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ORALITY IN LITURGY:
TOWARD A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE *SHEMA*

Thomas M. Alpert

SUMMARY

Many Hebrew prayers use oral techniques such as rhythm, alliteration, and rhyme to allow the worshipper to lose him or herself in the sound of the prayer, and so enahnce the prayer experience. English translations of those prayers have, however, concentrated on the semantic meanings of the words, not on these oral techniques. When they have dealt with orality, they have by and large eschewed trying to create the same numinous experience that many worshippers feel when praying in Hebrew.

The goal of this thesis is to show that this has happened, to explain why it has, to show that alternative translation ideas are available, and finally to provide a translation of one blessing that puts some of those ideas into practice, along with a detailed commentary on the translation. The contribution of the thesis is that it synthesizes much that has been written about translation, liturgical language, and Jewish prayer, provides original analyses of prayer translations from the perspective of orality, and gives a new type of translation of a benediction, one that emphasizes rhythm and affect.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first sets out translation theories. The second explores theories of liturgical language. The third Jewish prayer in light of the theories set out in the first two chapters. The fourth considers the history of prayerbook translations and the extent to which the translations use techniques of orality. The final chapter is a translation of the יוצר, one which emphasizes those techniques, together with a detailed commentary.

Sources consulted included traditional and modern Hebrew texts on prayer, a wide array of prayerbooks, and a variety of English-language books and articles dealing with the subject of this thesis.

ORALITY IN LITURGY:

TOWARD A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BLESSINGS

OF THE *SHEMA*

THOMAS M. ALPERT

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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PREFACE

A recent article reviewed a new translation of the poem, "Beowulf." The reviewer wrote: "The poem's many translators seem to have followed the same logic that drives people to open new restaurants: they're disappointed with what's out there and convinced that they can do better. Only in retrospect do they realize why they were doomed to fail."[1] I suspect that my impetus to undertake this project was similar; I shall not attempt to guess its fate.

When I came back as an adult to the study of Hebrew, my teacher, Judith Kates, pointed out some passages in the *siddur*. They sounded wonderful; they had rhythm, rhyme, the power of an oral language. She said to me, "You don't hear that in the English, do you?" And, of course, I did not. As my Hebrew fluency increased, I came to love losing myself in the Hebrew prayer text. I let the words flow over me and cover me like a tallit. As this happened, I felt that I was beginning to communicate with God.

As much as I love Hebrew prayer, though, I also love praying in English. My native tongue is still my first love, and is the language in which I first met Jewish liturgy. Yet I have been dissatisfied when I have tried to find English that could do for me what the Hebrew can. I listened for a rhythm and a sound that could take me out of myself as the Hebrew had. I did not find it. My dissatisfaction has increased as I have thought of the many American Jews who will never have the opportunity I had to immerse myself in the Hebrew language. Hebrew prayer is a wonderful goal, but English prayer will remain with us as long as we are in America. People praying in English should have the opportunity to partake in as much of the prayer experience as possible, including the

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[1] James Shapiro, "A Better Beowulf," *New York Times Book Review* (Feb. 27, 2000), p. 6.

ability to lose themselves in prayer.

With the goal of beginning to give them the opportunity, I set out to write this thesis. In consultation with my adviser, Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman, I focused on the benedictions surrounding the *Shema*. Thinking about a translation of these blessings led me to learn both about translation and about writing for religious services. My study in those areas is the basis of the first two chapters of this thesis. The first chapter introduces the reader to some issues in translation theory. The second chapter looks at liturgical language.

Of course, since my focus was on Jewish prayer, and especially on one rubric within the liturgy, those subjects merited treatment, and are dealt with in chapter three. Chapter four reviews the history of prayerbook translation and considers how a number of English-language prayerbooks have translated the benedictions of the *Shema*.

My final chapter is an opportunity to see if it is possible to write an English prayer that can use rhythm and sound in a manner similar to that of the Hebrew. I have translated the יוצר and have annotated that translation. This translation is intended to stand as a paradigm of the sort of translation that I am seeking.

It is, of course, possible, as has been suggested to me, that no prayer in English can do what I am asking of it. It is more than possible that such a prayer can be written, but I am not the one to write it. Only time will tell. Meanwhile, I offer this effort as part of the ongoing conversation about our Jewish liturgy.

It is said that writing a thesis is a solitary endeavor, but this one could not have been completed without an extraordinary amount of assistance from a great many people. I would like to thank first all those who are involved in the writing and study of liturgy

who took time to talk to me or provide me in other ways with their insights. Rabbi Chaim Stern spent almost two hours with me helping me see the relationship of his craft to the poetic tradition. Marcia Falk patiently answered my questions, and responded generously to my ideas about her work. Rabbi Elyse Frishman provided valuable insight into the ongoing development of the projected new Reform prayerbook. Dr. David Teutsch gave me similar insight into the development of the Reconstructionist prayerbooks, and showed me that he and others had been dealing with the concerns I was raising for some time now. Joel Rosenberg shared with me his poet's approach to writing English liturgy. Father Gilbert Ostdiek generously provided me with a forthcoming article that explains how the Catholic Church is dealing with somewhat similar matters. Dr. David Ellenson and Dr Michael Meyer shared with me their expertise in liturgical reform.

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues at the New York campus of the Hebrew Union College who have studied in *hevruta* with me over the years, and so given me hours of intellectual and spiritual growth: Andrew Davids, Robyn Weiss Frisch, Ruth Gais, Jeffrey Goldwasser, Dena Klein, Craig Marantz, Rebecca Pomerantz, and Randy Sheinberg. I would especially like to thank Ruth and Randy for their extraordinary support and encouragement during the process of writing this thesis.

Dr. Joel Hoffman assisted me in the early stages of preparing this thesis, and was a fount of information about translation theory. My adviser, Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman, has been patient, supportive, and a source of many useful suggestions. My debt to him appears on every page of this thesis.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My parents, Arthur and Estelle, have stood by me with material and moral encouragement throughout my time at Hebrew Union College, and for many years before. My children, David, Katherine, and Andrew, have put up with

a part-time father for four years, and have survived the thesis writing project with very few complaints. I owe them my gratitude. As for my wife, Eileen Hagerty, nothing I can say could do her justice. She has borne the brunt of my absences, and yet has remained fully supportive of my dream. She has given me the time to write this thesis, even though it meant that at times I was away as much as when I was still spending more time out of the house. And she has read my drafts with her wonderful writer's and reader's eye, making the finished product immeasurably better. I simply cannot thank her enough.

With all of this support, this thesis should have been a masterpiece. That it is so far from that, I can attribute to no one but myself.

GLOSSARY OF PROSODIC TERMS

This thesis uses a set of terms to describe the meter of poems and of other rhythmic writing. A foot is a unit of measure that contains stressed and unstressed syllables. In this thesis, no foot will have more than one stressed syllable.

In the chart that follows, an apostrophe (') indicates a stressed syllable, and an "x" indicates an unstressed syllable.

Disyllabic (two-syllable) feet:

iamb	x	'
trochee	'	x

Trisyllabic (three-syllable) feet:

dactyl	'	x	x
amphibrach	x	'	x
anapest	x	x	'

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSLATION THEORIES

English translation theory begins with the work of John Dryden, in particular the 1680 preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles*. For Dryden, there are three types of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. Metaphrase is what we typically call "literal translation"; it transfers the original into English "word by word, and line by line." Paraphrase is what Dryden calls "translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered." Imitation tries to capture not the sense but the style. It is "an endeavour of a later poet to write like one who has written before him, on the same subject; that is, not to translate his words, or to be confined to his sense, but only to set him as a pattern, and to write, as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age, and in our country."[1]

Dryden, appealing to the English view of themselves as moderate in all things, implicitly set up his trichotomy in order to lead his readers to choose the middle option, that of paraphrase. Indeed, as translation scholar Lawrence Rosenwald writes, "Dryden's terms themselves imply tendentious notions regarding language and translation [such as] ... that sense can be 'amplified' without being 'altered.'" As Rosenwald notes, though, Dryden also goes on to make an explicit argument for paraphrase. Metaphrase has the problem that "too faithfully is, indeed pedantically." Imitation is necessary for certain

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[1] John Dryden, "Preface to Ovid's Epistles," in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W.P. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 1:237, 230, quoted in Lawrence Rosenwald, "Buber and Rosenzweig's Challenge to Translation Theory," in Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, tr. L. Rosenwald with Everett Fox (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. xxx; *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 1998), s.v. "paraphrase."

authors, such as Pindar, who are "wild and ungovernable." But paraphrase is, generally, better than the other two options, "the mean betwixt them."[2]

Both metaphrase and imitation have had their defenders. Currently Douglas Hofstadter, for example, argues that "[t]he creation of 'literal' translations, although at first blush much less exciting than the creation of 'artistic' ones, actually poses some of the most fascinating challenges. Just how literal is literal?" Elsewhere he writes, "Is it crucial for a literal translation [of poetry] to contain exactly the same number of words as the original? Why or why not? ... Exactly what kinds of things are we supposed to pay attention to and what kinds of things are we free to ignore?" Although Hofstadter engages in all forms of translation, literal translation appeals to him because "the imposition of any reasonably sharp set of constraints will force a writer to explore and discover pathways in semantic space that would otherwise have been left entirely unexplored." At the same time, he is as vigorous as Dryden in his denunciation of a translation that so focuses on semantic meaning that it qualifies as "[t]his crib, this gloss, this 'pony.'"[3]

On the other end of the spectrum, Lawrence Hoffman has claimed that "the challenge of translation" should be "to ask: 'How would [the] original writer put it, if the writer were ourselves?'" This is a call for imitation, for doing precisely what Dryden describes, "writ[ing] as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age,

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[2] Rosenwald, "Challenge," pp. xxx - xxxi.
[3] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Le Ton Beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 3a, 2a, 135, 263.

and in our country."[4]

Rosenwald is able to conclude that currently, "[i]n sacred and secular translations alike ... the program of paraphrase has become centrist, central, and dominant..." Nevertheless, as both Hofstadter and Hoffman point out, neither metaphrase nor imitation can ever be entirely ruled out.

Dryden's categories only begin the inquiry, for they assume that the sense of what the original author intended is the proper subject for translation. This is, indeed, what many people think they mean when they talk about translations. As Hofstadter puts it, they expect not to be "treated to [an author's] precise *words*, but rather to his precise *ideas*.... Words can be given the old heave-ho as long as ideas are preserved, the former being but an incidental vehicle for delivering the latter. Who cares what make of truck it is that carries milk to their daily doorstep, as long as the milk is *fresh*."[5]

Hofstadter, of course, thinks that the comparison fails, and he is right. In the European Union, milk can travel from Germany to France, but there are no free trade zones across linguistic boundaries. Rather, cultures differ, and those differences lead to an array of translation issues. As Hofstadter puts it, there are problems not only "about mutual comprehensibility across *linguistic* barriers but [also] about mutual comprehensibility across *cultural* barriers -- which from the point of view of a translator, is often equally important, if not more so." Examples abound. A classic one involves the German words *Holz*, *Baum*, and *Wald*, which would seem to be translated by the English

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[4] Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Blessings and Their Translations in Current Jewish Liturgies," *Worship* 60 (1986): 158. It is worth noting that Hofstadter, a protean thinker, can be cited as easily by Hoffman in suport of imitation as by this thesis in support of its opposite *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[5] Hofstadter, *Le Ton Beau*, p. 103 (emphasis in original).

Wood, *Tree*, and *Forest*, and by the French *Bois*, *Arbre*, and *Forêt*. But in fact, this is not entirely so. *Wald* covers the semantic space of *Forest* and *Forêt*, but it also covers some of the space of *Bois* and *Woods*.[6]

One overcomes these problems, says Hofstadter, by viewing translation in metaphorical or analogical terms. "To convey your situation's essence to someone else, use analogy to recast it in terms of *their* situation. Then ... they will see your situation as theirs, or perhaps see their situation as yours. Whichever, they will metaphorically see through your eyes." So, for instance, he encouraged the Chinese translator of one of his works to use Chinese examples that conveyed a sense similar to the American examples he used. As quoted by Gilbert Ostdiek, Hillaire Belloc put the point eloquently:

> [W]e should say to ourselves, not 'How can I make this foreigner talk English?', but 'What would an English[person] [sic] have said to express the same?' *That* is translation. *That* is the very essence of the art: the resurrection of an alien thing in a native body; not the dressing of it up in native clothes but the giving to it of native flesh and blood.[7]

Hofstadter calls this process "transculturation." Yet transculturation does not solve every translation problem. Hofstadter discusses his once having read two translations of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. In one, the prisoners in the labor camp were made to sound like Americans, using American slang and idioms. In the other, the Russian terms were translated more literally, or not at all. One would have thought that a proponent of transculturation would have preferred the

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 542 (emphasis in original); *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation*, s.v. "semiotic approaches."

[7] Hoftadter, *Le Ton Beau*, pp. 141 (emphasis in original); Hillaire Belloc, *On Translating*, quoted in Gilbert Ostdiek, "Principles of Translation in the Revised Sacramentary," essay to be published in a forthcoming *Festschrift* honoring Father Anscar Chupungco (in the possession of the author) (emphasis in original).

former, and Hofstadter was indeed surprised to remember that he had not. Rather, the first version was, he thought, "*overtranslated*." The prisoners should have sounded "definitely alien. My purpose in buying the novel had been to experience the *Russianness* of the prison, of the prisoner, of their way of talking. That was being denied me by my translator's overzealousness." The greater solution, then, Hofstadter suggests, is to treat different genres differently. "The key variable seems to me to be the extent to which the culture is simply *part of the vehicle* for conveying a culture-independent message. Thus there are books ... ([including] most books on science) whose message is primarily *culture-independent*, and there are novels, history books, and so forth, whose message is primarily *culture-dependent*."[8]

Before going further, it is worth noting how some of these issues that arise in discussing transculturation affect translation of Hebrew prayer. Is the "message" of Hebrew prayer primarily culture-independent, or culture-dependent? Do we, in other words, want to be reminded constantly that we are praying something that was originally written in another language? Is its very foreignness to English as much part of its appeal to us as *Ivan Denisovich's* Russian was to Hofstadter?

The subject of Bible translation, to which we shall return in more detail below, addresses transculturation in different ways. Everett Fox notes, "the premise of almost all Bible translations, past and present, is that the 'meaning' of the text should be conveyed in as clear and comfortable a manner as possible in one's own language." Although Fox does not mention it, the *Good News Bible*, written to sound like a daily newspaper, may be the

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[8] Hofstadter, pp. 150, 152 (emphases in original). "Transculturation" is discussed generally at pp. 145-69.

epitome of this method. In his translation of the Torah, Fox approaches the problem differently. Drawing on the groundbreaking work of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, Fox embraces "the truth ... that the Bible ... is ancient, sometimes obscure, and speaks in a way quite different from our own. Accordingly," he says, he has "sought here primarily to echo the style of the original, believing that the Bible is best approached, at least at the beginning, on its own terms." Where Belloc had sought not to dress a translation in native clothes but to give it native flesh and blood, Fox wishes to do precisely the opposite. "... I have presented the text in English dress but with a Hebraic voice."[9]

It is not at all clear that the same costuming devices will work for prayer. The alienness of Hebrew culture cannot be gainsaid (just as it must not be overemphasized), but the experience of it differs in reading the Bible and in praying. Many people will want to read a number of different Bible translations. A person who reads widely in English Bibles can perhaps synthesize the "meaning" of the Hebew text. In prayer, however, as will be discussed below, each experience must be regarded as sacred, because each is an opportunity to converse with God. Prayer-language that is offputting, that is deliberately alienating, would not seem to be conducive to such conversation. On the other hand, perhaps the very strangeness of the English will allow the pray-er to move out of his or her quotidian world -- the newspaper world, if you will -- and move into a space where communication at a deeper level is possible.

This other world is not just of a different culture -- that is, of a different space, as

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[9] Everett Fox, "Translator's Preface," in *The Five Books of Moses*, tr. Everett Fox (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p. ix.

American culture in 2000 is different from Chinese culture in 2000. It is also, as Fox indicates, and as our references to newspapers underscore, a world of a different time. Transculturation is also transchronology.

This point was made compellingly by the philosopher Walter Benjamin, in his essay "The Task of the Translator." Benjamin begins with the obvious, but rarely remarked upon, fact that "a translation comes later than the original." This elementary observation has profound consequences. "[A] translation," Benjamin notes, "issues from the original -- not so much from its life as from its afterlife ..., and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life." A translation, in other words, literally *renews* a text (indeed, Benjamin remarks that an "afterlife ... could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living"). But translations not only give new life to texts; they develop the language into which the translation is made, what linguists call the "target language":

> For just as the tenor and significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well. While a poet's words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to be absorbed by its renewal. Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own.[10]

This can hardly be disputed; one need only recall how the King James Bible has influenced English, or how Martin Luther's translation has affected German, to see the wisdom of

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[10] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, tr Harry Zorn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), pp. 72-74.

Benjamin's observation.

Leaving aside these larger claims for a brief moment, however, the difficulties involved in translating texts across cultures and over time are evident. The problem only becomes greater when one asks for whose sake the translation is being made. Benjamin has a clear answer: "In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful.... No poem is intended for its reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener."[11] Whether this is true of works of art, it seems inapt for liturgy. Praying, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, differs from the experience of reading a poem, seeing a picture, or hearing a symphony. In prayer, the pray-er ideally should be transformed (or, if you will, transform himself or herself), and should enter into a conversation or communion with his or her fellow worshipers, with the tradition, with his or her own innermost thoughts and feelings, with God. This being so, do the authors of prayers have any special claim on the translator? Does the tradition? And, if one or the other does, how do those claims weigh against the claims of the contemporary pray-er, his or her needs for comprehensibility or mystery?

Let us take, for example, the claims of tradition. Anglo-American law recognizes a doctrine known as *cy pres* (literally, "as near"). Typically, when a person leaves property in trust, the donor's wishes, as set out in the trust instrument, govern the use of that property. Circumstances can change many years after a donor's death, however, and in those cases, a court might be called upon to revise the trust to take account of those changes. When it does so, the court must attempt to determine what the donor would have done in today's circumstances. Rice University in Houston was created from a trust

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

of William Rice, who specified that the school would admit only whites and would not require students to pay for their education. By the 1960s, changes in the social and economic environment led the University successfully to petition the Texas courts to apply *cy pres* and remove those restrictions. Mr. Rice, the court presumed, would have been more interested in creating a first-rate academic institution than in one that was free of both minorities and tuition.[12]

Courts are hesitant to invoke the doctrine of *cy pres*, because it so obviously interferes with the express will of the donor. So they cabin the doctrine in, using it only in what they consider clear cases. Translators of liturgical texts are in a different situation from courts dealing with trusts, however. First, do the author's (or authors') wishes have the same power as do those of a donor of property? For the author of a work of art, the case can be made that they do. But what of the author of a liturgical text? Are we not free, each of us, to pray in our own ways? The answer would seem to be that by identifying with a religious tradition, we identify with the liturgy of that tradition.[13] But the identification may be in how that liturgy is prayed over time, not in the original intentions of the authors.

Even assuming that the traditional language of the prayers has a strong claim on us, similar to a donor's intent, we must note that the very act of translation inherently

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[12] Hofstadter cites another example of this doctrine, although he does not mention the doctrine's name. *Le Ton Beau*, p. 156.

[13] This would certainly be the view of the Jewish tradition, which saw not only the Torah as מורשה , an inheritance (Deut. 33:3), but indeed regarded any non-Jew who sought to study it as a thief who was stealing that inheritance (Sanhedrin 59a: מאן דאמר מורשה - מיגזל קא גיזל לה, if one reads *morashah* [with a *shin*, as opposed to *morasah*, with a *sin*], then he [i.e., the non-Jew studying the Torah] robs [him -- i.e., us]). One could expand this to all of Judaism; tampering with tradition would be akin to theft; and no court would permit it.

changes circumstances. The question remains as to what sort of translation then best honors that claim. What degree of abstraction should we use to determine the intent of the tradition (as distinct from the intent of the authors)? Of course, this question itself assumes that a tradition can have an intent, but we do assume that for now. We could say that the tradition wants us to pray these words, or that it wants us to pray these ideas, or that it wants us to pray in this rhythm, or that it wants us to have a certain feeling when we pray. We may be back, then, to Hoffman's question: What would the rabbis have wanted had they been we? So, perhaps, in prayer, even when we seek to give tradition the major voice, imitation rather than paraphrase is the only proper translation. A view of prayer that defers less to the past might allow for even greater flexibility.

Whichever way one chooses to answer the questions that have been raised here, it is clear that translation is about more than the words of the text. Benjamin, as has been noted, sees translation as an enterprise dealing with language as a whole. Even that, however, is insufficient. For, as Hofstadter notes, translation is not simply "the transfer of a piece of text from one language to another." Rather it is "*a transfer between two linguistic media*," each medium having its own characteristics. The significance of those characteristics can be illustrated in an example Hofstadter gives about translation between musical media. Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* was originally written for harpsichord. Hofstadter remarks that he has always preferred it played on a piano. Commenting on this preference, he raises a larger issue:

> Is the painful truth that I had never been in touch with [the piece] at all, having always eschewed its original instrument? Or -- is the Well-Tempered Clavier a higher-level abstraction, floating above any specific instrument, just as it floats above any specific instrumentalist?... And what about works of literature? Analogously, some seem clearly more wedded to their original

> language than others are, yet masterful translations demonstrate that seemingly uncrossable linguistic barriers can be overcome. Such a work of literature then becomes an abstraction, floating above its original medium.[14]

It is almost as if a text has an essence, even if sometimes difficult to determine from the accidence of its original transcription. Again, this raises a question when applied to Jewish prayer. Is there an essence of Hebrew prayer that can be translated, assuming appropriate skill, into any language? Or, as Judah Halevi might have maintained, is Hebrew necessary for authentic Jewish prayer? According to Halevi -- and indeed much of Jewish tradition -- it is an especially holy language, and in particular is the language that God used to communicate with people from Adam and Eve on down. Does this mean that it is the only appropriate language for Jewish prayer? Or even if not the only appropriate one, is any translation of necessity a falling-off? Then, even if Jewish prayer remains powerful when translated, is it fully Jewish? Abba Hillel Silver argued that moving away from Hebrew in prayer, just as moving away from seeking a restoration of Zion, produces a dangerous universalism, one that risks creating a softer version of Christian universalism, a "Paulinic Judaism." How the tradition, and its reformers, addressed this question will be dealt with below.[15]

At the very least, these questions show that content, form, and context intertwine inextricably in translations. Those using a semiotic approach to translations seek to deal with these relationships. The American psychologist Charles S. Peirce, called semiosis "an action, an influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign,

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[14] Hofstadter, *Le Ton Beau*, pp. 239-40 (emphasis in original).
[15] Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, tr. Hartwig Hirschfield (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 2:67-78, pp. 124-28. Abba Hillel Silver, "Anti-Zionism is Paulinic Judaism," in W. Gunther Plaut, ed., *The Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources Until 1948* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), pp. 152-53.

its object and its interpretant, this three-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs." Interpretative semiotics, which developed from Peirce's work, sees all translation as a kind of interpretation. Our linguistic competence, according to Umberto Eco and Siri Nergaard, "provides instructions on how to interpret (and even translate) a given term according to the sense it acquires in a particular context and/or situation of production and reception, according to intertextual situations, and so on." The key word here is "context." A semiotic approach insists that only by careful, even excruciating, concern with the context is any translation ever possible.[16]

The issues raised in this chapter show that a translation of an affective text, such as a poem or a prayer, must somehow translate not just the content but the form of the original. Summing up his own work, Hofstadter demands "that poetry should be seen as a *marriage of equals*, rather than as a noble and proud macho Content who is accompanied, but pitter-pattering oh-so-softly in the background, by a terribly obsequious and deferential ladylike Form."[17] It is the burden of this rabbinic thesis that translations of Hebrew prayer have for too long failed to place these two partners on an equal footing.

