



Friday Night Services



A Guide to
Congregation Shearith Israel's
Unique Customs



Introduction

Welcome to Congregation Shearith Israel. Here you will find a unique blend of a community of Jews from many backgrounds, engaged in all aspects of 21st century Jewish life while honoring and celebrating this synagogue's esteemed history and traditions.

Many of our most cherished traditions and customs can be experienced during our Friday Night Service. These rites continue to be upheld in Shearith Israel, not merely for the sake of our pride and respect for the continuity of the tradition; in fact, the beauty, the reverence, and the dignity inherent in these rituals continue to attract a surprising diversity of congregants from the broader Jewish community.

Generations ago, it was assumed that there was little need to explain much of what we do here. We did not announce pages, for it was assumed that all worshippers would, even if by glancing at their neighbors, be on exactly the "same page." Now, as we glance around at our flourishing congregation, we decided to present this guide in the spirit of welcoming and encouraging the participation of all who come, of all backgrounds. We understand that the variances in our rituals and rites may be new and perhaps daunting to many newcomers; after all, when going to a religious service, we want to properly fulfill our religious obligations during the service, and it's true that there is often comfort in the familiar. Yet, there is also the possibility of exhilaration, and a spiritual re-awakening that can occur when experiencing Jewish traditions, and the underlying history, in a new light. This has been true for many of us who once were "newcomers," like you, to our Friday Night Service, and kept coming back, to ultimately feel at home here.

This guide is intended to help make our Friday Night Service more accessible and less intimidating for the newcomer. Our hope is that when the discomfort of not knowing what to expect is removed, you will be free to enjoy, participate, and be uplifted by what surrounds you.

And please, do participate. If you're not sure where we are, feel free to glance at your neighbor's prayer book (it's not rude or cheating), or ask him or her to show you the place.

Shabbat Shalom!



A note about “תפילה בלחש”

What is meant by “prayer in an undertone”?

The Hebrew term “תפילה בלחש,” so-called “silent prayer,” is more literally translated “whispered prayer” or “prayer in an undertone.” The Hebrew term for “reading” itself means to “cry out” or declaim, and thus even in prayer’s “worship of the heart,” traditional Jewish “reading” contrasts markedly with the silent meditation of the Western church, school, or library. The Biblical example of the prayer of Hannah was used to teach that “only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” Thus, on the one hand, while it is deemed prideful and unseemly to “raise one’s voice” when the congregation is not doing so; on the other hand, feelings of “thankfulness” and “admiration” require articulation in order to become actual thanks and praises. The *Hazzan*’s role alternates between “public representative” (שליח ציבור), speaking in the name of the public, and congregational chorus leader, but in most cases it is assumed that the congregation follows along, at least mouthing the words, with true silence only occasionally.

There remains debate on these points, with some views (especially those of some mystics) insisting that prayer should be truly silent (although it is said in this instance that R. Isaac Luria raised his voice somewhat more on Shabbat than he did on weekdays). And in most cases, of course, for those who cannot follow along, in Hebrew or English, with the *Hazzan*, it can be assumed that the *Hazzan* has full intent to fulfil their obligation in prayer for them, whether or not they answer “Amen.” Answering “Amen” does make this more explicit, but the uses of “Amen” are a complex subject of its own.

Traditionally, Sephardic communities were quite disciplined and decorous during prayer, and R. Joseph Caro seems to have assumed that any educated Sephardic Jew had the ability to recite his own prayer in an undertone while listening at the same time to the *Hazzan* and synchronize his own prayer perfectly, word by word, with the *Hazzan*. Ashkenazi synagogues, by contrast, were more cacophonous. The 19th-Century Reform critique, which began with appeals for the restoration of Sephardic-style decorum, eventually led to the glorification of “the meditation of the heart” and an emphasis on the “purer” sincerity of “silent devotion,” an influence which extended its vogue to many Orthodox congregations such as ours, as well.

Thus our De Sola Pool prayer book, in its English captions, habitually substitutes “silent devotion” or “recited silently” for the Hebrew “בלחש” which we shall render in this guide as “in an undertone.”



Minha

(Pages 108-128)

The sequence of the Minha service at Shearith Israel is as follows:

Unison Opening Psalm (page 108), Seated

The *Minha* service starts with Psalm 84. Psalm 84 speaks about how good it is to be in a Sanctuary, a Place where God is near, and begs that God hear our prayer.

Our tradition: In general, Sephardic prayer services open and close with a Biblical Psalm. The opening Psalm sets the tone for the service to follow. These opening Psalms are intended to be chanted in unison by the congregation along with the *Hazzan* at a measured pace.

Don’t be discouraged if, at first, you don’t recognize our recitation of Psalm 84. Because our chant has become rather idiosyncratic and doesn’t follow a Western regularity of meter, the newcomer may find it difficult at first to follow along—but this becomes easier with practice.

Korbanot Minha (Sacrifice Offering) (page 109), Seated

Psalm 84 is followed by verses from *BeMidbar* [Numbers] 28:1-8, the Torah’s enumeration of the daily “*Minha*” offerings.

