

THE ABBREVIATED AMIDAH

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

Answer:

Masorti communities have become increasingly accustomed to the shortened form of worship services known by the Yiddish term הויכע קדושה, that is, “*Hoikhe*” (or “loud”) *Kedushah*.¹ In this practice, the congregation does not recite a silent *Amidah* followed by a complete repetition, the usual norm [SA OH 124.1]. Instead – due to the lateness of the hour or other exigent circumstance – the leader begins the *Amidah* aloud through the *Kedushah*, after which congregation members recite their own private prayers.

The practice of abbreviating the full repetition, or shortening private prayer, has deep Halakhic roots, dating to Geonic times, and is cited by most major Medieval sages.² Classically, it was employed primarily for *minḥah*, 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 *minḥah*. The optimal [לכתהילה] practice is for each worshipper to recite a silent *Amidah* followed by a reader’s repetition, as all codes agree. There are good arguments against the pervasive use of the *hoikhe Kedushah*,³ although this paper examines not *whether* to employ this procedure, but *which* variation of the abbreviated *Amidah* is best.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. The individual rabbi, however, is the authority for the interpretation and application of all matters of halakhah.

¹ In Yiddish הויך means “high,” “tall” or “loud.” Alexander Harkavy, *Yiddish-English Dictionary* [1891], p. 299, translates הויכע קדושה as “the Sanctification hymn read aloud.” One also hears the term pronounced *haykhe Kedushah*, with a long A vowel instead of the rounded O or Oi, reflecting Lithuanian Yiddish pronunciation. There is no basis for the misconception that it means “half-Kedushah,” as if parallel to the Hebrew חצי-קדיש.

² See for instance the report in the name of R. Hai, by *Shibbolei HaLeket* 47 and then in *Beit Yosef* OH 232 about a partial repetition of the *Amidah*. See also *Tosafot* to *b. Berakhot* 21b s.v. *v’ain*, an important source about reciting the leader’s and the private prayers simultaneously.

³ Ideally this method should be for exigent circumstances, not as a daily practice. Admittedly, this was not always the case, as attested by daily *minḥah* practice of Sefardim as reported by *Beit Yosef* [OH 124] – a style

In a 1992 responsum for the Israeli Law Committee – as usual, with great erudition and succinct presentation – R. David Golinkin surveyed seven different methods employed over the centuries for a shortened service.⁴ R. Golinkin concluded that four of these could still be used in contemporary synagogues, but declined to judge which among these was best. Though I hesitate to “insert myself among lions,” 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.

Among the four that R. Golinkin approved, one is a distinct outlier, both in theory and in frequency of usage. As is well known, Maimonides abolished the silent *Amidah* in Egypt, leaving only the reader’s recitation [*Responsa* ed. Blau 256; *MT, Tefillah* 8.9], during which competent worshippers could say the prayers themselves, and those who did not know the prayers could listen and respond *amen*. Although this practice endured 350 years in Egypt, until Radbaz overturned it [*Responsa* 4.1079], and although R. 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.⁵

Another outlier is reported by R. Yosef Karo [*Beit Yosef OH* 234 *s.v. u’mitpal’lim*], in which the leader begins the *Amidah* aloud, with congregants reciting in synch, then falls silent for the interior petitionary prayers, then resumes the loud recitation for the final three

which he himself criticizes, and reports that other Safed sages rejected as well [*Beit Yosef OH* 232]. See also the criticisms of R. Yaakov Chaim Sofer, *Kaf HaHayim OH* 124 nn 9-10. The *hoikhe Kedushah* was also typical custom in Lithuanian yeshivot in Europe and their descendants in Israel and America, which abbreviate the service so they do not to lose even an extra five minutes of study. Precedent notwithstanding, regular use of this method communicates that prayer is a burden to be dispensed with as quickly as possible. Moreover, ideally prayer should be said silently, whispered to God, while praying aloud is considered faithless [*b. Berakhot* 24b]. Leading authorities agree that “the essential prayer is the silent one” [*Mishnah Berurah* 232 n.2 and *Arokh HaShulhan OH* 124.5]. Also, the main reason for abbreviating the prayer is that the designated time-period is ending. Yet this is virtually never applicable to *Musaf*, which may be said all day, and not that often to *Minhah* or *Shaharit*. Finally, when this method is used pervasively, worshippers never grow accustomed to hearing two-thirds of the Amidah, neither on weekdays nor on Shabbat. Invariably, these passages are less “fluid in the mouths” of even daily worshippers. They almost never hear the Priestly Blessing. They almost never respond *amen* to the important blessing *shomea Tefillah* or bow with congregation at *modim* [*SA OH* 109.1-2]. They rarely sing the Shabbat prayer melodies. In general, routine use of the *hoikhe Kedushah* disrupts the optimal balance of public and private experience in prayer.