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[16] *Routledge Encyclopedia*, s.v. "semiotic approaches," whence the Peirce quote was also taken (emphasis in original). This entry was written by Eco and Nergaard.
[17] Hofstadter, *Le Ton Beau*, p. 556 (emphasis in original).

CHAPTER TWO: LITURGICAL LANGUAGE

A. Theory

Semiotics, which was introduced last chapter in the context of translation, has had a profound impact on the study of liturgical language as a whole. The American philosopher Charles W. Morris, writing in 1938, considered the "'sign' ... a basic phenomenon of communication or 'semiosis.'" Morris divided language into three parts: syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. "*[S]yntactics* examines 'the relations of signs to one another,' *semantics* 'the relations of signs to the objects to which [they] are applicable, and *pragmatics* 'the relation of signs to interpreters.'"[18]

Linguistic pragmatics developed into its own academic specialty, in large part due to the concepts put forward by the English philosopher John Austin. In 1955, he delivered the William James lectures at Harvard, which were published under the title, *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin noted that, since the time of Immanuel Kant, philosophers have asked of statements that they be verifiable, that is, found to be true or false. He calls statements that meet this test "constative statements," because they "constate" (i.e., describe or report) something. Not all utterances can be so characterized, however. In

[18] David Hilborn, "From Performativity to Pedagogy: Jean Ladriere [sic] and the Pragmatics of Reformed Worship Discourse," in *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 170-71 (emphasis in original) (quoting Charles W. Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs," in O. Neurath, R. Carnap, and C.W. Morris, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* 1 (Chicago: Univerity of Chicago Press, 1938), pp. 81, 84). *See also* Jean Ladrière, "The Performativity of Liturgical Language," tr. John Griffiths, *Concilium*, n.s. vol. 2, no. 9 (1973): 52.

some cases, "the uttering of a sentence is [itself] ... the doing of an action"; Austin calls this sort of utterance a "*performative sentence*." A bride or groom saying "I now marry you" at a wedding is speaking a performative sentence. Such sentences are not true or false; they are rather successfully said or unsuccessfully said -- in Austin's words, "felicitously" or "infelicitously" uttered. In American law, if a man says this to a woman -- and further if both are above the age of consent, neither is married to someone else, they are not within prohibited degrees of family relations, and other conditions are met -- the utterance will be felicitous; the couple will be married. If these conditions do not prevail, the utterance will be infelicitous; it will not accomplish its purpose.[19]

As the last chapter suggested, semiotics calls for a translator to focus on context. More generally, the theory of linguistic pragmatics dictates that context rather than etymology actually determines the "meaning" of words -- that is, what the words "signify." But more than that, language itself is not the be-all and end-all of linguistic pragmatics. Language fits within a larger system, in Hilborn's words, "as an interactive enterprise in which many relevant features are *extralinguistic*."[20] So, to return to our example of the wedding, the words of the marriage liturgy are and must be seen as part of a larger enterprise, of which the music, the flowers, the canopy (in a Jewish wedding), the glass (same), the procession of bridesmaids and ushers, are all parts. And just as breaking a glass at a Jewish wedding means something quite different from breaking a glass in one's kitchen, so a lover's saying "You are the one for me" means something different than that

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[19] *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, s.v. "Pragmatics and Translation"; J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 2-7, 14. A clear summary of Austin's thought appears in Lawrence Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 133-35.

[20] Hilborn, "From Performativity," p. 171.

same utterance at, say, a playground where children are dividing up teams.

This insight that language could do more than one thing was later developed by John Searle into a theory of "speech acts." Austin and Searle are both philosophers, and their concern is more with issues of logical positivism, issues that are quite technical and well beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, one key concept of theirs needs to be introduced here, because it has had an impact on discussions of liturgical language. This is the idea of "illocutionary acts." According to Austin, "an illocutionary act [is] performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something." It is, in other words, the "**force** which may override literal sense and thus relay added effects such as those associated with, say, a request or admonition." According to the Belgian philosopher Jean Ladrière, examples of illocutionary acts are "affirmation, description, interrogation, thanks, promising, ordering, asking, approving, recommending, deciding, and so on."[21]

Hilborn has noted that both linguistic pragmatics in general and the theory of speech acts in particular have natural applications in the study and development of liturgy. As to pragmatics in general, he writes, "*liturgical* discourses must be understood to comprise more than the written *texts* studied by traditional liturgists; rather, they should be regarded as the verbal instantiations of a wider realm of sacral *enactment*." As to speech act theory, he notes, "Its stress on language as a means to action; its sensitivity to

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[21] John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1969); *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1970), vol. 4, s.v. "Language, Philosophy of"; Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 99 (emphasis in original); *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, s.v., "Pragmatics and Translation" (bold-face emphasis in original); Ladrière, "Performativity," p. 53.

performance, ritual and local 'rules' as components of linguistic meaning; its acceptance on these premises of 'empirically unverifiable' statements -- these commend it for the study of religious discourses in general and sacral discourse in particular."[22]

Ladrière has developed probably the most detailed application of performative linguistic analysis and speech act theory to liturgy. He begins by noting that the different illocutionary forms in liturgy work together to make up one liturgical language. Liturgical language, he maintains, does three things, or in his words has "a threefold performativity: that of an existential induction, that of an institution, and that of a 'presentification.' These three modes of performativity are reciprocal; the most decisive, that which unites liturgical language, is 'presentification.'"[23]

Ladrière defines "existential induction" as "an operation" (such as speaking, singing, or bowing) that "awakens in a person using it a certain affective disposition which opens up existence to a specific field of reality." When, for example, we say in prayer that we "thank" God, we are rarely actually reporting our feelings. Rather, our feeling of thanks flows from our utterances of thanks. By the liturgical act, we induce the feeling of thanks into existence.[24]

Not only does liturgical language create feelings in particular worshipers, it also creates, or "institutes," a worshiping community. "In pronouncing the 'we' [in prayer], each of the participants to some extent takes upon himself the acts which occur at the same moment, and by virtue of the same words, by all the others." One student of existential induction and institution notes that, for Ladrière, "liturgical illocutionary and symbolic acts

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[22] Hilborn, "From Performativity," pp. 172-73 (emphasis in original).
[23] Ladrière, "Performativity," p. 55.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.

create the community and create attitudes which come into effect when the liturgical rite is enacted. The liturgy creates attitudes.. it does not merely give expression to them."[25]

As has been noted, Ladrière considers "presentification" to be "[t]he most fundamental aspect of the performativity of liturgical language.... By all those acts which it effects, this language makes present for the participants, not as a spectacle, but as a reality whose efficacy they take into their very own life, that about which it speaks and which it effects in diverse ways...." Liturgy "makes present" in three ways: by repetition, by proclamation, and most important, by sacramentality. By "sacramentality," Ladrière means that the liturgy has, by its words, the power to change the form of something. In his Roman Catholic terms, the classic example of this is the eucharist. The Passover Seder's statement that each of us was present in Egypt might have the same effect for Jews.[26]

In recent years, many writers on liturgy have adopted the language of literary pragmatics and speech acts to call for a particular type of liturgical reform. A study of words in the Anglican liturgy reminds the reader that, in this case at least, the word is not in the beginning. "Behind text lies texture, the *pattern of experience* which has shaped the liturgy of the Church of England." Texts, it notes, are not

> just texts, pure and simple. Texts are spoken and sung, they are proclamation and response, dialogue and reflection, texts for reading publicly and for hearing privately. And the texts imply more than the

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[25] Ibid., pp. 58-59; David Fageberg, *What Is Liturgical Theology?*, quoted in Hilborn, "From Performativity," p. 175. Arguably, when a congregation speaks in the plural, it is simply engaged in a form of "phatic" speech, where the speech is used more to create an atmosphere of good will than for any larger purpose. See Anthony C. Thiselton, *Language, Liturgy and Meaning* (Bramcote, England: Grove Books, 1975), p. 14. Ladrière seems to be making larger claims for this speech, however.

[26] Ladrière, pp. 59-62.

> words on the page: they imply the text(ure) of the building and of the aural world; they imply the text(ure) of the participants -- and not just the ministers -- as they come together to provide the context of the celebration; and they are full of rubrics -- the semi-suppressed indicators that this text is not primarily to be read but to be done.[27]

The text is "to be done." This is the language of performativity, of speech acts.

The Roman Catholic Church, which has struggled with liturgical reform in the almost four decades since Vatican II, has been heavily influenced by the concept of performative language. Writing in 1980, Kenneth J. Larsen, an English poet and liturgical translator, reminded his readers that "[w]ords themselves have an integrity of their own, of themselves can be celebratory and indeed have the power to create their own reality... This is an important function of language beyond the mere communicative." Larsen called for language that captured "the celebratory and ritualistic element" of liturgy. By 1993, others were complaining that this call had not yet been heeded. Father Aidan Kavanagh of the Yale Divinity School decries western Christians' having "moved away from using liturgical words as performative utterances to subordinating the entire liturgy, both words and actions, to printed texts meant for recitation."[28]

Father Kavanagh cites Eastern Orthodox liturgy as a successful, and integrated, series of performative acts. Referring to its liturgy for the Beatitudes, he writes:

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[27] Hilborn claims that speech act theory "has been appropriated only sporadically by those working on [liturgical] discourse," "From Performativity," p. 173, but both the numerous examples he himself cites and the additional examples provided in this thesis suggest that the use of speech act theory and linguistic pragmatics generally is, in fact, widespread. The Anglican material comes from Phyllis James, Michael Perham, and David Stancliffe, "Image, Memory and Text," in *The Renewal of Common Prayer: Uniformity and Diversity in Church of England Worship*, ed. Michael Perham (London: Church House Publishing, 1993), pp. 31, 33.

[28] Kenneth J. Larsen, "Language as Aural," *Worship* 54 (1980): 34, 21; Aidan Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization: The Case of Western Liturgical Usage," *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1993): 70.

> The sacred text is not worried over or flung at the participants. The music and acts of ritual reverence attending it, rather, timorously unveil the sacred text, sensually and seductively arrayed in loveliness of sound and act, in the midst of the entire assembly. The participant is taken quite beyond mere concepts of justice and allowed instead, in his or her own fashion, to discover the warmth of God's hand, the truly maternal mercy that clothes his justice.

He contrasts this successful liturgical moment with what he considers the deritualization that has overtaken Western Christianity. This deritualization emerged when the Western churches focused too much on meaning and not enough on performance:

> [P]eople were taught to distrust the powerful repetition of ritual performance and to regard its symptoms as signs of an illness from which Christians must flee. We all wound up sitting in a circle with our legs crossed, reciting texts at each other over banks of potted plants, guitars in the background, boring ourselves and everybody else, especially the young, into insensibility as we groped for 'issues' to galvanize our bemusement. The faithful voted with their feet, or they succumbed entirely to the far more powerful performances of secular values -- as in spectator sports, celebrity watching, and MTV.[29]

Nathan Mitchell writes that ritual that focuses on meaning misconstrues its own nature: "In a very precise sense ... ritual is *meaningless*. It does not have a 'program' or 'table of contents.' ... In other words, ritual symbols lack a fixed, invariable 'center of meaning.' Rites do not 'encode' meanings which are then 'rehearsed' in successive performances.... What [rituals do] provide is not repetitive 'content' but *formal structure* -- a meeting-place where the ongoing dialogue between nature and culture, individual and group, faith and history, I and Thou, can occur."[30] Rituals, that is, are at base not about communication, but about performance.

Here, it seems, Mitchell may have let his polemic overwhelm his facts, because the

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[29] Kavanagh, "Textuality," pp. 73-74.
[30] Nathan Mitchell, "The Amen Corner: Lyrical Liturgy," *Worship* 67 (1993): 464-65 (emphasis in original).

ritual called prayer is indeed very much about at least one sort of communication -- that of the pray-er with God. But even in that case, the semantic meaning of the words of prayer must not be confused with the entire prayer experience. This point is made in a Jewish context as well. Shalom Rosenberg notes that, although originally the concept of "prayer" in Judaism included only the *Amidah*, by the Middle Ages it had come to encompass other rubrics, such as the recitation of the *Shema* and the reading of the Torah. This was because prayer could not be limited to a particular set of words; in "includes not only speech-acts, but other actions as well, such as standing, bowing, wrapping oneself in the *tallit*, the use of song and melody, and even, perhaps, weeping and dancing."[31]

Rosenberg claims that "prayer parallels language." He then analogizes Morris's categories of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to the study of prayer. The first level is "form analysis of prayers." The second focuses on "the theology behind the prayers." "The third level involves the relationship between the praying man and his prayer: the function which prayer fulfills in human life, its place in a general system of thought or philosophy." Using this insight, and interpreting as well the writings of Joseph Soloveithchik, Rosenberg is able to claim that "the covenantal encounter with God and the speaking with Him are the essence of prayer, while the concrete act of reciting certain texts is the means of praying, rather than the prayer itself."[32]

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[31] Shalom Rosenberg, "Prayer and Jewish Thought: Approaches and Problems (A Survey)," in *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change*, ed. Gabriel H. Cohn and Harold Fisch (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), p. 70.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75. To Morris's three levels, Rosenberg adds a fourth, "the changing historical dimension," p. 71.

Although the concepts of performative utterances and speech acts have had a widespread impact among those concerned with liturgical language, they have also had their critics. Gail Ramshaw discounts the ability of logical positivism to assist liturgists. Relying on Northrop Frye's reworking of categories derived from Vico, Ramshaw suggests that there have been three major literary epochs: [1] the mythic, [2] the heroic, and [3] the democratic. In the mythic age, "language as metaphor is known as magical power, the primary mode being poetry." In the heroic age, "language used in typology denotes linear order, the primary mode being allegory." During the democratic age, in which we now live, "language used as description corresponds to external reality, the primary mode being realistic narrative." Biblical language, Frye and she suggest, is principally magical or allegorical.

> Thus, the roots of liturgical language arise from uses of language no longer dominant in Western philosophical and scientific thought. The questions of logical positivism arise because we live in the third epoch, in which language is to correspond in some definite way to a factual exterior reality. It is not surprising, then, that when we take questions which arise in the third epoch and address them to the language of epochs one and two, our answers are dead ends.[33]

The language of liturgy, according to Ramshaw, neither describes nor does, is neither constative nor performative. While that language is from an earlier time, Ramshaw-Schmidt claims that it still speaks to us. Indeed, she notes, "metaphor and allegory are returning to favor," perhaps due to our disillusionment with the promises of modernity. "It is as though the Holocaust we lament and the holocaust we dread have discredited a mental notion that language can contain reality. Thus to pray to the Judeo-

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[33] Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, "The Language of Eucharistic Prayer," *Worship* 57 (1983): 422-23.

Christian God in contemporary English is to speak in ancient ways with contemporary language."[34]

The insights of both the logical positivists and their opponent have value for writing liturgy. On the one hand, the concept of performativity reminds us that comprehension is only part, and perhaps not even a terribly important part, of liturgy. Affect can be far more important. On the other hand, Ramshaw's critique suggests that the language of prayer is an older language, calling upon something that may even be atavistic inside of us.

B. Aurality and Orality in Liturgical Language

1. Issues in aurlity and orality.

If liturgical language is not primarily about conveying information, if it is primarily affective and performative, then we should focus less on the semantic meaning of the words and more on pragmatics, on how the words produce a desired impact. This thesis contends that the traditional *siddur* did precisely that, but that this focus has been lost in much of the Jewish liturgy that has been written in English. Shalom Rosenberg and others are correctly claim that spoken prayer is only one part of the liturgical experience. Nevertheless, the words of prayer have a performative aspect, just as bowing and other prayer actions do. Those words should be examined, therefore, not just for their sense, but for their sound.

Kenneth J. Larsen argues that for many centuries, lasting through the time of Milton, people wrote English to be said and heard. Subsequently, more and more English

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 423.

was written to be read. Literature since the eighteenth century has been "a form of self-expression rather an a communal act." That is to say, language that is meant to be heard requires a *community* of listeners, while language that is meant to be read silently requires only *indiviual* readers. Liturgical language is communal language *par excellence*. The concerns of the earlier writers must also be our concerns if we want to create texts that can be properly prayed. High on the list of those concerns, Larsen states, were rhythm and sound.[35]

Walter Ong, who pioneered the study of oral culture, has noted a set of differences between oral and literate writing styles. These can be summarized by the following dyads:

Oral:	Use of rhythm, balance, repetition, alliteration, etc.
Literate:	Expect reader to go back and re-read.
Oral:	Use of conjunctions.
Literate:	Use of subordinate clauses.
Oral:	Use of parallels, contrasts, etc. to heighten relationships between language elements.
Literate:	Write so that reader will separate and analyze elements.
Oral:	Style full of redundancies and layering.
Literate:	Spare style.
Oral:	Greater use of concrete images.
Literate:	Greater use of abstractions.

As Gilbert Ostdiek notes, "the words of ritual function more in the way speech does in oral cultures. This also serves the corporate purpose of ritual, for oral/aural language has a

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[35] Larsen, "Language as Aural," pp. 20-21. John Foley disputes that language can ever be written other than to be heard. Rather, great literature "is always listened to, with the mind's ear, by the sentient reader." John B. Foley, "An Aural Basis for Oral Liturgical Prayer," *Worship* 56 (1982): 133.

characteristic capacity to hold a group together (literally spell-bound) and to facilitate remembrance and reiteration." Although this thesis cannot discuss all of these differences in detail, Ong's analysis will be useful in considering the translations of the benedictions below. For now, it is worth noting that rhythm plays a key role in the difference between oral and literate styles.[36]

Robert Ochsner has put forward a definition of "rhythm" as "temporal proportion ... in and between a series of events and its subcomponent members." Writing less technically, Larsen says:

> Any spoken text must have rhythm for the simple reason that some spoken syllables are stressed more than others and pauses are necessary for breathing. These stresses and pauses must be so arranged and ordered in public speech that they clarify meaning and become an audible system of punctuation. Otherwise both meaning and sound will be confused. At its simplest, then, rhythm in language is no more than a rough pattern of stresses, phrases and ideas.[37]

The bulk of the study of rhythm in English takes place within the study of poetry. In poetry, it is important to distinguish among stress, accent, and foot. "Stress is emphasis, which is mainly a question of the degree of loudness, though such factors as pitch and duration and the 'weight' of consonants may be contributory. The unit which bears stress is the syllable." If stress is "the natural degree of speech emphasis," accent is artificial; it "is a metrical value assigned to one and only one syllable in a foot." Meter is "rooted in stress[, b]ut they are not identical, and a true feeling for verse depends on appreciating the difference." A foot "is a definite arrangement of the unaccented syllable or syllables in

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[36] Ostdiek, "Principles," pp. 14-15.
[37] Robert S. Ochsner, *Rhythm and Writing* (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing Co., 1989), p. 18. Ochsner is paraphrasing the definition of rhythm presented by E.A. Sonnenschein in *What Is Rhythm?* (1925); Larsen, "Language as Aural," p. 22.

respect of the accented syllables." Most English poetry is written in disyllabic feet, either iambic (unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable) or trochaic (the reverse). It is generally assumed that "[t]he natural gait of spoken English is closer to an iambic pattern than to any other [meter]." Further, iambic pentameter (five iambic feet per line) or its close cousins predominate in English poetry, again probably because these forms so closely echo speech: "A pentameter line matches the optimal unit for semantic closure -- five stressed words, and the binary meter (iambic/trochaic) enables us to process the meaning most efficiently because the weak and strong prominence relations are immediately established."[38]

Where poetic rhythm has been widely studied, prose rhythm has, until recently, been almost as widely ignored. Still, debate about it has found a small niche in English writing. In 1775, Joshua Steele began the examination of English prose rhythm when he wrote *An Essay towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech to be Expressed and Perpetuated by Peculiar Symbols*. Steele wrote to refute the claims of the Scottish Lord James Burnett that English has no melody. Steele claimed that it has not only changes in pitch, but also rhythm. These two antagonists set the terms for much of the later debate: whether English speech is "isochronous," that is, whether spoken English tends to exhibit a clear pattern of recurring stresses that follow each other at approximately

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[38] James McAuley, *Versification: A Short Introduction* (Detroit: Michigan State University Press, 1966), pp. 2-5, 10-11, 31; Ochsner, *Rhythm and Writing*, p. 11. Note, though, that Larsen and others believe that the earlier form of English alliterative verse more closely resembles spoken English than does iambic pentameter. See below, p. 28. This verse consists of a line divided into two part, each part containing two stressed syllables and an unspecified number of unstressed syllables. As the name suggests, each line consists of a set of alliterative words. A good example of this technique can be found at the beginning of the poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: "Sithen the sege and the assaut was sesed at Troye / The burgh brittened and brent to brondes and askes...."

equal distances.[39]

Empirical study of English prose rhythm dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. Originally, the principal students were psychologists interested in kinesthesis, the idea that our sense of rhythm is a kind of muscular activity. By the 1920s, kinesthesis had fallen out of favor, and analyses of prose rhythm have subsequently taken place in the areas of behavioral psychology, cognitive psychology, and literary studies. One of the more well-known of the last type is George Saintsbury's 1922 treatise, *A History of English Prose Rhythm*.[40]

In his study of oral liturgical prayer, John B. Foley, a priest and composer of liturgical music, relies heavily on Saintsbury and his concept of the English prose foot. Just as poetry arranges its accented and unaccented syllables in particular patterns, so Saintsbury and Foley claim that prose does as well (except, of course, that in prose it is stressed and unstressed -- or "strong" and "weak" -- syllables that are so arranged, prose having no accents). A prose foot, according to Foley, is "*an intuitive rhythmic unit formed whenever significant unambiguous meaning is added to what went before.*" There is more than one kind of prose foot. English prose rhythm is, for him, "the juxtaposing not just of syllables but of the feet themselves with each other; it is *the pleasing combination in a series of different types of rhythmic feet.*" In order to ensure the variety that he sees as "the heart of prose," Foley would prohibit identical feet coming after each other except for special purposes. At the same time, he suggests unifying devices within the diversity, an

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[39] Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, *English Speech Rhythms: Form and Function in Everyday Verbal Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1993), pp. 5-6, 8-11

[40] Ochsner, *Rhythm and Writing*, pp. 14-23.

organization of feet to emphasize particular effects.[41]

We need not consider the technical nature of Foley's arrangements here, however, because the entire concept of the prose foot has been called into serious question. Michael Hodgetts, writing in reply to Foley, argues compelingly that Saintsbury, with his schema for an English prose rhythm, describes not so much English as a kind of Latin manque. Hodgetts applies this criticism in particular to the idea of the prose foot. Furthermore, Foley, for all his concern with variety, actually has a procrustean notion of prose; he does not give enough attention to genre. "Words that can be spoken easily enough by a single speaker may cause stumbling when spoken by several in unison, and still more when sung by a congregation."[42]

In place of Foley's elaborate rules, Hodgetts proposes only four general guidelines for the rhythm of liturgical writing. "[1] The number of weak syllables between successive stresses should vary. [2] A slight variation is enough and is satisfying. [3] Two stresses may come together without any weak syllables at all between them. [4] The number of weak syllables between stresses may increase or decrease in the course of a phrase." Similarly, Larsen suggests that "units of meaning .. should deliberately be organized into units of two or three speech-stresses, between which there should not frequently be more than two weak syllables. 'Seen and unseen' for example is preferable to 'visible and invisible.'" Aristotle had said that a phrase should be able to be delivered comfortably (*euanepneustos*, well breathable). Using that as his guide, Hodgetts suggests "that for most people it would be unwise to demand as many as twenty words without a breath at

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[41] Foley, "Aural Basis," pp. 135-39 (emphases in original).
[42] Michael Hodgetts, "Sense and Sound in Liturgical Translation," *Worship* 57 (1983): 498-99.

the speed at which liturgical speech should be taken."[43]

As for sentences, Hodgetts has this to say:

> Put very crudely, the stresses in an English sentence tend to fall into groups of two or three: where these groups coincide, more or less with the units of meaning (Foley's 'prose-feet'), the sentence will be felt as rhythmical. This was the basis of the medieval alliterative line with its two (main) stresses on either side of a pause, and it is the basis of much modern verse drama. It also underlies much of the Book of Common Prayer and of the King James Bible; and that, rather than the now archaic accidence and syntax with which it is there associated, is what gives these versions their rhythmical satisfaction.