- The musical mode switches to a major key, in which the service will, by and large, remain, until the end of the *Amidah*.
- The *Korbanot* are read out loud in full by the *Hazzan*, with the congregation expected to keep pace in an undertone, and congregants chime in out loud with the *Hazzan* at various phrase endings.
- On the Eve of Shabbat, the reading of the incense offering is deemed unnecessary and omitted, and we skip to p.112, Malachi 3:4 “May the *Minha* of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to the Lord.”¹

Ashrei (pages 112-113), Hazzan/Congregation responsively, Seated

All *Minha* traditions include “*Ashrei*,” (the two introductory verses of Psalm 145) and then the whole of Psalm 145, followed by “*Va’anahnu*.”



Sephardim add Psalm 141:2 (mid-page 113): ... תְּכַוֵּן תְּפִלָּתִי [“May my prayer be set forth before thee like incense before, the lifting up of my hands as the offering at eveningtide”].¹

All these sections are read largely aloud by the *Hazzan*, with the congregation expected to follow along in an undertone as well as to occasionally join in with responses for the latter part of many verses.

For newcomers who may be wondering how and when you should join in with responsive prayer: Learning how and when to join in often presents some degree of difficulty for beginners to our service. Gradually, you will find that you can pick up on the cues given by the *Hazzan's* vocal inflections. Don't be discouraged; please keep coming back and you'll get the hang of it very soon.

Our Siddur offers helpful guidance:

- Throughout the prayer book, you'll find that the de Sola Pool Siddur does indicate the most important responses by adding a double asterisk (**) by the Hebrew text. Look out for these asterisks **.
- You'll notice, too, that in the de Sola Pool Siddur, the texts are arranged on the page so that the more poetic verses are spaced apart, allowing the parallel structures to become apparent to the reader.

Short Kaddish (Kaddish Le'Ela) (page 113), Standing

In all traditions, a *Hazzan's* two-paragraph short *Kaddish* precedes every *Amidah*. Sephardim call this *Kaddish Le'Ela*. Ashkenazim call this 'Hatzi (literally, half or partial) *Kaddish*. Minor wording variations are detailed later in this Guide.

It is the practice at Shearith Israel to stand for the *Kaddish*, just as Ashkenazim generally do (and unlike most Sephardim who may wait for the *Amidah* to stand).

Abridged Aloud Amidah (No Repetition) (pages 114-115), Standing

Attention newcomers: This is a segment of our *Minha* service that can confuse many people who are accustomed to praying elsewhere. Please note:

- There is no silent *Amidah* recited prior to the *Hazzan's* repetition of the *Minha Amidah*.²
- It is all said aloud and together communally.



- If this is unfamiliar and you are uncertain, we recommend: Stick with the *Hazzan* from the starting blessings of *Amidah* through *Kedushah*, singing the *Nakdishakh* and the *Kedushah* responses aloud with the congregation. Then you can proceed at your own pace or continue to recite your personal *Amidah* prayer alongside the *Hazzan's* out-loud chanting. See details below.

The *Hazzan* immediately reads the first two blessings aloud, then leads into unison singing of “*Nakdishakh*,” the opening of the *Kedushah* (page 115). After the *Kedushah* responses and the concluding “*Atta Kadosh... HaEl HaKadosh*” (bottom of page 115), the middle 13 blessings of the *Minha Amidah* are read quietly.

- Note the minor variations in wording from the *Ashkenazi Kedushah*.
- In the middle of the last one of these blessings, the *Hazzan* begins to raise his voice, and he reads most of the final three *Shemoneh Esrei* blessings aloud.

Attention newcomers: Since in our tradition, these ending blessings are also read aloud, you should read the first three blessings word-by-word with the *Hazzan* (largely, according to current practice, without “*Barukh Hu uBarukh Shemo*” and “*Amen*,”). Sing the *Nakdishakh* and the *Kedushah* responses out loud with the congregation.

- Try to keep pace quietly so that you finish the final three blessings before or at the same time as the *Hazzan*.
- If you have finished the entire *Amidah* and its closing before the *Hazzan*, you may then respond “*Barukh Hu uBarukh Shemo*” and “*Amen*” and recite the “*Modim deRabbanan*” in the appropriate places, and the *Hazzan* may pause or lower his voice to allow for this.

The exact wording of many prayers of our Spanish & Portuguese rite will differ from the exact wording of many other rites, including other Sephardic rites, not to mention differences from the Hasidic so-called “*Nusach Sfarad*” as well as from the standard Ashkenazi rites. Most noticeable, perhaps, are the two seasonally-variant versions of the ninth blessing of the *Amidah* on the top of page 117 (“*Barekh Alenu/Barekhenu*”), with their elaborate petitions for precipitation and success of the crop.

- The *Hazzan* will pause at the end to allow himself and any others to conclude “*Elohai Netzor*” in an undertone (bottom of page 122).
- The service proceeds³ to the *Kaddish Titkabbal*, which also has slight wording or phrasing variations from that of other traditions.



Attention newcomers: At this point, as *Minha* concludes, you will notice an important variation (in the sequence of *tefilla*) between the Ashkenazi⁴ and our Sephardic rites.

Our Friday afternoon *Minha* service ends with the following sequence of prayers:

- ***Kaddish Titkabbal*** (page 125 bottom)
- **Psalm 93** as Closing Psalm (page 161)
 - It is the Sephardic custom to (open and) close every *Amidah* service with a psalm. On Friday evening, they recite this closing psalm after *Kaddish Titkabbal*.
 - The recitation of Psalm 93, the short Psalm of the Day for Friday, is associated with Psalm 92 “A Psalm, A Song for the Sabbath Day.”
- **Mourner’s *Kaddish*** (*Kaddish Shalem* or *Kaddish Yehe Shelama*) (page 127-128), with mourners standing
- ***Aleinu*** (page 128) ending the *Minha* service, Standing
 - Note that only the first paragraph of *Aleinu* is read (in accordance with the Spanish & Portuguese tradition).
 - On the Eve of the Sabbath, *Aleinu* is largely read in an undertone.

