

The Timeline of Davening

How the davening grew and was written down — from Matan Torah to today

2448 — Matan Torah: The only fixed text everyone said was the three parshios of **Shema**, twice daily (also fulfilling zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim), plus davening once a day with the order of **הודאה, שאלת צרכיו, שבת** — the text not yet fixed. Moshe set the 1st bracha of Birkas Hamazon; Yehoshua the 2nd.

Around 2900 — Dovid Hamelech: Instituted saying **100 brachos a day** (no fixed routine yet of which brachos or when). Dovid and Shlomo set the text of the 3rd bracha of Birkas Hamazon.

Around 3410 — Anshei Keneses Hagedola: At the start of Bayis Sheini they fixed the **nusach of all the brachos** — before mitzvos, before and after food, on sights and smells — and the structure of Shachris, Mincha, Maariv, Musaf and Neila.

After the Churban (~3840–3900) — Sanhedrin in Yavneh: Added the bracha of **ולמשינים**, and later the 4th bracha of Birkas Hamazon, once the fallen of Beitar were brought to burial.

4349–4798 (589–1038) — the Geonim: Added **הנותן ליער כח**, the learning after Birchos HaTorah, איזהו מקומן, **לעולם יהא אדם**, אשרי (אדון עולם); and Selichos, the long Kinos and Piyutim.

Around 4630 (870) — Rav Amram Gaon: Composed the **first complete written Siddur**, sent as a letter to Barcelona; the ancestor of the European nusach.

Around 4690 (930) — Rav Saadya Gaon: The second complete Siddur, written with Arabic instructions; the root of much of the Sefardi nusach.

Late 4800s (1000s) — Reb Shlomo ben Shimshon: Wrote the first **pirush** (commentary) on the Siddur, in Worms, Germany.

Around 4865 (1105) — Machzor Vitry: From Rashi's beis midrash (R' Simcha of Vitry) — the first Ashkenazi Siddur available across Europe; also full of pirush hamilos.

Around 4937 (1177) — the Rambam: Included a complete Siddur within the Mishneh Torah.

Early 5000s (1200s) — Mahari bar Yakar & the Rokeach: Both wrote **complete commentaries** on the entire Siddur — the foundation of pirush hamilos.

5100 (1340) — the Abudraham: Compiled from Mahari bar Yakar, Machzor Vitry, Sefer Hamanhig and others a masterpiece on the Siddur — the most widely used from his day until today.

After 5252 (1492) — the Mekubalim of Tzfas: Spanish exiles reached Eretz Yisroel; the **Arizal** (5294–5332) and the Mekubalim added Kabbalah customs — Kabbalas Shabbos, Brich Shmei, passages from the Zohar — most collected in Pri Eitz Chayim.

5477 (1717) & 5505 (1745): The Siddurim of the **Shelah** and the **Yaavetz** are printed, with commentaries built on the Arizal's teachings and on peshat.

5494 (1734) — the Baal Shem Tov: Reveals **Chassidus**: the deeper meaning and the warmth of tefilla, made accessible to every Jew — not a change of pirush hamilos but of the soul of davening.

5563 (1803) — the Alter Rebbe's Siddur: Printed in Shklov; the nusach fixed on all three foundations at once — halacha, the Arizal's kavanos, and precise dikduk. Becomes the fixed Chabad nusach (Torah Or, Tehillas Hashem).

5600s–5700s (1800s–1900s) — later commentaries & translations: Eitz Yosef and Iyun Tefilla (in Otzar Hatefillos, Vilna 5675) and Tzalosa DeAvraham expand the pirush hamilos. The Siddur is translated to Yiddish (Korban Mincha) and English (R' Nissen Mangel, 5738 / 1978).

5729–5752 (1968–1992) — the great first printings: The Mahari bar Yakar, Reb Shlomo ben Shimshon, and the Rokeach on the Siddur are printed for the first time — most of it unknown to the public until now.

Today: Modern works gather the commentaries of the Rishonim and Acharonim on the Siddur into one place.

The Commentaries on the Siddur

The leading pirushim on the davening — from the Geonim until today

The foundational Siddurim (Geonim & Rishonim)

Rav Amram Gaon — ~4630 / 870 — first written Siddur; opens with ברכות דין מאה. Basis of the European nusach.

