

ABSTRACT

REPETITION OF THE EVENING 'AMĪDA ON FESTIVALS AND SPECIAL SABBATHS
IN THE CUSTOM OF ERETZ ISRAEL

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Traditional Jewish sources differentiate between congregational prayer services, which include a silent recitation of the 'amīda (the central prayer) by individual congregants and its repetition by the cantor aloud, and the evening service, when the 'amīda is not repeated. Contrariwise, a paytanic repetition of the 'amīda in congregational prayer for evenings of festivals and special Sabbaths in Palestinian ritual is discussed in scholarly literature. The first clear piece of evidence for this purported practice was adduced in an article by Ezra Fleischer published in 1993, in which he edited and analyzed a Geniza fragment of Seder Fustat B, the prayer book of the Palestinian synagogue of Old Cairo, written in the early thirteenth century. The instructions for congregational prayer for Passover on the evenings beginning and concluding the Shabbat clearly describe the recitation of two 'amīda prayers, one with the standard text and a second in poetic form (*shiv'ata*). When the benedictions of the *shiv'ata* were recited, the word *ha-shem* was substituted for the divine name. Fleischer adduced evidence for the repetition of the evening 'amīda on festivals from Abraham Maimonides' writings, but upon examination this passage was shown to deal with a custom where there was only one 'amīda that the cantor recited aloud.

Another example of the double 'amīda for the evening service is found in a passage from Seder Fustat A (written a few years before B) for Shabbat Hanukah. Furthermore, Geniza fragments of Palestinian prayer books, written by the scribe Samuel b. Jacob during the first half of the eleventh century (primarily Bodl. MS Heb. g. 2), produce additional evidence. The double recitation, one with the standard text, the second with a *shiv'ata*, is described unequivocally for the evening service on three occasions – the seventh day of Passover, Yom Kippur and Shemini Atzeret. When the cantor recited the paytanic version, he pronounced the divine name in its usual form.

In the discussion that follows, several issues are presented and clarified. There is no evidence for a purported Palestinian practice of evening prayers without any 'amīda. According to the seventh century *Sefer ha-Hilluqim* Palestinian Jews recited the 'amīda only aloud, and no mention is made of its repetition. Where there was a double 'amīda, some congregants, who were unfamiliar with the prayers, asked the cantor to recite the 'silent' 'amīda aloud too. In other synagogues, the repetition of the 'amīda for Shaḥarīt and Musaf of Sabbaths and Festivals was eliminated, and the cantor recited one 'amīda aloud, a practice enacted by Maimonides. Some congregants and cantors protested this innovation, because they did not want to miss the liturgical poems recited in the repetition. By allowing them to recite the *piyyuṭim* without benedictions after the 'amīda, Maimonides' disciple convinced members of the Babylonian congregation of Alexandria to accept the master's enactment.

In conclusion, an attempt is made to reconstruct the possible stages which culminated in the practice to recite a paytanic repetition of the 'amīda on evenings of festivals and special Sabbaths, known from the Geniza fragments.