Our Recitation of Psalm 93 and *Aleinu*: Both Psalm 93 and *Aleinu* are chanted at Shearith Israel in a simple minor mode, with a mediant on the second note of the scale. (occasionally the very final cadence will be in major).

— *End of Minha* —



Kabbalat Shabbat

BACKGROUND TO OUR *KABBALAT SHABBAT* SERVICE

1. *Introducing The Shearith Israel Choir*

Up until now, the service has been conducted by the *Hazzan* and the congregation. For the Sabbath and Festivals, the *Hazzanim* (usually a second *Hazzan* reads the next section) and the congregation are joined for the more festive part of the service—which begins at this point—by a formal choir, singing a capella (without instrumental accompaniment).

The Shearith Israel Choir consists of six to eight Jewish male professional singers, plus their choirmaster or assistant. The Choir is hired at least weekly by the congregation for Evening and Morning services on Sabbaths and Major Festivals, and occasionally as needed for other occasions.

The Shearith Israel Choir has been in continuous existence since about 1880.

2. *The Repertoire of the Choir*

The repertoire of the choir is divided between the “traditional” repertoire, and its composed “Art Music,” mostly Romantic and post-Romantic.

- Its so-called “traditional” repertoire consists of old psalmody/plainchant, unison or harmonized folk-tunes, some graceful old melodies, and even some Italian classical-style music, as well as later elements similar to later popular music such as German lied. While the plainchant is unusual, none of the rest of repertoire sounds particularly Oriental or exotic, and the arrangements are thoroughly Western in sound.
- The composed pieces, whose composers we recognize, contain some Anglo-American sounds, and Romantic-like expressive pieces, some with an ultra-modern harmony or chord thrown in once in a while. They include a very few rearranged Baroque and early Classical pieces.

Does the congregation join in the singing along with the Choir? It depends....

- Yes: Many of the traditional pieces can be joined in by the congregation, with the caveat that the congregants must stay together with and follow the conductor, his steady tempos and idiosyncrasies. This can take some getting used to.



- No: In much, but not all, of the “art-music,” a single recognizable melody-line and tempo is hard to distinguish, so they are not really meant to be joined in; these pieces are choir performances meant to be listened to and contemplated.

3. About Kabbalat Shabbat: Prelude to Arbit

There is only a very short *Kabbalat Shabbat* prelude (to the Sabbath Eve *Arbit*) at Congregation Shearith Israel. *Kabbalat Shabbat* is always marked off as a separate entity from the rest of the service.

The notion of “*Kabbalat Shabbat*” is based upon a play upon several meanings of the word “*kabbalah*,” including one having to do with “accepting” Sabbath restrictions from this point onwards, and one having to do with “receiving” the Sabbath as if the personified presence of a Divine “aspect” were a visiting guest to be greeted.

Kabbalat Shabbat was only adopted generally as a late addition to the service from the 1500s on, under the influence of the Kabbalists of Safed, such as R. Joseph Caro, R. Shelomo HaLevi Alkabetz (the author of our *Lekha Dodi* hymn), his in-law, the systematizing Kabbalist R. Moshe Cordovero, and their successors, R. Isaac Luria (the AR”I) and R. Hayyim Vital.

They based themselves upon preceding practices which encouraged the accepting of Sabbath restrictions early, while still broad daylight, before the setting of the sun. Our practice is to follow the *Kabbalat Shabbat* practice which emerged earliest.⁵ Aside from the omission of Psalms 95-99, the elements of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* Service are basically the same here as elsewhere.

4. Our sequence of prayer for Kabbalat Shabbat is as follows:⁶

- We read Psalm 29, which mentions the words “*Kol Adonai*” seven times, corresponding to the seven days of the week and the seven blessings of the *Shabbat Amidah*,
- *BaMeh Madlikin*,
- *Lekha Dodi*,
- Ending Paragraph of *Talmud Berakhot* (*banayikh/bonayikh pun*),
- *Kaddish deRabbanan* for mourners,
- Psalms 92-93, and
- a short Reader’s *Kaddish/Kaddish Le’Ela* (*Hatzi Kaddish*) leading into *Barekhu*.



