

LEHRHAUS

Over Rosh Hashanah

Vol. 7, Issue 49 • 29 Elul 5783 / September 15, 2023

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RESTORING THE (RECITATION OF) *KORBANOT*

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If there was one part of daily prayer that you would feel comfortable skipping, what part would that be? Many might wish to skip *Tahanun*. Anecdotally, however, it seems that *korbanot*, the daily recitation recounting the performance of sacrifices in the *Beit Hamikdash*, is popularly skipped either by individuals or entire congregations. When one comes to synagogue late, not only will they have to skip parts of *Pesukei de-Zimra*, but I would imagine that *korbanot* would be the least of our priorities.

When we search for meaning in our daily prayers, it is easy to overlook that they harken back to the absence of the *Beit Hamikdash*, a void that we are always looking to fill. This connection to the *Beit Hamikdash* is particularly true of the *korbanot*

section. However, not only do we often miss those connections as we go through the daily motions, but in many cases, *korbanot* are deemphasized if not completely omitted from the prayer routine.

Some synagogues, after completing the blessing of *mekadesh et shimkha ba-rabim*, go directly to the *baraita* at the end of *korbanot*, the thirteen hermeneutical principles of Rabbi Yishmael. Even in synagogues where enough time is left to say *korbanot*, many opt not to say some or most of them.

In this piece, I want to explore the halakhic role of various passages related to the sacrifices and their significance. By the end, I hope to have conveyed the importance of reciting these passages and their spiritual relevance.

Which parts of *korbanot* are halakhically required?

Two passages in the Talmud describe the virtue of reciting *korbanot* on a daily basis. One reports an

emotional discussion between Abraham and God. While Abraham famously pleaded with God to not destroy Sodom if there were more than ten righteous individuals, he also argues on behalf of the Jewish people in a couple of places in the Talmud. In [Taanit 27b](#):

Abraham said: Master of the Universe, perhaps the Jews will sin before You. Will You treat them as You did the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion, and destroy them? God said to him: No. Abraham said before God: Master of the Universe, tell me, with what shall I inherit it? How can my descendants ensure that You will maintain the world? God said to Abraham: “Take for Me a three-year-old heifer, and a three-year-old goat, and a three-year-old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon” ([Genesis 15:9](#)). God was alluding to the offerings, in whose merit the Jewish people, and through them the entire world, will be spared divine punishment.

Abraham said before God: Master of the Universe, this works out well when the Temple is standing, but when the Temple is not standing, what will become of them? God said to him: *I have already enacted for them the order*

of offerings. When they read them before Me, I will ascribe them credit as though they had sacrificed them before Me and I will pardon them for all their transgressions. Since the offerings ensure the continued existence of the Jewish people and the rest of the world, the act of Creation is read in their honor.

While this passage does not indicate a requirement to recite passages related to *korbanot*, we can understand the tremendous importance of doing so. While sacrifices were brought for a variety of reasons, a crucial purpose in bringing sacrifices was the atonement of the individual or the Jewish people at large. As Ramban famously writes in his commentary to Leviticus, when a human being sins, he or she really owes their own blood to God; however, God spares us and asks us to sacrifice animals in our place ([Leviticus 1:9](#)). If that is so, how do we achieve that level of atonement in the absence of the *Beit Hamikdash*? It turns out that God always had a contingency plan: our very learning and articulating the rite of the sacrifices constitutes their being offered.

This is, of course, echoed by the prophetic verse, “Instead of bulls, we will pay [the offering of] our lips” ([Hosea 14:3](#)).

Even though the recitation of sacrifices substitutes for their offering, it is not as important to recite them as it would be to bring them in the *Beit*

Hamikdash if we were able. Nevertheless, post-Talmudic halakhic authorities codify the importance of this recitation.

Tur and *Shulhan Arukh* discuss the recitation of *korbanot* in three different sections: [Siman 1:5-9](#), [Siman 48](#), and [Siman 50](#). In *Siman* 1:5, they state that it is “good” to recite the passages of the *olah* ([Leviticus 1:1-9](#)), *minhah* ([Leviticus 2:1-13](#)), *shelamim* ([Leviticus 3:1-5](#)), *hatat* ([Leviticus 4:27-31](#)), and *asham* ([Leviticus 7:1-5](#)). They stipulate that these passages should only be recited during the day. They state that one should say after these passages that this recital should be as if we ourselves offered these sacrifices. One should then recite the verse “It shall be slaughtered before the LORD on the north side of the altar, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar” ([Leviticus 1:11](#)). This verse invokes the memory of the Binding of Isaac. Finally, “some people have the practice” to recite the passage related to the basin, the *terumat ha-deshen*, the *Tamid* sacrifice, and the incense. With all of this said, there seems to be no requirement to recite these passages, only that it is “good” to do so or that “some people have the practice” to do so. It is noteworthy that most of the passages mentioned in 1:5 are not included at all in contemporary *siddurim*. *Arukh Hashulhan* ([OC 1:24](#)) explains that these passages correspond with public sacrifices, and since there is no purpose in their recitation by individuals, they are not canonized in the *siddur*. He simply says “there is no need” to recite them and clarifies that *Tur* only brings it as a custom.

