

**KosherTorah School**

for Biblical, Judaic & Spiritual Studies

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Ariel Bar Tzadok, Director, Rabbi



**A Nineteen (19) Lesson Audio Course**  
**Gemara Berakhot,**  
**Perek Tefilat HaShahar**  
**Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, Chapter Four**

**Taught by Ariel B. Tzadok**

**Course Outline**

**Lesson 1, Mishna.**

An overall introduction into what is fluid Halakha, how it developed, and what it really is (and is not). Why Halakha is the Torah Way, and not really Torah Law. The development of Talmud. What is Mishna, what is Gemara. The natural flow of Torah learning, compared to living water, maybe better compared to white-water rafting, its always a thrilling ride. The role of Talmud study Foundational principles for understanding the flow of Gemara logic. The times for prayer, and their reasons.

**Lesson 2, Gemara.**

When is the proper time to recite the Shema, and the Amidah. The identity of the Watikin, as the Essenes. Why Torah practice (Halakha) includes this tradition, but does not impose its stringency upon the public in accordance to the Rabbinic edict not to impose practices upon the public that is too difficult for the average person to uphold. The importance of recognizing a source, and validating a source. Morning prayers can only be recited til noon, oh really? The Gemara introduces what appears to be a contradiction to this rule, but is there really a contradiction? We see here the fluid flow of Talmudic logic, and cultivate wisdom and intuition in the process.

**Lesson 3, Gemara.**

Missed prayers and their makeups, the differences between intentional and unintentional missing of one's obligation. Contrasting teachings, how does one resolve contradiction. What happens if there is no resolution, "kashya." A comprehensive discussion of the Sephardi path of Talmudic study based on understanding the ebb and flow of the text, and its underlying intent with regards to Halakhic practice. A review of the major law codes of the Rishonim, the development of the Tur/Shulkhan Arukh, and an understanding of the Aharonim, and their role

in understanding Halakha. This class addresses the Gemara issues at hand, and sets the framework for the style of learning that this course will follow.

#### **Lesson 4. Halakha, and Agadata.**

The laws of makeup prayers from the Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 108. Introduction into the Mishnah Berurah, and the Kaf HaHayim, (with mention of R. Ovadiah Yosef). A kabbalistic understanding of prayer taken from the Kaf HaHayim and the kavanot of the Ari'zal and Rashash, and why the rule is that the prayer of the moment must precede a makeup prayer. Introduction into Agadata, as the drash of Torah, and why these stories are not meant as history, but rather as poetic, metaphorical moralistic, ethical teachings. How the Patriarchs instituted the times of prayer (but not the prayers themselves).

#### **Lesson 5. Agadata. Correlating Prayer to the Temple Sacrifices**

How we say that the Patriarchs instituted the prayers, and yet we see from the rules of their times how they correlate to the Temple sacrifices. The difference between voluntary prayer and liturgy, and how liturgy binds the nation together beyond all boundaries, and creates a "nation of priests" who offer spiritual sacrifice in the Heavenly Temple. A discussion of the two types of Minha, (gedolah and ketana). A discussion of half-minha (plag-minha), when is it, and then we delve into the intent of R. Yehuda's teachings to ask when a concluding time is given, is this time the beginning of the end, or the end of the end. Why this is important, and significant.

#### **Lesson 6. Gemara. What did R. Yehuda mean?**

The times of Shaharit, and Minha are subject to interpretation because the wording used to define their times is not precise. When the Mishna says one may pray until such and such an hour, does this mean until the end of that hour, or until its beginning? How is one supposed to decide? R. Yehuda is not around to ask, but his other teachings are available, so we must turn to them to gain insight into the meaning of his remarks. This lesson teaches us how to explore proper understanding of terms and concepts to discover their clear and definitive meanings.

