

**“The Abbreviated Amidah” by Jeremy Kalmanofsky**  
A Study Guide for Teaching a CJLS Teshuvah by Rabbi Erin Beser

**Essential Question:** What is the essence of Jewish prayer and if compromises are to be made, what is the most important piece to preserve? What is the ideal way to pray very quickly?

**Enduring Understandings:**

- Throughout Jewish history, communities have struggled to find the ideal blend of public versus private prayer.
- Throughout Jewish history, communities have struggled to satisfy the variety of needs of diverse constituents, with some members being able to pray more fluently than others.
- Often times the ideal version of events is no longer possible and a community must contend with several less than perfect options, some more ideal than others.
- Changes to liturgy come with intention to preserve certain core aspects of the Jewish prayer experience while attempting to make compromises for a new audience.

**Important Terms:**

***Hoikhe Kedushah*** - “Loud”, “Tall” or “High” in Yiddish, a situation where a congregation does not recite a silent Amidah followed by a complete repetition

**Shatz** - Shaliach Tzibur - Prayer Leader

**Set Induction (10 minutes):** How would you describe the core elements of Jewish prayer? Generate a list amongst the group. Which of these core elements are the most important aspects of prayer to you? If you had to have an experience that only encapsulated some of these aspects, which would you prioritize preserving over others?

**Alternative Set Induction (10 minutes):** Educators could print and cut out several elements of traditional Jewish prayer: silent meditation, responsive chanting, music, Hebrew versus translation, 10 people, Torah reading, etc. as examples and ask participants to put these elements in order from most important to least important for themselves or for their community. Participants can compare lists to see where opinions concur or diverge.

**Learning Activity (35 minutes):** Introduce this text written by R. Israel Meir HaKohen in the Mishneh Berurah: “The essence of public prayer is the ‘Eighteen Blessings’ [The Amidah], that is, that 10 adults should pray together.”

Ask and discuss: What is the essence and the importance of public prayer? How does the Amidah, according to this Rabbi, fit this essential experience?

Introduce the concept of ***Hoikhe Kedushah***, with the first text on Source Sheets A-D from Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky’s yeshivah, “The Abbreviated Amidah.”

Rabbi Kalmanofsky asserts that of the four methods of reciting the ***Hoikhe Kedushah*** that Rabbi David Golinkin has found useful, there is one that “surpasses the others in Halakhic elegance, textual support and ease of us.”

Your mission is to discover which method Rabbi Kalmanofsky has chosen. Each group/pair will look at the sources behind the way one (or each, time permitting) particular community recites the Amidah and share with the group. Then the group will decide which one they feel is the chosen one.

**Reflection (15 minutes):**

Reveal that Rabbi Israel Meir HaKohen completed his thought with the following sentiment: “Ideally, the community and prayer leader should begin the ‘Eighteen Blessings’ in unison,” and Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky agrees.

Share Rabbi Kalmanofsky’s P’sak Din:

“Ideally, one should recite a complete silent Amidah followed by a repetition for each service, and not rely so consistently on the abbreviated service known as the *hoikhe Kedushah*. Among several valid methods for reciting the *hoikhe Kedushah*, the optimal one is for congregation members to begin their private prayers along with the leader, saying every word of the first three blessings as the leader does, then continuing silently after *Kedushah*.

***Why do you think this is the ideal way to pray very quickly? Do you agree with Rabbi Israel Meir HaKohen that this experience encapsulates the essence of public prayer that is the Amidah? Why or why not? Did you prefer one of the other methods? Why?***

**Question: What is the best method for reciting the abbreviated service known as the “hoikhe Kedushah”?**

**The Abbreviated Amidah, by Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky**

The practice of abbreviating the full repetition, or shortening private prayer, has deep Halakhic roots...Classically it was employed primarily for *minhah*, and rarely at other services. In recent years, the *hoikhe Kedushah* has become pervasive in many Conservative synagogues, schools and camps, routinely used on weekdays and Shabbat alike, for *shaharit* and *musaf* as well as *minhah*. The optimal practice is for each worshipper to recite a silent Amidah followed by a reader's repetition, as all codes agree. I will argue that - while these four styles are all acceptable - of the two widely practiced methods for the abbreviated Amidah, one surpasses the others in Halakhic elegance, textual support and ease of use.

**Method Number 1: Is this the one?**

**Maimonides, MT Tefillah 8:9**

The Reader fulfills the obligation of the Congregation (by reading each word of the Amidah outloud). How so? When he recites the prayers and they respond with the utterance of Amen after every blessing, they are regarded as praying. This only applies to one who does not know the liturgy. One who is proficient does not fulfill his obligation unless he recites the prayers for himself.

בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהוּא מְתַפֵּל וְהֵם שׁוֹמְעִין וְעוֹנִין אַחֵר כֹּל בְּרָכָה. כִּיצַד. שְׁלִיחַ צַבּוּר מוֹצִיא אֶת הָרַבִּים יְדֵי חוּבְתָן  
בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמֹרִים כְּשֶׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ לְהַתְפַּלֵּל אֲבָל הַיּוֹדֵעַ אֵינוֹ יוֹצֵא יְדֵי חוּבְתָו אֲלָא. וּבְרָכָה הָרִי הֵן כְּמִתְפַּלְלִין  
בְּתַפִּלַּת עַצְמוֹ:

***Do you agree that the leader has the ability to fulfill the obligation of the community? Do you think it's important for a person to hear every word of the prayer? Which kind of experience do you prefer, praying for yourself, or saying “Amen” to the prayers of a leader?***

**Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, The Abbreviated Amidah, Spring 2017**

Although this practice endured 350 years in Egypt, until Radbaz overturned it, and although Rabbi Golinkin thinks it may be a useful tool for educators, it is unlikely to meet the needs of most Masorti communities, since it makes prayer an entirely public exercise, leaving too little space for interior meditation. Practically, for our communities today, it is good to have public prayer elements, like communal singing and the value of having the congregants learn the words by hearing them pronounced correctly.

***Do you agree that is important for our communities to hear every word of the prayer out loud, whether they know it or not?***

**Question:** What is the best method for reciting the abbreviated service known as the “*boikhe Kedushah*”?

### **The Abbreviated Amidah, by Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky**

The practice of abbreviating the full repetition, or shortening private prayer, has deep Halakhic roots...Classically it was employed primarily for *minhah*, and rarely at other services. In recent years, the *boikhe Kedushah* has become pervasive in many Conservative synagogues, schools and camps, routinely used on weekdays and Shabbat alike, for *shaharit* and *musaf* as well as *minhah*. The optimal practice is for each worshipper to recite a silent Amidah followed by a reader's repetition, as all codes agree. I will argue that - while these four styles are all acceptable - of the two widely practiced methods for the abbreviated Amidah, one surpasses the others in Halakhic elegance, textual support and ease of use.

### **Method Number 2: Is this the one?**

#### **R. Yosef Karo, Beit Yosef OH 234**

הספרדים אין נוהגים לחזור ש"ץ התפלה במנחה אלא מתפלל ש"ץ עם הציבור בקול רם ואומר קדושה וברכת אתה קדוש ואח"כ אומר האמצעיות בלחש עם הציבור ומתחיל רצה בקול רם וגומר תפלתו בקול רם ומנהג האשכנזים הוא הנכון וכן הנהיגו חכמים שבדור שלפנינו בצפ"ת תוב"ב וגזרו לעובר על תקנתם :

The Sefaradim don't have a custom of the shaliach tzibur repeating the prayer at minhah, rather, the shaliach tzibur begins with the community aloud through the Kedushah and after that, continues silently with the community, and then resumes a loud recitation for the final three blessings. But the custom of the Ashkenazim is correct.

***What values of prayer is this version trying to preserve? Do you think it accomplishes that goal?***

#### **Radbaz, Responsa 4.1079**

וראיתי במקצת מקומות שהחזן אומר ג' ראשונות וג' אחרונות בקול רם ואמצעיות בלחש וזה המנהג אינו לא כדן הגמרא ולא כסברת הרב ז"ל והוא מבואר הטעות כי מי שאינו יודע לא יצא ידי אמצעיות ולא ידעתי טעם לזה המנהג ושאלתי את פי אחד משלוחי צבור ואמר לי מפני שהחזן צריך לשאול צרכיו באמצעיות אומר אותם בלחש אמרתי לו מפני תקנתך אתה מקלקל את אחרים ומי שרוצה לעשות כן צריך לדקדק תחלה אם יש שם מי שאינו יודע יתפלל הכל בקול רם להוציא את מי שאינו יודע. והנראה לעניות דעתי כתבתי :

And I have seen a few places where the cantor begins the Amidah aloud, with congregants reciting together, then continues in a whisper, and then recites the three last blessings loudly. Though this custom is not technically incorrect according to the Gemara, the Rambam explains why it is a mistake: because he who does not know [how to pray] has not fulfilled his duty through the middle...and while surely the cantor needs to ask for his own needs in the middle, which the cantor says in a whisper, I told him that because of your regulation, you are spoiling the experience for others, and if you want to do it this way, you have to be careful if there is someone there who does not know, that the leader will pray all out loud for those who do not know.