However, in [Siman 48](#), *Tur* writes that “they established” to recite the passage delineating the *Tamid* sacrifice ([Numbers 28:1-8](#)), which suggests a stronger requirement. Although it is not clear who “they” is, *Beit Yosef* says the recitation is based on the *Gemara* in *Taanit* cited above. Rema in *Shulhan Arukh* also writes that the passage of the *Tamid* is recited. Mehaber is not as explicit, but he clearly assumes its recitation, based on his comment that the passage of the *Musaf* sacrifice is recited after the recitation of the *Tamid*. Similar to what *Beit Yosef* says, *Mishnah Berurah* explains the requirement to say the *Tamid* is that its recitation serves as a substitute for the sacrifices. Because sacrifices are offered while standing, the commentaries on *Shulhan Arukh* (including *Magen Avraham*, *Ba’er Heitev*, and *Mishnah Berurah*) say that the *Tamid* should be recited while standing, furthering the idea that the recitation of the *Tamid* is a substitute for its being offered (although *Sha’arei Teshuvah* and [Arukh Hashulhan](#) reject this requirement). Additionally, both *Sha’arei Teshuvah* and *Mishnah Berurah* stipulate that the *Tamid* is to be recited **aloud** in the synagogue because the sacrifice is a communal sacrifice.

The recitation of sacrifices is further mentioned in [Siman 50](#) of *Tur* and *Shulhan Arukh*. Here, there are three passages that are stipulated to be recited: *Tamid*, [Eizehu Mekoman](#) (the fifth chapter of *Mishnayot* in *Masekhet Zevahim*), and [Rabbi Yishmael Omer](#). There is a twofold purpose in reciting these passages in particular: one is to replace the performance of sacrifices with their recitation, as discussed. The other is based on one's

daily requirement to learn Torah. The *Gemara* ([Kiddushin 30a](#)) says that one should devote a third of their life to learning Scripture, a third to learning “*Mishnah*” (i.e. adjudicated laws), and the final third to “Talmud” (i.e., interpretation of the law). Given that obviously one does not know how long they will live and therefore cannot preemptively divide their time in this fashion, the *Gemara* clarifies that each daily regimen of learning should be divided into these three sections. Based on this, [Ba’alei Ha-Tosafot](#) explain, based on the *siddur* of Rav Amram Gaon, that we accomplish this daily regimen through the recital of the three aforementioned passages of the *Tamid* (Scripture), *Eizehu Mekoman* (*Mishnah*), and Rabbi Yishmael Omer (Talmud). *Eizehu Mekoman* is the set of *mishnayot* chosen to be recited because it is the only chapter of *Mishnah* that does not (explicitly) contain any disputes among the Sages; based on this, *Vilna Gaon* these *mishnayot* are *halakhah le-moshe mi-Sinai*. Furthermore, *Tur* cites the *Gemara* in *Menahot* ([110a](#)) that cites this verse from Malakhi ([1:11](#)): “And in every place offerings are presented to My name.” The *Gemara* wonders, are offerings brought literally everywhere in the world? They cannot be offered outside the *Beit Hamikdash*! Rabbi Yonatan suggests that the verse refers to those who study the laws of offerings, and it is considered as if they are making offerings, no matter where their study takes place. While Rabbi Yishmael Omer does not directly deal with sacrifices, it appears at the beginning of the midrash *Sifra/Torat Kohanim* on the Book of Leviticus. Thus, it precedes the midrashic-halakhic discussion of sacrifices and simultaneously provides the tools for deriving

rabbinic law from Scripture ([Arukh Hashulhan OC 50:1](#)).

Practically, so far, it seems that the *Tamid* is the most essential passage for recitation, while *Eizehu Mekoman* and *Rabbi Yishmael Omer* are normative to recite as well. Importantly, R. Shalom Yosef Elyashiv and R. Eliezer Melamed ([Peninei Halakhah, Hilkhot Tefillah, 13:1](#)) both maintain that saying the *Tamid* passage takes precedence over many parts of *Pesukei de-Zimra*. [Leviticus 1:11](#), as mentioned above, is normatively recited with the *Tamid*.

