

Rosh Hashanah Amidah: Three Special Sections *Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot*

Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 34b

According to Rabbah, the Holy One said: “On Rosh Hashanah, recite before Me words of Malchuyot (sovereignty), Zichronot (remembrance), and Shofarot. ‘Soveriegnty’ - so that you may acknowledge Me as ruler over you; ‘remembrance’- so that remembrance of you may rise up favorably before Me. And how shall all of this be accomplished? Through the sounds of the shofar.”

What makes these special sections of the Musaf Amidah difficult to access?

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:5-6

סֹדֵר בְּרִכּוֹת, אוֹמֵר אֲבוֹת וּגְבוּרוֹת וְקִדְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם, וְכוּלֵל מַלְכוּיּוֹת עִמָּהוּן, וְאֵינוֹ תוֹקֵעַ. קִדְשֵׁי הַיּוֹם, וְתוֹקֵעַ. זְכוּרוֹנוֹת, וְתוֹקֵעַ. שׁוֹפְרוֹת, וְתוֹקֵעַ. וְאוֹמֵר עֲבוּדָה וְהוֹדָאָה וּבִרְכַּת כֹּהֲנִים, דְּבַרֵי רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי. אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, אִם אֵינוֹ תוֹקֵעַ לְמַלְכוּיּוֹת, לָמָּה הוּא מְזַכֵּיר. אֶלֶּא אוֹמֵר אֲבוֹת וּגְבוּרוֹת וְקִדְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם, וְכוּלֵל מַלְכוּיּוֹת עִם קִדְשֵׁי הַיּוֹם, וְתוֹקֵעַ. זְכוּרוֹנוֹת, וְתוֹקֵעַ. שׁוֹפְרוֹת, וְתוֹקֵעַ. וְאוֹמֵר עֲבוּדָה וְהוֹדָאָה וּבִרְכַּת כֹּהֲנִים:

The order of the blessings [of Musaf Amidah]: **One recites** the blessing of **the Patriarchs and Matriarchs**, the blessing of God’s **Mighty Deeds**, and the blessing of **the Sanctification of God’s Name**, all of which are recited all year long. **And one includes** the blessing of **Sovereignty**, containing many biblical verses on that theme, **with them** i.e., in the blessing of the Sanctification of God’s Name, **and one does not sound** the *shofar* after it. Next, one adds a special blessing for **the Sanctification of the Day**, and **sounds** the *shofar* after it; followed by the blessing of **Remembrances**, which contains many biblical verses addressing that theme, **and sounds** the *shofar* after it; and recites the blessing of **Shofarot**, which includes verses that mention the *shofar*, **and sounds** the *shofar* after it. **And** one then returns to the regular *Amidah* prayer and **recites** the blessing of God’s **Service** and the blessing of **Thanksgiving and the Priestly Blessing**. This is **the statement of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri. Rabbi Akiva said to him: If one does not sound** the *shofar* **for** the blessing of **Kingship**, **why does he mentionit?** Rather, the order of the blessings is as follows: One **recites** the blessing of **the Patriarchs** and that of God’s **Mighty Deeds** and that of **the Sanctification of God’s Name**. One subsequently **includes**

the blessing of **Kingship** in the blessing of **the Sanctification of the Day, and sounds** the *shofar*. Next he recites the blessing of **Remembrances, and sounds** the *shofar* after it, and the blessing of **Shofarot and sounds** the *shofar* after it. **One** then **recites** the blessing of God's **Service and** the blessing of **Thanksgiving and the Priestly Blessing**.

אין פוחתין מעשרה מלכיות, מעשרה זכרונות, מעשרה שופרות. רבי יוחנן בן נורי אומר, אם אמר שלש שלש מקלן, יצא. אין מזכירין זכרון מלכות ושופר של פרענות. מתחיל בתורה ומשלים בנביא. רבי יוסי אומר, אם השלים בתורה, יצא:

One does **not** recite **fewer than ten** verses in the blessing of **Sovereignty**, or fewer **than ten** verses in the blessing of **Remembrances**, or fewer **than ten** verses in the blessing of **Shofarot**. **Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri says: If one recited three from each of them, one has fulfilled** their obligation. **One does not mention** verses of **Remembrance, Sovereignty, and Shofar** that have a theme of **punishment**. When reciting the ten verses, **one begins with** verses from the **Torah and concludes with** verses from **the Prophets**. **Rabbi Yosei says: If one concludes with** a verse from **the Torah, one has fulfilled** their obligation.

Structure of Each Section

- 1) Declaration of theological proof
- 2) Proof texts offered through a series of verses (Torah), Psalms (Ketuvim) and Prophets (Neviim).
 - a) Torah verses: The past, foundational sacred history
 - b) Psalms: Eternal present
 - c) Future of hope
- 3) A *bakashah* (request)

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The greatest act of faith is to engage in prayer when we aren't sure it's true. We aren't just reading verses. We are bringing the verses to life. Saying it doesn't mean it's an absolute truth for you. But in this moment we are willing to inhabit it and commit to it to make it true.

One way of understanding this *t'fillah* is that we are not simply affirming, we are also challenging. We are saying we want such a world, and we are not experiencing such a world. We are asking God to fulfill that part of the covenant.

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