5. Overview of various orders and customs for Kabbalat Shabbat

Usual Ashkenazi order for Kabbalat Shabbat	Shearith Israel/Sephardic order for <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> /Start of <i>Arbit</i>	Hasidic ‘Nusach Sfar’d’ Siddur
Psalm 29	Psalm 29	Psalm 29
<i>Lekha Dodi</i>	<i>BaMeh Madlikin</i>	<i>Lekha Dodi</i>
Psalms 92-93	<i>Lekha Dodi</i>	Psalms 92-93
Regular Mourners’ <i>Kaddish</i> , (<i>Shalem/Yehe Shelama</i>)	Ending Paragraph of <i>Talmud Berakhot</i>	Regular Mourners’ <i>Kaddish</i> , (<i>Shalem/Yehe Shelama</i>)
<i>BaMeh Madlikin</i>	<i>Kaddish deRabbanan</i> for Mourners (after this is the dividing line between the <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service and the beginning of the Eve of Shabbat <i>Arbit</i> proper)	Usually, <i>Zohar</i> sections ‘ <i>KeGavna</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Raza DeShabbatta</i> ’ replace <i>BaMeh Madlikin</i> .
End of <i>Talmud Berakhot</i>	<i>Arbit</i> Opening Psalms: ps 92-93	Short Reader’s <i>Kaddish</i> (<i>Le’Ela or Hatzi</i>) leading into <i>Barekhu</i>
Mourner’s <i>Kaddish deRabbanan</i> (preceding the <i>Barekhu</i> of <i>Arbit</i> proper)	Short Reader’s <i>Kaddish</i> (<i>Le’Ela or Hatzi</i>) leading into <i>Barekhu</i>	
<i>Mourners in the Ashkenazi tradition thus get both a standard Mourner’s Kaddish as well as a Kaddish deRabbanan recited by Mourners during Kabbalat Shabbat.</i>	<i>By contrast, in our order, the mourners only get to recite the one Kaddish deRabbanan recited by the mourners, and this is the very last Mourner’s Kaddish of the evening.</i>	<i>Mourners in the Nusach Sfar’d tradition get a single standard Mourners’ Kaddish during Kabbalat Shabbat, although they did get others during Arbit.</i>



Attention newcomers: Newcomers—especially those reciting *Kaddish*—may find this truncated *Kabbalat Shabbat* Service perplexing in that it stands in contrast to the order of the same material in the standard Ashkenazi service to which many are accustomed.⁷

- The dividing line between the *Kabbalat Shabbat* Service and the beginning of the Eve of Shabbat *Arbit* Service would be after that *Kaddish deRabbanan*.
- For Sephardim, Psalms 92-93 are part of *Arbit*, serving as introductory Psalms.

THE *KABBALAT SHABBAT* SERVICE

Note: On special *Shabbatot*, *Kabbalat Shabbat* opens first with the congregation's Parnas/Presidente and the *Hazzan* ascending to the *Tibal* Reader's Desk to approve and announce special honorees, after which they both return to their seats.

Opening Psalm: Psalm 29 (Mizmor L'David), (page 155), Hazzan and Congregation, Seated

On most *Shabbatot*, *Kabbalat Shabbat* opens with the traditional harmonized, rhythmicized version of the psalmody/plainchant of Psalm 29, led by our Congregation Shearith Israel Men's Choir, starting on page 155.

- Although this version is harmonized when the choir joins in, the basic chant melodically follows the same musical outline as the earlier Psalm 84 which was chanted by the congregation to open *Minha*, and the slow $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm makes it easy for congregants to join in.
- Singers are kindly asked to follow the choir's key and tempo and to try to blend in without overpowering.

BaMeh Madlikin, (page 156), Chanted by Hazzan with Congregation in an undertone with occasional responses at the ends of phrases, Seated

Psalm 29 is followed in our liturgy by the *Hazzan's* chanting aloud, in its entirety, "*BaMeh Madlikin*," the second chapter of the *Mishnah* of Tractate Shabbat.⁸

- This is chanted in the traditional major-key Spanish-Portuguese "*lernen steiger*," the mode used by the community for studying and reciting Talmud, yet another form of plainchant.
- Spanish & Portuguese *Hazzanim* traditionally prided themselves on their economy and clarity of diction in this recitation, and the recitation allows for a moment of meditation and study.



Lekha Dodi, (page 157-158), Hazzan Standing & Congregation seated until last stanza, at which point the congregation also stands

At the end of *Bameh Madlikin*, the *Hazzan* rises from his seat and proceeds to stand at the Reader's Desk, cuing the choir to begin *Lekha Dodi*.⁹

Congregation Shearith Israel only uses two traditional tunes for *Lekha Dodi* (with the exception of the *Shabbatot* before *Tish'a b'Av* and *Shabbat Nahamu*).

- The best conjecture is that our two tunes seem to have come down to us, like much of the Spanish & Portuguese musical tradition, by way of Morocco and Italy, and the early sources of Jewish leadership in Amsterdam.
- All our versions of *Lekha Dodi* in both our tunes, however, quite unlike most others, notably omit any use of the first line as a refrain.

Tune #1 for Lekha Dodi (Usual), Likely Moroccan

This usual tune, restricted and unique in its use to the *Lekha Dodi* only, seems quite related to a Moroccan *Lekha Dodi*.

The use of the term "Oriental singsong" best describes its regular, yet somewhat elusive pattern of musical arabesques and curlicues.

- This particular "singsong" *Lekha Dodi* has versions and variations, some simpler and some more complex, which have since been notated and still can be heard in London as well as among transplanted Moroccans, for example, in Montreal.
- Owing to its excessive ornamentation and the misunderstanding by Western ears of its Oriental provenance, not to mention the need for the choir to take breaths, our version of the "Oriental singsong" sounds rather stilted and can be quite difficult for even seasoned congregants to follow, never mind newcomers!
- Aesthetically it would probably be better if it were shorn of its *hazzanic* accretions and restored to the basic London version. But since the old-timers know it well enough that they can even sing it by themselves in the summer, when the choir is off, it would thereby lose some of its acquired New York character, and who knows if the choir or the congregation would actually sing it any better!