Rav Saadya Gaon — 4642–4702 — written in Arabic; more Eretz-Yisroel / Mitzrayim minhagim; root of the Sefardi nusach.

Machzor Vitry — ~4865 / 1105 — R' Simcha of Vitry (Rashi's talmid); also pirush hamilos. With Siddur Rashi, Sefer HaPardeis, Sefer HaOrah.

The Rambam — 4895–4965 — the Siddur within the Mishneh Torah.

R' Shlomo ben Nasan — ~Rambam's era — spread in Teiman; relies on Rav Saadya and Rav Amram.

Rishonim commentaries — Germany

R' Shlomo ben Shimshon — of Worms, colleague of Rashi — the first complete pirush hamilos (some attribute it to the Ra'avan).

The Rokeach — R' Elazar of Worms, ~4925–4998 / 1165–1238; talmid of R' Yehuda HaChassid. Peshat, remez, derush & sod; gematrios; Pirkei Heichalos.

Siddur Chassidei Ashkenaz — teachings of R' Shlomo, R' Yehuda HaChassid, the Rokeach and their circle.

Rishonim commentaries — Provence / Spain

Mahari bar Yakar — early 5000s — teacher of the Ramban; a complete pirush with many midrashim. The source of the Abudraham.

The Abudraham — R' David ben Yosef, Seville 5100 / 1340 — the best-known of the Rishonim on the Siddur.

Other Rishonim on tefilla

The **Tur** (O"C) & the **Beis Yosef / Bach**; the **Levush**; **Shibolei HaLeket**; **Rabbeinu Yona**; **Rabbeinu Manoach**; and the three chachamim of Lunel — Sefer Hamanhig, Sefer Haminhagos, Orchos Chayim / Kol Bo.

After the Zohar was revealed (~5050 / 1290)

Rabbeinu Bachaya — on the Chumash, 5051 / 1291 — Kabbalah, without naming the Zohar.

The Rikanti — Italy, ~5010–5070 — quotes the Zohar by name; pirush on the Siddur in Sefer Taamei Hamitzvos.

The Mekubalim of Tzfas & the Arizal

Collections — Pri Eitz Chayim, Olas Tamid, Sefer Kavanos, Mishnas Chassidim; Tolaas Yaakov, Tefilla LeMoshe, Seder Hayom (source of Modeh Ani).

Siddurim with the kavanos — Siddur Arizal (Zolkiev 5541), Siddur haRashash (R' Shalom Sharabi), Kol Yaakov, Roshkover, Or HaYashar.

Later Acharonim

Siddur of the **Shelah** (Shaar HaShamayim) & the **Yaavetz** — Kabbalah with peshat. **Otzar Hatefillos** (Vilna 5675): Eitz Yosef & Iyun Tefilla — the most famous later pirush hamilos. Also Beis Avraham, Derech Chayim, R' S. R. Hirsch, Avodas Yisroel (Yachin Lashon), Yesod Veshoreish HaAvoda, Shaar Hakolel.

Sephardi chachamim

Menoras HaMaor; Beis Elokim (the Mabit); Shalmei Tzibbur; the **Chida**; the **Ben Ish Chai**.

Chassidus & Chabad

The Baal Shem Tov — revealed 5494 / 1734 — the soul of tefilla, for everyone. Tanya explains Shema & Baruch Shem, daily Yetzias Mitzrayim, Yotzer Or & Ahavas Olam.

The Alter Rebbe's Siddur — Shklov 5563 / 1803 — halacha + the Arizal's kavanos + dikduk; the fixed Chabad nusach.

Chabad sefarim on tefilla — Siddur im Dach (Mitteler Rebbe), Maamarei Admur HaZakein, Kuntres Inyan HaTefilla, Derech Mitzvosecha, Or HaTorah, the Rashab's Kuntres HaTefilla & HaAvoda, the Rayatz's Toras HaChassidus VeHatefilla, Siddur im Likutei Torah, Siddur Maharid; Shaarei Tefilla, Or HaTefilla, Chassidus Mevueres.

Modern works & translations

My Prayer (R' Nissen Mindel); Tefilla Lemoshe (Mikraos-Gedolos style); Mesechta shel Tefilla; Shai LaMorah; Beureihatefila.com. Yiddish: Korban Mincha. English: **R' Nissen Mangel** (Tehillas Hashem, 5738 / 1978 — reviewed by the Rebbe).