. If he was fluent, he would increase his supplication and request and if he was of **uncircumcised lips** he would speak according to his ability - at any time he wanted. Similarly, the number of T'fillot was according to his ability: Some would say T'fillah once a day and some people would say T'fillah many times [a day]. Everyone would say T'fillah facing the Mikdash - wherever it might be. This is how the matter was from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu until Ezra.

4. Once the Jews were exiled in the times of the evil Nevu-khadnezzar, they assimilated in Persia and Greece and other nations, had children in those countries and those children spoke confusing languages, as each one was a mixture of several languages. Due to this, people couldn't express themselves fully in one language, rather it would be a mish-mash of language, as it says: **And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples** (Nehemiah 13:24); and when one of them would pray, he would find it difficult to request or praise haKadosh Barukh Hu (the Holy One, Who is Blessed) in **Lashon haKodesh** (the holy language) without other languages mixing in.

Once Ezra (c. 450 BCE) and his court saw this, they established 18 B'rakhot in order: The first three praising Hashem; The last three thanking Hashem; and The middle B'rakhot which contain requests for all of the things which are general categories for all people's desires and for the needs of the community.

all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. . . .

8.5 PARTING OF THE WAYS

8.5.1 Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 28b:

The Composition of the Blessing against the Heretics¹⁴⁵

After discussing the significance of the number eighteen regarding the prayer of the "Eighteen Benedictions," the Babylonian Talmud discusses the origin of what it considered to be the additional nineteenth blessing, denouncing non-believers, which has been incorporated into the prayer.



These eighteen [benedictions] are [really] nineteen. Rabbi Levi said: The blessing against the heretics (*minim*) was innovated at Yavneh. . . .

Our Rabbis taught: Simon ha-Pakoli arranged the Eighteen Benedictions in order before Rabban Gamliel at Yavneh.¹⁴⁶ Rabban Gamliel said to the Sages: "Is there nobody who knows how to innovate a blessing against the heretics? Samuel ha-Qatan arose and innovated it. The following year he forgot it and he concentrated for two or three hours [to remember it] but they did not remove him [from leading the prayer].

Why did they not remove him? Did not Rabbi Judah say that Rav said: "If he erred in any one of the blessings you do not remove him, but if [he erred] in the blessing against the heretics, you do remove him, [for] you suspect that he is a heretic?"

[They did not remove him because] Samuel ha-Qatan is different, for he innovated it. But should we not suspect that he might have changed his mind? Abaye has said: We learn [in a tradition] "one who is good does not become bad." Can he not? Is it not written, "And when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does wickedness" (Ezek. 18:24)?¹⁴⁷ This refers to one who is originally evil, but one who is originally righteous will not [become evil]. No? But we learn in a Mishnah, "Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death,"¹⁴⁸ for Yoḥanan the High Priest¹⁴⁹ served in the high priesthood for eighty years, and in the end he became a Sadducee.

145. Trans. S. Berrin.

146. Ca. 80 C.E.

147. Implying that a righteous person can become evil.

148. Mishnah Avot 2:4.

149. John Hyrcanus.

Abaye said, “Yannai¹⁵⁰ is the same as Yoḥanan.”

Rava said, “Yannai and Yoḥanan are separate individuals. Yannai was originally evil and Yoḥanan was originally righteous.”

It makes sense according to Abaye (that they did not suspect the originally good Samuel ha-Qatan of turning evil), but according to Rava it is a problem [that they did not remove Samuel ha-Qatan].

Rava would say to you: an originally righteous man may also change his mind.

If so, then why did they not remove him? Samuel ha-Qatan is different because he began [to recite] the blessing. For Rabbi Judah said that Rav said, and some teach Rabbi Judah ben Levi: “They only taught this rule [of removing one who erred in the blessing against the heretics] in a case in which he did not [even] begin [to recite] it. But if he began [to recite] it, he may finish it.

8.5.2 The Eighteen Benedictions: The Benediction against the Heretics¹⁵¹

Palestinian texts of the Amidah preserve an early form of the Benediction against Heretics which includes both minim, Jewish Christians, and nozerim, Gentile Christians. The Benediction’s recitation was intended to bring about the separation of Christians from the synagogue. Such a procedure is mentioned in the Gospel of John and in the writings of the Church Fathers.



For the apostates¹⁵² may there be no hope unless they return to Your Torah. As for the *nozerim* and the *minim*, may they perish immediately. Speedily may they be erased from the Book of Life and may they not be registered among the righteous. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who subdues the wicked.

8.5.3 Tosefta Hullin 2:20–21: Laws Distancing Jews from the Heretics¹⁵³

The Tosefta presents a list of regulations put together from previously existing statements, reflecting tannaitic steps to distance Jews from the early Chris-

150. Rabbinic tradition (Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 66a) relates that Yannai massacred the Sages of Israel. See text 6.2.12 in this volume. If they are the same person, then he was originally evil, so his Sadducean conversion is not surprising.

151. Trans. L. H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew?* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985), p. 55.