#### **Lesson 7. Gemara. An early Sabbath, really?**

Respect to Rabbis. Shulkhn Arukh, Orah Haim 233:1, the laws of Minha. One can pray before sundown according to R. Yehudah, or later according to the Sages, both options are acceptable, but one must choose one or the other. One cannot vacillate between the two. The proper respect due to Rabbis, a very important matter, terribly neglected in our times. Proper respect for those who pray. Some of the parameters of accepting Sabbath early, with practical examples of this observance.

#### **Lesson 8. Gemara/Agadata. Early Shabat Mistakes.**

Ma'ariv and the R. Yehoshua/R. Gamliel episode. Does the Shabat exist in nature, or in the mind? The significance of this difference in Halakha. When Shabat is received early by mistake, one may not need to repeat the evening prayers, and still be able to continue work until the proper time for Shabat to begin. Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 263:14. Whether or not, Ma'ariv is obligatory, or optional, a historical review. The different opinions of R. Gamliel, and R. Yehoshua, and how this led to a show of disrespect, and the public consequences of such actions.

**Lesson 9. Agadata. Rabban Gamliel, the man and his life, Rabi Elazar ben Azariah.**

The rights and responsibilities of leaders, the parameters of authority. This lesson looks at this famous story and extracts from it the qualities and qualifications for a public leader. Wisdom is defined and detailed as different from being knowledgeable. Wealth is considered, with practical examples of its importance. Merit of ancestors is discussed in a spiritual, metaphysical light with regards to collective soul power. The qualifications for religious studies, how sincere and righteous must one be. The difference between learning for the proper reasons, and for improper reasons. The example of Yehudah the Amonite convert, and how Rabbinic discussions analyze Biblical texts and extract from them practical directions for realistic circumstances.

**Lesson 10. Agadata. Making Peace among the Sages. Gemara. The proper time of Musaf.**

Lessons about real life are extracted from the Gemara stories. The obligation of Torah scholars to work for a living, even if it is in a hard manual-labor type of profession. How wealth can lead to arrogance and disrespect for those who have to toil hard for work. The importance of peace for the greater good. One does not need to like another, but all must nonetheless get along respectfully. Not every story in the Gemara, or Bible is literal fact. Literary devices are often used, including moralistic fiction. The importance of proper times, and why if they are not properly known, and lived-by how one can bring harm to the general order of the universe.

**Lesson 11. Halakha, Laws of Musaf. Mishna/Agadata. Prayers and Wise Advice.**

Why certain episodes in the Gemara is recorded. Laws of Musaf, Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 286. The fluid nature of halakha, why and how laws are no black and white, but “relative shades of gray.” A discussion of the use of electricity on Shabat and Yom Tov. How halakha is established for the collective good, which outweighs individual liberties. The importance of learning, talmud torah, it is not memorizing information, it is the expansion of the mind's ability to think, to understand, and to perceive with greater clarity. This is what we call “enlightenment.” The wise directives of R. Nehunia ben HaKana, and R. Eliezer.

**Lesson 12. Agadata. Death of R. Yohanan ben Zakai. Mishna, the Kitzur Amidah.**

The life of R. Yohanan ben Zakai, his relationship to the zealots, and their relationship to the original followers of Yeshu. All about the destruction of Jerusalem, and R. Yohanan's role in saving Judaism. A discussion about the afterlife, and the lack of early references to reincarnation. Eternal damnation is not a Jewish concept. R. Yohanan's advice to his students: God is watching you, fear Heaven as you would fear man. The new mishna introduces us to the topic of sincerity in prayer. Introduction into the kitzur Amidah. How to act in times of danger. Prayer focus should be towards the Holy of Holies, and as a physical location (direction of prayer), and as a focus of consciousness.

**Lesson 13. Gemara/Agadata, the Eighteen Blessings, plus One.**

A brief review of the overlap between Greek and Torah philosophies, and how the Sages adopted, and integrated the best of both worlds. Emphasis on rational textual analysis, and gematria. The coding of prayers, not by Luria alone. The order of the Eighteen, the bending of the spine during prayer, reference to the Shulkhan Arukh, and the Ben Ish Hai, also with reference to energy movement in meditative/prophetic prayer, and how it might be an early form of a “Torah yoga.” The nineteenth blessing, against the traitors, and cultic extremists. A

brief history of the Yeshu/Notzri movement and their behavior with greater Israel, and centuries later with Muhammad in Medina. Why an additional prayer was needed to separate the violent extremists from our midst. A brief Kabbalistic understanding of the blessings.

