

## History and Development of Foundational Prayer Texts

### Vocabulary:

<p><b>Seder/Siddurim</b>  <b>סדר/סדרים</b>: Order.          Siddur (prayerbook) is derived from this word.</p>	<p><b>Kavanah</b>  <b>כונה</b>: intention;          attention; directedness          of heart, purpose,          concentration.</p>	<p><b>Keva</b>  <b>קבע</b>: predictability,          order, fixity; a regular,          perfunctory act.</p>	<p><b>Nusach*</b>  <b>נוסח</b>: exact text of a          prayer service, "rite" or          "wording" as pertains          to a specific          community. *In this          context it refers to textual,          rather than musical nusach.</p>
<p><b>Avodah</b>  <b>עבודה</b>: work, service;          refers explicitly to          public works of the          temple cult sacrificial          system. Similar to the          Greek "liturgy" for          public works.</p>	<p><b>Minhag</b>  <b>מנהג</b>: Custom; often          varies by community.</p>	<p><b>Piyyut/Piyyutim (pl.)</b>  <b>פיוט / פיוטים</b>: hymn or          liturgical poem, usually          to be sung, chanted, or          recited during religious          services. Often          rhyming or formatted          as acrostics.</p>	<p><b>Mishmarot</b>  <b>משמרות</b>: "watches" or          "guarding", often used          to denote a period of          service.</p>
<p><b>Ma'amadot</b>  <b>מעמדות</b>: "standing          groups" that          witnessed, by turns of          one week each, the          daily sacrifice.</p>	<p><b>Shalem</b>  <b>שלם</b>: Whole, complete</p>	<p><b>Machzor</b>  <b>חזרום</b>: lit. "cycle";          prayerbook          containing the liturgies          for Rosh Hashanah          and Yom Kippur</p>	<p><b>Haggadah</b>  <b>הגדה</b>: lit. "telling";          foundation text that          sets forth the order of          the passover seder.</p>

### The Siddur

Prayer in the bible is seen often as an exchange with God about something regarding the immediate circumstance (example: Moses praying for Miriam's health in a moment of crisis, Abraham interceding on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah). While we don't see a formalized

structure or communal participation until much later, an early concept of prayer, as opposed to sacrificial worship, is seen with Abraham in what would become the morning prayer service. The retroactive continuity built around events in the Torah, point toward the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) as the originators of what would become the three daily prayer services. Before written prayers were widely available, prayer services were conducted by the “shaliach tzibbur”, literally messenger of the congregation, or prayer leader who relied on oral tradition and improvisation led by “kavanah”. As with many oral traditions, prayers were often ordered by nature of the themes they addressed rather than a text being quoted. Prayer leaders often improvised the words (kavanah), but the structure of the service was fixed (keva).

### **First Temple, Mishmarot, and Ma'amadot**

During the First Temple era, worship was primarily sacrificial in nature, but there was also singing of Psalms, confessional prayers, and some sense of personal prayer. Communal sacrifices were understood to require representation from the people Israel, rather than solely the priests (Kohenim) and Levites. Although the timeline is debated, as to whether this occurred during the First or Second Temple era, the system instituted under the rule of King David (as described in Chronicles 1, 24–26), divided priests and Levites into 24 rotating divisions (“mishmarot”, “shifts” or “watches”). Israel itself was also divided into corresponding districts, and representatives from the lay population were attached to each priestly division. These representatives were called the Ma'amadot (“standing groups”). Those unable to travel to Jerusalem would gather locally during the time of the sacrifices for fasting, reading the act of creation, and communal prayer. Though there is some scholarly disagreement, this may represent the earliest organized pattern of regular daily public prayer and the first step toward synagogue prayer. This also emphasizes the historical pattern of Judaism being a communal project, rather than a priestly privilege.

### **Second Temple and the Established of The Amidah**

At the end of the Babylonian exile, after the destruction of the first temple, the Anshe Knesset HaGadolah (the men of the Great Assembly) instituted the Amidah prayer (shmoneh esreh) prayer, to be offered three times daily corresponding to the sacrifices that would happen thrice daily. The repetition was also owing to the fact that during the time of exile Hebrew literacy fell; the formalization of a public prayer, rather than improvised, gave illiterate Jews the opportunity to commune with God. The rabbis transformed the private prayers and public work of the temple sacrifices (“avodah”) into public work in the form of worship.

By 500 CE, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the basic order (seder, later Siddur) of prayers as we see them today was established. In 9th century, first official siddur is compiled by Rav Amran Gaon of Sura in Babylonia, this became the basis of every siddur to follow - although every community added their own prayers and piyyutim (poems) to the basic structure creating their own rites or “Nusachot” (Nusach Sefarad, Nusach Ashkenaz, etc).