With that said, *Tur* also mentions the recitation of a passage of *Gemara* in *Yoma* ([33a](#)) that lists the order of the daily Temple service. Mehaber does not mention this, but Rema suggests that there are “some” who say this. The advantage of saying this passage is that it engages one with the entire day of service in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

As mentioned before, recitation of the passage describing the incense, *ketoret*, is mentioned as customary in the first *siman* of *Tur* and *Shulhan Arukh*. This passage received extra attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, as there is a long tradition of the [incense serving a protective role](#) during a plague or epidemic. With that said, *Arukh Hashulhan* ([OC 50:1](#)) assumes its normative recitation along with the *Tamid*. R. Eliezer Melamed, based on the *Zohar* ([Vayakhel 219a](#)), places the recital of *Ketoret* on a high pedestal, and like with the *Tamid*, it would take precedence over other parts of *Pesukei de-Zimra*. While the *Tamid*,

as a sacrifice of flesh and blood, connects us with God regarding our material existence, the *Ketoret* is a more spiritual offering. Thus, the *Tamid* and *Ketoret* complement each other ([Peninei Halakhah, 13:6](#)).

While the recital of *Ketoret* and *Eizehu Mekoman* are highly praiseworthy, *poskim* point out that their value—both in terms of their function as Torah learning and in terms of their substitution for sacrifices—assumes that one understands the passages. Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, *talmidei hakhamim*, Torah scholars, may be exempt from saying *korbanot*. This is because that time could be spent on more in-depth learning (see *Mishnah Berurah 1:12, 1:17*). R. Aryeh Zev Ginzberg, in [Divrei Hakhamim](#) (pp. 32-33, question #48), discussed this exemption with numerous *poskim*, who clarified that this applies to any *talmid hakham*, whether or not they generally learn all day. Still, they maintain that everyone should say the passage of the *Tamid*.

It does not appear that the passage related to the basin (*Kiyor*) is considered mandatory by *poskim*. However, *Berakhot (14b-15a)* says that “one who wants to completely accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven should [after arising] relieve himself, **wash his hands**, put on *tefillin*, recite *Shema*, and pray [the *Amidah*], and this is considered complete acceptance of the yoke of Heaven.” Thus, it is not a stretch to say that we are mirroring the handwashing of the priests before engaging in their

service when we wash our hands before our service, which is prayer. Thus, while not technically required, there would seem to be a meaningful virtue in reciting the passage about the *Kiyor*.

Women and Recitation of *Korbanot*

The coes do not explicitly delineate the requirement for women to recite *korbanot*, including the *Tamid*. On the one hand, women surely have a relationship with *korbanot* and would bring them in the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*. Furthermore, according to *poskim* who maintain that women are required to pray *Shaharit*, women should be required to recite the *Tamid* passage as well. Thus, *Beit Yosef* in [Siman 47](#) cites *Agur* (R. Jacob Landau) as requiring women to recite the blessing for learning Torah because women should be reciting the *Tamid* passage. This assumes that since women receive equal benefit from the *Tamid* sacrifice, the obligation to recite the passage is equal (see [Hida, Yosef Ometz, Siman 67](#)). On the other hand, R. Eliezer Melamed ([Peninei Halakhah, Women’s Prayer, 15:1](#)) asserts that the common practice is that women are not required to recite *korbanot*, including the *Tamid* passage. The reason for this is that the obligation for women to pray is unrelated to the relationship between prayer and the *Tamid* sacrifice, and it instead relies on a more basic need for Divine compassion. Furthermore, women do not give toward the *mahatzit ha-shekel*, which funds communal sacrifices. However, R. Melamed notes that a woman who wishes to recite the *Tamid* is to be commended.

Evaluating the Impact of Sacrifice on Prayer

The inclusion of passages relating to sacrifices in prayer is not incidental. It is not that one should theoretically say these passages, and therefore they are included in prayer. Rather, sacrifices and prayer have a dependent relationship. They are both *avodah*. Priests in the Torah are identified as servants of God.¹ Likewise, when the Torah commands us “to love the Lord your God and serve God with all your heart and all your soul” ([Deuteronomy 11:13](#)), “what is service of the heart? It refers to prayer” ([Taanit 2a](#)). Prayer and sacrifice are both service to God.