**Lesson 14. Agadata/Gemara. Can a righteous man fall? The Abridged Amidah.**

A discussion about the identity and role of the Sadducees, and those that came after them in their stead. Are human beings either inherently good, or inherently evil? Different opinions in religion, and in psychology. The identity of Yohanan, the High Priest, who became a Sadducee. A discussion about the Hasmonean dynasty (the Macabees), and the history of their fall. The Abridged Amidah, what is it, and when is it to be recited. Also discussed is the Kitzur Birkat HaMazon, the Condensed Grace after Meals.

**Lesson 15. Gemara. The General Way of Halakha.**

The Parameters of the Abridged Amidah. We open with a detailed discussion about the human element in the establishment, and practice of Halakha. Discussion of Responsa literature, R. Ya'akov of Merush and his Shoot from Shamayim, the details of whether or not a woman recites a blessing over the lulav on Succot. Other examples of how Halakha is decided by man for man, without the involvement of Heavenly sources. Numerous examples of when the Havineinu prayer cannot be recited, and why. Discussion of the validity of these opinions, why they are embraced, or rejected. A practice of sharpening logical thinking, by expanding the mental power to observe beyond the present, and into the collective future (this is explained in class).

**Lesson 16. Halakha. Devotion in Prayer.**

What are one's obligation with regards to devotion and meditation in prayer. An opening discussion of the psychic intuitive channeling nature of prayer, be it personal or collective, and the differences between them. The psychic purpose of a minyan. Is it better to pray in a minyan, or by oneself. Reading from the Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 98 regarding the required devotion in prayer. A review of the kavanot system, and its relationship to the collective unconscious. The Ben Ish Hai's additions to the prayers.

**Lesson 17. Agadata/Gemara. Praying with the Red Sun.**

Different Prayers, Tefilat HaDerekh. The natural/psychic correlation between the tides of human consciousness and the rising and setting of the sun. The vital importance of being practical and realistic, how this must trump idealism in halakhic practice. The reason and purpose of various opinions, tolerance and respect. Communal responsibility verses individual freedoms, the examples of R. Yosi of the Galil, and R. Elisha ben Abuya (Aher). Dangers when traveling, differences between ancient and modern times. The purpose of the Traveler's Prayer.

**Lesson 18. Agadata/Gemara. The Parameters of Prayer while Traveling.**

Practical guidelines for reciting ritual prayers at times when the needs of travel may prevent one, or hinder one from acting in the normal prayer fashion. Numerous realistic examples are given. The concept of the use of collective pronouns in prayer, all are to be included, because Torah is an inclusive path. Meditative focus when praying, first on the Holy Land, then the Holy City, then the Holy Temple, then the Holy of Holies, and finally upon the holy Presence of God upon the Ark of the Covenant. Discussion of the ideas of the present location of the Ark, and how one is supposed to psychically connect to it, regardless of its concealed physical location.

### **Lesson 19. Gemara. Early Prayers. Parameters of Musaf.**

Final class in this course. One can recite the Amidah early from the time called Amud HaShahar, and later recite the Shema after sunrise. This is not the normal order, but is allowed due to specific circumstances. The Gemara offers us a number of example supporting this, and other examples which contradict this. The reasons for this are discussed, which is more important, standing prayer, or devotional prayer. Musaf, is it a communal or individual responsibility. Periferal to this discussion is the question of missing the Rosh Hodesh blessing Ya'aleh V'Yavo in the evening Maariv prayers. A discussion of the 29 day and the 30 day months in the Jewish calendar.

## **Course Details**

**The cost of the course is \$190.00.**

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