Looking at the line as a whole, Larsen advises that it should typically end with a stress.[44]

Rhythm, of course, is only part of the way we hear sound. As Foley notes, it "is almost an abstraction until we have spoken about vowels.... [There is] an artistic pattern in such workaday items... [because] the greatest percentage of elapsed time in the speaking of English is devoted to vowels. They are the stuff of speech, they take longer to say, whereas consonants are like garnish." As with rhythm, Foley develops an elaborate system of English vocalization, and suggests that a writer should balance the circulation of vowels from one end of his spectrum to the other. Here, too, Hodgetts dismisses Foley's complex system. In its place, he provides a few basic guidelines, such as that one should avoid accidental rhyme and that repetition of the same vowels can sound "clumsy." Nevertheless, he agrees with Foley's major point: "variety of vowel sounds ('circulation') makes for clarity and vigor." Larsen has a small but quite practical suggestion along these lines: "Words of Anglo-Saxon root are generally preferable to those of Latinate origin,

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[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 502-04; Larsen, "Language as Aural," pp. 20-23.
[44] Hodgetts, "Sense and Sound," p. 504; Larsen, "Language as Aural," p. 23. For an analysis of modern English verse theater, see E. Martin Browne, *Verse in the Modern English Theatre* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1963).

because their long vowel sounds make them resound more strongly. Such quality of sound is essential for a text designed for proclamation...." Whether Hebrew prayer is such a text is a matter to which we shall turn presently. First, however, in light of Larsen's and Hodgett's invocation of the style of the King James Bible, it would be well to consider the impact that Bible translation can have on the aurality and orality of liturgy.[45]

2. The contributions of Biblical translation.

As noted previously, some of the most interesting work in Bible translations has been that of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, and of their American disciple Everett Fox. The Buber-Rosenzweig "school," as it were, shares the concern of this chapter with the sound of language. As Fox writes:

> [T]he Bible, if not an oral document, is certainly an aural one; it would have been read aloud as a matter of course. But the implications of this for understanding the text are considerable. The rhetoric of the text is such that many passages and sections are understandable in depth only when they are analyzed *as they are heard*.[46]

Buber and Rosenzweig provide two significant contributions to liturgical language that are related to aurality or orality. First, they developed the idea of a *Leitwort* ("leading word"). Like a *Leitmotif* in a Wagner opera, a *Leitwort* is repeated at key places to "signify certain themes or concerns." As Fox notes, there is an important aural dimension to the idea of *Leitwörter*: "A leading-word operates on the basis of sound: the repetition of a word or word root encourages the listener to make connections between diverse parts of a

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[45] Foley, "Aural Basis," pp. 143-48; Hodgetts, "Sense and Sound," pp. 507-08; Larsen, "Language as Aural," p. 29.

[46] Fox, "Translator's Preface," pp. x-xi (emphasis in original).

story (or even a book), and to trace a particular theme throughout." A repeated word or phrase connects different parts of a text; its very redundancy is precisely what Walter Ong sees as the hallmark of an oral writing style.[47]

Buber and Rosenzweig also brought to Bible translation the importance of line divisions (cola). Their translation, as is Fox's, is "printed in lines resembling blank verse. These 'cola' are based primarily on spoken phrasing. In Buber's view, each unit represents simultaneously a unit of breathing and of meaning, thus illustrating the deep connection between form and content in the Hebrew Bible." Carrying this idea to a new level, Lawrence Rosenwald adduces the theories of the contemporary French theorist Henri Meschonnic. He, like the writers we have been discussing, emphasizes the idea of "rhythm." He uses this word broadly:

> Meschonnic means by rhythm a characteristic of every text, not only of oral or poetic or literary texts; he means by the rhythm of a text its organization of meaning in time. As a translator, he seeks to render that organization in time at least partly by shaping a corresponding organization in space. Typography then is crucial for him; he remarks, 'there is a strict correspondence between translational technique and typography.'[48]

Liturgical text, too, should be organized in space to correspond with the spoken prayer's organization in time.

3. The particular challenges of liturgical translation.

Besides its contributions to our discussion or orality and aurality in liturgy, Bible translation also reminds us that this project is about a translation of Jewish benedictions.

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. xvi. See also Rosenwald, "Challenge," pp. xxxix-xlii.
[48] Fox, "Translator's Preface," p. xv; Rosenwald, "Challenge," p. xliv

and that the translation of liturgical language raises particular issues of style. Some of the most thoughtful discussion of these issues comes from the Roman Catholic Church and its International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). ICEL was born of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, and in particular of its *Constitution on the Liturgy*, adopted in December 1963. Throughout its existence, ICEL has wrestled with various issues involved in translating a liturgy from Latin into English.[49]

One such issue of particular significance here is the rhetorical style of much of Latin prayer. As Gilbert Ostdiek describes it,

> From ancient times, the Latin collects were called *orationes*, which [can be translated] as 'prayer-speech.' That is, they were proclaimed; they were to be heard and not read by the assembly. So the authors shaped these texts for proclamation in a large public space, using the rhetorical devices of the cultured Latin of their day.... The resulting prayers were stately, restrained, and concise, with the literary qualities of public, cultured Latin. They were not cast in the popular Latin of everyday and the marketplace.

The Church is now trying to take this hierarchical style from a hierarchical age and write an English that is elevated, yet popular. It has decreed that the language of the liturgy should be "'set apart from the everyday speech of the street and the marketplace.'" On the other hand, Ostdiek asks, "Can full participation of the assembly be achieved with [the] kind of

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[49] Ostdiek, "Principles of Translation," pp. 1-3; John R. Page, "ICEL Through Twenty-Five Years," in *Disciples at the Crossroads: Perspectives on Worship and Church Leadership*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), pp. 64-70; Vatican Council II, "Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)," in ICEL, *Documents on the Liturgy: 1963 - 1979* [*DOL*] (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982), pp. 4-27 [DOL 1].

rhetorical style [of the *orationes*], or must another language register be found?"[50]

The translator of the benedictions surrounding the *Shema* has a different set of challenges. From early times material was included in these benedictions that was designed to induce a state of ecstatic euphoria among the worshippers. Such material would hardly have been written in the style of the *orationes*. Even aside from this material, these benedictions have traditionally been *davened*, prayed aloud but not in unison. These have not been the sort of "text[s] designed for proclamation" that Larsen and Ostdiek discuss.[51]

On the other hand, the nineteenth century Reformers created such innovations as unison recitation, responsive reading, and -- very much in the Christian style to which Larsen refers -- hearing prayers proclaimed. As Eliezer Lieberman, writing in 1818, suggested: "Look at the Gentiles and see how they stand in awe and reverence and with good manners in their house of prayer. No one utters a word, no one moves a limb. Their ears and all their senses are directed to the words of the preacher and to [the recitation of] their prayers." A Jewish liturgical translator writing today must decide whether to keep innovations of the sort that Lieberman wanted -- in which case the specific solutions devised by the Church translators may be instructive. If on the other hand the translator decides to reject them, then the process of Church translation has more significance than

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[50] Ostdiek, "Principles of Translation," pp. 3-4. The section on "the marketplace" is quoted from Pope Paul VI, "Address to Translators of Liturgical Texts (Nov. 10, 1965)," *DOL*, p. 273 [DOL 113]. The Church produced a thorough and quite fascinating document for translators: Vatican Consilium, "Instruction *Comme le prévoit*, on the translation of liturgical texts for celebrations with a congregation" (Jan. 25, 1969), in *DOL*, pp. 284-91 [DOL 123]. The "Instruction" is summarized and discussed in Ostdiek's article.

[51] Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), p. 21; Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, tr. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), p. 18; Larsen, "Language as Aural," p. 29.

does the content of its decisions.[52]

Turning now to the question of process, just as Church Latin has its stylistic idiosyncracies, so too does prayerbook Hebrew. Because certain poetic forms appear in the *siddur*, it is worth embarking at this point on a brief excursus on Hebrew poetry, of which Biblical poetry is the starting point. Scholars disagree over whether "Biblical poetry" even exists as a distinct category. James Kugel writes, "[W]hat is called biblical 'poetry' is a complex of heightening effects used in combinations and intensities that vary widely from composition to composition even within a single 'genre.'" As a result, "the same traits that seem to characterize Hebrew 'poetry' also crop up in what is clearly not poetry." Other scholars, led by Robert Alter, deny that "the strategies of biblical verse are simply part of a 'continuum' with what we designate as prose." Nevertheless, both Kugel and Alter agree that far and away the most important feature of Biblical poetry "is the strictly observed principle of parallelism on which it is organized...."[53]

When one is listening for sound, parallelism must take a back seat to rhythm and its formalized poetic version, meter. In Biblical poetry, however, as Adele Berlin remarks with some understatement, meter has "proved to be elusive." As Alter writes, "Some analysts, with an eye to the number of stresses in a verse, have sought to detect a system of

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[52] Eliezer Lieberman, "The Light of Splendor," in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2d ed. ["*JMW*"], ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 162. It should be noted that the Reformers were inspired, at least in part, by their concern that many congregants did not know Hebrew and so were in fact not participating at all in Jewish worship. See, e.g., Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 51.

[53] James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 94, 63; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. 6, 7; Adele Berlin, *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 14-15.

'meters' in biblical poetry ..., but there is little evidence that the counting of stresses was actually observed as a governing norm for a poem, in the way a Greek or Roman poet watches his iambs or hexameters throughout a poem, and so the term meter should probably be abandoned for biblical verse." Alter, however, does detect rhythm in Biblical poetry. He cites Benjamin Hrushovski, who, Alter tells us, has found that Biblical verse has a "semantic-syntactic-accentual rhythm.... The result is what Hrushovski defines as a 'free rhythm,' which is to say, 'a rhythm based on a cluster of changing principles....'"[54] Contrary to Alter, though, it does seem that this "rhythm" may be so "free" as to be a meaningless concept.

By the time the statutory prayers, such as those that are discussed in this thesis, were being prepared, new elements had moved their way into Hebrew verse. Rhyme, a more developed sense of rhythm, and alphabetical acrostics all appear in the benedictions that surround the *Shema*. Each of these presents issues for the translator. Should one use the occasional rhyme in a translation of what is otherwise not a rhyming poem, and so run the risk of appearing, as Hodgetts cautions against, simply to be writing bad prose? Is the Hebrew rhythm one that translates well into English, or should one use a cognate rhythm more suited to English speech (and verse) patterns? Are acrostics, a high art form in Hebrew, suitable for English liturgy? These and other questions can best be addressed in the context of a specific translation, and so we shall return to them in our notes on translating the benedictions.[55]

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[54] Berlin, *Biblical Poetry*, p. 15; Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, pp. 8-9.
[55] Berlin, *Biblical Poetry*, p. 26; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, pp. 18, 216, 220-21.

4. Aurality and orality in the writing of liturgy.

While some issues in liturgical translation and liturgical language are specific to particular religious traditions, such as Catholic or Jewish, there are some general observations that apply to any person seeking to compose, or even to convey, an effective liturgy. First, Kenneth Larsen correctly notes that the movement of the language must likewise move the worshippers. As he writes:

> Because it serves a communal function [liturgical language] must first be so designed that a community can be engaged and caught up in the flow of language and thus join in praising God. Not only, then, must it reflect the common language and purpose of the community, it must also be creative: it must so merge and unify the community that the community is one in praising God.

Whether the text is to be read responsively or *davened* or proclaimed, Larsen is correct to say that the community must be united, and that the flow of the language plays a necessary role in uniting it.[56]

Second, a text to be spoken must remain close to a spoken cadence. Gilbert Ostdiek makes this point when he says, "Those who work in the field of humanities and anthropology tell us that text is an 'inscribing medium,' while utterance/speech is an 'incorporating medium.' For written prayer texts to be effective, they have to approximate speech/utterance. The more they do, the easier it is for a presider to lift them off the page and bring them to life for the assembly." Again, although Ostdiek is writing from a proclamatory prayer tradition, his suggestion has perhaps even more power in a tradition where the congregation is reciting the words and trying themselves "to lift them off the page."[57]

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[56] Larsen, "Language as Aural," pp. 21-22.
[57] Ostdiek, "Principles of Translation," pp. 14-15.

Third, prayer texts that are to be recited regularly must show durability, even at the expense of originality. "Liturgical language, even newly composed texts, must always live close to the danger of belonging to the past. Texts composed for particular occasions may be intentionally striking or even strident, but texts for regular use week by week need to be capable of public recitiation, memorable and memorised, and even new texts will inevitably draw on older phrases and images."[58]

Finally, and related to this, the text need not always force the worshipper to think, it must, however, always enable the worshipper to feel God's presence. There is a special value to a fixed text that allows those who are reciting it to go beyond its words, to where their mind and heart will take them. Aidan Kavanagh found this in the Latin mass, and found in it likewise a way of breaking down elitism:

> The old liturgy's rigid and often incomprehensible constancy (e.g., the mass celebrated the same way whether in Dublin, Dubuque, Rome, or Saigon) freed many ordinary people to respond to and interiorize God's palpable, even mystifying, presence in a rich and tough egalitarianism that enhanced the social bond both ecclesially and culturally....

In Jewish tradition, this fixed form of prayer that nevertheless allows for, and even invites, a special connection to God beyond the words of the prayer goes under the headings of *keva* and *kavvanah*. It is to those topics, and others related to the development of the benedictions surrounding the *Shema*, that we now turn.[59]

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[58] James, Perham, and Stancliffe, "Image, Memory and Text," p. 35.
[59] Kavanagh, "Textuality," p. 75.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PERFORMATIVITY OF JEWISH PRAYER

A. Jewish Prayer in General

A visitor entering any sanctuary, whether Reform, Orthodox, or other, will be struck by the sheer number of prayer books that dominate the room. At the Western Wall, carts full of *siddurim* stand at the entrance, as though Jews cannot properly pray without the words of the prayer text in front of them. With this in mind, we are surprised, to say the least, by this statement in the Babylonian Talmud: כותבי ברכות כשורפי תורה, "those who write down benedictions are as if they had burned the Torah." The context of this statement places it in a legal framework far less dramatic than the words would at first reading suggest. Nevertheless, as Stefan Reif has noted, "[i]t is the current scholarly consensus that the wide variety of prayers and blessings that are attested in the talmudic literature were normally recited from memory, and transmitted orally, and that there was a distinct preference not to commit them to an authoritative, written text."[60]

Joseph Heinemann turned the attention of scholars to the relationship between what he called "the fixed and the fluid in Jewish prayer." According to Heinemann, while the Second Temple was still standing, Judaism introduced an innovation to the world: fixed, communal prayer. Previously, as attested in the Bible, individuals had prayed when the

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[60] Shabbat 115b. The Mishnah had stated that sacred writings, including the Torah, could be saved from fire even on Shabbat. Benedictions, however, even those containing substantial amounts of Torah text, could not be so saved. Hence, the rabbinic dictum here quoted because, as Rashi notes, "one could not save them on Shabbat." Stefan Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives in Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 124.

mood struck them or even at fixed times. Communal worship did include psalms and other liturgical hymns that accompanied the service; these were precursons to communal prayer. But in that service, the priests performed the sacrifices, while the congregants merely looked on. The psalms and hymns were only ancillary. The development of a fixed prayer service changed all that. First, as Heinemann writes, "[n]o longer does prayer depend on the mood of the worshiper or on his state of mind; no longer is it limited to occasions of joy or sorrow. It has become fixed, obligatory; it is recited regularly at set hours and in a certain, definite form and style." Second, this fixed prayer has become communal, not individual. Third, and related very much to this, the locus of power has shifted. It is this shift that Heinemann regards as "radical" and more:

> [U]nlike the sacrificial cult ... the new form of worship is to be performed by each individual, by the entire community of worshippers, wherever they may be. The people themselves become both the performers and the bearers of the divine service. The democratization of the divine worship, then, constitutes another *revolutionary* aspect of fixed, statutory prayer, and paves a new, more intimate and immediate way by which man may approach God and fulfill his divine obligations, anywhere and at any time.[61]

Those obligations could, in other words, be fulfilled in the synagogues as well as in the Temple, and indeed history would shortly remove the latter option. While the times of prayer were soon fixed, however, the content was anything but. The philological school of liturgical analysis that had preceded Heinemann, founded by Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), and later exemplified by Ismar Elbogen (1874-1943), had searched for original

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[61] Joseph Heinemann, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer," in Cohn and Fisch, eds., *Prayer in Judaism*, pp. 45-52; Heinemann and Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Literature of the Synagogue* (New York: Behrman House, 1975), p. 2; Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), p. 14 (emphasis added). For a critique of Heinemann and his form-critical school, see Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, pp. 1-19.

Jewish prayer, for an *Urtext*. To Heinemann, these philologists were on a fool's errand, because no one original prayer text had ever existed. Rather, only the general subject matter of a benediction was fixed from an early date. "Originally ... the worshipper was not obliged to use a fixed word-for-word formulation of any benediction, but on the contrary, would spontaneously 'compose' his own formulation on the spot while praying." Eventually, "certain phrases and idioms, as well as the mention of certain well-known subjects and items (over and above the primary subject of a particular benediction)" won out in this democratic marketplace of blessings. "It was at this stage that the halakic [sic] Sages fixed the mention of these subjects and the use of these idioms as obligatory. Each worshipper was still basically allowed to formulate his own benedictions so long as he 'mentioned in them' those items and idioms which, in the meantime, had become customary." This stage had been achieved by the end of the tannaitic or, at the latest, early in the amoraic period.[62]

By the late amoraic period, "it was no longer deemed sufficient merely to set down the particular items which had to be mentioned in specific benedictions, but it was also felt necessary to fix exact wordings of the opening formula, the concluding eulogy, and ultimately certain important phrases in the body of the benediction itself." After the compilation of the Talmud, the gaonate built on this standardization, in what Heinemann regards as a case of Babylonians behaving like Babylonians:

> The tendency toward a complete systematization and ordering of every detail of Jewish life -- both of the community and of the individual -- which is so typical of the Babylonian academies, was unquestionably at work in the field of liturgy, too. Moreover, it

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[62] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 51; Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 4.

> would certainly have been difficult for the Jewish communities of the Diaspora to continue the free improvisation of prayer formulations in Hebrew (since they were unwilling to abandon its use in prayer, in spite of the lenient rulings of the *Tannaim* ...). For this reason, liturgical innovation gradually gave way in Babylonia to standard formulations which could easily be memorized and, eventually, written down. These formulations were accepted as exclusively normative, and thus became additional factors which led ultimately to the punctilious, binding regulation of every single item in the *Siddur Tefillah*.[63]

This description of reverse entropy, this move from fluidity to rigidity, while accurate in its broad outlines, must be qualified in three important respects, all of which have a bearing on the subject of this thesis. First, as Lawrence Hoffman argues, the gaonic period was not unitary when it came to liturgical standardization. Although at the beginning of the period in the early sixth century, the geonim aggressively used standardization as a way of consolidating their power, by the end of the period in the early eleventh century, they could no longer do so. "By now local Jewish centers had arisen throughout the world, each independently pursuing its own pulsating life while ignoring the one-time titular heads, the geonim." Unwilling to risk losing financial support from these *novi homines*, the geonim told the communities what the latter wanted to hear. "[T]hey adopt[ed] a lenient stance toward liturgical diversity, liberally accepting differences in custom whenever possible." Changing external circumstances thus moderated rigidity, but as Hoffman notes, only slightly. At the end of the gaonic period "genuine canonization of liturgical practice had occurred."[64]

Second, even as the prayers were beginning to be fixed, fluidity was bubbling along

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[63] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 52, 287.
[64] L. Hoffman, *Canonization*, pp. 8-9 and *passim*. For a meditation on the idea of reverse entropy, see Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 66-69.

under the surface and broke free on occasion, notably in the form of poetry. A somewhat more detailed analysis of liturgical poetry will appear in the next section of this chapter, but for now suffice it to quote Heinemann on this subject:

> Even after specific versions were written and accepted by the vast majority of worshippers and communities, there was still not a complete halt to the dynamic an creative element in these fixed prayers. As soon as prayer had become routinized, the liturgical poem, or *piyyut* was born -- first in Palestine, and then in many other countries. It served to vary the routine, substituting for the one fixed text tens or even hundreds of continually varying ones. The early *piyyut* was not thought of as an addition to a fixed text, but a substitute for it.[65]

In addition to varying text throughout the known world and in Palestine itself, a third reaction to rigidity was also occurring, and would in many ways have the most lasting impact. This has taken the form of focusing not on the pray-er's words but on his or her heart. On the one side was *keva*: in this case, praying a fixed text, often with fixed gestures. On the other side was *kavvanah*, intention, what the worshipper himself or herself brought to the fixed text. Interestingly, although *kavvanah* is presumably the antidote to rigidity, its own history has been one in which the struggle between fluidity and rigidity has been played out. Because that history yields some interesting insights into the performative nature of Jewish prayer, and the importance of orality to this, a brief review is in order here.

Seth Kadish has recently written a masterful study of that history. Toward the beginning of that book, Kadish quotes this dialogue from the Palestinian Talmud to show that lack of concentration has long been a problem in Jewish prayer:

> Rabbi Hiyya said, 'I never concentrate during prayer in all

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[65] Heinemann, "Fixed and Fluid," pp. 49-50.

my days! Once I wanted to concentrate, but I thought about who will meet the king first, the *Arkafta* [a Persian high official] or the Exilarch.'

Shemuel said, 'I count clouds [during prayer].'

Rabbi Bun bar Hiyya said, 'I count the layers of stones in the wall [while I pray].'