***How much should the experience of the prayer leader matter in crafting a prayer experience for a community? How much should the community craft a prayer experience that feels***

*inclusive to all, regardless of fluency? How much responsibility should the prayer leader take for helping those who do not know all of the text?*

**Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, The Abbreviated Amidah, 2017**

This practice is unlikely to serve most communities' needs, as it demands that individual worshippers keep pace with the Shaliach Tzibur during the silent portion, which seems difficult. Still, synagogues might elect to employ this method on an occasional basis, to permit public recitation of Birkat Kohanim, the loud Modim and High Holiday season additions.

**Question: What is the best method for reciting the abbreviated service known as the “*hoikhe Kedushah*”?**

### **The Abbreviated Amidah, by Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky**

The practice of abbreviating the full repetition, or shortening private prayer, has deep Halakhic roots...Classically it was employed primarily for *minḥab*, and rarely at other services. In recent years, the *hoikhe Kedushah* has become pervasive in many Conservative synagogues, schools and camps, routinely used on weekdays and Shabbat alike, for *shaharit* and *musaf* as well as *minḥab*. The optimal practice is for each worshipper to recite a silent Amidah followed by a reader's repetition, as all codes agree. I will argue that - while these four styles are all acceptable - of the two widely practiced methods for the abbreviated Amidah, one surpasses the others in Halakhic elegance, textual support and ease of use.

### **Method Number 3: Is this the one?**

#### **R. Ovadya Yosef, quoted in his son's work Yalkut Yosef, 2:124.5:**

When time is limited and the prayer leader recites the Amidah aloud up until Ha'El HaKadosh, **it is proper that the community prays the Amidah word-by-word** along with the leader. When the leader reaches Kedushah, they should say the entire Kedushah together with him, including na'aritzekha. Then they should continue their own prayer silently. ... This is preferable to the custom of waiting until the prayer leader concludes Ha'El HaKadosh so that one can answer amen to his blessings and then beginning to recite the Amidah. The practice should follow the first view.

***What are the elements involved in this prayer experience? How would this feel to the participant? To the leader?***

### **Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 31a**

וקולה לא ישמע (שמואל א.א.יג) יכול ישמיע קולו בתפלתו כבר מפורש על ידי חנה שנאמר

Furthermore, I might have thought that one may make his voice heard in his *Amidah* prayer; it has already been articulated by Hannah in her prayer, as it is stated: “And Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved and her voice could not be heard”.

וחנה היא מדברת על (שמואל א.א.יג) אמר רב המנונא כמה הלכתא גברותא איכא למשמע מהני קראי דחנה לבה מכאן למתפלל צריך שיכוין לבו רק שפתייה נעות מכאן למתפלל שיחתוך בשפתיו וקולה לא ישמע מכאן שאסור להגביה קולו בתפלתו ויחשבה עלי לשכורה מכאן ששכור אסור להתפלל

Rav Hamnuna said: How many significant *halakhot* can be derived from these verses of the prayer of Hannah? As it says: “And Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved and her voice could not be heard, so Eli thought her to be drunk”.

The Gemara elaborates: From that which is stated here: “And Hannah spoke in her heart,” the *halakha* that one who prays must focus his heart on his prayer is derived. And from that which is stated here: “Only her lips moved,” the *halakha* that one who prays must enunciate the words with his lips, not only contemplate them in his heart, is derived. From that which is written here: “And her voice could not be heard,” the *halakha* that one is forbidden to raise his voice in his *Amidah*

prayer as it must be recited silently. From the continuation of the verse here: “So Eli thought her to be drunk,” the *halakha* that a drunk person is forbidden to pray. That is why he rebuked her.

***Do you agree that these are the ideal circumstances for prayer? Have you ever experienced prayer like this? What are now the two values in tension, one raised here, concerning the recitation of the Amidah?***

**Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, The Abbreviated Amidah, 2017**

Ideally, the congregants should recite these prayers in a whisper, conforming to the general norm that the Amidah be silent. However, in practice, most recite the beginning of the *boikhe Kedushah* in a chant, which does have the merit of bringing the community together and permitting some communal singing. Stopping the chant and forcing people to whisper might be counterproductive and futile, and “better error than willful transgression.”