## The Printing Press

In 1486 the first siddur was printed by the Soncino Family of Italy. While siddurim would not be mass produced for several hundred more years, the printing press was pivotal in not only standardizing prayerbooks, but helping to spread new prayers and contributing to wider acceptance of new ideas. This allowed communities the ability to fix their liturgies to the established minhag, establishing a fixidity in Jewish practices that was hitherto impossible. Modern movements (Conservative, Reform, Orthodox, etc.) have all made use of this to meet their ideological needs as well as suit the liturgical needs of their communities with commentary and sometimes transliterations of Hebrew.

Siddurim come in several formats. Nusachot variations notwithstanding, there are weekday siddurim that include just the weekday prayers; weekday and shabbat siddurim; and siddurim shalem (complete) that contain weekday, shabbat, and festival services.

## The Machzor

The machzor is the prayerbook used for the High Holy Days and the three pilgrimage festival holidays (Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot). In addition to the standard prayer services, the machzor includes a more extensive liturgy, with many unique elements relating to the specific themes of the holiday, for example:

- Avinu Malkenu (Rosh Hashanah)
- Shofar service (Rosh Hashanah)
- Tashlich (Rosh Hashanah)
- Piyyutim, poetic additions to the Amidah (both)
- Kol Nidre (Yom Kippur)
- Al Chet (Yom Kippur)
- Selichot (Yom Kippur)
- Avodah (Yom Kippur)
- Ne'ilah (Yom Kippur)

These additions to the machzor add an emotional weight of the services and intensify the supplicatory and confessional nature of the texts, as well as communal remorse and atonement. A primary, and popularized by Leonard Cohen's "Who By Fire", example of this is the U'Netaneh Tokef, a piyyut that has been part of the High Holy Day liturgy for centuries; It examines the powers and judgement of God, ponders the potential outcomes of those sealed in the Book of Life, and offers a glimpse of hope for redemption.

Typically, machzorim (pl.) are available as sets of five books (one for each relevant holiday), a single volume inclusive of the three festivals, or a single volume for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

## The Haggadah

The Haggadah (“telling” or “narration”) is the text used during the Passover Seder to retell the Exodus from Egypt. Unlike the siddur and the machzor, it is not primarily a prayer text, rather a script and instructional text for the passover seder. Although portions of it quote the Torah, scholars are generally of the opinion that its origins reside in the Talmudic era. It evolved gradually from biblical commands, rabbinic teachings, medieval manuscripts, and modern reinterpretations. In addition to the standard list of blessings that accompany various acts of daily life (washing hands, Shehechyanu, etc.), the Haggadah includes a variety of piyyutim specific to the occasion including: Ha Lachma Anya, Vehi She’amda, an Dayenu. As with the siddur and machzor, there are haggadot for every custom and tradition, as well as variations for specific themes (social justice, children oriented, etc.).

<b>General Seder Order - As Specified in the Haggadah</b>	
<b>Kadeish (קדש)</b>	Sanctify - Recite the blessing over the first cup of wine. Shehecheyanu blessing.
<b>Urchatz (ורחץ)</b>	Wash hands, without blessing
<b>Karpas (כרפס)</b>	Eat a small piece of vegetable dipped in salt water, after you say the appropriate blessing.
<b>Yachatz (יחץ)</b>	Break the middle matzah from the Seder plate in two. The larger piece, the afikoman, is removed and hidden.
<b>Maggid (מגיד)</b>	Ask the Four Questions (mah nishtana) and retell the story of Passover. Drink second cup of wine.
<b>Rachtzah (רחצה)</b>	Wash your hands again as before, this time reciting the blessing for washing hands.
<b>Motzi (מוציא)</b>	Recite the blessing for bread.
<b>Matzah (מצה)</b>	Recite the special blessing for matzah, then eat matzah.
<b>Maror (מרור)</b>	Eat the bitter herbs.

## General Seder Order - As Specified in the Haggadah

<b>Korech (כורך)</b>	Eat the "Hillel sandwich" of matzah and bitter herbs.
<b>Shulchan Orech (שולחן עורך)</b>	Eat the seder meal.
<b>Tzafun (צפון)</b>	Eat the afikoman, the piece of matzah that was set aside earlier in the Seder.
<b>Barech (ברך)</b>	Recite the Grace After Meals and drink the third cup of wine.
<b>Hallel (הלל)</b>	Fill Elijah's cup and the fourth cup of wine, open the door for Elijah the Prophet, sing songs of praise for the miracles performed for the Jewish people, and drink your final cup.
<b>Nirtzah (נרצה)</b>	Conclude the Seder with the prayer, "Next Year in Jerusalem." - this reference isn't interpreted as present day Israel