Rabbi Matnaya said, 'I am grateful to my head, because it bows by itself when I reach "*Modim*"!'[66]

Since prayer is conversation with God, it stands to reason that the worshipper should be aware of what he or she is praying, instead of concentrating on the clouds or the Exilarch. Accordingly, Maimonides held that prayer without concentration was no prayer. By the time of the *Shulhan Arukh*, however, this position had been reversed. It was, it seemed, more important for Jews to be praying without concentrating than to be concentrating without praying. So, Joseph Caro could write (Orakh Hayyim 98:2) "that 'in our time' we never neglect *tefilla* for lack of concentration because 'we don't concentrate much in prayer.'"[67]

Leaving aside the obligatory nature of *kavvanah*, the question remains of what the term means. Kadish proposes three answers, depending on how one thinks of prayer. Developed first and persisting in the face of the other two is what he calls "simple prayer", i.e., conversing with God. "For simple prayer, *kavvana* [sic] means simple sincerity. It means that the *mitpallel* [pray-er] means what he says to God and feels it very deeply."[68]

A second form of prayer is what Kadish calls "rational." Rationalists are more than a bit skeptical about simple prayer, because they typically do not see God as a person who responds to particular requests and intervenes in human affairs. One could think of

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[66] Seth Kadish, *Kavvana: Directing the Heart in Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), p. 7.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30. The Maimonides reference is to *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefilla* 4:15 (כל תפלה שאינה בכוונה אינה תפלה).

[68] Kadish, *Kavvana*, p. 229.

Maimonides and Gersonides. Rationalists, therefore, must reconfigure prayer and with it, *kavvanah*. They do so by using prayer not to speak to God but to discipline the self. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenborg, the nineteenth century author of *Iyyun Tefilla*, for example, attempts to show that we pray not to ask God to intervene on our behalf but to influence ourselves so that we are better able to understand what God wants of us. "[T]he kind of help one asks for from God is to help him in his struggle against the Evil Inclination. Mecklenborg does not mention worldly, physical requests." Kadish sums up the rational position by writing, "For rational prayer, *kavvana* [sic] means that a person thinks about the moral or philosophical lessons contained in the prayers, without letting his mind wander."[69]

There are two obvious difficulties with the rational approach. First, it makes the words dispensable. The Spanish philosopher Bahya ben Joseph ibn Pakuda saw the text as necessary only because people need a guide. If they can grow out of it, however, the *siddur*, with all of its value as *keva*, will be lost. Second, it loses the performative aspect of prayer. Adin Steinsaltz tells of meeting a friend and asking what the friend means by *kavvanah*.

> He explained that his intent during prayer was to understand the connection between one sentence and the next, between one word and another, between the various sections, and so on. He thinks about and concentrates on these matters -- and this he terms *kavvanah* in prayer. I told him, rather shortly, that these are things which I do on *Shabbat* after eating dinner, and that sometimes I study these problems and look into books which deal with and explain prayer in this manner. But to regard the analysis of the text (which is what his *kavvanah* amounted to, though he did not use this expression) as a proper form of devotion for, say, the service of the High Holy Days -- this I cannot agree with or accept as

[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 229

kavvanah in the true sense.[70]

Reacting against the threat that rationalism posed to the language of prayer, the kabbalists elevated that language to an almost divine status. The Kabbalah "gave every prayer (in later versions, every *letter* of every prayer!) an 'essential' meaning and a higher purpose than just 'self-training.' Every detail became significant." Kadish refers to this as "mystical prayer," although, as we shall see later, it is a particular branch of mysticism.[71]

The sixteenth century mystics of the Kabbalah, being good neo-Platonists, regarded the physical as inferior to the spiritual. Because prayer is "entirely meditative and non-physical (besides the fact that the pray-er moves his lips) ... the Zohar viewed it as the primary service of God." Through prayer, the pray-er repairs the *sefirot*, God's emanations, bringing them into harmony. Physical *mitzvot* also effect these repairs, but prayer does so more efficaciously and even, in part of the theory, in a qualitatively different way. Each prayer has its own *kavvanah*, because each has a different way of acting on the *sefirot*. As a result, Kadish says, "[w]hen it comes to mystical prayer we speak of *kavvanot*, in the plural, instead of *kavvana*. This is because the true depth of kabbalistic prayer is in its details." As the concepts developed, not just each prayer but each individual *letter* had its own *kavvanah*. This produced a rarefied view of prayer:

> Using numeric and other hints, the pray-er must keep in mind what every single letter means for the *sefirot* when a word leaves his mouth. Obviously, this could only be accomplished by special, rare individuals with extraordinary memories and gifts of concentration. Thus, in Lurianic kabbala, 'true' prayer became more of an elitist activity than ever before.[72]

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[70] *Ibid.*, p. 154; Adin Steinsaltz, "Education for Prayer," in Cohn and Fisch, *Prayer in Judaism*, p. 181 (also quoted in part in Kadish, *Kavvana*, p. 184).
[71] Kadish, *Kavvana*, pp. 154, 229-30.
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 229, 160.

By the eighteenth century, the shortcomings of the Lurianic system for a Jewish world filled, as all worlds are, with average people was becoming clear to the Hasidim of Eastern Europe and to their opponents, the *Mitnaggedim*. Each developed solutions, but according to Kadish, that of the Hasidim was the more innovative. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of hasidism, believed that the essence of kabbala "was *devekut*, attaching oneself to God through prayer." As Kadish notes, this belief itself moves away from Isaac Luria's position: "Emotional attachment to God finds it difficult to coexist with concentration on intricate combinations of *kavvanot*." Nevertheless, the Besht called on worshippers to develop an "attachment to the letters" of the prayers. But this attachment differed substantially from what Luria had expected. "The Hasid visualizes the letters when he prays, 'uniting' them into words. *This* kavvana *can remain the same for any word in any prayer*. In this kind of *kavvana*, like [Luria's] *kavvanot*, the plain meaning of the words is ignored. But this *kavvana* is one that can be achieved by a much wider range of people, and also allows one to become attached to God." In the generations after the Baal Shem Tov, "even the 'attachment to the letters' was dropped, and hasidim were told to pray 'simply,' concentrating on the plain meaning of the words. But the idea that the individual letters and words affect the sefirotic universe was never dropped, and continues to be central to this day."[73]

The idea of mystical prayer, as developed through Hasidism, is profoundly opposed to translation. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the *halakhah* is clear in holding that certain prayers, at least, may be prayed in translation. Nevertheless, the Hasidim -- and for that matter the *Mitnaggedim* as well -- held "that every Jew, regardless

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[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66 (emphasis added).

of how educated he is (as long as he knows the Hebrew alphabet) must always say every word of every prayer in Hebrew whenever he can, from beginning to end. He may not skip a single prayer, nor may he substitute a translation for any of them." These Hasidim, of course, knew that the *halakhah* was not so strict. "However, concern for the profound kabbalistic effects of every Hebrew word was enough for the statement to be made that under normal circumstances no part of the siddur may be skipped, and that prayer in Hebrew without *kavvana* is preferred to prayer in translation with *kavvana*."[74]

More generally, none of the three views of prayer that Kadish sets out -- simple, rational, and mystical -- completely captures the illocutionary effect of prayer that is discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, although there are instructive elements in each. Simple prayer, with its emphasis on the plain meaning of the words of prayer, risks seeing communication too much in terms of content, and not enough in terms of the prayer-experience, the experience of establishing a connection with a community and with God. The rational view, which in one sense is least wedded to the words of prayer, nevertheless expects the pray-er to analyze prayer texts. Steinsaltz's critique of this focus on semantics is telling. Finally, the "mystical" view, as developed through Hasidism, has the advantage that by concentrating on the act of praying itself, it allows the worshipper to enter a more affective experience of prayer. As Kadish says, for the hasidim, "[k]abbalistic *kavvana* ... became a psychological effort far more than an intellectual demand...." Nevertheless, by continuing to focus on the words and the letters of prayer, Hasidism gives more power to the text, and less to the prayer experience.[75]

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[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 170-71.
[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

In the dialogue from the Palestinian Talmud that was quoted above, Rabbi Matnaya is grateful to his head, because it bows by itself at the appropriate moment. This is seen as a confession of his failure at praying. But perhaps we can see something different in it. Perhaps saying the words of prayer, letting the mouth do its work, letting the head bow at its due time, is precisely what we should be doing when we pray. Perhaps, too, that need not be combined with concentration on the words of the prayers (as in simple prayer) or on what prayer means (as in rational prayer) or on the letters (as in "mystical" prayer). Perhaps prayer works best precisely when the mind does wander, when it moves to the stones and the clouds, when it might be free to reach its own union with God. It is just possible, in other words, that the mystical desire for *devekut* can best be achieved not through effort, but through its opposite. In that case, the words of the prayer will simply provide the conditions for true praying. This seems to have been the opinion of an earlier group of mystics, a group that had a profound influence on the shaping of the benedictions of the Shema.

B. The Benedictions of the *Shema*

The Shema and its attendant benedictions are recited (קריאת שמע) twice daily, in the morning and in the evening prayers. As these appear in the traditional Ashkenazic siddur, the morning and evening recitations differ as follows:

Morning

1. Call to prayer (ברכו)
2. 1st benediction, concerning creation (יוצר)
3. 2nd benediction, concerning revelation (ברכת התורה, or אהבה רבה)
4. Three paragraphs from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-8, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41)
5. 3rd benediction, concerning redemption (גאולה, or אמת ויציב)

Evening

1. Call to prayer (ברכו)
2. 1st benediction, concerning nightfall (מעריב ערבים)
3. 2nd benediction, concerning revelation (אהבת עולם)
4. Three paragraphs from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-8, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41)
5. 3rd benediction, concerning redemption (אמת ואמונה)
6. 4th benediction, a prayer for safety at night (השכיבנו)

The Mishnah had already prescribed the different number of benedictions in the morning and evening prayers. The extent to which the texts of those benedictions are coextensive with the current ones has occupied a substantial amount of scholarship.[76]

A detailed historical analysis of how the prayers came to take their current form in the Ashkenazic and Sephardic rites is beyond the scope of this thesis. A few points should be made, however. First, without the blessings, the recitation of the *Shema* alone would probably not constitute prayer. As Heinemann and Jakob J. Petuchowski remark, "In prayer, man addresses God; in these Bible passages God addresses Israel.... [T]he Shema [sic] could not have become a prayer-service were it not for the benedictions preceding and following it, in which the worshiper gives praise and thanks to God and explicitly identifies himself with, and responds to, the Shema itself." Hence, the benedictions themselves are a particularly appropriate field of study in a thesis about the prayer experience.[77]

Second, as Heinemann writes,

> Throughout the liturgy we find repeatedly juxtaposed the three basic and complementary motifs of Creation -- Revelation (viz. the giving of the *Torah*) -- Redemption, which in the Rabbinic world

[76] M. Berakhot 1:1-2, 1:4.
[77] Heinemann and Petuchowski, *Literature of the Synagogue*, p. 17. A similar point is attributed to Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ("when he prays, a person talks to God, while when he studies Torah, God talks to him"). Kadish, *Kavvana*, p. 48.

> view mark respectively the beginning of the history of mankind, the critical turning-point in the progression of that history, and the ultimate goal and final destination of the historical continuum. This 'triad' is represented, e.g., by the three benedictions which surround the *shema* in the morning...

The first benediction, the יוצר, as Heinemann and Petuchowski note "is not related to the Shema itself, but gives praise to God for renewing sunlight in the morning and thereby, renewing creation itself; it is, in fact, a typical and appropriate morning prayer." By contrast, the second benediction, אהבה רבה, is directly related to the *Shema*, in that it praises God for giving Israel the Torah, the source of the *Shema*. This giving of the Torah is, of course, God's revelation to Israel. The benediction after the *Shema* is in two parts. The first acknowledges the faith of the worshippers in what they have just repeated from the Torah; they recognize that it is אמת ויציב, "true and established." The second part deals explicitly with the redemption from Egypt, which in turn is a type of all future redemptions. Any translation, even one focused more on pragmatics than semantics, must take account of these underlying themes, and of the central images and motifs by which those themes are developed.[78]

It should be noted that these themes appear more clearly in the morning than in the evening service. The second and third benedictions are the same in substance as in the morning service. The first benediction, מעריב ערבים, however, "instead of stressing the renewal of light in the morning, emphasizes that God brings night and darkness as well... Since the motif of Creation is not emphasized in the first evening benediction, the evening series as a whole does not feature the association ... of the ideas of creation, revelation, and redemption..." This leads Heinemann and Petuchowski to conclude that "the morning

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[78] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 33; Heinemann and Petuchowski, *Literature of the Synagogue*, pp. 17-20.

series of benedictions is the original one, and was later adapted for use in the evening as well." The final evening benediction, השכיבנו,

> in contrast to the preceding three, is a petition for personal protection from night dangers, when a man is asleep and off guard. This prayer was added because the recital of the Amidah [sic], with its manifold petitions, was originally not obligatory at night and the Shema and its benedictions constituted the entire evening service; this was felt to be insufficient -- a prayer-service must, of necessity, contain petitions as well as praises -- and thus an additional prayer was attached to the evening Shema service.

The petitionary nature of this prayer suggests that its register in English might be somewhat different from those of the other benedictions.[79]

Third, we must keep in mind not just the content but the antiquity of the *Shema*, for its very age gives it a special power. Along with the *Amidah*, the *Shema* is Judaism's most ancient prayer. We know from Josephus that this liturgical unit existed during the time of the Temple. Heinemann cites the evidence of the Talmuds, which he finds no reason to disbelieve, to contend that אמת ויציב and אהבה רבה, at least, were recited by the priests. On the other hand, Stefan Reif writes that "the lack of conclusive evidence about the content of the *shema* itself makes it unlikely that its liturgical setting has been so far defined, and even when benedictions did begin to attach themselves to its recitation in, say, the latter part of the first Christian century, their oral nature and lack of standardisation meant that they could be no more than simple and brief." Even from this, however, we know that parts of the benedictions, at least, are quite old. Other parts come from a later time.[80]

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[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
[80] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 16; Hoffman, *Canonization*, p. 24; Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 129; Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, pp. 83-84.

Many of these accretions are poetic. Elbogen, for example, following Zunz, argues that the יוצר benediction was originally quite terse (a version attested in the prayerbook of Saadia Gaon and in various Geniza fragments), and that the text we now have contains many later poetic additions. Elbogen distinguished sharply between poetic additions placed in the "statutory prayers" (*Shema* and *Amidah*) and the later *piyyutim*. Subsequent scholarship, including that discussed by the editor of the recent English edition of Elbogen's treatise, has erased this clear distinction, but it is certainly true that the poetry in the benedictions surrounding the Shema lacks the sophisticated flourishes of later *piyyutim*.[81]

Later *piyyutim* are complex to the point, often, of incomprehensibility. This description does not apply to the poetic insertions into the benedictions of the Shema. For these, some of a set of rules that Heinemann developed for the *Hoshannot* would apply. The *Hoshannot* are liturgical poems recited during *Sukkot*, of a date as early as or earlier than the poetic portions of our benedictions. Among the sylistic criteria developed by Heinemann are the following:

1) "All make use of one or more of the following stylistic devices (and no others):

a) Use of simple acrostics (not, for example, those that use the letters of the author's name);

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[81] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, pp. 16-24, 219-21; Jefim Schirman, "Hebrew Liturgical Poetry and Christian Hymnology," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 44 (1953-54): 129; Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, pp. 81-82 ("Some of the oldest Hebrew prayers have indeed been classified as *piyyutim*, ... a view that would make that genre of Jewish liturgical expression as old, if not older, than the more prosaic Hebrew texts that are characteristic of the rabbinic prayerbook.").

b) "A 'meter' which is constructed on the basis of an equal number of words on each line";

c) "A primitive form of rhyme, achieved through the use of the same grammatical suffix (possessive suffix, plural suffix, and so forth), at the end of each line (this is the weakest form of rhyme possible in the Hebrew language, as it lacks all variation...)."

2. "These poems lack the typical linguistic characteristics of most *piyyutim*, such as obscure phraseology, allusions to Rabbinic literature, and frequent use of epithets in place of proper nouns; nor do they employ artificial grammatical forms."[82]

Later sections of this thesis will discuss these various devices, and will also consider the wisdom of using them in English. At this point, it is worth noting merely that most of Heinemann's characteristics apply to the poetry in the benedictions that are the subject of this thesis. The one that does not, at least not consistently, is 1b. The benedictions have more of a sense of "meter" than Heinemann finds in the *Hoshannot*. At the very least, as Elbogen notes, "[t]hese are the first signs of rhythm that began to spring up in this period."[83]

As to the *Hoshannot*, Heinemann finds in their "primitiv[ity]" evidence that they are not "artistic compositions *per se*." Rather, "they were 'composed' at the time of their recitation by way of improvisation." Perhaps the same applies to the poetry in the benedictions around the *Shema*, but there is reason to think otherwise. For it is widely agreed that the *Yordei Merkavah* mystics inserted this poetry into the benedictions.[84]

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[82] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 140-41.
[83] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 216.
[84] *Ibid.*; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 18; Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, pp. 154-56.

The *Yordei Merkavah* mystics (the name refers to "going down [into] the chariot" of Ezekiel's vision) flourished in Palestine at least in the third and fourth centuries, and Heinemann contends that their principal liturgical work dates back to, and perhaps even before, the Mishnaic period. They are responsible, inter alia, for the קדושת, including the קדושה in the יוצר. As Hoffman writes, they composed liturgy designed to enable them to go into a trance. His description of their prayers is worth quoting at length, for it reflects much of what this thesis is attempting to do:

> Rhythm, repetition, sound, elaborate praise of God, without, however, burdening the mind with conceptualizations of the deity being praised; these were some of the formal characteristics that enabled the mystic to escape the fetters of mundane reality and to enter the world of the numinous. The last-mentioned characteristic is especially significant. Words in prayer were not always intended to convey information about reality. The very reverse was often the goal. The mind was to be freed from the normal strictures of thought, so that, in the extreme instance a trance might set in. We deal with a form of mantra. True, these mantras are not strings of totally meaningless syllables, but they are mantras nevertheless, in that otherwise meaningful words are used in meaningless ways; that is, the sentences they constitute do follow the normal rules of syntax and are thus translatable into conceptually valid statements, but their function is irrelevant to their message, and their cognitive content is not allowed to intrude upon their rhythmic affective function. Indeed, the theologically disparate concept-signifying words, *kadosh* and *barukh*, often appear interchangeably in *merkavah* liturgy, since their normal 'meanings' -- we would say, 'holy' and 'blessed' -- were irrelevant to a liturgical experience that presented words for purposes of their rhythm, their affect, not their sense-values, their dictionary-defined equivalents.[85]

While the translation of the יוצר that will be set forth in chapter five is not designed to produce a trance, it is intended, in some small way, to let the worshipper leave the world

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[85] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 24; Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, p. 155. See also Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, p. 111.

of the concept-signifiers, and enter the world of rhythm and affect.

As to the primitivity of the prayers here, it should be noted that Gershom Scholem describe the *hekhalot* literature produced by the *Merkavah* mystics in the geonic period as possessing an "intense solemnity of style [that] is unsurpassed in Hebrew hymnology. In the strangely vacuous solemnity and the august repetitiousness of their diction they reflect marvelously the religious mood of those who conceived them. They are, indeed, outstanding paradigms of what Rudolf Otto has called 'Numinous Hymns.'" It is possible, of course, that the mystics learned their craft in the centuries that intervened between the composition of the קדושה and that of the *hekhalot* hymns. It is also possible that the fairly simple poetic style of the קדושה is precisely what was needed to produce the desired effect.[86]

A word about the content of *Merkavah* theology is necessary here, because it appears so powerfully in their compositions. In Hoffman's words, theirs "was a cosmology that pictured our world in the center, with seven heavens surrounding it. In the furthermost heaven sat God enthroned in a chariot of glory, surrounded by angels giving praise, in the very words of the *Kedushah*. Worship's task was to transport the mystics to the seventh heaven, where they would join the heavenly band of laudators." Such "angelological, eschatological, and mystical themes," according to Reif, "appear in far greater number in the books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha [Second Temple period] than perhaps in any other period of Jewish history and seem to have flourished in an ever-increasing degree as political and social conditions deteriorated." In this time of ferment, the recitation of the *Shema* may well have been seen as a way to ward off evil

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[86] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 21.

Reif indeed claims that it was recited in the Temple period "as a form of amulet," and that such usage appears as late as fifth century Babylonia. "What appears to have happened by this time is that there had been a move toward the incorporation of elements of the mystical into the general body of the more authoritative "[87] These angelogical materials have been excised in most Reform prayerbooks; whether there is now a place for them in an age less sure of the power of rational science to explain the world will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

According to Heinemann, the liturgy "generally avoid[s] angelology and mystical descriptions," and accepts them only in rare circumstances. Hoffman disputes this reified conception of liturgical development, but it is certainly true that normative Jewish writing rarely refers to trances, mantras, or indeed, rhythm, sound, and affect. Nevertheless, it is also true that those elements have made their way into the liturgy. There may, yet, be a place in Jewish prayer for those whose heads bow by themselves, whose thought are in the clouds.[88]

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[87] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, p. 155; Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, pp. 44-45, 83, 110.

[88] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 36; Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, p. 157

CHAPTER FOUR:
ORALITY AND PERFORMATIVITY IN PRAYERBOOK TRANSLATIONS

A. Setting the Scene: The Debate Between Rambam and Ra'avad.

A thousand years ago, the terms were set for how Jews would regard translations of prayers. As early as the Talmud (Berakhot 13a), the rabbis had debated whether the *Shema* could be recited in any language, or had to be said in Hebrew. Throughout the tractate קריעת שמע of the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides deals at some length with the manner of reciting prayers in Hebrew -- the importance of proper pronunciation, when to pause, and so forth. He also, however, holds that the Shema can be recited in other tongues, and sets out the manner in which this is to be done: קורא אדם את שמע בכל לשון שיהיה מבינה. והקורא בכל לשון צריך להזדהר מדברי שבוש שבאותו הלשון ומדקדק באותו הלשון כמו שמדקדק בלשון הקדש.[89]

Rabbi Abraham ben David, the Ra'avad, disagrees with the Rambam here, as he does so often. Where Maimonides requires precision in the translation, the Ra'avad first disagrees that the *Shema* can, in fact, be recited in any language other than Hebrew. If one were so to recite it, however, he would not need to worry about matters such as pronunciation, because he would not truly be reciting the *Shema*. Rather, he would be speaking an interpretation, and while, as Seth Kadish notes, a prayer might require exactness, an interpretation does not.[90]

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[89] *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Kri'at Shema* 2:10 ("One may recite the *Shema* in any language that he understands. One reciting in [any] other language must be careful about confusing [his] words in that language; and he should be as precise in that language as he is in the Holy Language.").

[90] Kadish, *Kavvana*, pp. 314-15.