152. Jews who no longer practice Judaism.

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you now justly suffer; and that your land may be desolate, and your cities burned with fire; and that strangers may eat your fruit in your presence, and not one of you may go up to Jerusalem.¹⁹⁸⁴ For you are not recognised among the rest of men by any other mark than your fleshly circumcision. For none of you, I suppose, will venture to say that God neither did nor does foresee the events, which are future, nor foreordained his deserts for each one. Accordingly, these things have happened to you in fairness and justice, for you have slain the Just One, and His prophets before Him; and now you reject those who hope in Him, and in Him who sent Him—God the Almighty and Maker of all things —cursing in your synagogues those that believe on Christ. For you have not the power to lay hands upon us, on account of those who now have the mastery. But as often as you could, you did so. Wherefore God, by Isaiah, calls to you, saying, 'Behold how the righteous man perished, and no one regards it. For the righteous man is taken away from before iniquity. His grave shall be in peace, he is taken away from the midst. Draw near hither, ye lawless children, seed of

¹⁹⁸⁴ See *Apol.*, i. 47. The Jews [By Hadrian's recent edict] were prohibited by law from entering Jerusalem on pain of death. And so Justin sees in circumcision their own punishment.

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יגזן ויאנחה ומלוך עלינו אלה יי לבדך בחסד וברחמים וצדקנו
במשפט. ברוך אתה יי מלך אלהי צדקה ומשפט:
(נע"ח טסייטס הנכה ברוך אתה יי המלך המשפט)

ולמלשינים אל תהו תקנה
וכל עושי רשעה ברגע יאבדו
וכלם מהרה יבררו והזרים
למלשינים אל תהו תקנה
וכל המינים ברגע יאבדו וכל
אויביה מהרה יבררו והזרין

בחסד וברחמים ע"פ הוצע ב' כ"א. וצדקנו במשפט, נסדורי ספרד בצדק ובמשפט, והוא ע"פ
סדר רב עשרים והרש"ט. מלך אלהי צדקה ומשפט, ע"פ תהלים ל"ג, ה' ול"ט, ד'. המלך המשפט
אומרים בעצרת ימי חנוכה פירש רש"י בברכות י"ג, ע"כ שהוא כמו מלך המשפט, דוגמת הארון הנרית
שהוא כמו ארון הנרית (יחזקאל ג', י"ד) המסגרות הסככות נטקו סככות (ע"כ ט"ו י"א)
העטק הסגרים נטקו עטק הסגרים (ירמיה ל"א, ט'). וכן בחר ר' יונה כס' הקטבה ע"כ ל"ו, ור"ח
גם בחזקת רש"י הנדפסות נס' חסד טטטוים סטן ד', גם בנעוץ ר' וולף היינדהיים לטאונים דף
כ"ג, והרש"ד (טובל כל נו ס' י"א גם נאנודרהס נסוף ענה ענה) פירש שהוא להפלת הזבח אל
השם יתברך, ר"ל שהוא המלך והוא הטעם כמו האומר שהוא טכטט והוא הסדע. וכן פירש בר' טכט
לנ"י סטן תקפ"א.

