

Questions & Answers

By Shawn Lichaa

If one is traveling and needs to conduct an abbreviated prayer, what elements should the prayer include?

Historically, Karaite prayers contained seven key elements, and a prayer according to the Karaite custom should touch on each of these.

1. *First*, the prayer opens with praise of God and God's glory. This first step is called ***shevach*** ("praise").
 - a. For example, at the Karaite Jews of America, the Shabbat morning prayer contains Psalms 103 and 104 toward the beginning of the service. These Psalms focus on God's omnipotence and his wonders.
2. *Second*, the prayer contains verses related to the unity of God. This second step is called ***yachud*** ("unity").
 - a. For example, the first time the *Shema* is read during the Shabbat morning service is right after the initial praises for God.
3. *Third*, the prayer contains verses sanctifying God. This third step is called ***kedusha*** ("sanctity").
 - a. For example, we read liturgical poems by Aharon ben Yoseph, one of which begins "*Atah Kadosh*" ("You are holy").
4. *Fourth*, the prayer contains verses of thanksgiving. This fourth step is called ***hoda'ah*** ("thanksgiving").
 - a. For example, we read Psalms 136. These verses begin "*hodu l'Adonai ki tov*" ("Thank God, for He is Good.")
5. *Fifth*, the prayer contains verses related to confession. This step is called ***vidui*** ("confession").
 - a. For example, the Karaite liturgy contains a list of confessions, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
6. *Sixth*, the prayer contains verses related to supplication and pleas. This step is called either ***vakashah*** ("request") or ***techinah*** ("plea").
 - a. For example, we read Psalms 106:47-48 and Psalms 40:14.
7. *Seventh*, the prayer contains verses related to personal pleas. These are usually stated in a whisper and accordingly this step is called ***tefilah b'lachash*** ("prayer in whisper").
 - a. For example, during the *tefila b'lachash*, we read Psalms 66:20.

The concluding prayer of the Karaite service is *Baruch Shimcha* ("Blessed be Your Name"), and it includes all seven of these traditional elements.