We have seen that Maimonides prevails in claiming that the *Shema* can be recited in any language. More interesting, here, however, is the differing interpretation these two rabbis give to the meaning of prayer in the vernacular. For Maimonides, vernacular prayer is truly prayer. It must be treated as scrupulously as Hebrew prayer. To use philosophical terminology, the form of the prayer prevails over such accidents as language. For the Ra'avad, only Hebrew prayer is true prayer; that language is essential to the very form of prayer. This being the case, the vernacular rendering lives free of many of the limitations of the Hebrew, for it lacks the efficacy of the Hebrew.[91]

Translators and those thinking about translation have had to wrestle with this conflict. Can Jews truly pray in a language other than Hebrew? If they do, should the translation help them pray, or can it only aid them in understanding the Hebrew that they are not praying but should be?

B. Prayerbook Translation: The European Background.

This study will focus on American translations of the prayers into English. Those translations, however, can only be understood in the light of the agenda set by the European translators, and in particular by those who sought in the nineteenth century to reform the Jewish experience of prayer. As has been noted, despite the general agreement that Maimonides had correctly stated the law allowing for translations, for much of Jewish history the community leadership frowned upon the practice of praying in the vernacular.

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[91] *Ibid.* The *Tur* cites Rambam and adds that one needs to ensure that he makes his listener hear what has gone out of his mouth (וצריך להשמיע לאזנו מה שמוציא מפיו). *Orakh Hayyim* ("O.H."), sec. 64b. The *Shulkhan Arukh* (O.H. 62:2) makes clear that the law follows the Rambam here.

Nevertheless, Jews have been translating their liturgy since at least the Middle Ages. These early translations were quite limited, however. In the first place, they appear to have been intended to guarantee that the less educated Jews would understand the Hebrew that they were reciting. Jews did not pray in the vernacular in synagogues. Second, the translations were made into Jewish languages that used Hebrew script and some Hebrew words and grammar, such as Yiddish, Judaeo-Arabic, and Judaeo-Spanish. Purely secular languages do not appear in the prayerbooks until the sixteenth century, when the *siddur* was first translated into Spanish. Italian, French, German, Dutch, and other editions followed. By the nineteenth century, it was normal to see prayerbooks containing parallel Hebrew and vernacular texts, and to hear public prayer in a language other than Hebrew.[92]

Vernacular prayer came into its own only with the Reform Movement in Germany in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The early Reformers campaigned for prayer in German as part of their larger project of revolutionizing the esthetics of Jewish worship. As Stefan Reif puts it, they wanted "the sights, sounds and general atmosphere of the synagogue [to] be a matter of pride rather than embarrasment, that is to say, more akin to ecclesiastical formality than to what had become the more improvised nature of Jewish worship." Language was intimately related to this effort, because the Reformers believed that people could not be expected to sit quietly and respectfully in prayer if they did not understand what they were hearing, much less saying. The Hamburg Temple held the first systematic Reform worship services. Its 1817 constitution makes explicit the connection between comprehensible language and Reform esthetics:

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[92] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, pp. 279-80. See also, Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 299.

> Since public worship has for some time been neglected by so many, *because of the ever decreasing knowledge of the language in which alone it has until now been conducted*, and also because of many other shortcomings which have crept in at the same time -- the undersigned ... plan to arrange in this city ... a dignified and well-ordered ritual according to which the worship service shall be conducted on the Sabbath and holy days and on other solemn occasions.... Specifically, there shall be introduced at such services *a German sermon*, and choral singing to the accompaniment of an organ.[93]

Indeed, the Reform esthetic was so powerful that in the nineteenth century an entire literature of *Synagogenurdnungen* arose. The German term, according to the historian of European prayerbook reform, Jakob Petuchowski, carries "implications both of authoritative pronouncements and of the order and decorum which the Reformers wanted to see in the synagogue." Consistent with that order and decorum, the previous lay character of Jewish worship gave way to a focus on the cantor or rabbi as leaders of public prayer. When a Jew walked into a synagogue, he (the focus being on men) was told that "[h]e ... must immediately go to his seat, and remain in it as quietly as possible." Once there, "[i]n order not to disturb the devotion of the congregation, everyone present must pray in silence. By no means must they audibly pray with [the cantor], let alone sing with him." The congregants were to open their mouths only for responsive readings.[94]

The desire for order and decorum did not just affect the Reformers; it permeated the *Zeitgeist* of nineteenth century German Jewry. Even Samson Raphael Hirsch, the

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[93] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, p. 270; "Constitution of the Hamburg Temple" in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *JMW*, p. 161 (emphases added).

[94] Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), pp. 105, 110, 113 ("go to his seat" -- from "The Regulation of the Worship Service for the Synagogues in the Kingdom of Wuerttemberg," 1838), 120 ("pray in silence" -- from *Synagogenordnung* of Mayence, 1853).

founder of Neo-Orthodoxy, "imported into the Orthodox synagogue various elements of liturgical reform... There was to be no noise, conversation or disturbance before, during or after services [and] the congregational reader was not to be accompanied by the chants of individuals...."[95]

Unlike the Orthodox, however, the Reformers highlighted language in their effort to increase order and decorum. We see this in the Hamburg Temple constitution, and we see it even more clearly in the 1823 *Judenordnung* of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar:

> The prayers (including the few *piyutim* and *selihoth* which have still been retained after a careful sifting) must [with limited exceptions] *be recited in their entirety in German only* -- for the sake of true devotion and with suitable decorum. The sing-song tone which had heretofore been generally used for the recitation of Hebrew prayers is strictly prohibited. So is the loud repetition of the prayers, the over-hasty responding in responsive readings, as well as the swaying to and fro, and the murmuring.

Hebrew praying needed rules to ensure decorum and dignity. German praying, by contrast, did not, presumably because the authorities could not conceive of its being recited in a "sing-sone tone." It seemed that the vernacular inherently lent itself to the goal of the Reformers.[96]

On one level, as the Hamburg Temple constitution suggests, praying in German was about comprehension, about the idea that if one understood the language, one would worship not just respectfully but also respectably. Coming out of the Age of Enlightenment, it seemed only rational that people should know what they were saying.

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[95] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, p. 282. Hirsch applied these restrictions throughout his entire rabbinate, including in his more conservative phase in Frankfurt. Of course, Hirsch was in many other ways as well very much a product of his time. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 77-79.

[96] Quoted in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 125 (emphasis in original).

Something else, however, was in play among those who sought to worship in German, something that can be glimpsed in the debates at the Frankfort rabbinic conference.[97]

Held in 1845, the Reform conference brought thirty-one rabbis together to address a number of issues, including the place of Hebrew in the prayer service. Abraham Geiger, already on his way to becoming the leading figure in German Reform, spoke in favor of the use of German. The conference reporter noted his words:

> The speaker considers it desirable to pray in the mother tongue, which is the language of the soul. Our deepest emotions and feelings, our most sacred relationships, our most sublime thoughts find their expression in it. He feels compelled to admit that as regards himself -- although Hebrew is his first mother tongue which he has learnt before other languages, and a language he knows thoroughly -- a German prayer strikes a deeper chord than a Hebrew prayer.[98]

Zacharias Frankel, who was to leave the Conference over this issue and eventually to become "the ideological father of present-day Conservative Judaism," took issue with these remarks:

> If Geiger goes on to claim that a German prayer strikes a deeper chord in him than a Hebrew one, he makes a purely subjective statement. Most speakers of Hebrew will feel differently, because this language is a stronger expression of religious emotions; as witnesses, the speaker calls upon the majority of Rabbis assembled here, who are familiar with the Hebrew language.[99]

Joseph Kahn, chief rabbi of Trier, in turn responded to Frankel:

> I certainly wish to retain the Hebrew language for the time being, but ... [o]ur ideal ... should be the establishment of a purely *German*

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[97] On the vernacular and reason, see Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, p. 271.
[98] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 136-37; "Hebrew as the Language of Jewish Prayer," in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *JMW*, p. 179.
[99] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 84; "Hebrew as the Language of Jewish Prayer," in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *JMW*, p. 180.

> service.... Our *schools* ought to teach in Hebrew; the service, however, aims at edification, elevation, instruction; it should not be turned into a means for the preservation of the Hebrew language.... The *shema* ... sounds much more religious to the German when spoken in German, and much more edifying to the Englishman when spoken in English, than when spoken in unintelligible Hebrew.[100]

While Kahn speaks in terms of intelligibility, he, Geiger, and Frankel are all interested in something more than whether the language of prayer can be understood for its sense. They are concerned about "edification," "striking a deeper chord," "expression of religious emotions" -- they sound, in short, like what they are, products of Romanticism. The defenders of German and of Hebrew prayer battled on common ground; they both recognized that the language of prayer is a language of affect more than of cognition, and they only disagreed about which language was more affective. The Reformers who held services in the house of Jacob Beer in Berlin from 1817 to 1823 called for the use of German in the prayers in almost mystical terms:

> *Holy* is the language in which God once gave the Law to our fathers, and the divine teaching by the mouth of His faithful servant, Mosheh.... But seven times more holy unto us is the language which belongs to the present and to the soil whence we have sprung forth, ... the language in which a mother first greets her new-born child, ... the language which unites us with our fellow-men in happy fellowship or in serious business, the language, finally, in which our philanthropic and just king speaks to us, in which he proclaims his law to us....

This statement employs typical Romantic tropes, such as the emphases on native soil and on origins in general. It uses the language not of intellectual persuasion, but of feeling. All of the remarks quoted here show that the Reform Movement has from its inception regarded prayer as performative, as transforming worshippers through the prayer

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[100] *Ibid.*, p. 181 (emphases in original).

experience, and that the language of prayer has been an integral part of that process. Like the *Merkavah* mystics, the early Reformers knew that the words of prayer had to convey meanings beyond the semantic. The Reform Jew of today is the heir to their insight.[101]

While this thesis is not in a position to assess whether the German translations of the prayers lived up to the ideals that have been discussed here, it is at least interesting to note that some of the liturgists showed concern for the way the German sounded. Joseph von Maier, author of an 1861 Stuttgart prayerbook, claimed to have included "a totally new and, in part, metrical *translation*." In 1910, Caesar Seligmann, Liberal rabbi in Frankfort, published a prayerbook that, according to Petuchowski, "is distinguished by the poetic quality of its German paraphrases...." Seligmann himself comes down on the side of Maimonides side in regarding vernacular prayer as true prayer, yet also can be counted with the Ra'avad in believing that vernacular prayer must always have a certain freedom from the Hebrew original. He writes about the guidelines he uses in

> the translation or paraphrase of the Hebrew prose passages. The German translations should absolutely make the impression of original prayers, since they are, after all, meant for those who do not know Hebrew. To achieve this purpose, it was not only necessary to avoid Hebrew constructions in German, but, in many cases, the whole tenor of the Hebrew prayer had to be given up. Therefore, the German paraphrase is largely to be regarded as an empathizing with, and a free rendering of, the original.

The issues that Seligmann was facing were also being addressed across the ocean, by the

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[101] Quoted in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 135 (emphasis in original). For information about the services at Beer's house, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 46. The quintessential Romantic statement about the importance of origins is probably from "The Prelude," where Wordsworth writes, "The child is father to the man." The comparison between the *Merkavah* mystics and the early Reformers is made in Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, pp. 161-63.

authors of English language liturgies for American Jews.[102]

C. The Benedictions of the *Shema* in American Prayerbooks, 1855 - 1975.

A good place to begin an examination of American liturgy in English is with Isaac Mayer Wise's *Minhag America*. Wise's prayerbook was not the first to contain English prayers. In 1830, the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, South Carolina, issued a slim volume of prayer entirely in English. It was something of an anomaly, however, as it followed the Sephardi liturgy, not the Ashkenazi rite. It also preceded the rabbinic conferences in mid-century Germany and so was uninfluenced by the decisions reached there. The first mainstream post-conference liturgy with English in America was *Seder Tefillah*, the 1855 product of Rabbi Leo Merzbacher of Temple Emanu-El of New York.[103]

Wise, however, can claim to have founded American Reform Judaism, and his prayerbook became one of the principal liturgies in the United States in its time. That time began with the first edition in 1857, and continued with its revision in 1872. With his keen sense of marketing, Wise prepared translations into both German (the language of many Reform Jews) and English.[104]

Michael Meyer has described Wise's English version as "rather wooden," a characterization that is not overly harsh. Wise's translation of the יוצר provides a good

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[102] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 160, 191, 199.
[103] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 231-32; Eric L. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song: Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Pr., 1997), pp. 137-45. For excerpts containing some of Merzbacher's philosphy of translation, see p. 142 n. 5.
[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-54; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 254.

example. He sets the prayer up as a responsive reading, and has the congregation recite the following:

> O Eternal Lord, be benign unto us in the magnitude of Thy benignity; for Thou art the ruler of our destiny, the rock of our protection, the shield of our salvation, the protector of our existence.

It is difficult to imagine any congregation praying these words, to say nothing of a congregation that included (as "English speaking" congregations often did) many marginal Anglophones. A phrase such as "in the MAG-ni-tude of Thy be-NIG-ni-ty" is replete with weak syllables. When Wise calls on God to "be benign ... in ... Thy benignity," he is recapitulating the Hebrew, בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, "in Your great mercy be merciful to us." "Benign," however, is not the sort of word that can bear such repetition; the phrase sounds nothing short of silly. In the second half of the sentence, the pattern of weak-strong-weak syllables in the possessive nouns (pro-TEC-tion, sal-VA-tion, ex-IST-ence), which is fairly pleasing, is marred by the beginning of the series: DES-ti-ny. The nominative nouns -- RULer, ROCK, SHIELD, pro-TEC-tor -- as a group have no pattern whatever.[105]

The great rival to *Minhag America*, David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*, uses German as its vernacular, and so is beyond the scope of this thesis. The next significant American Reform *siddur* is the *Union Prayer Book*. After an abortive attempt in 1892 to create a Hebrew-English prayerbook for the Reform Movement, the Central Conference of American Rabbis published what proved to be successful editions in 1894 (High Holidays) and 1895 (Sabbath, other holidays, and weekdays). Slightly revised in 1918, this version

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[105] *Ibid.*; מנהג אמעריקא: *The Daily Prayers for American Israelites*, 2d ed. (Cincinnati Bloch and Co., 1872), p. 27.

of the *Union Prayer Book* (which we shall call "*UPB-1*") dominated the Reform Movement until its revision in 1940.[106]

In *UPB-1*, the benedictions of the *Shema* are written principally for reading by the service leader ("Minister"), with the congregation reading aloud only responsively in the two אמת prayers ("Truth eternal" -- morning; "eternal truth" -- evening). Nevertheless, one can glean a sense of this prayerbook's orality. The translation of the יוצר prayer works well in some ways, less so in others. Following the typical Reform practice of abridging the prayers not only allows the book to omit such theologically troubling issues as angels, but it also produces a discrete paragraph with its own rhythm. Set in what would likely be its standard speech rhythm, the prayer would look something like this [orthographic note: primary stresses are shown in **BOLDFACE CAPITALS**; other strong syllables in STANDARD CAPITALS; and weak syllables in standard lower case]:

1 PRAISE be to **THEE**, O LORD, our **GOD**, RULer of the **WORLD**,
2 WHO in thy **MER**cy CAUSest **LIGHT**
3 to SHINE OVer the **EARTH** and all its in**HAB**itants,
4 and DAIly re**NEW**est the **WORKS** of cre**A**tion.

5 HOW **MA**Nifold are thy **WORKS**, o e**TERN**al;
6 in **WIS**dom HAST THOU MADE THEM **ALL;**

7 the **EARTH** is FULL of thy pos**SES**sions.
8 the **HEA**Vens deCLARE thy **GLO**ry

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[106] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 279, 320. The 1918 revision was undertaken in part to harmonize the *UPB* with the new Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible. Semantics dominated this revision; when given a choice between following the JPS translation or Reform ideology, the CCAR would choose the latter. See Lou H. Silberman, "The Union Prayer Book: A Study in Liturgical Development," in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: CCAR, 1965), pp. 62-64. The High Holiday volume was revised in 1945

9 and the **FIRM**ament SHOWeth thy **HAND**iwork.

10 THOU **FORM**est LIGHT and **DARK**ness,
11 or**DAIN**est GOOD out of **E**vil,

12 and BRINGest **HAR**mony into **NA**ture,
13 and **PEACE** to the HEART of **MAN**.[107]

There is much that is rhythmically effective here. The lines are short, and typically have two (occasionally three) primary stresses in each line. There are few long runs of weak syllables; evem line 3 contains only one run of four weaks, a strong, and two weaks. The vowels show good variation. On the debit side of the ledger, a substantial number of lines end with weak syllables (although not the final one). The text is definitely prosaic, eschewing meter and alliteration. It reflects none of the techniques of the Hebrew. It is the sort of prayer Larsen and other Christian liturgists seek, a prayer to be proclaimed, not to be *davened*. It is, in short, what one would expect to find in a classical Reform prayerbook.

It would be possible to imagine the rabbi having the congregation join in reading this paragraph. It is much less likely that he would have done so with the version of אהבה רבה, "With love abounding." A sentence like "Make us gladly obedient to Thy commandments and fill our hearts with love and reverence for Thee" cannot be said easily by a group. It contains too many long, Latinate, abstract words.

It should be noted that if the CCAR sought to imitate the best of Christian worship, it fell short. There is no line in the *UPB* that approaches, for simplicity or rhythm, this from the General Confession in the *Book of Common Prayer*: "we have left

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[107] Central Conference of American Rabbis, *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship* (Cincinati: CCAR, 1895), p. 268. The stresses, and especially the primary stresses, that have been noted here are based on the author's reading of the prayer; others may read it differently.

unDONE those THINGS which we OUGHT to have DONE; and we have DONE those THINGS which we ought NOT to have DONE; and THERE IS NO HEALTH IN US." The words of the first two clauses are repeated, as they should be in oral prayer, with only a slight but crucial change. The words are all of Anglo-Saxon rather than Latinate origin. The weak syllables in the first two clauses serve the purpose of hurrying the worshipper through them, as if he or she wanted to finish the confession as quickly as possible. The final clause brings one up short; it is full of strong syllables, leaving the person making the confession with no place to hide from the enormity of his or her sins. By contrast, the confession of sins in the High Holiday *UPB* is read silently.[108]

Despite its almost universal adoption in Reform synagogues, the *Union Prayer Book* was not always well-liked. Samuel S. Cohon, a professor of theology at Hebrew Union College, was a devotee of Rudolf Otto and his *Idea of the Holy*. This book emphasizes the numinous nature of human encounter with God. Cohon found little numinous in "[t]he *Union Prayer Book* [which] conveys the impression that it was especially written for a people composed of retired philanthropists and amateur social workers." Similarly, Israel Bettan, who taught Midrash at the College, called on the CCAR to recognize that "worship is essentially a mystical experience." He decried Reform's having moved away from active congregational participation. "The Union Prayer Book, in its eagerness to occidentalize our worship, has all but abandoned this older concept and practice of the Synagog [sic], and many of us feel that, in consequence,

[108] "A General Confession," Morning Prayer, *Book of Common Prayer*. Rabbbi Chaim Stern has suggested that the diction of the *UPB* is closer to that of the pre-Raphaelite poets than to that of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Interview with Chaim Stern, Jan. 4, 2000.

our services have been immeasurably weakened.... Listening to, instead of joining in, the service, [congregants] soon grow weary of the sameness of the liturgy." While both Cohon and Bettan deal with the pragmatics of worship, neither they nor anyone else seems to have addressed orality in any purposeful way. The many rabbis who disagreed with Cohon and Bettan did not even get to pragmatics; they focused on semantics, and were concerned with failing to mention Zionism, or with praying to a God Who they believed could not grant petitions.[109]

The 1940 revision (*UPB-2*) contained more service choices to please each of the competing groups within the Conference. It offers only one morning service for the Sabbath (and, for our purposes, an almost identical one for weekdays), but it sets out five services for Friday night. One of these especially accommodates humanists, while another accommodates Zionists, none is geared to mystics. The register is similar to that of *UPB-1*. A few changes are worth noting. Two of the evening services (IV and V) contain a השכיבנו prayer, which had been omitted from *UPB-1*. In the Evening Service I, the אהבת עולם is set out for congregational rather than pulpit reading. While it begins rather awkwardly, with a long, abstract word and many weak syllables ("INfinite as is thy **POW**er. Even **SO** is thy **LOVE**"), it is no more or less successful, on the whole, for congregational reading than would have been the יוצר discussed previously. The editors seem to have been thinking of orality to some degree, in that they included some pulpit readings that might work as such, but that would have been far too convoluted for congregational prayer. A sentence such as the following, from Service III, is too long,

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[109] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 317-21; Israel Bettan, "The Function of the Prayer Book," *CCAR Yearbook* 40 (1930): 265, 270.

too complex, and too full of subordinate clauses for congregational recitation: "When justice burns like a flaming fire within us, when love evokes willing sacrifice from us, when, to the last full measure of selfless devotion, we proclaim our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness, do we not bow down before the vision of Thy goodness?" Congregants can better savor the prayer's allusion to the Gettysburg Address when they hear it than when they say it.[110]

The first American Conservative liturgy was the 1927 *Festival Prayer Book*. In 1946, the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of America jointly published the *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, more popularly known by the name of its editor, Rabbi Morris Silverman. In his preface to the Silverman Prayerbook, Robert Gordis, chairman of the Conservative prayer book commission, set out some of the issues involved in translating the Hebrew into English. He notes such differences in syntax as that Hebrew prefers coordinate clauses, while English prefers subordinate ones, or that Hebrew writing is replete with synonyms. Eliminating them all would make the book too English, retaining them all, too Hebrew. The Silverman book chooses to keep some and eliminate others. Still, its core attitude toward English prayer comes through in this sentence: "In general, the *reader* deserves an idiomatic *English* version just as the *worshipper* requires an authentic *Hebrew* text." One is expected to read the English, but to pray the Hebrew. This, too, explains Gordis's insistence that "we cannot take refuge in the procedure of printing a traditional Hebrew text and a parallel English version that has little or nothing in common with the original." Semantic fidelity, not the pragmatics of vernacular worship,

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[110] Meyer , *Response to Modernity*, pp. 321-22; CCAR, *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship* (New York: CCAR, 1940), pp. 12, 39, and *passim*.

remains the primary, indeed perhaps the only goal.[111]

Not surprisingly, the English of the Silverman Prayerbook does not lend itself to such oral prayer. One example will suffice. In the יוצר, the following lines occur: אֵל בָּרוּךְ גְּדוֹל דֵּעָה הֵכִין וּפָעַל זָהֳרֵי חַמָּה. טוֹב יָצַר כָּבוֹד לִשְׁמוֹ. The Hebrew contains an acrostic and a modified iambic meter that draws the worshipper into the flow of the words. This is how the Silverman Prayerbook translates it: "The blessed God, great in knowledge, designed and made the radiance of the sun. The beneficent One thus wrought glory unto His name." While this translation is semantically interesting -- "the beneficent One" is a nice rendition of טוב -- it makes no effort to translate or to interpret the Hebrew rhythms in English.[112]

The Reconstructionist Movement published its first prayerbook, the *Sabbath Prayer Book*, in 1945, and proceeded to develop others, including a daily prayerbook that it published in 1963. The founder of Reconstructionism, Mordecai Kaplan, was heavily involved in editing all of these volumes. The initial volume contains a lengthy introduction setting forth the editors' aspirations. As one might expect of a book created in at least substantial part by one of the leading philosophers of twentieth century Judaism, the introduction is long on doctrine. It does, however, contain some words about the prayer experience. The editors call on "the men and women" of the congregation (no earlier prayerbook explicitly recognizes women) to participate in the service in order "to create a common emotional mood." It advises that "as many as possible should learn Hebrew and

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[111] Robert Gordis, "Foreword" to The Rabbinical Assembly of America and the United Synagogue of America, סדר תפלות ישראל לשבת ולשלש רגלים, *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, ed. Morris Silverman (New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of America, 1946), pp. xii (emphasis added), vii.
[112] *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, p. 89.

should join in congregational singing." It does not mention English prayer.[113]

This generation of Reconstructionist prayerbooks contains a few distinct features, such as "interpretive versions" of the prayers, some of which are printed below the line on pages containing translations. These interpretive versions must have been meant for silent reading; this interpretive version of the יוצר, for example, would certainly fall flat if read aloud, due to its long subordinate clause and would certainly fall flat if read aloud: "Verily thy law has been our life and the length of our days, enabling us to outlive powerful nations that have sought to enslave or destroy us." The translations, by contrast, are reminiscent of the *Union Prayer Book*. If we take the יוצר again, the text is substantially shortened, as in the Reform version, and the cadences of the English are similar. The first two sentences will suffice to show this:

1 BLESSed be **THOU**, o eTERnal our **GOD**, **KING** of the Universe,
2 who **FORM**est **LIGHT** and creATest **DARK**ness,
3 who **MAK**est **PEACE** and creATest all **THINGS**.
4 thou GIVest **LIGHT** in MERcy to the **EARTH** and to THEM that **DWELL** thereON,
5 and in thy **GOOD**ness thou re**NEW**est the creAtion **DAI**ly.

