



Hoshanos

Hoshanos are the prayers recited when the congregation forms a processional with lulav and esrog in hand. The name comes from the refrain of “hosha na,” meaning “please save.” This processional is based upon what was done in the Temple. The mishna in Succah (4:5) describes how on each day of Succos, the kohanim (priests) would lead the people in a circle around the altar reciting “hoshia na,” and on the seventh day of Succos – which we call Hoshana Rabbah – they would do so seven times. The Midrash describes how we emulate this ceremony as a sign that we have emerged victorious from our judgment on Yom Kippur, which was mere days before Succos.

In the Temple, Hoshanos were performed after offering the *korban musaf* – the special offering of the holiday. For this reason, most congregations perform Hoshanos as part of the Musaf service, which corresponds to that sacrifice. Some, however, perform Hoshanos after Hallel, consolidating all parts of the service involving the four species into one greater ceremony.

Performing Hoshanos in the Temple is a *halacha l'Moshe miSinai* – a Biblical law communicated orally from God to Moshe at Mount Sinai without any reference in the text of the Torah. When the Temple was destroyed, the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* (Men of the Great Assembly) instituted that we should continue the practice with the *bimah* of our synagogues substituting for the altar.

Hoshana Rabbah

The seventh day of Succos is known as Hoshana Rabbah (“the great Hoshana”). While this name is of medieval origin, the day was unique even in Biblical times. The mishna (Succah 4:6) calls that day “*yom chibut chariyos*” – “the day of beating the palm branches.” (The author of that statement felt

that the lulav should be beaten rather than the *aravah* – the willow – as we do. The Bartenura states that the halacha does not follow the author of that mishna.) Like the prayers recited throughout Succos, the bundle of *aravos* we beat is also referred to as “hoshanos.”

Hoshana Rabbah is a particularly holy day, on which the judgments of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are ratified. Even though Hoshana Rabbah is not a yom tov (Festival), the extra Psalms of praise that are recited on Shabbos and yom tov are recited on that day as well. After we make the seven processions with the lulav and return the Torah to the ark, the bundle of *aravos* is beaten on the ground.

The Hoshanos Prayers

The prayers we recite as Hoshanos were composed by Elazar HaKalir, a sixth-century *paytan* (liturgical poet) whose works include literally hundreds of *piyutim* (liturgical poems) recited on the various holidays, as well as most of the *kinot* (elegies) recited on Tisha b'Av. Each Hoshana has its own theme, usually in an alphabetic acrostic.

1. **L'maan Amitach** – This Hoshana refers to God's various traits – truth, greatness, splendor, kindness, goodness, unity, power, etc. It also mentions His covenant and the Temple which, while not traits per se, are still relevant.
2. **Even Sh'siya** – This Hoshana references Jerusalem in general and the Temple in particular – the foundation stone, the threshing floor that was purchased for the land to build the Temple, the trees imported from Lebanon to make panels, etc. Salem refers to the name of Jerusalem until Abraham's day, while Zion is the Temple Mount.
3. **E'eroch Shui** – The theme of this Hoshana is that we should arrange our prayers in advance, rather than waiting until a time of



trouble. This prayer references the recently-completed High Holiday season.

4. **Eil I'Moshaos** – Salvation is the theme of this Hoshana. It discusses Torah scholars, who master the secrets of the Torah and all the details of the law, who turn to God and beseech Him to redeem us.

5. **Adon HaMoshiah** – This Hoshana discusses God as savior – only He has the ability – and, hopefully, the inclination – to provide us with sufficient crops and rain.

6. **Ohm Ani Chomah** – The theme of this Hoshana is the nation of Israel, who are compared to a wall, the sun, a palm tree, and more.

7. **Ohm N'tzurah** – This Hoshana is recited on Shabbos and, not surprisingly, its theme is Shabbos – the obligations to remember and to guard the Shabbos, the 2,000-cubit Shabbos boundary (*techum*), the special food and clothes reserved for Shabbos, the two loaves of bread at each meal, and more. (On Shabbos, we do not carry a lulav and esrog or form a processional.)

Unlike most prayers, the order of the Hoshanos varies depending on what day of the week Succos begins. (The first day of Succos cannot fall on a Wednesday, a Friday, or a Sunday.)

First day Monday –

M 1, T 2, W 3, Th 6, F 4, Sh 7, Sun HR

First day Tuesday –

T 1, W 2, Th 3, F 4, Sh 7, Sun 5, M HR

First day Thursday –

Th 1, F 2, Sh 7, Sun 3, M 4, T 5, W HR

First day Shabbos –

Sh 7, Sun 1, M 3, T 2, W 4, Th 5, F HR

Since *E'eroch Shui* refers to Yom Kippur, it is always recited on the earliest possible day of Chol HaMoed. Since *Adon HaMoshiah* includes a prayer for rain – which is something we don't want as long as we're eating in the succah – it is said on the last day of Succos prior to Hoshana Rabbah.

Hoshanos on Hoshana Rabbah

On Hoshana Rabbah, we recite seven Hoshanos, including *L'maan Amitach*, *Even Sh'siya*, *Ohm Ani Chomah*, and *Adon HaMoshiah*. Additionally, there are three special Hoshanos for Hoshana Rabbah:

Adam u'Beheima – Man is compared to a number of things, ranging from a tapestry to animals;

Adamah mei'Erer – This Hoshana discusses the curses that Adam brought upon the world through his sin;

L'maan Eisan – This Hoshana references the deeds of our righteous forebears, including the three Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and many others, with a unifying theme of fire. (Abraham was thrown into a furnace, Isaac was nearly offered as a burnt offering, etc.)

Ani Vaho

The mishna (Succah 4:5) has a difference of opinion as to what was said in the Temple during Hoshanos. The first opinion is "ana Hashem hoshia na" ("Hashem please bring salvation now," as in Hallel). The second is "ani vaho hoshia na," a phrase we repeat in our recitation of Hoshanos. What's "ani vaho?"

Rashi (Talmud Succah 45a) says that "Ani Vaho" are two of God's names that are concealed in three verses in parshas Beshalach that have 72 letters each (Exodus 14:19, 14:20 and 14:21). Running the first and third verses forward and the middle verse backwards, the first letters spell "Vaho" and the 37th letters (the first letters in the second half) spell "Ani." (It should be noted that there's another "Vaho" at the 49th letters but there are kabbalistic reasons for selecting the first.)

As an aside, the gematria (numerical value) of "Ani Vaho" is the same as "ana Hashem," so the two expressions are in a sense equal and interchangeable.

