

# **Berakhot, Chapter Four, Mishnah Three-Four**

## **Introduction**

This and the next mishnah are perhaps the most important mishnayot in the two chapters concerning the Tefillah. Here we see that there was some rabbinic opposition to the institution of fixed prayers. We should recall that in biblical times there were no fixed prayers, by which I mean prayers fixed in time and wording. Rather, all prayers are spontaneous.

The transition from spontaneous to fixed prayer seems to have been part of the transition to a post-Temple world. While there may have been some attempts to fix prayer formulas while the Temple still stood, they don't seem to have attained much prominence in the literature. The sacrificial service seems to have been sufficient to fill people's spiritual needs.

As always occurs when there is innovation, not all agree as with the innovation or with its particular details.

## **Mishnah Three**

- 1) Rabban Gamaliel says: every day a man should pray the eighteen [blessings].
- 2) Rabbi Joshua says: an abstract of the eighteen.
- 3) Rabbi Akiva says: if he knows it fluently he prays the eighteen, and if not an abstract of the eighteen.

## **Mishnah Four**

- 1) Rabbi Eliezer says: if a man makes his prayers fixed, it is not [true] supplication.
- 2) Rabbi Joshua says: if one is traveling in a dangerous place, he says a short prayer, saying: Save, O Lord, Your people the remnant of Israel. In every time of crisis may their needs be before You. Blessed are You, O Lord, who hears prayer.