The lines are not as well balanced as in the *UPB*, betraying a bit more literalism in the Reconstructionist version. The mix of stressed and unstressed syllables is similar, however.[114]

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[113] Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, סדר תפלות לשבת, *Sabbath Prayer Book* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1945), p. xxix.
[114] Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, סדר תפלות לימות החול, *Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1963), pp. 20, 17.

D. Current American Prayerbooks.

1. Movement Prayerbooks.

The title of this section is already misleading. There are no Orthodox "movement" prayerbooks, in the sense that there are official Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist ones. Perhaps the closest that one might come to such is the set of books by Philip Birnbaum. First published in 1947, the Birnbaum *siddur* takes translation quite seriously. The author regards the "task" of the translator as "making intelligible the meaning of the prayers." He does not believe "literalness" is possible; clearly not enamored of the Buber-Rosenzweig school, he finds it "decidedly wrong to use invariably the same English word to represent the same Hebrew word." Nevertheless, the purpose of the English here is certainly to convey the semantic meaning of the Hebrew, not to allow the worshipper a meaningful experience of reciting the English words. The יוצר contains the poetic פְּנוֹת צְבָאָיו קְדוֹשִׁים רוֹמְמֵי שַׁדַּי. Birnbaum translates it with the quite unpoetic "His chief hosts are holy beings that extol the Almighty."[115]

The Orthodox approach could be summarized as saying that prayer translations should be seen but not heard. The Metsudah publications carry this to a logical conclusion. They provide interlinear texts for "the person who wishe[s] to learn the meaning of a word or phrase of the prayer he [is] reciting...." It seeks semantic accuracy, pure and simple. "No poetic license was taken to deviate from a faithful translation even when a less literal term or paraphrase might have produced a more esthetic English expression." As far as the project of this thesis is concerned, Orthodox translations are a

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[115] הסידור השלם, *Daily Prayer Book*, tr. Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1949), pp. xxii, xxiii, 72.

dead end.[116]

The current set of Conservative prayerbooks dates back to 1972, with the publication of the *Mahzor* edited by Jules Harlow. Harlow is a model of the creative literal translator whom Hofstadter praises. While refusing to depart from the semantic meaning of the fairly traditional Hebrew, he includes devices that enhance the sound of his English prayers. The השכיבנו prayer includes the following lines: וּפְרוֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ וְתַקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהָגֵן בַּעֲדֵנוּ וְהָסֵר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב דֶּבֶר וְחֶרֶב וְרָעָב וְיָגוֹן The Hebrew has an interesting rhythmic structure and rhyme. Rather than choosing to replicate those, Harlow gives us a semantically sound translation but then adds a characteristic *English* poetic element, alliteration. One should note in his translation the sibilant sounds, which not only link the words but also are a bit soporific, in keeping with a prayer for safety at night [orthographic note: the "S" and related (e.g., "SH") sounds are capitalized for emphasis]:

> Spread over uS your SHelter of peaCe,
> guide uS with your good counSel.
> Save uS for the Sake of your merCy.
> SHield uS from enemieS and peStilenCe,
> from Starvation, Sword and Sorrow.

The repetition of the "or" sound in the last line ("sword and sorrow") and the move from two concrete nouns to a powerful abstract one in that line are all especially nice touches. Yet, while Harlow does what he does masterfully, his determination to be semantically scrupulous keeps his translation from being completely "davenable." The cadences of this section of the יוצר, for instance, would have fit comfortably in the *Union Prayer Book*.

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[116] סדור מצודת אברהם, *The Metsudah Siddur*, tr. Avrohom Davis (New York: Metsudah Publications, 1981), pp. ix, x.

"He is singular, performing mighty deeds, creating all that is new. He is the champion of justice, sowing righteousness, reaping victory."[117]

Harlow and the Conservative Movement followed his *Mahzor* in 1985 with a new prayerbook, *Siddur Sim Shalom*. In 1998, the Movement produced a new edition (which, unlike the first version, is limited to Shabbat and the Festivals). The translations of the benedictions of the *Shema* do not differ substantially from those in the Harlow *Mahzor*, and so merit no additional comment here. The translation philosophy of the new prayerbook is worth noting, however.

As set forth in its platform, the official position of the Conservative Movement is that "Conservative Jews, like Jews throughout the centuries, pray largely in Hebrew." Hebrew prayer, it argues, has three benefits. It "preserve[s] all the original nuances of meaning"; "link[s contemporary worshippers] to Jews praying in all times and places"; and allows the worshipper to "develop[] an emotional attachment to the very sounds and rhythms of the words and music" of the Hebrew *siddur*.[118]

This may be the ideal, but the practice appears to be somewhat different. Rabbi Leonard Cahan chaired the editorial committee for the revision. In his introduction, Cahan implicitly acknowledges that congregants will pray from this book in English.

> Recognizing that prayer is poetry, and that the English text is both a translation and a form of prayer in its own right, much time and effort has been devoted to making the English manuscript as meaningful and as authentic as possible. We have made a concerted effort to be sensitive to the implications of words and language in

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[117] מחזור לימים נוראים, *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, ed. Jules Harlow (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1972), pp. 27, 115.
[118] The Jewish Theological Seminary, et al., *Emet ve-Emunah*, אמת ואמונה: *Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, et al., 1988), p. 52.

> English, consistent with the retention of good literary style and traditional Jewish concepts....
>
> We have also deviated from offering a literal translation of the Hebrew original in this volume, as did the first edition.... [As] Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser ... wrote: 'Is it legitimate to depart from the literal text, to offer expansions on it, or free translations? Every translation must, to some extent, do so.... The rabbis recognized this when they declared in Kiddushin 49a: "He who translates a verse literally has perpetrated a fraud."'

Yet, when Cahan gives examples of his philosophy of translation, they deal with such matters as avoiding dependence on masculine imagery for the name of God; that is to say, his focus is on word meanings, not on poetic form.[119]

At about the same time the Conservative Movement was beginning to publish its new *siddurim*, the Reform Movement too embarked on a wave of prayerbook revision. In 1975, the Central Conference released *Gates of Prayer*, its new Union Prayer Book for weekdays, Sabbaths, and festivals. This was followed three years later by *Gates of Repentance*, the new *mahzor*, and in subsequent years by an entire series of *Gates* liturgies for various occasions. Rabbi Chaim Stern served as editor of these volumes. Stern came to this role with excellent credentials in prayerbook revision, having previously assisted Rabbi John Rayner in creating the British Liberal prayerbook, *Service of the Heart*, published in 1967 (Stern had served with Rayner in the rabbinate of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St. John's Wood, London).[120]

As one would expect, *Gates of Prayer* (*GOP*), written after the Holocaust and the

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[119] The Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, סדור שים שלום לשבת ויום טוב, *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 2d ed. (New York: The Rabbinical Assemby and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1998), pp. xvii - xix.

[120] Friedland, *Were Our Mouths*, p. 227; Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, עבודת הלב, *Service of the Heart* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1967).

founding of the State of Israel, shows the influence of those two important events, an influence it shares with *Service of the Heart*. Stern acknowledges that the *Union Prayer Book* also "contributed much of its contents to its successor." Yet, when it came to the English prayers, Stern was also seeking to differentiate the new *siddur* from the *UPB*. He was seeking to write an English that was "readable by a group of people," but he continues to believe that content remains paramount. The language of the *Union Prayer Book* can work to limit the understanding of the prayers, an understanding that in his estimation goes to the heart of the Reform enterprise (and, for that matter, of the Jewish prayer enterprise in general). The difficulty with the *UPB*, according to Stern, is that to members of his generation, its language was "not so much grand as grandliloquent." It was a hollow language.[121]

That having been said, Stern did not set out to change any particular translation, but rather to translate the Hebrew of the daily prayers correctly. In terms of diction, it is important, he suggests, to remember that by and large the Hebrew prayers are written as prose, not poetry. He wanted the diction of the English to be closer to that of the Hebrew. That Hebrew, he says, is a "middle Hebrew," that is to say, "a kind of folk Hebrew, ... a weekday Hebrew." Some parts of the daily service, such as the פסוקי דזמרה, have a more elevated diction, but they are the exceptions that prove the rule. This "Middle Hebrew" diction (and its vernacular analogue in the vernacular), Stern believes, is essential if a liturgy is to survive the stresses of daily or weekly repetition. It is also, he claims, quite close to that of the "high Modernist" poets who have influenced his writing in

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[121] Central Conference of American Rabbis, שערי תפלה, *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), p. xii; Interview with Chaim Stern.

general: Eliot, Yeats, and the rest.[122]

Gates of Prayer contains a plethora of services: ten for Shabbat evening and six for Shabbat morning, along with others for other occasions. In his commentary on *GOP*, Stern calls Evening Service Three "Mysical Search," so that would appear to be a good place to investigate, for the purposes of this thesis. Here, as throughout *Gates*, the benedictions of the *Shema* are arranged for limited congregational reading. The congregation does participate, but usually only by reading a few lines responsively. This certainly serves to increase understanding of the prayers, and to allow the congregation to meditate on their meanings. It does not help the congregation to lose itself in the prayer language (which, in fairness, is not Stern's aim). This is not to say that the language is either dull or earthbound. Here is Stern's original prayer "on the theme of *Hashkiveinu*," presented in full to give an idea of its diction, and in the orthography of *GOP* (i.e., the reader's portion is written in Roman type, and the congregation's in italics):

> The shadows fall, but the end of day fills the eye with brightness;
> the infinite heavens glow, and all creation sings its hymn of glory.
> With hope, therefore, we pray for light within: O God, reveal
> Yourself; hide no more; let Your face shine on all who seek You.
>
> *Eternal and infinite God, banish our darkness! Be present to us as*
> *the sudden light that lifts the heart and brings us joy.*
>
> Then shall we be at peace, O God, whose peaceful shelter we seek
> through all the days and nights of our lives.[123]

Stern's poetic training is evident here. The use of the one syllable "light" in the

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[122] Interview with Chaim Stern.

[123] Chaim Stern and A. Stanley Dreyus, "Notes to Shaarei Tefillah," in *Gates of Understanding*, vol. 1, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977), pp. 172-73, 209; *Gates of Prayer*, p. 168.

congregational response carries out the theme of suddenness. We accept the idea that a light can "lift" something in part because of the repetition of the "l" sound, a sound that suggests its content, because we have to lift the tongue to make it. The conclusion of the line, with at least three stressed words ("brings us joy"), is powerful. The final word, "joy," which we have to open the mouth wide to say, conveys not just the meaning but the sound of wonder. The congregational response, in other words, does what Stern wants it to do; it powerfully makes the pray-er conscious of the meaning of the prayer. It does not, however, allow the pray-er to be lost in the prayer.

The projected new Reform prayerbook, which should be published sometime around 2003, focuses quite strongly on the orality of prayer. Rabbi Elyse Frishman, who along with Rabbi Judith Abrams is co-editor of the new prayerbook, is not relying principally on *Gates of Prayer*, but is instead returning to the traditional *siddur* as a model. She is trying to craft "a creative and singable English translation." She expects that all of the English will be able to be prayed aloud by the congregation, and that the worshippers will be able to do a traditional *davening* of the prayers. The English will not scan identically with the Hebrew, but where the Hebrew form is especially interesting, Frishman hopes to echo that in some way in the English. Ultimately, for her, though, the words of the prayers will not replace the need for the cognitive; that replacement will occur, as it traditionally has, through music.[124]

The new Reconstructionist prayerbooks are the ones that are most self-consciously address the issue of orality, and the ones that come closest to the project of this thesis. These prayerbooks are each entitled *Kol Haneshamah*. The first one was published in

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[124] Interview with Elyse Frishman, Feb. 14, 2000.

1991; we shall be dealing with the Shabbat and holiday volume, published in 1994. Rabbi David Teutsch was the chair of the commission that compiled and edited the prayerbook. The English was written principally by Joel Rosenberg, whom Eric Friedland appropriately describes as a "talented poet and Judaicist." The book has a number of distinctive features. As Friedland notes, "*Kol Haneshamah* is the first official American prayerbook to make use of illustrations in its pages." It provides a useful and often moving set of explanations at the bottom of the pages. Following a Reconstructionist tradition, it contains a number of valuable supplementary readings.[125]

David Teutsch is aware that prayer is illocutionary, and that the language is only one of its elements. The music, the physicality, moving in and out between study and prayer, these are all part of the prayer *Gestalt*. Within this overarching experience, though, he believes that it is vital that English prayer "be prayed in English." That is, the experience of prayer is not just one of the "meaning" of the words but also one of the rhythm and vividness of the language. When his committee sought to achieve this in prayer, they kept two things in mind. First, Teutsch says, any English prayer must be durable. A prayer can wear out unless it meets certain criteria. These include that the prayer be sufficiently complex to avoid inducing boredom, have a vivid and universal imagery, be emotionally accessible and powerful, have values that one wants to teach on a regular basis, have sufficient emotional depth and resonance, and be suited to a number of occasions where it can usefully be repeated. Second, a prayerbook is "one of the most powerful artifacts of an organizational culture," a culture whose ethos it must match.

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[125] Friedland, *Were Our Mouths*, pp. 244-49; כל הנשמה : שבת וחגים, *Kol Haneshamah: Shabbat Vehagim* (Wyncote, PA: Reconstructionist Press, 1994), pp. iv, xxii.

Teutsch believes that liberal prayerbooks have erred in calling for reading in unison. That forces a congregation to "march in lockstep." He sees *Kol Haneshamah* as a "voice for pluralism and controlled chaos." This sounds like *davening*, and he says that the English prayers in the book are meant to allow for, although not demand, that form of prayer.[126]

Joel Rosenberg, the translator, also seems to have found a model in *davening*. His own daily *davening* helped him develop a feel for how to write prayers in English that would stand up to frequent repetition. He learned, among other things, how to avoid being too exotic. So, he often sets his English in verse lines, because he, unlike Stern, sees the traditional *siddur* as being principally in verse. He does not write with any particular music in mind, believing that a mellifluous English can be adapted to any music. He retains rhyme and acrostic frequently, because this comes closest to carrying on the tradition.[127]

Rosenberg's ideas on translation in general appear in an article he wrote for the journal *Kerem*. There, he finds a tension in all translations. On the one hand, "[t]he task of a good translation ... is to carry you back to the original, to draw your attention to what is in the source, without drawing attention to itself." On the other hand, "we English-speaking Jews have an unavoidable indebtedness to the language of Caedmon and Aelfric, of Chaucer and Wyatt, of Shakespeare and Donne, of Blake and Joyce, and Nadine Gordimer." Yet, at the same time, he asks "are Jews obliged to preserve the elegance of elevated English from those eras when all Jews were barred from England?" What *is* the proper English for Jewish prayer? The answer, he says, is that "[t]he Hebrew of the siddur

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[126] Interview with David Teutsch, Feb. 3, 2000.
[127] Interview with Joel Rosenberg, Feb. 7, 2000.

... is [no more a] single tongue" than is English, and the English used to render it need be no "less complex than the original." "And so," he notes, "we approach the New World mother tongue with some affection and respect. It too is part of who we are, regardless of when or where we climbed aboard and found the shelter of its wing." English prayer is part of our prayer, because it cannot be otherwise.[128]

An example of Rosenberg's translations, from the יוצר prayer, will suffice to show his methods in practice. The portion that in Hebrew begins הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּרוֹמָם לְבַדּוֹ מֵאָז contains, as Hoffman notes, a great deal of alliteration of the "m" sound. Rosenberg captures this effect without following it slavishly (the alliterative letters are capitalized here, although not in the original): "you are the world'S Sole Sovereign, dwelling in the Highest HeightS before the dawn of time, praiSed and magnified and Held in awe from dayS of old." In addition to the repetition of the "h" and "s" sounds, the sound of "dawn of time" is repeated, yet varied, with "days of old." Further alliteration can be found two sentences later: "SourCe of our Strength, our Stronghold rock, our SHield of help, the fortreSS over uS!" Reading this, one can almost hear it being chanted. Rosenberg continues with an English acrostic version of the Hebrew acrostic אַל בָּרוּךְ גְּדוֹל דֵּעָה. *Kol Haneshamah* sets the initial letters in bold type. It should be noted that Rosenberg uses *Hebrew* initial letters in his English; that is to say, ABGD, etc., for the Hebrew אבגד, וכו', rather than ABCD, etc. This avoids, among other things, having to find words that begin with "x": "**A**ll-powerful and **b**lessed, **g**reat in **d**iscernment, you **h**ave prepared and

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[128] Joel Rosenberg, "Reversing the Garment: On Language and Ritual in Jewish Prayer," *Kerem* (Winter, 1992-93), pp. 28-29.

wrought the sunlight's healing rays," and so forth.[129]

2. Independent Prayerbooks.

Independent prayerbooks, that is, those officially connected to no movement, were the norm in Germany. Because of the American trend toward denominationalism, they have played less of a role here, at least since the adoption of the movement-generated prayerbooks discussed above. Nevertheless, independently-authored prayerbooks have reappeared over the last two decades and are becoming commonplace again. Most are so recent that it is hard to say how they will fare. A relatively early one that has demonstrated staying power is *Vetaher Libenu*, the prayerbook of Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley, in Sudbury, Massachusetts. This *siddur* was not the work of a rabbi or group of rabbis but of a congregation. A first edition was published in 1975, and a revised version in 1980.

If Congregation Beth El is representative, then at least in 1980 Jews who were thinking seriously about liturgy devoted their attention to the meaning of the words, and not especially to their sounds. The introduction to the revised edition of *Vetaher Libenu* discusses how the English, and sometimes the Hebrew, attempts to make the service more meaningful to contemporary Jews by removing masculine terms for God, changes "the feudal epithets that crowd God's name," and "trie[s] to dismantle the ancient metaphor ... of the Creator as a hoary old king seated on the throne of mercy...." The introduction

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[129] *Kol Haneshamah*, p. 263. On the "m" sounds in this prayer, see commentary by Lawrence A. Hoffman on the יוצר prayer in Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book: The Sh'ma and Its Blessings* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), p. 51.

makes no reference to the rhythm of the English.[130]

This is not to say that *Vetaher Libenu* contains no poetry. It includes new versions of songs, meditations such as one welcoming Shabbat, a treatment of the Amidah that is set in line cola, and the like. Leaving aside any consideration of the merit of these efforts, it is clear that the benedictions of the *Shema* deal more with meanings than with sounds. Referring to God as "The Holy One of Blessing" carefully and elegantly avoids masculine epithets for God. It solves a semantic problem. On the other hand, how *Vetaher Libenu* deals with orality can be seen in this selection from מעריב ערבים:

> Creator of day and night, You roll away light before darkness and darkness before light; You cause the day to fade and bring on the night, making each separate from the other. You rule over the heavens. Your strength lives and endures. You will rule over us now and forever. Holy One of Blessing, You summon the mingling shadows of twilight.

The first sentence begins well, and is quite similar to the translation in Shabbat Evening Service I of *Gates of Prayer*, although as would be expected, the pronoun for God has shifted from "He" to "You." In the last clause, "making EACH SEParate from the other," however, the rhythm disappears, as the register shifts from the mildly poetic (Stern's analogue to "Middle Hebrew") to the purely prosaic. A series of short, simple declarative sentences follows. Then, in the eulogy, the register shifts again, now moving to the highly poetic ("mingling shadows of twilight"). *Vetaher Libenu's* strength remains in its careful thought, not in the sounds of its prayers.[131]

By contrast, *On Wings of Awe*, the Hillel *Mahzor*, was clearly prepared with orality and performativity in mind. Edited by Rabbi Richard Levy and published in 1985,

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[130] Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River, וטהר לבנו, 2d ed. (1980), pp. 3-4.
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Wings of Awe expects that its prayers will be *davened*. While ideally this should be done in Hebrew, the *Mahzor* recognizes "that if the Torah was given at Sinai in all the 70 languages spoken in the world, English was one of those languages. Since God created language and oversaw our scattering to the lands where languages like English are spoken, it is appropriate for us to believe that God's *kedushah*, God's holiness, dwells in English words and sentences as well as in Hebrew, though it may be harder to discern. When Hebrew is opaque for us, English must be the tongue in which we approach our ancient lover."[132]

Wings of Awe contains suggestions for the book's use. Specifically as to "*English davening*," it advises "[e]ncouraging daveners to use melodies for the English prayers in this book, particularly those in poetic form, similar to the chants they might use for Hebrew prayers..." This "can help introduce them to those non-verbal associations which traditional melodies bring to prayers, and give them more independence in praying than a unison reading offers." Levy thus anticipated Teutsch's call for "controlled chaos." Levy, like Frishman, seems to expect that the music, more than the words, will provide the non-cognitive element in prayer.[133]

Levy certainly sees much of Hebrew prayer as poetry, or at least he translates it into English as such. Here is the end of his השכיבנו for the evening of Rosh Hashanah (the arrangement of the lines is his):

1 Bring us into shelter
2 In the soft, long evening shadows

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[132] מעלי תפילות, *On Wings of Awe: A Machzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, ed. Richard N. Levy (Washington: B'nai Brith Hillel Foundations, 1985), p. xx (emphasis in original).
[133] *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

3 Of Your truth,
4 For with You is protection and safekeeping
5 And in Your presence is royal acceptance and gentle love.