The Talmud also debates whether prayer (particularly the *Shemoneh Esrei*) originates from the Patriarchs or from the daily *Tamid* sacrifice ([Berakhot 26b](#)). It [concludes](#) that the concept of praying three times a day originates with the Patriarchs, but many aspects of the sacrificial rite are reflected in prayer, such as the fact that the morning prayers can only be recited until the latest time that the *Tamid* was offered in the Temple. Many aspects of behavior during *Shemoneh Esrei* correspond with requirements related to sacrifices, such as the requirement to recite it standing, to have a fixed spot, and to wear appropriate clothing ([Shulhan Arukh OC98:4](#)).

Finally, it is not just the *Amidah* that corresponds specifically with the *Tamid* sacrifice, but the entire structure of the prayer book is said to correspond

with the structure of the *Beit Hamikdash*. Thus, early blessings correspond with the *Ezrat Nashim*, the outer part of the *Mikdash*; fifteen steps leading from *Ezrat Nashim* to *Ezrat Yisrael* correspond with the fifteen *Birkot Hashahar*; the blessing *mekadesh et shimkha ba-rabim* corresponds with the Gate of Nikanor; *Birkat Kohanim* corresponds with the *Ezrat Kohanim*; the Altar corresponds with the recitation of sacrifices; the antechamber to the Sanctuary (*Heikhal*) corresponds with *Pesukei de-Zimra*; the *Heikhal* corresponds with the blessings of *Shema*—the Menorah with the first blessings, the incense altar with the recitation of *Shema*; the *Parokhet* with the last blessing; and the Holy of Holies corresponds with the *Amidah*.²

Yom Kippur

With Yom Kippur approaching soon, it is worth noting the significance of sacrifices during this period. According to a *baraita* brought in *Masekhet Yoma* ([39a](#)), one of the early signs of the imminent destruction of the Holy Temple was the cessation of some aspects of the Yom Kippur sacrificial service that signified atonement. The absence of the *Beit Hamikdash* is acutely felt on Yom Kippur. The *Avodah* portion of *Musaf* is meant to provide an opportunity to both learn about the service that took place but to also serve as a substitute for the service that cannot be done. The *hazzan*, serving as a substitute for the High Priest, recites that which the High Priest would say in asking God for atonement on behalf of the Jewish people. The

¹ In many cases, priests' service of God uses the root sh-r-t, but in [Exodus 30:16](#), the half *shekel* is given toward *avodat ohel mo'ed*, the service of the *Mishkan*. It is noteworthy that this *avodah* is meant to provide atonement.

² See R. Shimon Schwab's [Rav Schwab on Prayer](#) (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2001), xxx-xxxiii for greater elaboration on this point.

jubilant singing of *Mareh Kohen* is meant to mirror the happiness the people experienced when the High Priest emerged from the Holy of Holies successfully. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik describes the way in which his father and grandfather would say the *Avodah*:

They said it with so much enthusiasm, such ecstasy, that they could not stop. They were no longer in Warsaw or Brisk; they were transported to a different reality ... One who recites the *piyyutim* of the *Avodah* is placed in an almost beatific trance as he both observes and becomes involved in the ritual as it unfolds, compelled to follow every detail until its successful completion.³

However, right after the euphoria of *Mareh Kohen*, we immediately begin to recite poetry that mourns our inability to experience this service in its actual form. In Rabbi Soloveitchik's words:

Suddenly, the *payettan* and the reader of the *piyyut* are rudely awakened from a dream. They cry, "This is no longer the reality in which we live. It existed once, yes, but is no more" ... Fortunate is the

eye—but not our eyes.⁴

Not only are there tears about the state of exile, but Rabbi Soloveitchik goes as far as to say that after this point in the prayers, Yom Kippur is transformed into a kind of *Tishah Be-Av* with its attendant mourning of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He notes that *Tishah Be-Av* and Yom Kippur are connected because ongoing sin prevents the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*. In fact, after *Mareh Kohen*, the level of joy found in many of the *piyyutim* in *Shaharit* and earlier in *Musaf* ceases for the rest of Yom Kippur.

If our atonement is especially dependent on the sacrificial rites of Yom Kippur, what are we to do without it? That brings us back to where we began. Prayer substitutes for sacrifice every day, but this point is accentuated most on Yom Kippur. To this day, I remember my rabbi in college pleading with us to read the *Avodah* in English instead of Hebrew so that we would understand it. The *Avodah* on Yom Kippur should not just be recited but should be understood and internalized as representing the hopes and dreams of the Jewish people for the coming year.