⁴ תשובה בעניין חזרת הש"ץ. <http://www.responsafortoday.com/vol5/6.pdf>, with an English summary at http://www.responsafortoday.com/engsums/5_2.htm.

⁵ Conversely, some have suggested, at least occasionally, having *only* a silent *Amidah* with no leader’s recitation. This would run counter to the idea that the Sages instituted a leaders’ prayer to discharge the obligation of those unable to recite their own prayers. As Maimonides holds [cited in *Beit Yosef OH* 124 *s.v. v’katav*] there should always be a reader’s prayer to uphold the Sages’ decree [לקיים תקנת חכמים] even when all the worshippers are competent to pray themselves and there is no formal agency. Other commentators [e.g. *Arokh HaShulhan OH* 124.3] add that the reader’s prayer has other advantages: the recitation of the long *Kedushah* and the Priestly Blessing. 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.

blessings. *Beit Yosef* reports that this is widely practiced among Sefaradim, but he disapproves of this style, as does Radbaz. This practice is unlikely to serve most communities' needs, as it demands that individual worshippers keep pace with the *Shatz* 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.⁶

Two of the methods are widely practiced, one which R. Golinkin describes as the Sefardic style (the fourth in his list) and one the Ashkenazic style (the seventh). I will use those terms here for easy reference, but they are only generally descriptive. Plenty of Ashkenazi authorities adopted the Sefardic theory, if sometimes applying it differently in practice.⁷ The key differentiation between the two methods is that in the Sefardic style, the community begins together, with the congregation reciting the first paragraphs of the *Amidah* aloud, singing or reciting word-by-word along with the leader; in the Ashkenazic style the leader recites the first two paragraphs alone, while the congregation responds to *Kedushah* and then starts its own prayers from the beginning.

A succinct contemporary presentation of the Sefardic option comes from 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.⁸

⁶ I note that this is the preferred option of our colleagues R. Barukh Frydman-Kohl and R. Ed Feld.

⁷ Even R. Moshe Isserles [*OH* 124.2] prefers the "Sefardic" method when the hour is short [*OH* 124.2, and *Darkei Moshe*, *OH* 124, where he attributes this to R. Yaakov Moellin, or "Maharil," the leading Rhineland authority, *Tefillah* n. 5]. R. Eliyahu Shapira of Prague [*Elya Rabba*, n4] and the Galician R. Yosef Teomim [*Peri Megadim*, *Eshel Avraham* 124] also favor the congregation beginning along with the leader word-by-word, but direct individual worshippers to continue aloud past the *Kedushah* through to *shomea Tefillah*. R. Israel Meir Kagan, *Mishnah Berurah*, *Bi'ur Halakha* 124 s.v. *be'lahash* suggests that this is the implied (if not explicit) position of GR'A of Vilna as well.

⁸ כשהזמן מצומצם והשליח צבור אומר תפלה אחת בלבד בקול רם, עד ברוך אתה ה' האל הקדוש, נכון שכל הקהל יתפללו תפלת העמידה מלה במלה עם השליח צבור, וכשיגיע לקדושה יאמרו עמו כל הקדושה, נקדישך ונעריצך וכו', ביחד. ואחר כך ימשיכו התפלה בלחש... וזה יותר נכון ממה שיש נוהגים להמתין מלהתפלל, עד לאחר שמסיים השליח צבור ברכת האל הקדוש, כדי לענות אמן אחר ברכותיו, ואחר כך מתחילים להתפלל שמונה עשרה. וכן המנהג כסברא ראשונה

As R. Yosef relates in the notes, this position is based upon Maimonides, *MT Tefillah* 10.16 and *Beit Yosef OH* 124, in which he reports that “nowadays in most places the custom *ab initio* is for the prayer leader to pray *minhah* aloud,” with each congregant reciting each word in synch with the leader. Ideally, the congregants should recite these prayers in a whisper,⁹ conforming to the general norm that the *Amidah* be silent [e.g. *b. Berakhot* 31a, et al]. However, in practice, most recite the beginning of the *hoikhe 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.”