6 Watch over us as we go forth.
7 Prepare for us as we return
8 A peaceful welcome
9 Life
10 A future
11 And now.

12 Spread over us Your peace-filled sukkah
13 And over all we love
14 Over our Jerusalem
15 And Yours.

16 Go with us.

This is quite good poetry. The vowel sounds in the words "soft," "long," and the first syllable of "evening" in line 2 are all themselves elongated, fitting the sense of the words perfectly. The final line gains power by the stark simplicity of its request. A number of other features could be commented on as well. Nevertheless, while this prayer may well be wonderfully "aural," it does not function as well "orally," by which here is meant simply that it does not lend itself to this thesis's idea of *davening*. One wants to hear and reflect on the silences in this prayer, not to use them as a mantra.[134]

One of the more interesting new independent prayerbooks, and the one with which we shall end this discussion is *The Book of Blessings* by Marcia Falk. Falk is a thoughtful feminist and a gifted poet; and both of these aspects appear in her prayerbook. To simplify an extremely complex subject, the dominant feminist critique in Judaism has taken exception not simply to the idea of God as a male ruler, but to any sort of hierarchy and, indeed, any reified dualism. Linked to this, since the dualistic distinction between, say,

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[134] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

people and God is distorting, much of feminist thought is profoundly immanentist: God is present in all creation. Liturgy is an especially appropriate field for those who hold these views. As Judith Plaskow states, it has been the most important source "for a Jewish conception of God's power ..., for it is above all in the repetition of prayer that a portrait of God is formed." Falk's views are in line with, indeed have helped shape, this position, and they play a significant role in her *siddur*. Falk changes both the Hebrew and the English of the opening of the blessings. She chooses a variety of openings, but rejects the traditional one. As she remarks, "To me, *adonay eloheynu, melekh ha'olam* is an example of a dead metaphor, that is, I see it as a greatly overused image that no longer functions to awaken awareness of the greater whole. Moreover, because this image has had absolute and exclusive authority in Jewish prayer, it has reinforced forms of patriarchal power and male privilege in the world."[135]

This quotation, starting with language and ending with theology, shows how much Falk is both writer and feminist. As to the former, she has long given serious thought to the issue of bringing Hebrew religious texts to Anglophones. In her earlier notes on her treatment of the Song of Songs, she attempts to find a new way to translate Biblical poetry, eschewing both the King James Bible on the one hand, and the Buber-Rosenzweig approach on the other.

> My version does not attempt to mimic the rhythms of Hebrew verse, for this would be unnatural in English. English, an analytical language, requires more words to express thought than does the synthetic language of the Bible, which can, for example, incorporate

[135] Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), p. 129; Lawrence Hoffman, "Marcia Falk's Book of Blessings," *Prooftexts* 19 (1999): 89; Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), p. xvii.

> preposition, article, and noun or subject, verb, and accusative pronoun into a single word. English cannot express whole thought units in two or three beats, and to force it to do so would violate its own natural rhythms. To imitate the long-lined style of the King James, on the other hand, would reinforce a misconception about Biblical verse. My lines of verse are therefore a deliberate departure from the styles of both the King James Version and the original Hebrew text. The lines in my version are of variable length, divided according to the demands of English verse, while still intended to reflect (not mimic) the quick, delicate qualities of the Hebrew.[136]

Falk's desire to "reflect (not mimic)" the Hebrew appears again in *The Book of Blessings*. With each Hebrew blessing that she composes, she includes "an English version (which is not a literal translation but a counterpart, an English poem designed to recreate the effect of the original Hebrew)." Here, of course, her concerns are not merely those of the translator and poet, but also of the liturgist. In that vein, she tries to avoid creating "formulas", rather, she says, "as a liturgist, I firmly believed that no convention of prayer ought to become completely routine, lest it lose its ability to inspire authentic feeling." On the other hand, she "assumed that some communities would want to use the prayers repetitively, as they would any other prayer book." She does not think it possible to write prayers authentically that have the intention of getting people lost in the prayer experience. "Words have meanings and you cannot pretend they do not. If you want pure sound without semantic meaning, compose music."[137]

Falk's version of the אהבה רבה provides a good example of her methods and a place from which to analyze how they fit within the project of this thesis. We begin with

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[136] Marcia Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible: A Translation and Literary Study of the Song of Songs* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1982), p. 57.
[137] Falk, *Book of Blessings*, pp. xviii ("an English version"), xvii ("as a liturgist"); corresondence from Marcia Falk, dated Jan. 31, 2000, in the possession of the author (all remaining quotations) (used by permission).

Falk's Hebrew version, which she calls בִּרְכַּת תּוֹרָה:

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת עֵין הַחַיִּים,
מְקוֹר הַבָּנָה וְהַבְחָנָה.

נִזְכֶּה נָא לְהָבִין וּלְהַשְׂכִּיל
לִשְׁמֹעַ לִלְמֹד וּלְלַמֵּד
לִשְׁמֹר וְלַעֲשׂוֹת וּלְקַיֵּם
דִּבְרֵי תּוֹרָה בְּאַהֲבָה.

In her commentary, Falk provides her own literal translation of this blessing, much of which can be found in the traditional *siddur*

Let us bless the source of life,
Source of understanding and discernment.

May we merit to understand and to be wise
To listen, to learn, and to teach,
To observe and to do and to fulfill
The words of the Torah with love.

Finally, there is Falk's English version, which she calls "Blessing of Revelation" (the line numbers are added)

1 Let us bless the source of life
2 source of the fullness of our knowing.

3 May we learn with humility and pleasure,
4 may we teach what we know with love,

5 and may we honor wisdom
6 in all its embodiments.[138]

This is certainly fine poetry, meant to be read aloud. The first four lines, and especially lines 3 and 4, have basically an anapestic rhythm, particularly if the "y" in "humility" and the "a" in "and" are elided ("may we LEARN with hu-MIL-i-tyand PLEAS-ure,/may we TEACH what we KNOW with LOVE). One can almost feel the rush to

[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69, 466.

learn. Line 5, which deals with honoring wisdom, is more stately, full of stressed syllables. The final word, "embodiments," works at the level of contrasting with the more spiritual "wisdom." It is a more erudite word than those in the rest of the poem, however, and it tails off with two weak syllables at the end ("em-BOD-i-ments").

All this having been said, this poem (and in this it is typical for these purposes) has two shortcomings, as far as this thesis is concerned. First, it literally comes up short, that is to say, it is a very brief blessing. It is difficult to imagine someone falling into its flow, because it stops flowing so quickly. Second, Falk's very enterprise, of not creating formulas, runs counter to our project here. In his favorable review of *The Book of Blessings*, Hoffman notes of the standard opening to a blessing, that "for most people, that set of words functions like a single word -- '*barukhatahadonai*.' It makes the blessing familiarly theirs, and since it functions like a mantra, they neither know nor care what it literally means. But Falk's problem is that she knows what it means and cannot stand it." Falk, presumably, would want the worshipper also to be aware of what the words mean, especially while they are being prayed. One cannot speak Falk's blessing on revelation without thinking about those meanings. It is not clear whether blessings that require careful thought are durable, whether they can be prayed week after week. In any event, Falk is part of the tradition, discussed in chapter three, of those for whom the meaning of the words of prayer is always crucial. Her head would not bow by itself.[139]

Ultimately, both Rambam and Ra'avad have been reconciled in the various translations that we have discussed here. On the one hand, the translators in the liberal traditions have recognized that English prayer is real prayer, and must be taken seriously

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[139] Hoffman, "Marcia Falk's Book of Blessings," p. 91

as such. On the other hand, they have also recognized that it must always and only be an interpretation, that it can never capture everything in the Hebrew. There is thus room for a translation that tries to reflect (but not mimic, as Falk would say), the orality of the Hebrew.

CHAPTER FIVE:
TOWARD A NEW TRANSLATION , WITH COMMENTARY

יוצר אור -- Who Makes All the Lights

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ,
עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכֹּל.

1 Blest are You, oh our God,
2 Oh our Sovereign, who rules all the world,
3 Who makes light and creates darkness,
4 Who gives us peace and creates everything.

הַמֵּאִיר לָאָרֶץ וְלַדָּרִים עָלֶיהָ בְּרַחֲמִים,
וּבְטוּבוֹ מְחַדֵּשׁ בְּכָל־יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית.

5 The one who in mercy enlightens the world full of life
6 Who is good and creates anew every day every hour.

מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, יְיָ.
כֻּלָּם בְּחָכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ.
מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנֶךָ.

7 How great are Your works, oh God.
8 In wisdom You have made them all.
9 The earth is full of Your life.

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְרוֹמָם לְבַדּוֹ מֵאָז,
הַמְשֻׁבָּח וְהַמְפֹאָר וְהַמִּתְנַשֵּׂא מִימוֹת עוֹלָם.
אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם,
בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ,

10 Oh mighty, immortal, immovable Master
11 Marvel-maker, magnificent. From time immemorial
12 You have been merciful. Send us Your mercy,
13 Great and most wondrous, God of the world.

אֲדוֹן עֲזָנוּ,
צוּר מִשְׂגַּבֵּנוּ,
מָגֵן יִשְׁעֵנוּ,
מִשְׂגָּב בַּעֲדֵנוּ.

14 *God who directs us,*
15 *God who protects us,*
16 *God who provides for us,*
17 *God who guides us.*

אֵל בָּרוּךְ גְּדוֹל דֵּעָה
הֵכִין וּפָעַל זִהֲרֵי חַמָּה.
טוֹב יָצַר כָּבוֹד לְשִׁמוֹ,
מְאוֹרוֹת נָתַן סְבִיבוֹת עֻזּוֹ.
פְּנוֹת צְבָאָיו קְדוֹשִׁים,
רוֹמְמֵי שַׁדַּי תָּמִיד מְסַפְּרִים
כְּבוֹד אֵל וּקְדֻשָּׁתוֹ.

18 *God the great, the One who knows,*
19 *Who gave us light above, below.*
20 *God set the sun to shine for us;*
21 *God made the world divine for us.*
22 *And the heavenly creatures do sing,*
23 *And all of the praises they bring*
24 *Unto God they do bestow.*

תִּתְבָּרַךְ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
עַל־שֶׁבַח מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ,
וְעַל־מְאוֹרֵי־אוֹר שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ, יְפָאֲרוּךָ. סֶלָה.

25 *May You be blest, Eternal our God,*
26 *For the works of Your hands, that You have formed,*
27 *For the glowing stars, that give You praise.*

תִּתְבָּרַךְ צוּרֵנוּ,
מַלְכֵּנוּ וְגוֹאֲלֵנוּ,
בּוֹרֵא קְדוֹשִׁים.

28 *May You be blest*
29 *Our fortress*
30 *Our champion*
31 *Our stronghold --*
32 *Maker of angels.*

יִשְׁתַּבַּח שִׁמְךָ לָעַד מַלְכֵּנוּ,
יוֹצֵר מְשָׁרְתִים, וַאֲשֶׁר מְשָׁרְתָיו
כֻּלָּם עוֹמְדִים בְּרוּם עוֹלָם,
וּמַשְׁמִיעִים בְּיִרְאָה, יַחַד בְּקוֹל,
דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים וּמֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם.

33 *They sing Your praises unceasing, our Sovereign,*
34 *The servants who serve You whose substance You shape,*
35 *They stand in the heights and proclaim in one voice*
36 *The words of our God, living Ruler of all.*

כֻּלָּם אֲהוּבִים,
כֻּלָּם בְּרוּרִים,
כֻּלָּם גִּבּוֹרִים,
וְכֻלָּם עֹשִׂים
בְּאֵימָה וּבְיִרְאָה
רְצוֹן קוֹנָם.

37 *All these are the mighty*
38 *All these are the pure*
39 *All these are beloved*
40 *All these will do Your*
41 *Will their Creator*
42 *In awe and in love.*

וְכֻלָּם פּוֹתְחִים אֶת פִּיהֶם
בְּקְדֻשָּׁה וּבְטָהֳרָה,
בְּשִׁירָה וּבְזִמְרָה,

43 *Their hymns of joy,*
44 *Their poems of praise,*
45 *Their songs so pure,*
46 *Their voices raised.*

וּמְבָרְכִים וּמְשַׁבְּחִים,
וּמְפָאֲרִים וּמַעֲרִיצִים,
וּמַקְדִּישִׁים וּמַמְלִיכִים
אֶת שֵׁם הָאֵל
הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל, הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא,
קָדוֹשׁ הוּא.

47 *They magnify*
48 *And they glorify.*
49 *They accept God's reign*
50 *And they call God's name:*

51 *Great and*
52 *Grand and*
53 *Glorious.*
54 *Praised be God.*
55 *All praise.*

וְכֻלָּם מְקַבְּלִים עֲלֵיהֶם עֹל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם זֶה מִזֶּה,
וְנוֹתְנִים רְשׁוּת זֶה לָזֶה לְהַקְדִּישׁ לְיוֹצְרָם.

56 *Each from each, they accept God's rule.*
57 *Each to each, they speak God's blessing.*

בְּנַחַת רוּחַ,
בְּשָׂפָה בְרוּרָה,
וּבִנְעִימָה קְדֻשָּׁה,
כֻּלָּם כְּאֶחָד
עוֹנִים וְאוֹמְרִים
בְּיִרְאָה.

58 *And then they say, all in one voice,*
59 *One breath, one song, in reverence:*

קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ יְיָ צְבָאוֹת
מְלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ.

60 *Holy, holy, holy the God of Hosts,*
61 *God's glory fills the earth.*

וְהָאוֹפַנִּים וְחַיּוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ,
בְּרַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל מִתְנַשְּׂאִים לְעֻמַּת שְׂרָפִים.
לְעֻמָּתָם מְשַׁבְּחִים וְאוֹמְרִים.

62 *Now facing each other,*
63 *Row upon row,*
64 *Facing each other they say:*

בָּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְיָ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ.
65 *Blest be the glory of God, everyplace.*

לְאַל בָּרוּךְ נְעִימוֹת יִתֵּנוּ.
לְמֶלֶךְ, אֵל חַי וְקַיָּם,
זְמִרוֹת יֹאמַרוּ, וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת יַשְׁמִיעוּ.
כִּי הוּא לְבַדּוֹ.

66 *Then the poem, the praise, the song, the shout to*

67 *God alone --*

פּוֹעֵל גְּבוּרוֹת,
עֹשֶׂה חֲדָשׁוֹת,
בַּעַל מִלְחָמוֹת,
זוֹרֵעַ צְדָקוֹת,
מַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעוֹת,
בּוֹרֵא רְפוּאוֹת,
נוֹרָא תְהִלּוֹת,
אֲדוֹן הַנִּפְלָאוֹת,

68 *Working wonder,*
69 *Growing goodness,*
70 *Spreading splendor,*
71 *Sowing sunlight.*

הַמְחַדֵּשׁ בְּטוּבוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית,

72 *New sunlight each day,*
73 *A new sun every day,*
74 *Each new day,*
75 *Each new day.*

בָּאָמוּר לְעֹשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֹלִים, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ.

76 *And for that we thank God,*
77 *Who makes the great lights,*
78 *Whose love lasts forever.*

אוֹר חָדָשׁ עַל צִיּוֹן תָּאִיר,
וְנִזְכֶּה כֻּלָּנוּ מְהֵרָה לְאוֹרוֹ.

79 *And shine a new light upon Zion,*
80 *And let us deserve all its rays.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,
יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת.

81 Blest are You, oh our God,
82 Who makes all the lights.

Commentary

General. In his commentary on the *siddur*, David Abudraham comments on this prayer: "It is written ... in a *t'shuvah*. I say the *yotzer* and *ma'ariv* blessings along with the precentor, quietly, because no one is able to pay attention constantly to the precentor in silence." This observation remains applicable today. While I have suggested, in this thesis, that concentration on the meaning of the words is only one form of prayer, I do not mean by this that the worshipper should be disconnected from the prayer experience. Quite the contrary is true. It is principally by speaking the words that a pray-er can pay attention to his or her heart, and to God.[140]

The previous chapters were intended to lay the groundwork for this one. Here I have taken one of the seven benedictions of the *Shema*, namely the יוצר, the praise for light and creation. I have tried to write an English version that emphasizes the oral aspect of this prayer -- rhythm, alliteration, rhyme, and other qualities of sound. It is meant to be read aloud, but not in unison. It should be read fairly quickly, alhtough each word should be distinct, as Maimonides demands of translations. It should, in short, be *davened*.

This prayer is not a poem. Most poetry strives to keep a consistent style

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[140] אבודרהם השלם, pp. 70-71. All translations of Abudraham are mine, unless otherwise noted. Because in this chapter I shall be discussing my own artistic composition, I have changed the voice of the text from the traditional scholarly forms (first person plural or impersonal) to the first person singular.

This prayer shifts every few lines between English alliterative verse, anapestic pentameter, iambic tetrameter, and a range of other modes. Yet that variety is meant to capture a truth about the יוצר: God's creation is abundant and multiform. The pray-er should feel this when he or she speaks.

I fear that at times this prayer borders on doggerel. I hope that it does not cross that borderline, but it has to walk near it. For the appeal of doggerel is that it comes easily to the tongue. A davenable prayer should do the same, without becoming foolish. Not every rhythmic or other choice that I have made will work. But if the person reciting this prayer finds that on the whole it can be *davened*, it will have succeeded.

I have adopted two techniques from the Buber-Rosenzweig school. The first is the use of cola. Line divisions form the principal guide for the rhythm of this prayer. Second, I have identified at least one *Leitwort*. As has been noted, the *Merkavah* mystics multiplied the use of light imagery; God to them was a source of pure light, and the angels were themselves creatures of light. With the recent rise of interest in Kabbalistic mysticism, the liberal Jewish community is again receptive to the power of the imagery of light. This translation brings the word "light" into the prayer as much as possible.

This translation of the יוצר is meant as a paradigm of translations that I hope at some time to write of all of the benedictions of the *Shema*. As such, it contains very detailed notes explaining each significant decision that I made in crafting this prayer.

ll. 1-2. The Hebrew invocation typically contains one or two unstressed syllables between stresses: *ba-RUKH a-TAH a-do-NAI, e-lo-HEI-nu ME-lekh ha-oLAM.* Because this pattern is so familiar even to those who pray principally in English, I have tried to

reflect it here. The English does not follow the Hebrew beat for beat; rather, it also keeps only one or two unstressed syllables between stresses. As a general rule, here and throughout this benediction, I have tried to end each line with a stress, which is by far the most common ending of English verse lines and of good English liturgy (note that the English in my commentary indicates expected pronunciation with devices such as apostrophes for unpronounced syllables): "BLEST are YOU, oh our GOD/oh our SOV'reign, who RULES all the WORLD."

On a theological note, I find that masculine terms for God (such as "king") have become a stumbling block for prayer; hence I omit them. On the other hand, I am not convinced that hierarchy per se or dualism present the same problem to many of our worshippers. Perhaps equally important, they do not present the same problem to me; I continue to see transcendence as one of God's most significant attributes. This theology is reflected in this blessing.

ll. 3-4. The Hebrew is a variation on Isaiah 45:7. The Talmud already asked why darkness was being mentioned in a morning prayer. According to Rava, in fact it was proper to mention light at night and darkness in the day, presumably because it showed God's power at both times (Berakhot 11b). Precisely God's power was at the heart of a prior question, one which led to this inquiry about mentioning night, for the prayer had changed the text of Deutero-Isaiah. The prophet, perhaps responding to Persian dualism, had declared that God "makes good and creates evil." The prayer, however, reads עשה שלום ובורא את הכל, "who makes peace and creates everything." Also in Berakhot 11b, the Talmud had stated that "everything" is "elevated language." In his commentary on the *siddur*, Adin Steinsaltz notes that the change does not affect the core meaning, namely that God "is the one who forms and is the one responsible for all existence and for

everything, but the sages taught that it is not appropriate to be reminded of evil while praying, and so they softened the emphasis that appears in Scripture." Marcia Falk criticizes this decision as, in effect, sweeping a painful subject under the rug: "While prayer is probably not the best place to engage in theological arguments, it *is* the right place, I believe, to name our truths, and, insofar as possible, to do so inclusively -- which is to say, not to name half-truths, which are, effectively, lies." My version sides with the tradition. Using a word such as "bad" or "evil" in connection with God will likely produce precisely a theological argument, and that is the last thing I want in a prayer that is to be *davened*. It might be more appropriate in a meditation to be spoken by a single voice. It is worth noting that Falk's English version uses "chaos," a word that is likely to be less charged to a worshipper not schooled in theology [141]

As to prosody, the Hebrew, as is often the case with Biblical poetry, contains two lines, each divided into half lines. The first half line of each line has three syllables, two of them stressed, including the final one. The second half line has two stresses, the final one in the penultimate syllable. The rhythm is distinct enough, and well enough known by many congregants who have only a passing acquaintance with Hebrew, that I have chosen to reproduce it precisely in the English:

yo-TZAIR OR u-vo-RAI KHO-shekh
who MAKES LIGHT / and cre-ATES DARK-ness

o-SEH sha-LOM u-vo-RAI et ha-KOL
who GIVES us PEACE / and cre-ATES ev'-ry-THING

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[141] John L. McKenzie, *The Anchor Bible: Second Isaiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), p. 77 (on Persian dualism); עדין אבן־ישראל שטיינזלץ, הסידור והתפילה (Jerusalem: Yediot Akhronrot, 1994), vol. 1, p. 318 (all translations of Steinsaltz are mine, unless otherwise noted); Falk, *Book of Blessings*, p. 465.

ll. 5-6. Commentators have long wondered why our receiving sunlight is an example of God's mercy. Abudraham remarks that God is indeed being merciful, in that God brings us daylight "little by little, not all at once, for if the one rising from his bed should see a great light, he would not be able to open his eyes to see quickly, for he would have to stand an hour as if blind, because he would not be able to look at [the light, i.e., the sun]." In my translation, I have retained the word "mercy."[142]

The Hebrew indicates that God sends light to the earth and all who dwell on it. Abudraham explains that not only the inhabitants benefit, for they can see to go out to work, but the earth itself does also "in that the sun makes the plants grow, and metals increase, and sweetens fruit." This translation tries to pick up this theme in the words, "full of life."[143]

The Hebrew uses מחדש, in the present tense: God makes new the works of creation. How can this be? Picking up an idea already set out in the Talmud (Hagigah 12b), Abudraham explains that God not only divided the light from the darkness on the six days of creation but "He continues to do so every day, forever." In this way, God is always making the world new. The Hebrew also says that God does this בכל יום תמיד, "every day, continuously." Steinsaltz notes that this is written so that one will not think that renewal takes place once a day, at sunrise, but rather that "[t]he forming of the world is a matter which transpires in each instant in time, and it is fitting to praise it every moment." I try to capture this sentiment with the phrase "every day, every hour."[144]

The two Hebrew lines here are full of multisyllabic words; only one word

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[142] אבודרהם, p. 72.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[144] *Ibid.*; שטיינזלץ, הסידור, p. 318.