Conclusion

It is clear, then, that recitation of sacrifices is intrinsically connected with and relevant to prayer. The *Beit Hamikdash*, our experience of the holiest

³ Dr. Arnold Lustiger and R. Michael Taubes, eds., [*Yom Kippur Machzor with Commentary Adapted from the Teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*](#) (New York: K'hal Publishing, 2006), 618-619.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 620.

place on earth, where the Divine meets our world, is no more. But through invoking sacrifices, we maintain our connection. Reciting the *Tamid* in particular not only recalls the relationship between prayer and sacrifice, but it also defines the entire basis for prayer. To omit this passage is to omit the role that sacrifice is meant to play in the Jewish spiritual life and the daily method of atonement granted to us. Including this passage demonstrates a deep appreciation for the gift God gave us in being able to pray despite the destruction of *Beit Hamikdash* and our exile from the Divine presence. We fully encapsulate the meaning of prayer through inclusion of *korbanot*.

With that said, it is clear that not all of the sacrificial passages included in the *siddur* are halakhically mandatory. Should synagogues return to their recitation? On the one hand, saying all of the sacrifices is time consuming, and weekday prayer services, especially those that cater to working individuals, are under time pressure. Indeed, there are times in which we validate longstanding synagogue customs that are not entirely contrary to Halakhah, even if there may be a better halakhic path.⁵ Furthermore, saying just the *Tamid* passage (and perhaps *Eizehu Mekoman*) can be confusing, as it would require skipping pages and jumping around. Even though we jump around the *siddur* a little before *Pesukei de-Zimrah* in general, adding more of the same may not be entirely user-friendly.

⁵ For an example related to the High Holiday season, see [Mahzor Vitry Siman 325](#), in which the author cites Rabbeinu Tam's justifications for including *piyyutim* in the blessings of

On the other hand, it is worth reevaluating the opportunity to include the *Korban Tamid* in our prayer services, and perhaps synagogues can find a way to either recite it aloud or allow time for its recitation before *Rabbi Yishmael Omer*.

One final note regarding the opportunity to recite sacrificial passages in our prayer: Despite Korah's claim that Moses and Aaron seized all of the opportunities for holiness, the Jewish people is a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" ([Exodus 19:6](#)). Each Jew possesses an element of priesthood. The inclusion of *tekhelet* in the *tallit* for men is an opportunity to embody a small aspect of priestly clothing. Likewise, while the physical work in *Beit Hamikdash* could only be done by the High Priest, each one of us can have a portion of this role through reciting the sacrifices. In the words of [Rabbi Asher Lopatin](#):

The bulk of *Korbanot*—and the reason it gets its name—aims to convince us that we are not just plebes and nobodies, but that every one of us can become a High Priest offering the holy tasks performed daily in the ancient Temple. By the time we are done, we have cleaned the altar, washed our hands with the holy waters of the Temple laver, and offered all the daily sacrifices: animal

Keriat Shema, even though it could be seen as an impermissible interruption. He ends with the statement "*minhag halakhah hi*"—*minhag* is equivalent to Halakhah.

and vegetarian (incense) offerings, voluntary offerings, sin offerings, Passover offerings. A full day's work ... For a few minutes, while you are saying *Korbanot*, you are critical to the success of an elaborate system of holiness that takes up a quarter of the Torah.

May it be God's will that, despite the lack of the *Beit Hamikdash*, that the prayer of our lips will be worthy of acceptance and considered as if we ourselves offered the Sacrifices, bringing favor to the entire Jewish people.

ONE DAY, ONE CHAPTER; FOUR RECITATIONS AND FOUR THEMES IN PSALM 24

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On the second day of Rosh Hashanah this year, Jews will have the opportunity to recite excerpts from the same chapter of Tehillim, [Psalm 24](#), “Le-

David Mizmor,” four times over the course of the day, as this chapter performs four different roles across the *tefillah* service. These four times are after Maariv, as part of Shaharit, when the Torah is returned to the Ark, and as part of Mussaf.¹ Two of the recitations are unique to Rosh Hashanah, while two of the recitations take place the rest of the year as well.

Despite its brevity, Psalm 24 is thus quite adaptable, with its ten verses used to highlight many different ideas and themes. Some chapters of the Bible might lend themselves only to one central idea or one moment in time, but this Psalm lends itself to many. Still, there are two formal elements which may tie the Psalm's themes together as one. The Psalm can be divided into four sections: The three sections that follow the introduction all include words with the root *n.s.a.* (to raise or carry), used six times across the various sections ([24:4](#), [24:5](#), [24:7](#), [24:9](#)). The three also use rhetorical questions, four questions in total, where the Psalm asks and then answers about the identity of key personae (twice in [24:3](#), [24:8](#), [24:10](#)).²

For each recitation to be meaningful, readers should think about which theme of the Psalm emerges at which point in the davening.³ This essay will walk

¹ I discussed an example of a prayer being used three times regarding the recitation of Psalm 29 on Succot in Yaakov Jaffe, “[Do The Liturgical Uses Of Psalm 29 Suggest Different Interpretations Of The Psalm?](#)” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 51.1 (2023), 46-53.