*Tune #2 for Lekha Dodi (Festive), Borrowed Classical Melody,
Likely Italian*

Shearith Israel's second traditional *Lekha Dodi*, used only on special, more festive *Shabbatot*, is one of the Classical melodies. The melody has all the simplicity and grace characteristic of the era of "Classical" music.

- On any special *Shabbatot*, on *Rosh Hodesh*, as well as on some festivals, it is treated as one of the **לחנים**, or "tunes of the day," and adapted, alternated with others, and repeated in *Lekha Dodi*, in *Kaddish*, in *Adonai Melekh*, in *Hallel*, and in *En Keloheinu*.
- The tune's use is not restricted to *Lekha Dodi*; it was likely not originally intended for it, but was rather a tune borrowed from elsewhere.
- It is simple enough to sing easily, and it has a 16-bar 4/4, *maestoso* tone, with a harmonic structure that is just complex enough and so classical in its economy of movement that the congregation never tires of it.
- The harmonic structure gives it a kind of "This is a Song That Never Ends" character, since it starts on the dominant, not the tonic, and since the "final" cadence is on the dominant, not the tonic. This induces the ear of the Western listener to anticipate a return to the first eight bars to seek out a cadence on the tonic, wanting to repeat it over and over again; yet another reason why the congregation never tires of it!

Last Stanza of Lekha Dodi (Bo'i BeShalom): (page 158), Standing

The congregation stands at *Bo'i BeShalom* (last stanza of *Lekha Dodi*) and remains standing through *Kaddish deRabbanan*.

Bo'i BeShalom and bowing:

Attention newcomers: With the last stanza of *Lekha Dodi*, newcomers to Shearith Israel, and even some older members, are accustomed to fully turn around to face and bow to the back doors of the synagogue, following the prevalent Jewish custom to greet the "Sabbath Queen or Bride," a personification of the Divine Presence, "welcoming" the Sabbath. You may find yourself perplexed at the lack of full conformity to that practice here.¹⁰

At the beginning of the last stanza of *Lekha Dodi*, the congregation also stands, and the congregants subtly may bow slightly to the right and left, without fully turning around to the back. Those at the *Teba*, and others who face front, bow to the two front doors and the *Hekhal*.



It is around this point and the following, through Psalms 92-93, that the Sabbath restrictions are usually accepted fully by the men of the congregation.

**Reading of the End Paragraph of Talmud Berakhot (page 159)
(Banayikh/Bonayikh pun)**

While the congregation continues to stand, a short Rabbinic passage (with appended Psalm verses) is recited by the *Hazzan*, with congregational responses.

- This passage is commonly used in the liturgy. It interprets Isaiah 54:13, saying that scholars cause the welfare (**שלום**) of the world to increase, bidding us substitute the vocalization "great is the welfare of your builders [*bonayikh*]" for great is the welfare of your children [*banayikh*]."
- It is Divine Law, as revealed in the human realm through the Torah, which gives structure and form to the World, giving solidity to its edifice. Of course, the primary obligation is to teach one's children Torah, but here there is an emphasis upon scholars of all ages, who, despite the fact that they often have to curtail their involvement in worldly affairs, contribute to the "building" of the world in a more profound and fundamental way.

Kaddish deRabbanan follows, almost always recited by mourners and *Nahala* (*Yahrzeit*) observers only, with the rest of the congregation completely silent, joining only in responses.

- The congregation remains standing throughout.
- This is usually the last Mourners' *Kaddish* recited this evening, since our custom is that the interdiction of public mourning on Sabbaths and holidays encompasses the recitation of Mourners' *Kaddish* (this one recitation is an exception since *Kabbalat Shabbat* is a late addition to the service proper).

Note to newcomers, mourners and observers of a Nahala (anniversary of a death, a yahrzeit): If you are reciting the *Kaddish deRabbanan*, you should pay special attention to the wording of many sections of our *Kaddish*, which may be very different from Ashkenazi and other versions.

- Note especially the paragraph "*Al Yisrael ve'al Rabbanan*," which is shorter than the Ashkenazi, and
- The paragraph "*Yehe Shelama Rabba*," is much longer than the Ashkenazi, and is customarily accompanied by Sephardic congregational exclamations such as **היים ושבע ורווח והצללה**, with which you may be unfamiliar.



- Make a particular effort to read at a slow, steady pace, in consonance and in unison, listening for the pace of the other mourners as well as the congregation's *shammash*, who may very well be situated at the opposite ends of the large sanctuary.
- Mourners should moderate their voices enough to be able to hear others, but should maintain a reasonable degree of loudness and projection of their voices so that others can hear them. They are, after all, acting at that point as prayer leaders for the rest of the congregation.
- Try your best, but there are no scorecards and we understand that this can be daunting at first.

— End of Kabbalat Shabbat —



ARBIT FOR THE EVE OF SHABBAT

The sequence of the Arbit service is as follows:

Psalms 92-93 (pages 160-161), Opening Psalmody for Arbit, chanted by the Choir and Congregation, Seated

At the end of the previous *Kaddish deRabbanan*, the *Hazzan* cues the choir with the key in which he answers the final “Amen,” upon which the congregation sits. The choir chants in unison Psalm 92, the “Psalm Song for the Sabbath Day”, augmented by its sequel, Psalm 93. The two psalms are sung as a single continuous unit, without pause.