(תמיד) has only two syllables, and there are no one-syllable words. One can hear the worshipper almost hurrying to express his or her gratitude. I have chosen to use anapests to capture that sense of hurrying. Anapestic rhythms are uncommon in English poetry, and their effect can be comic if continued too long. Two lines at a time seems about right:

> the ONE who in MERcy enLIGHTens the WORLD full of LIFE,
> who is GOOD and creATES us aNEW ev'ry DAY ev'ry HOUR.

ll. 7-9. The text is from Psalms 104.24. The Hebrew word קנינך can mean either "Your possessions" or, more commonly in the Bible, "Your creations." Steinsaltz suggests that the latter meaning is more appropriate here: "all the creatures of the world were creations of the Lord, which He formed and established with his strength." My translation, "of Your life," (l. 9) allows for both meanings but is closer to the one preferred by Steinsaltz.[145]

The Hebrew text here has shorter phrases of shorter words: only three or four words per line, and only two or three syllables for every word other than קנינך (assuming one elides the חתף פתח in מָעֲשָׂיִךְ). This is a more proclamatory tone, as the meaning of the words would suggest. I have tried to capture it in English with a principally iambic stress pattern, with full stops at the end of each line, and with no more than four beats per line:

> how GREAT are your WORKS oh GOD.
> in WISdom YOU have MADE them ALL.
> the EARTH is FULL of your LIFE.

ll. 10-13. Abudraham asks why, in the midst of praising God, the prayer now

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[145] *Ibid.* Joel Hoffman, in his commentary on the text, is in agreement with the position set out by Steinsaltz. J. Hoffman, commentary on the יוצר, in L. Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book*, pp. 49-50.

asks God to be merciful to us. Have we not been extolling God's mercy in creating light? Why do we need to ask for more? He explains, "[I]t appears to me that it is due to what is written in the [Palestinian Talmud] (Ta'anit 84:3), '"Let there be lights." (Gen. 1:14). "Lights" is written defectively, without a *vav*, because children are caused to get the croup." Therefore, you need to [try to] correct it by saying 'in His great mercy' in the benediction concerning lights." That is to say, the world is not perfect, just as the spelling of the world "lights" is not "perfect"; children still die of diseases. It is appropriate even in this hymn of praise to ask for God's help. I have done so in my translation.[146]

As Lawrence Hoffman remarks, and as I have noted above, the Hebrew in this section is full of emphatic "m" sounds. I have tried to capture that in the English, not only by using "m" sounds myself, but also by writing in a version of "muscular" English alliterative verse: each line divided into halves, with two stresses per half line. The final line replaces the alliteration of "m" with that of "g," partially for variety; partially to use the word "God"; and partially because the final line should, I felt, have a stress at the beginning of both halves, and these seemed the most appropriate words for that purpose. Again, this rhythm is foreign enough to English poetry over the past six hundred years that I have chosen not to use it for more than a few lines at a time, lest the worshipper regard it as too odd to induce the proper prayer spirit.[147]

ll. 14-17. The Hebrew is a series of praises of God for assisting us, God's people. It consists of four lines of five syllables each (assuming elision of the חתף פתח in בָּעֲדֵנוּ). The lines have a simple rhyme, each ending in *Elnu*. This rhyme picks up from the

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[146] אבודרהם, p. 72.

[147] L. Hoffman, commentary on יוצר, in *My People's Prayer Book*, p. 51.

end of the previous "verse," רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ. Thus, the Hebrew reads:

a-DON u-ZEI-nu
TZUR mish-gab-BEI-nu
ma-GEIN yish-EI-nu
mis-GAV ba(a)-DEI-nu.

The English provides a variation on this. Semantically, the words are all related, although there is a chiastic structure in the English, with lines 14 and 17 referring to God's actively assisting our choices, while lines 15 and 16 deal with God's keeping us from harm. I felt that having four pure synonyms in English would actually call more, rather than less, attention to the words; it would make people think too much. Changing the language from nouns to verbs ("God, who protects us," not "God, our protector") allows for a stronger rhythm in English, which picks up the simple, clear rhythm of the Hebrew. The "rhyme," if it can be called such, is also quite simple: each line ends with "us." Again, the simplicity is carried forward by starting each word with "God," which also allows me to emphasize the synonymous quality of the lines while still using verbs instead of nouns. The verbs are short words, of one or two syllables. The last line (l. 17) is meant to end strongly, with three stressed syllables and no unstressed ones. It is also the most alliterative, which strengthens the emphasis.

ll. 18-24 The Hebrew here is a complete alphabetical acrostic. The acrostic form has a distinguished lineage; as Elbogen notes, "[v]arious forms of alphabetical word- or sentence-order are found from the very beginnings of sacred poetry." The אל ברוך is one of the older ones, and Elbogen is certainly correct when he says that it "had the good fortune to be accepted in the prayer books while the others vanished or are only now

turning up in manuscripts after a millennium of oblivion."[148]

Abudraham gives a sense of the significance that the tradition has attached to the acrostic over the years in his explanation of why this one appears in the יוצר. This prayer is, of course, about creation, and the acrostic is designed to show that the world was created only on account of Torah. Abudraham reaches this conclusion from the fact that "the whole Torah is set out in the letters of the alphabet, twenty-two letters, and so Scripture says, 'We shall be glad and rejoice *in You*.'" (Song of Songs 1:4). "In You," in Hebrew, is בך, letters that together have a numerical value of twenty-two. Thus, "Midrash says, when you see בך, [remember] that the Torah was written with twenty-two letters, and read twenty-two for בך." Thus, as Joel Rosenberg notes, acrostics serve the function of emphasizing both completeness and the connection of the world to Torah. Tradition is a compelling reason to use acrostics, as Rosenberg does. Nevertheless, I believe that most people do not notice them, and when they do, they find acrostics distracting. In English, the acrostic word form lacks the associations of the Hebrew. In this language, it is a novelty, a clever poetic trick. For that reason, I have not used it.[149]

The אל ברוך poem does, however, have a number of other distinct features that I have tried to reflect. First, as Lawrence Hoffman notes, the rhyme scheme of the poem is aabbccb. Second, the Hebrew has a definite rhythm, and perhaps even a meter. The first four lines each contain four short words, and each ends in an iamb. Indeed, the lines contain many iambs. If read in a certain way, with the maximum possible elision, the lines are actually a fairly regular iambic tetrameter, with the first and third lines beginning a

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[148] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, pp. 228, 215.
[149] אבודרהם, p. 72; Rosenberg interview.

single stressed syllable:

EIL ba-RUKH g'-DOL dei-AH
hei-KHIN u-FA(a)AL za(ho)-REI kha-MAH.
TOV ya-TZAR k'-VOD lish-MO
m(')or-OT na-TAN s(')vi-VOT u-ZO.

I have varied the rhyme scheme slightly; mine is aabbcca. This allows me to convey the idea of "above, below" (l. 19), because the two lines "above" (ll. 18-19) match the line "below" (l. 24). Rhyme has been out of favor among poets, including liturgical poets, ever since the Modernists, but it still has an appeal for those who hear and say it. As Douglas Hofstadter notes, we would never think of removing rhyme from children's books, but "there is a pretense that adults are far more serious than children, that adults do not want to be distracted by childish musical frivolity, that what adults are after is only the dead-serious *core* of a literary work." I share Hofstadter's skepticism about this "pretense," especially where liturgy is concerned. As to rhythm, I have kept the iambic tetrameter, being careful in particular to end each line with an iamb. I have also tried to use words of one syllable where possible, or two at the most:

GOD, the GREAT, the ONE who KNOWS,
who GAVE us LIGHT a-BOVE, be-LOW,
god SET the SUN to SHINE for US,
god MADE the WORLD di-VINE for US.[150]

The next two lines in Hebrew end with anapests (*k'-do-SHIM; m'-sap-PRIM*), and, if one wants to avoid elisions, have anapests elsewhere as well (*ts'-va-AV; ro-m'-MEI*). This, I believe, is done both for the sake of variety and as a build-up for the last line. In the English, I move to a trimeter full of anapests, for the same reasons:

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[150] L. Hoffman, commentary on יוצר in *My People's Prayer Book*, p. 55; Hofstadter, *Le Ton Beau*, p. 548 (emphasis in original).

and the HEAV-en-ly CREA-tures do SING,
and ALL of the PRAIS-es they BRING

The final line of the Hebrew may, and I think probably should, be read as a return to iambic tetrameter: *k'VOD EIL uk(')-DUSH-sha-TO.* Although I retain the trimeter in the English, I also end with two iambs, and for what I suspect is the same reason as the Hebrew: that rhythm is more powerful, more stately, than is the anapestic, and so makes for a more fitting climax to the poem.

Finally as to this poem, I need to add a note about angels. In the Hebrew they are קדושים, "holy ones." I call them "the heavenly creatures". Angels play a substantial role in the traditional *siddur*. From the days of Abraham Geiger, who pronounced that "[t]he enumeration of the various *angelic* orders and the depiction of their activity cannot be admitted" into the prayerbook, Reform and similar prayerbooks have stayed away from them. *Kol Haneshama* welcomes them back. In his commentary, David Teutsch writes, "The tradition leaves ample room for each generation to understand angels as it will, whether as natural forces or revealing moments in our lives, the divine in the people we meet, or manifestations of the goodness in our world or in the inner workings of the human heart." As our congregants are becoming increasingly more willing to conceive of the world in other than purely rational terms, I believe that there is more room for angels, understood as broadly as Teutsch suggests, in the liturgy.[151]

ll. 25-27. The Hebrew here exhibits parallelism, but no particular meter or stress pattern. In this case, I return to my default pattern: a balanced line with two

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[151] Israel Abrahams, *A Companion to the Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, rev. ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1922), pp. xliv - xlvii (on angelology in the traditional *siddur*); Abraham Geiger, "*Denkschrift*" (1869), quoted in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 166; *Kol Haneshama*, p. 264.

stresses in each half line, each line ending with a stress. The material is not "poetic" enough for me to add much alliteration (only the "g's" in l. 27). It is workmanlike, as befits the action it describes:

may YOU be BLEST / e-TER-nal our GOD
for the WORKS of your HANDS / that YOU have FORMED,
for the GLOW-ing STARS / that GIVE you PRAISE

ll. 28-32. According to Abudraham, קדשים, "holy ones," means "angels," and so I have translated it here. The Hebrew contains three rhyming words for God, each with some quantity of unstressed syllables preceding a stressed and then an unstressed syllable: *tzu-REI-nu, mal-KEI-nu, u-go-a-LEI-nu*. The final two words end in stresses, an iamb and an anapest: *bo-REI k'-do-SHIM*. English rhyme here would sound awkward, something like, "our king, our spring." I have dropped that, but I have kept the amphibraclic meter (unstressed - stressed - unstressed) for the names for God. *Kol Haneshamah* has "our rock, our sovereign, our champion," which is more correct semantically. I have moved champion to the middle of the list to get an o-a-o variation in the stressed vowels in each amphibrach. I reverse the Hebrew pattern for the last two words by using a dactyl and a trochee. Both patterns have the effect of breaking up the previous rhythm; mine allows me to use the word "angel" and not another euphemism. The English scans as follows:

may YOU be BLEST
our FORT-ress
our CHAM-pion
our STRONG-hold,
MA-ker of AN-gels.[152]

ll. 33-36. The Hebrew refers to God as יוצר משרתים, a phrase that can be

[152] אבודרהם, p. 73; *Kol Haneshamah*, p. 264.

read either participially or verbally, as either "former of the ministering ones" or "[who] forms [or, is forming] the ministering ones." The commentators asked why this action of God is set in the present tense. According to the *Tur*, the explanation is found in the Talmud, in Tractate Hagigah (14a): "'Every day ministering angels are created from the fiery stream . . . as it is written 'they are new every morning' (Lam. 3.23).' And so one could interpret [this as], 'He creates ministering ones.' They are the ones made new daily, and they will be his ministers forever, such as Michael and Gabriel, all of them standing before Him." The English in line 34 ("make") also uses the present tense.[153]

The Hebrew can be read as five lines. The first four lines each have four words; the fifth line has five words, but אלהים חיים is such a set phrase, that it can almost be taken as one word. Each line divides easily into two halves. In this schema, the first two lines have many sibilants. With these all capitalized, and with the line subdivisions marked by slashes, the Hebrew would appear as follows:

yiSH-tab-bakh SHim-kha / la-ad mal-kei-nu
yo-TZeir m-SHar-tim / va-a-SHer m-SHar-tav
ku-lam om-dim / b-rum o-lam
u-mash-mi-im b-yir-ah / ya-khad b-qol
div-rei e-lo-him khay-yim / u-me-lekh o-lam

The first two lines of the English translation are written in alliterative verse rhythm (that is, two stresses per half line). The first two lines contain "s" alliterations to echo the Hebrew. The phrase "servants who serve You" in l. 34 is a nod to a Buber-Rosenzweig *Leitwort*; the literal translation of the Hebrew would be something like, "He creates servants, and [of these] His servants . . ." The last two lines move toward an

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[153] טור, אורח חיים, sec. 59. All translations of the *Tur* are mine, unless otherwise noted. All references to the Tur will be to *Orakh Hayyim*

anapestic tetrameter. They do not change the rhythm substantially, but one is meant to sense the words of praise hurrying to get out into the world. The sibilant sounds in the first two lines are underlined.

> they SING your PRAIS-es / un-CEAS-ing our SOV-e-reign
> the SERV-ants who SERVE you / whose SUB-stance you SHAPE
> they STAND in the HEIGHTS and pro-CLAIM in one VOICE
> the WORDS of our GOD liv-ing RUL-er of ALL.

ll. 37-42. The Hebrew repeats the word כֻּלָּם, "all of them," four times, each with a different adjective. These adjectives, of course, all have the same masculine plural ending, producing a simple "im" rhyme. The adjectives are either two or three syllables, each ending in a stress. After this series, there are two dactyls followed by two iambs. The two dactyls (בְּאֵימָה וּבְיִרְאָה) rhyme. The two iambs repeat the sound "ohn" in successive syllables (רָצוֹן קוֹנָם). The verse as a whole reads: *ku-LAM a-hu-VIM ku-LAM b'-ru-RIM ku-LAM gib-bu-RIM v'-khu-LAM oh-SIM b'-ei-MAH uv-yir-AH r'-TZON ko-NAM.*

All the English lines are short, to correspond to the Hebrew. Further, the English rhythmic patterns of the first and third, and second and fourth, lines are similar; these correspond to the כלם series in the Hebrew. The repetition of "will" in ll. 40-41 is an English version of the repetition of "ohn" in the last line of the Hebrew. After four lines beginning with unstressed syllables, l. 41 begins with a stress, to emphasize the idea of God's will being paramount. The last line ends with a stress, to bring closure to the verse.

ll. 43-46. The Hebrew has an alliterative rhythmic repetition: פּוֹתְחִים and פֵּיהֶם. The next four words have a number of unstressed syllables before a final stress, and all end in "ah": *bi-k'-du-SHAH u-v'-ta-ho-RAH, b'-shi-RAH u-v'-zim-RAH.* My English

lines are again short to reflect the limited number of Hebrew words. There is an abcb rhyme scheme. The meter is iambic, with two iambs per line:

their HYMNS of JOY
their POEMS of PRAISE
their SONGS so PURE
their VOICE-s RAISED

ll. 47-55. The Hebrew begins with a series of long, rhyming words, each masculine plural present tense verbs of the piel or hiphil conjugations. Using these conjugations allowed the writer to use a preformative *mem*, thus lengthening the word as much as possible. These refer to what the angels say, and are probably therefore meant to show, and to reprise, the multiplicity of their praises. Following this is a different rhythm, a set of short words describing God as exalted (אֶת שֵׁם הָאֵל, וכו). None of these root words themselves is more than two syllables, although many do have a definite ה added. The English tries to reflect this, with an almost sing-song rhythm in the first four lines followed by no more than three syllables per line in the final five, and alliteration in ll. 51-53.

ll. 56-57. This portion has no discernible or consistent rhythm in the Hebrew. The Hebrew does, however, have a word pattern, first saying זֶה מִזֶּה and then זֶה לָזֶה. The English translates this literally, but emphasizes it by using it to begin each line: "Each from each," and "Each to each." I again use the Medieval English alliterative rhythm (although without the alliteration) my default.

ll. 58-59. In contrast to the previous two lines, the Hebrew here shows a definite rhythm. Here the stress is less important than the number of syllables per word. It

can be demonstrated most clearly by mapping out each "line," without highlighting stress:

1 *b'-na-khat ru-akh* (3 syllables, followed by 2)
2 *b'-sa-fah vru-rah* (3:2)
3 *u'-vin-i-mah k'-do-shah* (4:3)
4 *ku-lam k'-eh-khad* (2:3)
5 *o-nim v'-om-rim* (2:3)
6 *b'-yir-ah* (3)

All lines except the last have two words. In the first three lines, the second word has one syllable fewer than the first word, while in the next two lines, it has one more. The final word certainly stands by itself for emphasis: the angels are speaking "in awe." The moves up and down in the number of syllables are ways of echoing, which is precisely what the angels are doing. All but one of the six root Hebrew words in the first three lines have two syllables, and even that one (קְדֻשָּׁה) could be elided to sound quite close to a two-syllable word. This similarity is appropriate for a choir that is singing "all as one."

The English tries to reflect the Hebrew by using iambic tetrameter, and by repeating the word "one" for emphasis. The final word, "reverence," is a Latinate dactyl, the last sibilant of which echoes the final sibilant in the previous line. This word is used to create a hush, before the short, strong, long-voweled Anglo-Saxon word, "holy," bursts out.

ll. 60-61. This is one of three *Kedushot* in the morning prayers. One other occurs in the *Amidah* (and is called קדושה דעמידה). The third, which is recited silently, takes place in the additions to the morning service and on certain other occasions (קדושה דסדרא). The *Kedushah* in our text is known as קדושה דיוצר (for obvious reasons) and as קדושה דישיבה (because, unlike the one in the *Amidah*, it is traditionally recited while seated). There has been a substantial scholarly debate over which of the two principal *Kedushot* came first. Elbogen states with some certainty that the version in our prayer

"appears to be considerably later than that of the *'Amidah*; it seems to be the creation of the mystics of the geonic period." Heinemann, on the other hand, argues that this *Kedushah*, like the other "is of Palestinian origin and is probably quite ancient...," and that it is fruitless to attempt to determine the order of the two versions.[154]

In both cases, the *Kedushah* contains verses describing a vision of God, and so not surprisingly is a favorite of the mystics. It is a doxology (hymn of praise), as is much that goes before it. These lines come from Isaiah 6:3. They give the *Kedushah* its name of "trishagion" (three-fold praise [of God]), because it begins with the words קדוש קדוש קדוש. My version is basically iambic, but no good iambic word will do for קדוש, and the repetition is so important, and so well known, that it must be translated literally. So, I have used the traditional "holy." The Talmud explains that Hannah was the first to call God יהוה צבאות, "Adonai of Hosts." She reminded Him that He had created hosts of beings; could He not give her one son? Thus, "Hosts" is related in the tradition to the idea of creation. And, of course, it specifically refers to the angels. These reasons, more than any warlike imagery (the term can also refer to an army) justify my retaining it.[155]

ll. 62-64. In the Hebrew two groups of angels face each other and sing. One would be singing the verse from Isaiah, the other Ezekiel 3:12, which is about to appear in our text. It is likely that these verses were sung by two choirs antiphonally. Having the angels singing to each other allows for a reconciliation of these two verses, which otherwise might be regarded as contradictory reports of what angels say when they are

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[154] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 59 (and see also his editor's well-annotated discussion of the debate on pp. 59-61); Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, p. 232; Abrahams, *Companion to the Authorised Prayer Book*, pp. lxxxii - lxxxiv.

[155] Berakhot 31b.

speaking to God. The Hebrew refers to two groups of heavenly beings: האופנים החיות הקדש, "the ofanim and the heavenly creatures," on the one hand, and שרפים, "seraphim" on the other. These words would throw the worshipper off. "Seraphim" will make the worshipper stop and try to remember what the word means; few will have heard of "ofanim." The English here tries to convey a sense of repetition (ll. 62 and 64) and antiphonality (l. 63) in simple words. Lines 62 and 64 face each other across line 63.

l. 65. This is the Ezekiel verse. It should be noted that in the *Kedushah* in the *Amidah* the congregation recites these two verses and another from Psalm 146:10 ימלך יי לעולם אלהיך ציון לדר ודר הללויה, "Adonai will reign forever, your God oh Zion, from generation to generation, hallelujah." In commenting on why it does not appear here, the author of the *Tur*, Jacob ben Asher, quotes his father, Asher bar Yehiel, to the effect that the prayer text "does not come now to sanctify [God] but rather to report the words by which the angels sanctify [Him]." That is to say, the Psalms text refers to human needs; the *Kedushah* here is solely about the praise of God, unentangled with earthly concerns. This prayer is our chance to enter that other world; it is precisely the prayer that can be said with language at its least communicative, at its most performative.[156]

ll. 66-67. The Hebrew refers to various forms of praise of God. English can capture the variety here simply by a list, which is effective after the longer sections that have gone before. The multiplicity contrasts with God's uniqueness (which will, of course, be proclaimed in the Shema itself); here it is phrased הוּא לְבַדּוֹ, "He alone." In the English, the contrast is made by moving from the list in l. 66 to the two simple words in l. 67.

ll. 68-71. The Hebrew contains a list of the wonders that God performs. This

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[156] טור, sec. 59.

section has an insistent meter and rhyme scheme. Each description is two words, of which the first is typically two syllables and the second three: *po-eil g'-vu-rot / o-seh kha-da-shot /* etc. The first word is a present-tense transitive verb, the second a direct-object noun (or, in the alternative, these are noun pairs; it hardly matters). The second word is always in the feminine plural form, ending in "ot." I have tried to reflect this in the English with pairs of alliterative words, with a present participle followed by an object.

ll. 72-75. The Hebrew deals with renewing the works of creation. Since the one that has been emphasized has been the sun, and since it seems that a *Leitwort* can help in the prayer experience, I have added "sunlight" to the idea of renewal, and have emphasized that renewal by repeating l. 74.

ll. 76-78. The Hebrew text quotes Psalm 136:7, which praises God as the maker of the great lights, and whose mercy is everlasting. The English captures this, and tries to do so using simple words of gratitude.

ll. 79-80. This section does not appear in Sephardic prayerbooks, in part reflecting the influence of Saadia Gaon, who had campaigned against its inclusion. Hoffman states that Saadia did not want to include a prayer for redemption in a prayer of thanksgiving for the creation of sunlight. The *Tur* explains this prayer refers to the light that the Holy One "created on the sixth day of creation [i.e., presumably in the twilight of that day, but] the world did not merit [the right to] use it, and it was hidden for the righteous in the world to come." We hope that in the world to come the Holy One "will renew it for us." Thus, this light would in fact be the light of creation, and so arguably not a new subject.[157]

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[157] L. Hoffman, *Canonization*, pp. 24-30; טור, sec. 59.

The English tries to capture the sense of messianic excitement by the meter in these two lines: each has an iamb, followed by two anapests (assuming that "Zion" is often elided to one syllable: "zyne"). The lines begin with "and" to emphasize further the feeling of anticipation. The word "rays" is added to use a concrete image:

and SHINE a new LIGHT up-on ZION,
and LET us de-SERVE all its RAYS.

ll. 81-82. The last two lines consist, in English, of iambs and anapests, the principal feet that I have used. Each line ends with a stress, so that the prayer closes strongly, with a sense of completion and accomplishment. This last line ("Who makes all the lights") consists entirely of one-syllable words. It is designed to make the pray-er slow down, as befits a conclusion. The prayer tries to end simply, focusing back on the element of light, the symbol of the one God, after a journey through the multifarious world of the seen and the unseen, the world of humans and angels.

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