² Rav Yoel Bin Nun has suggested that there is implied rhetorical question that should lead [24:5](#) as well. In that case, one can read the entire Psalm as being a responsive reading

where the lead singer would ask a question to be answered by the chorus. [24:2](#) answers [24:1](#), [24:4](#) answers the question of [24:3](#), [24:6](#) answers the implied question of [24:5](#), and then [24:8](#) and [24:10](#) include both a question and its answer.

³ *Shut Sheivet Ha-Levi* (11:38) discusses the possibility of having multiple *kavanot* in one recitation. He notes that this is theoretically possible, but seems to frown at the practice.

through the second day of Rosh Hashanah in chronological order, considering how we use Psalm 24 in different ways throughout the holiday.

Evening: A Prayer for Sustenance/*Parnassah*

Who shall go up upon the mountain of Hashem (in order to pray), and who shall stand in His holy place? [A person of] clean palms, and clear heart, who did not raise My Soul in vain (in an oath) and did not swear in deceit. He shall carry a blessing from Hashem, and charity from the God of his salvation. ([24:3-5](#))

After Maariv on the evening of both days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Psalm 24 is recited as the introduction to a [prayer for *parnassah*, sustenance](#).⁴ While the canonical, original prayers of Rosh Hashanah focus on life and peace, later generations wished to highlight and create opportunities to pray for food and sustenance in the upcoming year. After all, an individual's sustenance is set every year on Rosh Hashanah ([Beitzah 16a](#)), so

it is understandable that Jews who faced famine, destitution, or poverty would add prayers for sustenance to the Mahzor. To that end, no fewer than five prayers for sustenance have been added to the Mahzor in recent centuries,⁵ and Psalm 24 introduces one of them, recited on the evening of Rosh Hashanah.

In this case, the recitation focuses on one verse or phrase, the words “he shall carry a blessing from Hashem,” focusing on the fact that some human beings are so meritorious that they are the beneficiaries of a blessing that emerges from Hashem. Psalm 24 is the only chapter of Tehillim which uses the noun *berakhah*, blessing, to refer to a gift a human being receives from God, and so it is a fitting introduction to a prayer for sustenance. [Hagigah 12b](#) indeed cites this verse to discuss the storehouses of blessing found in Heaven. The first two verses of this section, with the first two rhetorical questions in the Psalm, stress that only Jews who are clean from sin in their heart, lips, and hands and who do not carry (*nasa*, from the root *n.s.a*) God's name in vain merit to carry (*yissa*, from the root *n.s.a*) the blessing. Reading these verses

⁴ Though some Mahzorim separate between the prayer for sustenance and Psalm 24, it is clear that Psalm 24 was intended as the introduction to the prayer for sustenance. See Rav Nosson Nota Hannover's description in [Shaarei Zion](#), (Prague, 1692), and *Yalkut Yosef Kitzur Shulhan Arukh OH 582:29*. *Arukh Ha-Shulhan* ([OH582:8](#)) argues that Ashkenazic custom omits this entire recitation of the Psalm, but Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Iggrot Moshe OH2:21*) explains the basis of how it also became part of the Ashkenazic service. Rav Moshe Feinstein seems to be unaware of the Psalm's role as an agent of prayer, however; he calls it praise and specifically notes that it does not constitute any request.

⁵ The five include three very similar supplications with much common language recited: after Maariv (*Artscroll Mahzor*, p. 78), during Avinu Malkeinu (p. 386, 622), and at Tashlikh (p. 634; including a repeat of Psalm 24), along with smaller parts of the two prayers of Rav Nosson Nota Hannover (printed in [Shaarei Zion](#), Prague, 1692) one for when the Torah is removed from the Aron Kodesh (p. 392) and the other during the priestly blessing (p. 578). Though some Jews recite all five of these supplications, many omit some or all of the five.

inspires us to live up to that standard and to “go up” to the synagogue, patterned after God’s holy place and Temple, and pray there for blessing.

Morning: The God of Creation

To David, a Song. For Hashem is the land and her filling, inhabited space⁶ and those that dwell in it. For He placed her foundation upon the seas, and on rivers established her.

