Introduction to How To Pray in Synagogue

The *synagogue* (*shul*) prayer service may confuse the unfamiliar. Here is a brief guide to following the congregational prayers.

NOTE This Guide may be printed and given to people who are unfamiliar with the prayer services (or to people who are not yet completely comfortable in following the prayer services). It may be particularly useful for people who do not normally attend weekday minyans, especially people who are saying *kaddish*!

A printed copy may also be useful as a guide to a specific *siddur*. Before the prayer service takes place, the actual page numbers may be copied from the *siddur* onto the pages of the Guide for quick reference during the service. (This could be done by the user or by someone who is more familiar with the prayer services, as an aid to help the user follow what is going on.)

General Rules in Following/Answering the Leader

Ends/Beginnings of Paragraphs
Each individual says most of the prayers, but the leader sets the pace. He says out loud the last line or two of many paragraphs (and sometimes the next paragraph's first few words), to help others find where he is in the prayers.
Hint If you get lost, listen to the leader and try to find those words at the beginning or end of one of the paragraphs near where you think you should be!

Saying *Amen*
When the prayer leader/*chazan* says a blessing (*Baruch ata adonai*...) and finishes the final word, everyone usually replies *amen*.

Baruch Hu U'Varuch Shemo
It is common (but not required) to say *baruch hu u'varuch shemo* after hearing God's name (*Adonai*) when it is said in a blessing.

EXCEPTION No one should say *baruch hu u'varuch shemo* between *bar'chu* and the beginning of the *amida*.

NOTE Some people say the phrase very loudly and slowly (pretentiously), but this wrong practice may prevent themselves and others from hearing the blessing's end and knowing when to say *amen*.

Praying *Shacharit*

This list mainly includes the parts of the prayer service that are said together or when in *synagogue*, not those said individually or at home.

NOTE If you need to use the toilet between *baruch she'amar* and *yishtabach*, say *asher yatzar* after saying *yishtabach* and before saying *yotzeir or*.

NOTE If you need to speak during the early part of *shacharit*, it is best to speak after *yishtabach* but before *bar'chu*. You should not speak during *psukei d'zimra* unless it is urgent or about the *shacharit* service.

Initial Blessings/*Asher Natan*

The initial blessings beginning with *asher natan*... through the end of *ven brit* may be said at home.

Ma Tovu

Upon arriving in *synagogue* in the morning, say *Ma tovu*....

Talit

Married men (and also those with a tradition to wear a *talit* from *bar mitzva* age) normally put on their *talit gadol* on all days (except *Tish'a b'Av* morning)**.**

For more details, see *Talit (Gadol)*.

Tefilin

On weekdays, all men put on *tefilin*. They do not interrupt putting on *tefilin* to respond to other's prayers, not even to say *amen*.

For more details, see *Tefilin*.

Birchot HaShachar/Initial Blessings

If you have not yet said the initial blessings beginning with *asher natan*... through the end of *ven brit* , say them once you are in *synagogue* and after you have put on *talit/tefilin* (if relevant).

Everyone stands while the prayer leader reads the initial blessings aloud. They say *amen* after each one.

NOTE Individuals should not intend to fulfill their personal requirement to say those blessings by answering *amen*, since everyone should say the blessings for him/herself.

L'Olam Yehei Adam/Shema

L'olam yehei adam is said quietly, with everyone saying the *shema* line together.

Order of the Sacrifices

Some read (quietly) the order of the sacrifices.

13 Principles of *Talmud* Explanation/*Kaddish*

- The 13 principles of how the *Talmud* is explained are read quietly.
- *Kaddish* is said by any mourners.
- Everyone says, *amen*, *yihei shmei raba*...

NOTE Everyone, not just mourners, stands for *kaddish;* this is the custom for all kaddishes and for all services.

Mizmor Shir*/*Kaddish

- *Mizmor shir* is read quietly.
- Another *kaddish* is said by the mourners.

Baruch SheAmar

Baruch she'amar is said by everyone, standing. The leader says the final blessing out loud.

Verses (*Psukim*)

The following several pages are verses *(psukim*) from various sources, said by everyone quietly.

NOTE The leader says several intermediary lines aloud due to their importance and so that everyone else knows where he is.

Mizmor L'Toda/Yehi Chevod

- Everyone stands to say *mizmor l'toda* quietly (just for this paragraph).

- The next paragraph (*yehi chevod*) is read quietly.

NOTE Don't say *mizmor l'toda* the day before or during *Passover* (the Thanksgiving offering/*Toda* was *chametz)*, or before *Yom Kippur*.

Ashrei* and 5 *Psalms

Ashrei and the following five *psalms* (#146 to 150) are said quietly by everyone; the leader says the final line or two out loud.

Baruch Adonai L'Olam Amen v'Amen

Baruch adonai... is said by the leader.

