

**Mishnah Berakhot, Chapter 4**  
**Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields Executive Director, Women's League for**  
**Conservative Judaism,**  
**Zoom will be on Thursday, November 21, 2019, 8 pm EST**

**Chapter 4: Mishnah 1 - Time restrictions on when prayers can be recited.**

תפלת השחר, עד חצות. רבי יהודה אומר, עד ארבע שעות. תפלת המנחה עד הערב. רבי יהודה אומר, הערב אין לה קבע. ושל מוספין כל היום. רבי יהודה אומר, עד שבע שעות עד פלג המנחה. תפלת

*Shacharit [can be said] until midday. Rabbi Yehudah says until four hours into the day. Minchah [can be said] until the evening. Rabbi Yehudah says until the middle of the afternoon. Ma'ariv has no set time and Musaf can be said all day. Rabbi Yehudah says until seven hours into the day.*

**Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- Do you have time bound rituals in your own life?
- Does your day have a specific structure?
- How would you describe the way your life is structured during the day?

**Chapter 4: Mishnah 2 - Prayers entering and leaving study hall.**

רבי נחוניא בן הקנה היה מתפלל בכניסתו לבית המדרש וביציאתו תפלה קצרה. אמרו לו, מה מקום לתפלה זו. אמר להם, בכניסתי אני מתפלל שלא תארע תקלה על ידי, וביציאתי אני נותן הודיה על חלקי

*Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKaneh would offer a brief prayer when he entered the study hall and when he left. They said to him: What is the nature of this prayer? He told them: Upon my entrance, I pray that no mishaps should occur because of me; and upon my departure, I offer thanksgiving for my portion.*

**Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- Do you have specific gratitude mantra, or gratitude rituals ? (not the usual, Thank you, etc. Something else.)
- Have you ever thought of creating a gratitude ritual? Perhaps a Gratitude Journal?
- Isn't it great we are studying this the week before Thanksgiving - you can bring this mishnah to your Thanksgiving Day celebration.

#### **Chapter 4: Mishnah 3 - Shemoneh Esrei - Number of blessings; Fluency.**

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר, בְּכָל יוֹם מִתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר, מֵעַיִן שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר. רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר, אִם שְׂגוּרָה תְּפִלְתּוֹ בְּפִיו, יִתְפַּלֵּל שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר. וְאִם לֹא, מֵעַיִן שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר:

Rabban Gamliel says: Every day a person must pray eighteen [blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*]. Rabbi Yehoshua says: [One may say] an abbreviated [form of the] eighteen [blessings]. Rabbi Akiva says: If his/her prayer is fluent in his/her mouth, s/he must say eighteen; and if it is not -- an abbreviated eighteen.

**Questions to ponder to make this relevant - Does prayer intimidate you?**

- Do you feel rushed to finish?
- Do you say your own prayers
- Combine what is taught in Mishnah 3 and in Mishnah 4 - and think about your own creative prayer vs. the standard, traditional prayer in our *Siddurim*.

#### **Chapter 4: Mishnah 4 - Keva - Fixed Prayer; Transitions; Liminal Moments**

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר, הַעוֹשֶׂה תְּפִלְתּוֹ קִבֵּעַ, אֵין תְּפִלְתּוֹ תַּחֲנוּנִים. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר, הַמְהִלֵּךְ בְּמָקוֹם סְכָנָה, מִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִלָּה קְצָרָה. אוֹמֵר, הוֹשֵׁעַ הַשֵּׁם אֶת עַמְּךָ אֶת שְׂאֵרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּכָל פְּרֻשַׁת הָעֵבֹר יְהִי צְרִיכֵהֶם לְפָנֶיךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה:

Rabbi Eliezer says: One who makes his/her prayer "set" [as though it is burdensome to him/her], his/her prayer does not constitute "pleading" [for Divine mercy]. Rabbi Yehoshua says: One who is traveling in a dangerous place should offer a brief prayer [and] say: Save, God, Your people, the remnant of Israel; at every period of transition let their needs be before You. You are the Source of all blessing, God, Who heeds prayer.

**Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- Do you find prayer burdensome?
- Does your daily life incorporate some sort of fixed prayer?
- Have you ever felt like praying was dangerous? Have you prayed in a dangerous place? Are these two questions the same?
- How do you handle transitions in your life?
- Do you find a need for prayer at these transitional moment?

#### **Chapter 4: Mishnah 5 - Kavannah - Intention of Prayer**

הִיָּה רוֹכֵב עַל הַחֲמֹר, יֵרֵד. וְאִם אֵינוּ יְכוּל לִירֵד, יִחְזֵר אֶת פָּנָיו, וְאִם אֵינוּ יְכוּל לְהַחְזִיר אֶת פָּנָיו, יִכְנֶן אֶת לְבוֹ  
כְּנֶגֶד בַּיִת קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוּשִׁים:

If one was riding a donkey, s/he should dismount from it [while s/he prays]. And if s/he is unable to dismount, s/he should turn his/her face [towards Jerusalem]. And if s/he is unable to turn his/her face, s/he should focus his/her heart toward the Holy of Holies [in the Temple in Jerusalem].

#### **Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- How would you explain *kavannah*, intention?
- What do you find harder, *Keva*, fixed prayer, or *Kavannah*, intention while praying?
- What do you do to be in the right state of mind, and truly have *kavannah*, intention when you pray?
- Can you think of a time when you prayed and it was with an incredible amount of *kavannah*?
- Can you think of a time when you prayed, and truly had no *kavannah*, but eventually developed, or never did have any *kavannah*, but you prayed anyway?
- Ideas to ponder - Intentionality; Mindfulness in Prayer.

#### **Chapter 4: Mishnah 6 - Unusual locations for prayer, and what to do**

אוּ בַּאֲסָדָה, יִכְנֶן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בַּיִת קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוּשִׁים הִיָּה יוֹשֵׁב בַּסְּפִינָה אוּ בְּקָרוֹן:

If one was sitting in a boat, or in a wagon, or on a raft, [when s/he prays] s/he should focus his/her heart toward the Holy of Holies.

#### **Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- What is the most unusual place you have prayed?

## **Chapter 4: Mishnah 7 -**

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר, אין תפלת המוספין אלא בחבר עיר. וחכמים אומרים, בחבר עיר ושללא בחבר עיר. רבי יהודה אומר משמו, כל מקום שיש חבר עיר, היחיד פטור מתפלת המוספין

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah says: [One does] not [say] the prayer of *Musaf* except in the presence of a *Minyan*. And the sages say: [One should always say the prayer of *Musaf*,] with a *Minyan* or without a *Minyan*. Rabbi Yehuda says in his [Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's] name: Any place in which there is a *Minyan* praying, the individual is exempt from the prayer of *Musaf*.

### **Questions to ponder to make this relevant -**

- How often do you find yourself praying, even if you are not in the presence of a *minyan*?
- Any general takeaways from *Mishnah Berakhot*, Chapter 4, which you may teach someone else, or ponder further?

What questions did this chapter bring to mind for you? Email Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields with any thoughts, concerns or questions [ewolintz-fields@wlcj.org](mailto:ewolintz-fields@wlcj.org)