למלשינים, הנכרה הזאת היא שנוספה עוד ל"ח נרות התפלה ימי רבן גמליאל (לא ימי
הגאונים כמו שהנח טענות כפירוש בר' לני) ונקראת נרות המינים או נרות הלדוקים, כי
נתקנה נגד הלדוקים והאפיקורוסים אצנו ימים ההם שהכניסו בתורה שנע"פ ונניחת פסח ושאר יסודי
אמונת ישראל והיו טעיתים ועדייתים וטחיתים ולא זאת בלבד אלא שהלשינו ג"כ את היהודים הטלשינים
אלל הרוטיים והכינו ככה רעות רבות עליכם והליקו להם נעמוד, וידוע כי גדולה כלרה זנאה
לאומה ע"י טעיקים טעומים טקרה טן כרעה הנאה לה ע"י לורים זולתה (וראה רש"י לויקרא כ"ו,
י"ז), וע"כ כאשר ראה רבן גמליאל את חגרות כרעות הזאת אל כפועים ההם לוח הוא וניה דינו
לתקן חפלה על אכודס ולקנעט נתוך טנה ענה ועד חכס אחד טטאל הקטן טט ויסדה, וכללו
בה גם את כודים, ר"ל להתפלל בה ג"כ איכלה הזון והטול והטקף אשר היה טונעס ימים ההם
טקיום החורב והטלות, ואוסרים את הנכרה אשר הכינה אופטינו, טטאלר טנעה דין כרעיים כלו
העינים, וכדליתח נטר' נרות דף כ"ח, ב', וטלה דף י"ו, ב', וירושלמי נרות פרק ד'. אך
נוסחה הנכרה הזאת איננה אה כסדורים כי נתלפה לאונה נעטן הוטטים ונהרנה אופטים, כי טע"פ
שאיננה נוסדה כלל נגד אומה אל אטונה אחרת (וכאשר יבאר עוד היטב) רק כנגד הטודים שבישראל
וטופרים בישראלים בכל זאת הטלירים טלאו נה אח ידם להתטולל עלילות רע ולטורר תחרות ואינה
(ראה ס' נלחון סטן זע"ט וכטט יבדה ס' ט'. וט"ד) וטפנו כך טנה כלאוטה עד זאין לנו לטטוד
עוד נברור על הנוסחה הטקריה, כי נס' כל נו העטיד תנותיה על טטפר ל"ג, וככ"י אחד טלתי
לאונה שהיא אל ט"ה תנות, ונוסחת סדור ספרדי כ"י היא אל ל"ד תנות, ונרטט"ס היא אל כ"כ תנות.
חטנס כזני סדורים כ"י גם נטחזור טלוניק כך לאונה: לטטוטרים אל תרו חקרה וכל המינים
כרגע יאבדו וכל אויבי עטך טרהה יברחו וטלכות זרון טרהה חקקר וחטבר וחטגר וחכניע
כל אויבנו בטרהה ביטנו ברוך אתה ה' שובר אויבים ומכניע זרים' וככה היא טעט גם כסדור
רפ"ב (רק שהטטד למלשינים נטקוס לטטודים וכדרך כל המדפיסים להדפיס כן) ונוסחה הזאת נראה
שהיא הקדטובית, כי כן טניחה כול ס' נלחון, גם נעל לרה לדרך נפרק ל"ו אל טטטר ח' כלל ח'
נכדוס פירחרה, אכל נדפוס סכיוניטה הטטטו המדפיסים את כל הענין אל נככה זו, וכטו טעט
ג"כ נס' אל אנודהס), גם הטור נח"ח ס' קי"ח וכאר"י נס' הכוונות וכרוקה היתה הנוסחה הזאת
לפניהם רק טכס הסידו את התנות כל אויבנו אשר הם נחטת רק כפל לאן כי כנר אטור וכל אויבי
עטך, והיו טטפר התנות כ"ט, וכן הנוסחה כסדור דפוס רפ"ו, וכן הטעידה גם יעטן כסדורו
(נעטט סטנו וכל אויביך חחת וכל אויבי עטך) וכן הדפיס ר' זלטן טלונדן כסדוריו, ובעין זאת
היא גם נטחזור ריטח, וע"כ בה נחטו גם אחרנו וזוטה ננארנה. — לטטוטרים, כן הנוסחה טטקרה
נעדות הטור וטעל כד הטטת חות תי"ו וטעל נלחון וטעל לרה לדרך וטעל כסף טנה נטלכות תפלה
רחט פרק ב', וכן היא ככל כ"י יאניס. ונקרה ק"ק"י היהודי היודע וטכיר את ארלו וטתכוין לטוד
נו, והוא טטרכ שטד נכיוני ק"ק"י שהוא חולדת כנין פיעל, והורחת הטרכ (חס כי לא נטלח נטקרח
רק ככנין נטעל והטעיל) ל' נחיקה וקליטה ופריחה היא וטודף טס טרכ שטטט גם שטח, וע"כ טטטוד



thy goodness, and bless our year like other good years. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who blessest the years.

X. FOR
REUNION
OF ISRAEL

Sound the great horn for our freedom ; raise the ensign to gather our exiles, and gather us from the four corners of the earth. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gatherest the dispersed of thy people Israel.

XI. FOR
THE
RIGHTEOUS
REIGN OF
GOD

Restore our judges as in former times, and our counsellors as at the beginning ; remove from us sorrow and sighing ; reign thou over us, O Lord, thou alone, in lovingkindness and tender mercy, and clear us in judgment. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the King who lovest righteousness and judgment.

During the Ten Days of Repentance
say :—
the King of Judgment.

XII.
AGAINST
SLANDER-
ERS

And for slanderers let there be no hope, and let all wickedness perish as in a moment ; let all thine enemies be

11. Eleventh Benediction : *For the Righteous Reign of God.*

The hope of the reunion of Israel leads to the Prophetic aspiration for the righteous reign of God, for the freeing of human society from iniquitous corruption and oppression ; Isaiah 1. 26.

sorrow and sighing. Few evils are the source of deeper grief and suffering than absence of justice in a land.

clear us. Declare our innocence in the Judgment that is to precede such Reign of God.

judgment. The change to " King of Judgment ", like the change to " holy King " in Benediction IV, is to emphasize, during the days intervening between the solemn festivals of New Year and Day of Atonement, the idea of man's responsibility to God.

12. Twelfth Benediction : *Against slanderers, informers and traitors.*

This petition is an addition to the " eighteen benedictions ", which by it became nineteen. It is directed against Jewish sectaries (*Minim*) in the generation after the Destruction of the Second Temple. They wrought division and havoc in the religious camp of Israel. Especially detestable were their fratricidal activities in the political field. They played the informers for the Roman authorities, and brought many of their brethren to a painful death. The wording of this Benediction has undergone manifold modifications. In its present form it has a universal and timeless application. The statement that in this prayer Jews of to-day utter an imprecation against those of another Faith, is a baseless calumny.

slanderers. This term covers both the disloyal Jews in ancient times