Short Reader’s Kaddish (Kaddish Le`Ela or Hatzi Kaddish) and Barekhu (page 162), Standing

(Hazzan solo while the congregation is completely silent except for its responses)

- The congregation stands as the *Hazzan* recites the short (two-paragraph) *Kaddish*¹¹ for the Reader before *Barekhu*.
- This recitation of *Kaddish Le`Ela* is the common practice before *Barekhu* at all Sephardic *Arbit* services.
- On the Eve of Shabbat, for musical purposes, the *Hazzan* repeats three or more of the last words of Psalm 93 as a lead-in to the chant for the recitation of the short *Kaddish*.

Ashkenazi visitors should note that, as in the Hasidic (*Nusah Sfard*) prayer book, every *Kaddish* of every Sephardic type adds the four words referring to the Messiah after “*malkhuteh*” before the second congregational answering of “Amen” in the *Kaddish*, thus מלכותיה ויצמח פורקניה ויקרב משיחיה.

Between the two paragraphs, the congregation and choir join in, in the same basic chant, the famous Aramaic response “*Yebe Shemeh Rabba.*”

As is apparent from our prayer book, the custom here among the Spanish & Portuguese is for the congregation to recite only the one word past what most Ashkenazim respond: אמן. יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלם, לעלמי עלמיא יתברך .



- Our custom is identical, in this respect, to the usual Ashkenazi Hasidic practice, with the *Hazzan* repeating the response of the congregation and continuing solo at וישתבח.
- We don't follow the typical Ashkenazi *Mitnagged* practice of ending the response a word earlier, nor do we follow the more "typical" Sephardic practice which the *Beit Yosef* seems to indicate, of having the entire congregation continue saying the next ten words, as well.
- For us, all other responses of the congregation in the *Kaddish* itself simply use the word "Amen." (Answering "ברוך הוא" is a telltale giveaway of the uninitiated Ashkenazi neophyte).

Barekhu

Since, according to Sephardic practice, the previous short *Kaddish* serves as a preface to *Barekhu*, it makes sense that our *Barekhu* continues in the same tunes as the short *Kaddish* (unlike most Ashkenazi practice). Both the *Kaddish* and *Barekhu* involve a solo leader calling forth a univocal, unison mass-response of the congregation as a unit,¹² officially calling the service to order and mustering the assembled quorum of attendees as a קהלה, a single corporeal entity.

Blessings Preceding Evening Shema (pages 162-163), Seated

The two paragraph-long blessings preceding the *Shema*, *Asher Bidbaro Ma'arib Arabim* and *Ahabat Olam* (on pages 162-163) are always led quietly by the *Hazzan* in a minor chant (with touches of the relative major), with the congregation expected to read along in an undertone. This continues until each paragraph's last three lines, where the *Hazzan* induces the choir and congregation to join in, cuing them to alternate singing with him the two phrases at the end of each paragraph around the word "לילה."

Shema (pages 163-165), Seated

After the first line of the *Shema* is chanted in a minor singsong, and its whispered response, the next three paragraphs, are chanted following the congregation's usual Sephardic Torah-reading *te'amim* (musical notes, cantillation) in their minor musical mode.

- Newcomers will quickly recognize that as long as good behavior, rewards, and blessings are mentioned, the *Hazzan* chants out loud; however, when the text mentions "take heed to yourselves lest your heart be seduced," and punishments and curses are mentioned, the *Hazzan* intentionally lowers his volume, so as not to give full voice to such imprecations.



- The *te'amim* are actually printed in the prayer book to facilitate the congregation's singing along, word by word, in an undertone with the *Hazzan*, at a relatively moderate pace, with the extremely precise diction required by *halakha*, most especially for the reading of the *Shema*.

First Post-Shema Blessing: Emet VeEmuna/Gaal Israel (pages 165-166), Seated

(*Hazzan* out loud with congregation in undertone and responding)

By the end of the last paragraph of *Shema*, the *Hazzan* has switched out of *te'amim* into what we might call the "Shabbat and Festival *Amidah* mode," which has motifs using the full range of the Western major scale.

- In the "*Emet VeEmuna*" paragraph, our De Sola Pool Daily and Shabbat Prayer Book makes extensive use of double asterisks to indicate congregational responses, which, in the more leisurely-paced Shabbat services, are intended to keep the *Hazzan's* and congregation's pace in perfect accord.
- The congregation's response is sung simply going down the scale in variants of "sol fa mi re do."
- At the "*Mi Khamokha*," the *Hazzan* and the responses transition to a minor mode, finally established at the *Gaal Yisrael* and *Hashkibenu*.

Second Post-Shema Blessing: Hashkibenu, (page 166), Seated

The minor tune used throughout the second evening post-*Shema* blessing, *Hashkibenu*, is our congregation's American variant of the simple traditional congregational melody used in London, which is easy to pick up and sing along.

- It is led by the choir in a harmonized arrangement, and the melody line is thus in a rather high range.
- Like the second of the *Lekha Dodi* tunes, the melodic/harmonic structure makes the tune a kind of "Song that Never Ends."
- The lulling, rest-inducing sound of the tune befits the more peaceful wording of this prayer on Shabbat, which beseeches our Father to grant that we lie down in peace and spread his shelter of peace over us.