The common Ashkenazi practice is that the leader begins the *Amidah* alone, reciting the first two blessings aloud, then reciting *Kedushah* responsively, as in a reader’s repetition. After concluding *Ha’El HaKadosh*, the leader continues silently and individual worshippers commence their own *Amidah* from the beginning. This method is described by major Ashkenazi *posekim*, including R. Israel Meir Kagan, [*Mishnah Berurah*, *Bi’ur Halakha* 124 s.v. *be’lahash*] and R. Yehiel Michael Epstein [*Arokh HaShulhan OH* 109.12].¹⁰

This latter method seems most common custom among *Masorti* communities, and, at least in America, in more Orthodox settings, such as the quick minyanim one finds in offices and at weddings. This practice has well-attested pedigree and validation by many authoritative sources, from *Mishnah Berurah* to R. Golinkin. It also has the advantage of permitting worshippers to recite an entirely silent *Amidah*. Those who follow this custom can feel confident that they are behaving with Halakhic sanction.

However, the Sefardic practice surpasses this version for several reasons, practical, theoretical and aesthetic. *Masorti* communities, schools and camps should prefer it.

First, reciting the *Amidah* together is the ideal expression and even the very definition of public prayer, or *tefillah be’tzibbur*.¹¹ This ideal is fulfilled in the Sefardic version, when the leader and the community begin the *Amidah* as one. The communal character of prayer is slightly but notably diminished in the Ashkenazi style when the *Shatz* is the only one davening.

⁹ This is Rambam’s position [*Tefillah* 10.16]: ויתפלל עמו בלחש מלה במלה עד שיגיע שליח ציבור לקדושה הציבורי, as well as that of R. Isserles [*OH* 124.2].

¹⁰ An early explicit articulation of this practice comes from the 17th century by R. Yom Tov Lippman Heller *Divrei Hamudot* on Rosh, *Berakhot* 4.3, n.15. I would speculate that the practice of the congregation waiting until after *Ha’El HaKadosh* is actually a misplaced import from a slightly different situation. *SA OH* 109.2 describes the case of a synagogue latecomer who arrives at the repetition of the *Amidah*. One can pray word-by-word along with the leader, according to R. Karo. R. Isserles prefers the latecomer respond to *Kedushah* with the community and then commence his own prayer after *Ha’El HaKadosh*.

¹¹ As R. Israel Meir HaKohen writes in the *Mishnah Berurah* [90 n.28]: “The essence of public prayer is the ‘Eighteen Blessings’ [the *Amidah*], that is, that 10 adults should pray together.” He writes further [66 n.35]: “Ideally, the community and prayer leader should begin the ‘Eighteen Blessings’ in unison.”

ס' צ' ס"ק כח: ועיקר תפלה בצבור הוא תפלת י"ח דהיינו שיתפללו עשרה אנשים שהם גדולים ביחד.
ס' סו ס"ק לה: גם לכתחלה ראוי להתחיל תפלת י"ח עם הש"ץ והקהל בשוה.

Moreover, when the community does not begin in unison, it raises a conceptual question about the leader's own prayer. When the *Shatz* begins alone, why is she praying aloud? She is not repeating the *Amidah*, to conform to the Sages' 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 anyway, signaling that they do not rely on her prayer.

The soundest explanation for the Ashkenazic custom is that the leader's *Amidah* is a private prayer said aloud, not a true *tefillah be'tzibbur* which the community recites together. This custom developed, it seems, to permit the congregation the merit of reciting the full call-and-response *Kedushah*. But if the leader's prayer is really her own personal *Amidah*, why should it include the responsive *Kedushah*, which does not belong in a private prayer? Yet another Ashkenazi who favored the Sefardic custom, none other than R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, makes exactly this point.¹² Only when all worshippers recite the first blessings of the *Amidah* together with the leader can it be considered a public prayer that warrants including the full *Kedushah*.

Surely those authoritative Ashkenazic sages who favored this method recognized this incongruous *Kedushah* format and permitted it nonetheless. But it is more elegant and conceptually cleaner to include the reader's *Kedushah* in the loud recitation of an *Amidah* that is fully public prayer, when all worshippers recite the *Amidah* as one.

Additional practical factors make the Sefardic style preferable. As R. Golinkin notes, the Ashkenazi method is inappropriate for *Shaharit*, when there is supposed to be no interruption between the blessing *Ga'al Israel* and the beginning of the *Amidah* [OH 111.1]. Private worshippers who recite the *geulah* blessing cannot then wait for the *Shatz* to pray two blessings aloud and then respond to *Kedushah*, before reciting their own *Amidah*. In this context, only the Sefardic method of beginning the *Amidah* all together is sensible. But what educational or aesthetic sense is there to instructing congregants to use one method of *hoikhe Kedushah* at morning prayers and a different one for *Musaf* or *Minhah*? That is needlessly confusing. Clearer would be to keep it simple and always begin the *Amidah* together.