VaYevarech David

The next section (from *va'yevarech David* until after *bar'chu*) is said quietly by everyone while standing.

Shirat HaYam

Shirat ha'yam is read quietly by everyone.

Yishtabach/Kaddish

Yishtabach is said quietly by everyone together. The leader says the final line of *yishtabach* out loud and then *kaddish.*

Bar'chu

- The leader says *Bar'chu et Adonai ha'mevorach.*
- Everyone bows from the waist and replies (aloud), *Baruch Adonai ha'mevorach l'olam va'ed* (which is then repeated by the leader).
- Everyone says the blessing's ending *...u'vorei et ha'kol*.

***Shema* and Its Blessings**

The next paragraphs lead up to the *shema:*

- Leader says, "*Et shem ha'el*..."
- Everyone says aloud, together: *Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*... and *Baruch kevod Adonai mi'mkomo.*
- Leader says the final line or two of *La'el baruch ne'imot*... and everyone responds *amen*.
- Everyone says *ahavat olam* quietly.
- Leader reads the final lines aloud.

  NOTE It is the custom to not say *amen* to the blessing before *shema*.
- Everyone says the first line of the *shema* together and aloud, but *Baruch shem*... silently.
- Everyone reads the *shema* individually, and the leader repeats out loud *Adonai eloheichem emet*.
- Everyone reads the next paragraphs, through *ezrat avoteinu,* together, quietly.

Mi Chamocha

Stand for *Mi chamocha* until after the *amida*.

Adonai Yimloch

Everyone reads together and aloud: *Adonai yimloch...* until the final blessing before the *amida.*

NOTE At some time before completing that blessing, step back far enough (one large step is fine) so that you can take three small steps forward to begin the *amida*. If there is no room to step back, you may pray the *amida* without stepping forward.

The *Amida*

***Amida*: Details and Direction**

For more details on saying the *amida*, see What To Pray: Set Prayers: *Amida*

For where to face during the *amida*, see *Amida*: Location: Where To Face

Stepping To Begin the *Amida*

After saying *ga'al Yisrael*, symbolically approach God by taking three steps forward (any size of steps is fine):

- Step forward with your right foot,
- Step forward with your left foot, and
- Step forward with your right foot.
- Bring your left foot to meet the right one, so that both feet are touching at the heels and at the balls (so that you are standing as if you had one leg, like the angels!)

Bowing in the *Amida*

Next, with your feet still together, do knee-bowing at the start and end of the first paragraph. You will also be bowing at:

- Beginning of *modim* (waist-bowing).
- End of *modim* (knee-bowing at *Baruch ata Adonai* of the blessing ending *u'lecha na'eh l'hodot*).

NOTE For how to do knee-bowing and waist-bowing, see *Amida*: Actions: Bowing.

Slach Lanu

In *slach lanu*, when saying *ki chatanu* and *ki fashanu*, hit your chest over your heart with your fist.

Reason We are saying that we sinned, so we strike our heart for leading us astray.

Ending the *Amida*

Symbolically take leave of God by taking three steps back after *Adonai tzuri v'go'ali*:

- Step back on your left foot,
- Step back on your right foot,
- Step back on your left foot (and then place your right foot next to your left foot).
- Bow to the left while saying *Oseh shalom bi'mromav*...,
- Bow to the right while saying *Hu ya'aseh shalom alenu*, and
- Bow to the middle (straight in front of you) while saying *Ve'al kol yisrael v'imru amen*.

Then pause for at least three seconds before walking forward or sitting down.

Reader's Repetition of *Amida*

At *kedusha*, everyone stands (even if they were sitting so far for the *amida's* repetition) with their feet together, again imitating the angels who only have one leg.

- The leader says *nekadeish* (in some places, everyone says *nekadeish).*
- Everyone says the next line together (*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*...).

NOTE When saying *kadosh* each of the three times, rise up on the balls of your feet and return to "feet flat" so you will be able to rise up three times total. Some people also rise on their feet when they say the next line (*baruch kevod*), but it is neither required nor a universal practice.

- After the leader says *Halleluya*, everyone else may move their feet (or sit down, if that is their custom).
- On fast days, the leader says an extra paragraph in *shacharit* (other paragraphs in *mincha* are said by everyone).

NOTE These extra paragraphs usually appear in small--or tiny!--print in siddurs near where they get said. Look for asterisks to show where to insert them. It might be helpful before beginning *shacharit* to ask someone to point out exactly what to say and when.

Tachanun

When To Say *Tachanun*
Tachanun is usually said on weekdays.

How To Say *Tachanun*
Tachanun is said differently, depending on if there is a *Torah* scroll in the room, as follows:

***Tachanun* If *Torah* Scroll Present**

***Tachanun* with *Torah* Scroll: Sun., Tues., Wed., Fri.**

To say *tachanun* on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, when a *Torah* scroll is present:

- Say *Va'yomer David* sitting down, while resting your head on your left arm (unless you are wearing *tefilin* on your left arm, in which case lean onto your right arm).