[\(24:1-2\)](#)

On the morning of Rosh Hashanah, most communities recite the Song of the Day. The recitation of the Song of the Day is ancient in origin, going back to the time of the Temple.⁷ As the second day of Rosh Hashanah falls out on Sunday this year, the song is Psalm 24, as it would be on any Sunday.⁸ When recited as the psalm of the day, the prayers focus on God’s role as the creator of the world,

which began on the first Sunday, the first day of creation. As Rashi ([Rosh Hashanah 31a](#)) puts it: “For He created heaven and earth, in order to give ‘inhabited space to those that dwell in it,’ and ruled over His world alone (since the angels were not created until the second day).”

The Psalm discusses God’s mastery and ownership over the entire inhabited land, and also recalls the miracles of the third day of creation, when dry land was established atop the primordial oceans of the dawn of time. Thus, use of the Psalm as part of the Levite song that accompanies the morning sacrifice focuses on the theme of creation found in the opening verses.⁹

Torah Reading: The entry of the Torah into its Sanctuary

This is the generation of those that seek Him, those who search for

⁶ Two Hebrew words, *aretz* and *teivel*, are used to refer to two different locations. Commentators disagree as to what the two words refer to: Israel and the Diaspora, inhabited land and uninhabited, or perhaps the words are full synonyms referring to the exact same places using different equivalent terms.

⁷ This practice appears in the Mishnah ([Tamid 33b](#)), and is explained as being connected to the creation of the world, which began on Sunday, in [Rosh Hashanah 31a](#). The Mishnah says that this song was sung on the first day of the week at the time of the Temple, and so its connection to Sunday goes back for millennia. The Septuagint also begins its translation of the chapter with the note that this song is associated with the first day of the week. See also [Magen Avraham 132:4](#) for evidence that the original custom was to recite the actual song for each day on its appropriate day, and not just to recite each day the

summary Mishnah from *Tamid* that lists the titles of the seven Psalms.

⁸ For further discussion of what the song of the day for Rosh Hashanah should be, and when it should be recited, see Yaakov Jaffe, “[The Psalm of the Day in the Prayer Service of the Vilna Gaon](#)” [Hebrew], *Beit Yitzchak* 42 (2010), 103-109.

⁹ What is the relationship between the section about creation, and the rhetorical question that follows about who may ascend upon God’s holy mountain? [Rashi](#) explains that despite God’s control over the entire world, still it is only a small set of those created for whom it is appropriate to visit the Temple to pray. [Malbim](#) says that the special nature of the Temple and its holiness is understood within the context that God – who resides there – is the fashioner of all of creation.

Your face, (children of) Yaakov, Selah.¹⁰ Raise, O Gates, your heads,¹¹ and be raised O Openings of Eternity, and He will come: the King of Honor. Who is this, the King of Honor? Hashem is mighty¹² and heroic, Hashem is the hero of war. (24:6-8)

Psalm 24 is recited whenever the Torah is returned to the Ark, both on weekdays and holidays, with the exception of Shabbat morning. Consequently, when the Torah is returned on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we find our third recitation of Psalm 24. This time, the focus is on the gates of eternity, taken by the liturgy to refer to the gates of the temple or the gates of the inner temple sanctuary. The Midrashic literature in [Shabbat 30a](#) and elsewhere relates these verses to the occasion of Solomon bringing the Ark into the Kodesh Ha-Kodashim; thus, they are recited when the Torah is returned to

the Ark to parallel that moment.¹³ It speaks of the generation that sought God, the generation of Solomon's time who dedicated themselves to build the Temple to house the Ark and create a space in which they could seek God.

In this case, the recitation no longer focuses on the introductory setting and its review of creation, nor on the material blessing that emanates from the Temple. Instead, the Psalm is read to focus on God's honor and glory, manifested in the Ark which symbolizes God's throne and honor, returning to its exalted and private location. Creation is of the past and human blessing is immaterial as our attention focuses on the King of Honor and His glory.

Mussaf: Monarchy and Royalty at the end of days

Raise, O Gates, your heads, and raise,¹⁴ O openings of eternity, [your heads], and He will come: the King

¹⁰ The word "*Selah*," which often denotes the end of a section, suggests that this verse is the final one of the previous section which focused on who was righteous to receive the blessing of God; see note 2. Still, [Ibn Ezra](#) argues this verse begins this section which follows, focusing on the generation who built the Temple, and through that were searching for "God's face." Searching for God's face is connected to the Temple in [Psalms 27:4-8](#).

¹¹ The verse does not ask the gates to be opened, and indeed the simple reading of the verse is that the gates are asked to raise their heads in pride and honor ([Metzudat David](#)). However, the liturgical use clearly involves the Midrash referenced below which understands the request as asking the gates to open (see [Rashi](#)).