Also, I have observed a shortcoming of the Ashkenazi method: people find it burdensome to return to the beginning of the *Amidah* after *Kedushah*, and simply continue with the succeeding blessings. Yet in many cases they have treated the first three blessings like they sound: as a reader's prayer, not their own. They may sing along to *mekhalkel hayim* but do not take care to say every word and conclude each blessing, as one should in the *Amidah*.

¹² R. Herschel Schachter, *Nefesh HaRav*, p. 126: בשלמא כשיש חזרת הש"ץ והיא נחשבת כתפילת ציבור והיא מצטרפת לכל המנין וחיוב כאלו כולם ביחד הגישו תפילה אחת לקב"ה, דוגמת ציבור המגישים קרבן ציבור אחד בעד כולם, הרי נמצא שאמרו קדושה באמצע תפילת הציבור שלהם. אך בשעת הדחק שאומרים רק "א הויכע קדושה", בכדי שתהיה הקדושה באמצע השמונה עשרה שלהם, בעינין בדוקא שיתחילו כולם להתפלל מלה במלה עם הש"ץ. And R. Schachter adds: וכן נהג רבנו.

Often one hears even a singing congregation fall silent as the *Shatz* recites the concluding blessings, as indeed is logical given the musical clues of a reader's prayer.¹³ The better strategy would be to instruct all worshippers to say each word with the prayer leader each time.

On the other hand, 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 matriarchs, 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*.

Finally, a related addendum:

Reciting the *hoikhe Kedushah* in the Sefardic method affects how worshippers would participate in reciting the public *Kedushah*.

In the Ashkenazi method, since one begins a complete new silent *Amidah* after the leader's prayer aloud, the individual worshipper should recite only the texts belonging to the personal prayer. That is, in the third blessing, one says only *Atah Kadosh*, without the verses from Isaiah, Ezekiel and Psalms.

However, when reciting in the Sefardic style, joining one's personal prayer to the leader's loud recitation, the private worshippers should say the opening lines – which serve as a kind of call to worship – *nekadesh* or *na'aritzekha* – in unison along with the prayer leader. Although congregations commonly say the *nekadesh* phrase, which the leader then repeats, this is not correct, strictly speaking, even for a full repetition.¹⁴ A single time through that sentence, together, is more appropriate. The central phrases in the *Kedushah* [*Kadosh-Kadosh, Barukh K'vod* and *Yimlokh* and *Shema* in *Musaf*] may be recited by worshippers and *hazzan* in unison or, as is familiar, with congregants going first and the *hazzan* responding

¹³ Alternatively, one might argue that this is not a problem, and we might consider that the leader discharges the congregation's prayer obligations, for "one who hears is like one who answers." But this explanation would face three objections. First, in our day, worshippers holding translated prayer books should all probably be considered competent to pray on their own, and it is doubtful that their obligations can be met by the prayer leader at all. Second, even if the *Shatz* can exempt them, the worshippers would have to be silent and listen to every word, not sing along [Maimonides, *Tefillah* 8.9, 10.16]. This does not happen in practice. Third, even if this were done, it would be dubious whether worshippers can rely on a hybrid, where part of the *Amidah* is discharged by the leader and part said by individuals. It should be one method or the other.

¹⁴ In fact, many authorities think *only* the *hazzan* should say those opening lines, not the congregants at all [SA *OH* 125.1]. However, this is a case where popular practice deviates from the rule on the books [MB 125, n. 2].

antiphonally. The various connecting phrases that narrate the *Kedushah* – *az b'kol*, *mimkomekha*, etc. – should be said once, by congregants and *hazzan* together. At the end of the *Kedushah*, congregants should conclude with *le'dor va'dor*, as the leader does in public prayer, not *Atah Kadosh* as they would in private prayer.¹⁵

¹⁵ As ruled by most *posekim*. Even Ashkenazim who adopt the other method say that in cases when using the Sefardic method [e.g. the synagogue latecomer or at *shaharit*] one should say *le'dor va'dor* with the leader. See *Bach* [citing Maharshal], OH 124; *Mishnah Berurah* 124 n.9; *Arokh HaShulhan* 109.11, etc. It should be noted that some authorities think individuals saying a *hoikhe Kedushah* should say *Atah Kadosh*, given that they are reciting their own individual *Amidah*, not serving as *Shatz*. *Tefillah Ke'hilkhatah* [R. Yitzhak Yaakov Fuchs, Jerusalem, 1989], p. 262 and n. 24 there reports this view in the name of R. David Jungreis [d. 1971], who had been *Av Beit Din* of the Jerusalem *Edah Haredit*.

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*.