NOTE Rest your head on your left arm even if you are left-handed. Some type of cloth should separate your face and your arm when doing this, but if your arm is bare and you don't have a *talit* or other garment with which to cover your arm, you do not need to put your head down at all. There is no problem with not being permitted to put your face on your bare arm, just that there is no point in doing so.

- When you reach *shomer Yisrael*, lift your head up and sit normally while saying the paragraphs until *v'anachnu lo neida ma na'aseh.*
- Before saying "*na'aseh,*" stand up for the remainder of *tachanun*.

***Tachanun* with *Torah* Scroll: Mon., Thur.**

To say *tachanun* on Mondays and Thursdays, when a *Torah* scroll is present:

- Say *tachanun* standing until *Va'yomer David*... at which time, everyone sits down.
- Follow the directions above for the remainder of *tachanun*.

***Tachanun* If No *Torah* Scroll**

Put your head down only if there is a *Torah* scroll in the room. When you say *tachanun* in a room in which there is no *Torah* scroll, sit for the first part (without resting your head on your arm), remaining sitting for *shomer yisrael...*, then stand for *va'anachnu lo neida.*
For more about putting your head down for *Tachanun*, see *Tachanun*.

Hallel

- When *hallel* is said, most of the *psalms* are said quietly by everyone. (In some *synagogues*, several of the *psalms* are sung in unison.)

- The lines beginning *Hodu l'adonai*... are read aloud by the leader.
- Everyone else responds aloud, *Hodu l'adonai*... and reads quietly the next line (which the leader then reads aloud when they finish).
- Similarly, *Ana adonai* is read responsively by the leader, followed by everyone else.

Kaddish
The leader says *kaddish* out loud.

Torah **Reading** (Mondays and Thursdays)

- Everyone reads quietly the phrases *va'yehi be'nso'a*... and *brich shmei*.
- The *Torah* is taken out and carried to the *bima*.
- As each *man* (called an *oleh*) is called up to the *Torah:*
    - The *oleh* says *Bar'chu*...
    - Everyone responds *Baruch Adonai*....,
    - The *oleh* repeats that line and says a blessing.
    - Everyone answers *amen*.
- After each reading, the *oleh* says one more blessing and everyone replies *amen*.
- After the third *aliya*, the *Torah* is lifted up.
- Everyone says, *V'zot haTorah*....
- The *Torah* is rolled and wrapped.
- Meanwhile, the leader reads four paragraphs beginning, *Yehi ratzon mi'lifnei avinu...*
- The final paragraph, *Acheinu kol bet yisrael*... is read by everyone aloud.
- The *Torah* is put back while everyone reads two *psalms* quietly.

Ashrei/U'va L'Tzion

- Everyone reads *ashrei* quietly, followed by *la'menatzeiach* and *u'va l'tziyon*.
- Everyone together says, *Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* and *Baruch kevod*.

Kaddish
The leader says *kaddish.*

Alenu
Everyone says *alenu* together.

Kaddish
Mourners say *kaddish.*

Psalm for the Day
Psalm for that day is read by everyone.

Kaddish
One more *kaddish* is said by the mourners.

L'David

- During *Elul* and into *Tishrei*, *L'David* is read by everyone.

- One more *kaddish* is said by the mourners.

Praying *Ma'ariv*

V'hu Rachum
Everyone reads the two introductory lines of *v'hu rachum*.

Bar'chu

- Leader says *bar'chu*.
- Everyone else responds, *baruch Adonai*....
- The leader repeats that line.
- Everyone reads the next paragraph/blessing.
- The leader says that final line out loud.
- Everyone responds *amen*.

NOTE Don't say *baruch hu u'varuch shemo* at all during *ma'ariv*.

***Shema* and Its Blessings**

- The leader repeats the final two words of the *shema* and the word *emet*.
- Everyone continues quietly saying the phrases until *Mi chamocha.*
- *Mi chamocha* is said by everyone together including by the leader, who then also reads the next line.
- Everyone says *Adonai yimloch*... together, continuing through the end of the next blessing, which is repeated by the leader.
- Everyone says *hashkiveinu* quietly.
- The leader says the blessing *shomer amo Yisrael la'ad* out loud.
- *Baruch Adonai l'olam*... is said through to the end by everyone quietly.
- The leader says the final line and the final blessing out loud.

NOTE *Baruch Adonai l'olam* is not said in *Eretz Yisrael.*

Kaddish
The leader says *kaddish.*

Amida
Everyone says the *amida* silently and individually.

Kaddish
The leader says *kaddish.*

Alenu
Everyone says *alenu* together.

Kaddish
Kaddish is said by any mourners.

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