VeShameru (page 166), bottom, Quote from the Torah Announcing Shabbat, Standing

- The first repetition of *VeShameru* is sung only by the choir (and it is omitted when the choir is off).
- The first repetition is expressive, Romantic art music,¹³ intended to make time stop and bring out all of the feeling of Shabbat rest in these two verses from Ex. 31:16-17.¹⁴
- The *Hazzan* then repeats the *VeShameru* in the more traditional Sephardic minor plainchant, with the congregation expected to recite along in an undertone, finally anticipating the *Hazzan's* last two words by joining in out loud.
- *VeShameru* serves as a brief announcement and bearing witness (hence the congregation stands) and perhaps as an extension of the blessings of redemption and protection.

Short Kaddish, Shabbat Eve Amidah, Kaddish Titkabbal, Standing

The Short Kaddish (Kaddish Le'El/Hatzi Kaddish) preceding the *Amidah* is read quickly by the *Hazzan* in the usual mode, which alternates between major and the relative minor.

Shabbat Eve Amidah, recited in an undertone or whisper

- Since the entire congregation is quiet at this point, care should be taken to recite the *Amidah* in the quietest or most muted undertone or whisper possible.
- The short *Arbit Amidah*, like the other *Amidot* of Shabbat, has three opening, three closing, and one central blessing, a total of seven blessings.
- The Shabbat Eve *Arbit Amidah* has no loud sections at all nor loud parts recited by the *Hazzan*.

Vaykballu, Birkat Me'En Sheba, recited by *Hazzan* with congregation mostly in undertone, occasionally joining in lengthy responsive singing

- Although there is no full repetition of the *Amidah*, there is a repetition of the paragraph *Vaykballu*, and an abbreviated *ברכה מעין שבע* ending with the complete concluding paragraph of the middle blessing, chanted in the traditional minor mode of plainchant.



Kaddish Titkabbal

- The *Kaddish Titkabbal* bookends it all (the earlier “bookend” having been the Short Readers’ *Kaddish*).
- The *Kaddish Titkabbal* is chanted quickly, only by the *Hazzan*, in the most usual major-with-minor-endings *Kaddish* chant, and the congregation is silent except for the responses.
- This officially closes the major part of the *Arbit* service, the *Shema* and *Amidah*; hence we ask that our prayer be accepted.

Closing Psalm, Psalm 23 (page 174), Seated

As previously stated, all Sephardic statutory services are introduced by an opening Psalm and are closed with a Closing Psalm, thus grounding the liturgy in the Bible.

- Usually the closing Psalm is shorter than the Opening Psalm and its accretions.
- The Psalms are chosen appropriately according to the occasion.
- The psalm used here by Sephardim is the famous 23rd Psalm, considered appropriate to the Day of Rest.
- On most *Shabbatot*, the entire 23rd Psalm is sung in Hebrew by the choir, usually in two alternate musical settings, both composed specifically for this congregation.
- When the choir sings, congregants can read along, if they like, but it should be done very quietly.
- However, in the summer, when the choir is off, the entire Psalm is chanted in unison according to the traditional Psalmody.

23rd Psalm Setting, composed by Rev. Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, Seated

This was composed by the congregation’s able and versatile *Hazzan* and Minister Rev. Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes. This composition, for which he is best known, is his very peaceful and pastoral-sounding setting of the Hebrew words of the 23rd Psalm: “A Psalm of David, the Lord is my shepherd...”

- The music has a very Civil War-era American feel, in a major key with echoes of “barbershop”-style harmony and American liturgical music, including perhaps American spirituals.
- With its slow tempo, by the psalm’s end, mundane weekday concerns are let go of, and the onset of “Sabbath Peace” (“*Shabbat Shalom*”), calm,



tranquility, and repose is quite palpable in our Sanctuary. (We just have to warn you, if you've had a tiring week, this is a danger zone for entering a soft slumber!)

Alternate 23rd Psalm Setting, composed by Leon M. Kramer, Seated

The alternate setting of the 23rd Psalm is by the congregation's veteran choir director (and famous American-Jewish musician), Leon M. Kramer (1866-1943). It has a bit more passion, more Romantic "Sturm und Drang," betraying Kramer's German origin and his study of music at the Royal Academy of Arts in Berlin, where he briefly served as an assistant to Louis Lewandowski, one of the premier composers of Ashkenazi synagogue music, who was also music director at the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue.

Kaddish Shalem (Yehe Shelama) (page 175), for Choir, Congregation, and Hazzan, but Not for Mourners, Standing

The so-called "Kaddish Shalem" ('*Yehe Shelama*') after the 23rd Psalm is not said by mourners, as one might normally expect. Rather, it is traditionally sung the whole way through by the choir, and by the congregation joining in with the choir (and even just by the congregation alone to the same tunes when the choir is off in the summer).¹⁵

The tunes we use:

- The usual tune is a variation of a kind of very basic and extremely short singsong.
- The other tune is used on special festive occasions, a variant of what seems to be referred to as the simple "Pardo" tune, which sounds like a basic "jig."
- During the High Holidays, yet a third tune is used.

It's interesting that the musical functions of the *Hazzan* and choir are here reversed, with the *Hazzan* singing short solo responses while the choir and congregation sing most of it in full voice, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, the brevity of these responses makes little textual sense, and often there is no responding "Amen." It's almost as if it is assumed that by joining in a chorus in unison, one is relieved of the obligation to respond, as if the halakhic principle *שומע כעונה* (hearing counts as if it were assenting out loud) is assumed to work in the converse, or reverse, as if *עונה כשומע* (assenting out loud counts as if it were hearing).