***Is it important to perform a “mitzvah” exactly to the letter of the law? What kind of experience of prayer would you have if you performed the Amidah exactly in this way? Would you feel that it would compromise your experience of joining your voice with community in any way?***

**Question: What is the best method for reciting the abbreviated service known as the “hoikhe Kedushah”?**

**The Abbreviated Amidah, by Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky**

The practice of abbreviating the full repetition, or shortening private prayer, has deep Halakhic roots...Classically it was employed primarily for *minḥab*, and rarely at other services. In recent years, the *hoikhe Kedushah* has become pervasive in many Conservative synagogues, schools and camps, routinely used on weekdays and Shabbat alike, for *shaharit* and *musaf* as well as *minḥab*. The optimal practice is for each worshipper to recite a silent Amidah followed by a reader's repetition, as all codes agree. I will argue that - while these four styles are all acceptable - of the two widely practiced methods for the abbreviated Amidah, one surpasses the others in Halakhic elegance, textual support and ease of use.

**Method Number 4: Is this the one?**

**Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, Mishnah Berurah, Bi'ur Halakha 124**

ובלא שעת הדחק הסכימו הרבה מהאחרונים שלא לעשות כן כי עיקר התקנה היתה מדינא להתפלל מתחלה בלחש ואח"כ בקול רם :

When the hour is not too late, many of the later sages agree that the ideal version of the Amidah, is to begin silently and then to repeat aloud.

ץ האל הקדוש"כ לא יתחילו הצבור רק לאחר שאמר הש"ואם אין השעה דחוקה כ (ח)  
ץ מלה במלה"דהיינו גם נוסח הברכה לדור ודור עד האל הקדוש יאמר עם הש

And if the hour is late, the community begins their own silent prayer only after the leader recites the blessing, “Ha’El HaKadosh”. The Kedushah is recited responsively.

**Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, R. Herschel Schachter, Nefesh HaRav, p. 126:**

ץ והיא נחשבת כתפילת ציבור והיא מצטרפת לכל המנין וחשיב כאילו כולם ביחד "בשלמא כשיש חזרת הש  
הרי נמצא שאמרו קדושה, דוגמת ציבור המגישים קרבן ציבור אחד בעד כולם, ה"הגישו תפילה אחת לקב  
בכדי שתהיה הקדושה, "א הויכע קדושה"אך בשעת הדחק שאומרים רק. שלהם "תפילת הצבור"באמצע  
בעינן בדוקא שיתחילו כולם, באמצע השמונה עשרה שלהם  
ץ"להתפלל מלה במלה עם הש.וכן נהג רבנו .

When the community is truly praying together, and each person is joining into the minyan, as if everyone is offering up one single prayer to the Holy One, as if the entire community is offering one collective sacrifice, then in this case, the Kedushah is said in the middle of the repetition, because it is truly a communal prayer. If the hour is late and they say just to do a “*Hoikhe Kedushah*”, in order to say the Kedushah in the middle, everyone should begin together, singing each word for word with the Shaliach Tzibur.

***How is this different from Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan's suggestion? What specific elements are different?***

**Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, The Abbreviated Amidah**

When the *Shatz* begins alone, why is she praying aloud? She is not repeating the *Amidah* to conform to the Sage's decree. She is not helping other worshippers discharge their obligations to pray: for one thing, she will not complete the *Amidah* aloud; moreover, the worshippers will begin their own silent prayers three minutes later anyways, signaling that they do not rely on her prayer.

***What is Rabbi Kalmanofsky's challenge with this particular version of the hoikhe Kedushah? What is the purpose of leading another person in prayer? What are the challenges?***

### **Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, The Abbreviated Amidah**

There is one common scenario in which *Masorti* worshippers might legitimately prefer the Ashkenazic method. Some *Masorti* communities permit the *Shatz* to decide whether to include the names of the matriarchs in the first paragraph of the *Amidah*. When worshippers wish to recite "God of Sarah, etc." and the communal leader does not include them, these *davveners* might well prefer to recite the entire *Amidah* from the outset, after the leader concludes *Ha'El HaKadosh*. Worshippers who are personally committed to reciting the matriachs, and who find themselves in minyanim where they are uncertain what the leader will do, may legitimately follow the Ashkenazi style and commence their *Amidah* after the reader leads *Kedushah*.

***Have you ever been in a community with a divergent practice to your own? How did that experience compare to a time when your practice matched those around you? What did the leadership do (if anything) to help you feel more or less comfortable?***