1. Brachot 5:1 speaks of intense concentration during the Amida prayer, ignoring our surroundings. Is that something you feel you can do? Are the examples given realistic? What do you do when your child/grandchild/friend asks for your attention during the Amidah, or asks you to move a little to let them by?

2. Brachot 5:2 quotes a dispute over where belongs the addition of Havdalah during the Ma’ariv Amida of Motzei Shabbat. Which different perception of the nature and essence of Havdalah does each of the options convey?

3. Why is Brachot 5:3 opposed to us adding to our prayer these expressions of appreciation? And how does the first part of this Mishnah relate to the second part, concerning mistakes made by the prayer leader? The focus of the chapter shifts in this Mishnah from the individual to the prayer leader. Why in this context?

4. Why does Brachot 5:4 prohibit the prayer leader from answering “Amen” to the Priestly Blessing? What could be so disruptive in saying “Amen?” Wouldn’t stopping altogether and reciting the Priestly Blessing (assuming the leader is a Priest), as the second part of the Mishnah describes, be more disruptive – and yet that is allowed under some circumstances?

5. The story of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa in Brachot 5:5 raises many questions: If he has this power, why doesn’t he just pray well (“fluently”) for everyone, and let everyone live? Why does the Mishnah bring us such a statement in his name, when we know there are no guarantees for what he says? And finally - the Mishnah uses the same word to describe both the unacceptance of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa’s prayer and the disruption of the prayer leader’s prayer in Brachot 5:4 should they answer Amen. In Hebrew the words are トラף and מjured - teruf and meturaf. What is the Mishnah saying by making that choice of words?

And now for the big picture:

What is the overall flow of this chapter? Why these topics, in this order? Is there an overall message here?