¹² As Ibn Ezra notes throughout his commentary on Tehillim, the word "*oz*," strength, refers to the Ark when it appears in

Tehillim. See Jaffe, "Psalm 29," 52, note 6, and see also Ibn Ezra [110:2](#) and [150:1](#), and [Midrash Tehillim 149](#).

¹³ See Reuven Margoliot, *Hamikra Ve-Hamesorah*, 3rd printing (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1989), 19-20, for further discussion of the origins of this custom. The custom is mentioned in [Mishnah Berurah 149:8](#), but is not mentioned in many of the very early sources.

[Psalms 132:8-10](#) is also recited when the Torah is returned. [Shabbat 30a](#) similarly connects these verses to the bringing of the Ark to the sanctuary, on the basis of [II Chronicles 6:41-42](#).

¹⁴ There is a change of but a single word from [24:7](#) to [24:9](#), with the root "to raise" changed from the second person plural passive imperative in 24:7 into the second person plural active imperative in 24:9. Malbim explains the grammatical change that in [24:7](#) the gates are acted upon by the external force of the fear of God, so the passive voice is used. However, by [24:9](#),

of Honor. Who is Him, the King of Honor? Hashem, Master of Legions is the King of Honor. Selah.

[\(24:9-10\)](#)

The fourth time the Psalm is not recited in full. Rather, only the last four verses are recited, as part of the verses of Kingship in Mussaf. These verses have been associated and recommended for the verses of Kingship since the time of the Talmud ([Rosh Hashanah 32b](#)), and consequently, these verses as a unit constitute the final citation from Ketuvim in the Kingship verses.

The final two verses of the Psalm resemble the two verses that preceded them, as the gates and openings are again directed to raise themselves so the King of Honor, later identified as Hashem, may come. These verses feature the final two of the rhetorical questions in the Psalm; in a shocking but yet inspiring twist, the first two rhetorical questions referred to righteous individuals while the last two refer to God.

Hashem is referred to in two different ways in the two sections. First, in the earlier verses, He is referred to as hero of war, and then in the later verses He is referred to as Hashem, Master of Legions, without reference to war. Commentators explain the difference by applying the different,

similar verses to two different times. [Ibn Ezra](#) understands the final two verses to refer to the Messianic era, when swords are beaten to plowshares and God is no longer extolled for His role in war but solely for His glory, in and of itself. In the Messianic era, with war banished, God is no longer seen for His mighty strength and military power; instead we honor Him for His essential nature and royalty alone. The use of the word “*teivel*” in the opening verse of the Psalm supports this eschatological reading, as the word “*teivel*” appears often in eschatological and Messianic Psalms.¹⁵ The reader’s attention is no longer focused on the past tense moment of the building of the temple; the reader’s attention is now focused on the far future and the recognition of God’s rule that comes at that time.

Though a small number of the *verses* of God’s kingship refer to the present tense, the *frame* for those prayers (the paragraph “*Al Kein*” that introduces the verses of Kingship and the concluding blessing which follows them) orients the blessing towards a Messianic moment in the future when all of humanity will recognize God’s kingship. The final two verses of kingship from Navi ([Ovadiah 1:21](#) and [Zechariah 14:9](#)) surely refer to the Messianic future, as might the other verses from Psalms ([22:29](#) and [93:1](#)). Instead of looking to the past, the Psalm now looks to the future, when God

the gates act of their own accord, consciously raising themselves out of the awe of God’s greatness.

¹⁵ The word appears 14 other times in Tehillim, with most of the other times in the handful of eschatological Psalms ([33:8](#), [93:1](#), [96:10](#), [96:13](#), [97:4](#), [98:7](#), [98:9](#)).

will be truly recognized as the only real king of Honor.

From Creation to Temple to Redemption

The thematic line from Creation to the Temple to Redemption is easy to sketch, and indeed Jews connect these three themes each day in the liturgical blessings that precede and follow the Shema. The moment of Creation creates a paradigm and proof for the honor that becomes later manifested on this Earth in the temple, and which will achieve its full fulfillment at the moment of Redemption. For that reason, we do not need to resolve which theme of the chapter is primary; there is one overarching argument about how the glory of God's creation is later realized in the Temple and further still in redemption.

The Psalm may have one central idea, but that idea is still built out of different sub-arguments, and so readers will focus on different parts of its arguments on different parts of the day. A reader should not mumble the same words each time, but should intend to imbue each recitation with its unique significance by focusing on the sentences that are most germane to that moment in the service. Rosh Hashanah is a day to pray for blessings, a day to reflect on Creation, a day to study Torah, and a day

to hope and imagine the time of Redemption. Each of these four themes is part of this one special day, and each time the Psalm is recited a different theme is brought to the fore.

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