Barekhu and Aleinu (page 176), Standing

As usual in a Sephardic *Arbit*, the *Kaddish Shalem* concludes with *Barekhu*, led in this case by the *Hazzan*, rather than a mourner.

- The *Kaddish* is again paired with *Barekhu*, in the same tune, as at the beginning of *Arbit*, followed by a different-tuned choral and congregational response.
- At the end of the service, the *Barekhu* serves as a kind of a seemingly repetitive *פורש על שמע*, perhaps formerly intended for latecomers, before the congregation chants the usual minor psalmodic *Aleinu* in unison, which the response "*Barukh Adonai...*" leads into musically.

Yigdal (page 177), Very Musical, Traditional Tunes, Sung by Choir with Congregation Joining, Seated

There are a multitude of anonymous, simple, traditional tunes for *Yigdal*, some associated with special holidays and special occasions. Most are of a musical, classical-type.

- It's notable that our New York version adds the closing summation line: *אלה שלש עשרה לעיקרים, הנם יסוד דת א-ל ותורתו מתים יחיה א-ל*, followed by a repeat of the *אלה שלש עשרה לעיקרים*.
- Most all of the choir's arrangements highlight this repetition, with some iterations of *מתים* being sung as a soft tenor solo.
- Then the entire choir and most of the congregation join in more fully, as if the individual's tenuous faith in the ultimate Justice of God achieved through Resurrection is fully affirmed and confirmed by the faith-proclamation of the entire community.

The service traditionally closes with the formula *תקובל ברחמים וברצון את תפילתנו* (page 178), an echo of the end of the earlier *תקבל קדיש*, asking for the acceptance of the prayer which closed the main section of the service.

— *End of Arbit for the Eve of Shabbat*—



Notes

- 1 These references to incense play upon use of the two meanings of the word “עֶרֶב;” thus “*Minha* of Evening” can also be understood as “*Minha* of Pleasing.”
- 2 Spanish & Portuguese, most Moroccans, and several other traditions follow Maimonides’ opinion (with regard to *Minha*) in not having the entire *Amidah* read twice.
- 3 *Tahanun* is customarily omitted from the Friday Afternoon *Minha* service.
- 4 Ashkenazim, by contrast, go immediately from *Kaddish Titkabbel* into *Aleinu*, with the Mourner’s *Kaddish* afterwards ending the *Minha* Service.
- 5 Many Italian congregations kept this earlier version of the practice as well.
- 6 In order to uphold this earliest practice, we actually begin with Psalm 29 on page 155, even though the De Sola Pool Shearith Israel prayer book includes the option of starting with “*Lekhu Nerannana*” on page 151.
- 7 In contrast, most synagogues follow the somewhat later practice initiated by R. Cordovero, starting with the additional five Psalms 95-99 and then reading our Psalm 29 at the end, making a total of six Psalms before *Lekha Dodi* plus Psalm 92, the Psalm for the Sabbath Day, read later.
- 8 *Bameh Madlikin* in the liturgy seems to have been recited historically after *Arbit*, but it was more useful to move it toward the beginning, where it could serve practically to remind one of the laws regarding the preparations for the Sabbath.
- 9 Our common textual version of the “*Lekha Dodi*” hymn was written by R. Shelomo HaLevi Alkabetz (c. 1500-1576) who originated in Salonica (Thessaloniki) and studied with the famous Spanish exile, halakhist, and fervent Kabbalist, R. Yosef Taitatzak. R. Alkabetz married and taught first in Salonica and later in Adrianople (Edirne), where he met R. Yosef Caro, and both decided to move to the Holy Land, settling in Safed. His hymn, and the very *Kabbalat Shabbat* service itself (the use of the term “*kabbalah*” to designate a putative mystical “tradition” gives yet another nuance to “*Kabbalat Shabbat*”) spread with the spread of Safed Kabbalism, although it is doubtful that the music originally used came down to us.



- 10 Basis of the Shearith Israel practice is that in 1600s Amsterdam, they always treated *Kabbalah* with a good deal of discretion, especially when interpretations of some of its practices might be inferred to condone the separate worship of multiple aspects of God, and the practice of overtly facing and bowing to an approaching personified Divine Presence came under attack.
- 11 Sephardim call this “*Kaddish Le’Ela*” and the Ashkenazim call it “*Hatzi-Kaddish*.”
- 12 The short *Kaddish* before *Minha* serves the same purpose.
- 13 Composed by Samuel Naumbourg (1815-1880), an Ashkenazi *Hazzan* and Romantic composer of synagogue music, active in France.
- 14 Since this was music from an Ashkenazi foreign source (and it is omitted when the choir is off), it was thought necessary for the *Hazzan* to quickly repeat the *VeShameru* in the traditional minor Sephardic plainchant, although this has the effect of making the congregation stand throughout while the short *Kaddish* and the start of the *Amidah* are delayed even further.
- 15 This is rather surprising and perplexing, especially given that its text (omitting *Titkabbal* but including “*Yehe Shelama*”) and its order placement seem to indicate its origin as a Mourners’ *Kaddish*. As stated earlier, it seems that long after this *Kaddish*’s text and placement had already become an established part of the liturgy, it was later ruled inappropriate for mourners to lead it, given the ban on public mourning on Shabbat and holidays, and thus it was given over for the *Hazzan* and, perhaps later, the entire congregation, to sing. Or else, perhaps it was the practice already for mourners to read, but to make their mourning less obvious on Shabbat, the rest of the congregation joined in.



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