# LITURGICAL ASPECTS IN THE POETRY OF YEHUDA AMICHAI

CRAIG H. AXLER

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Advisor: Dr. Wendy I. Zierler

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## Introduction

My first introduction to the poetry of Yehuda Amichai occurred sometime during my early teenage years. As a member of the Reform movement's youth groups and an enthusiastic "chaplain" of my region (the title we gave in the "old days" to the person responsible for arranging religious affairs), I was constantly looking for materials to include in the next creative service. At some point, though I am not sure exactly when, I attended a Shabbat service at which the poem "Wildpeace" was utilized alongside the traditional prayer for peace. I cannot honestly say whether or not the name, Yehuda Amichai, appeared on the page. If it did, I did not remember the name, only the poem. I clipped it out and added it to my file box of materials and readings.

I became reacquainted with Amichai during my junior year of college, when I went to study in Jerusalem in the College Academic Year program at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. One of our courses was technically titled "An Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature." Though I imagine we must have seen works by some other writers, Amichai dominated the class. The instructor, Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon had recently finished writing her Rabbinical thesis on the poet, and was passionate about his work. Additionally, she had a surprise planned for the American students who had only just been introduced to Amichai's poetry: the poet himself would teach the final session of the class. This was facilitated both by the existing relationship between Amichai and the College–Institute, and by the fact that his house was located just a few blocks away.

I can remember as though it was yesterday (and yet it was exactly a decade ago) the early spring morning in Jerusalem on which I sat with seventeen other American

college students and drank in the words and the personality of Israel's greatest poet of the last generation. We were novices in Hebrew poetry, at best – possessing only skills enough to decode maybe one line without translation. And yet, Amichai was willing to sit and share with us his words and his love for that country, that city. I was deeply impressed by the passion and the humanity that burst forth from his writing. I purchased the three existing bilingual collections of his poetry before I returned to the United States. Though I left Israel, Amichai remained with me, both as a reminder of my year in Jerusalem and as a growing literary companion.

I relate these two personal stories as an introduction to this thesis because it seems obvious that a text cannot be viewed fully without any knowledge of its author. I am coming to this subject of "Liturgical Aspects in the Poetry of Yehuda Amichai" as: a rabbinical student approaching ordination; an American; a Reform Jew, and the list goes on. I have come to Amichai's poetry through multiple paths.

This thesis began with the experiences I just described, and yet it has grown significantly in scope since the start of the process. My initial plan was to look at how Amichai's poetry was utilized within a liturgical context. However, it was suggested that I might also consider the ways in which Amichai utilized liturgy in his poetry, the intertextual aspects. I agreed that this would constitute a well balanced approach to the material. However, in examining the first question of the liturgical use of Amichai's poetry, it became evident that I would also have to provide a context in which to present the liturgical use of modern poetry in general, and a third section was born.

In the first chapter, I set out to examine the role of modern poetry in contemporary Jewish worship. The questions I consider include:

- What is the place of modern poetry within the context of the historical development of Jewish liturgy?
- What are the factors which have led to a proliferation of modern poetic insertions into contemporary Jewish liturgy?
- What difficulties might arise in the incorporation of such materials into liturgy?
- What are some of the models available for the incorporation of such materials?

Additionally, I conducted a review of several of the contemporary liturgies which make use of modern poetry. I have collected citations of poets included, and some analysis of these works in Appendices A-C.

The second chapter approaches the question of how Amichai utilized liturgy within his poetry. A discussion of the theoretical aspects of intertextuality is presented as an introduction to my analysis of eight poems selected to demonstrate different aspects of Amichai's intertextual allusion to and quotation from liturgy. Additional elements of intertextuality are also discussed where relevant, as are literary and theological observations. Each poem is presented in original Hebrew and translation at the beginning of the analysis. My own English translation accompanies three of the poems.

The third chapter brings us to my original question of the "liturgical use" of Amichai's poetry. I have approached the subject from two directions. First, I sought to examine the anecdotal use of Amichai's poetry. One result of that search is presented in Appendix D, which details all of the published volumes of liturgy I was able to find where Amichai's poetry is utilized. When appropriate, I also present my analysis of the ways in which the poetry functions in that context. Additionally, I present in Appendix E the results of an e-mail query through which I attempted to determine what use has been made of Amichai's poetry outside of published volumes. Just as in chapter two, the second half of the chapter is devoted to my analysis of eight Amichai poems which reflect some of the varied liturgical possibilities I have identified for his poetry. In this

section, I present one original English translation. Following chapter three, brief conclusions are offered, as well as indications for further research.

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of many individuals. I am grateful to all of the rabbis and professionals who gave their feedback to my questions regarding Amichai and liturgy. My professors at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York have helped me develop over the past five years, constantly showing both mastery of their subjects and love of teaching. During my undergraduate year in Jerusalem, Rabbis Kinneret Shiryon and Naamah Kelman introduced me to Amichai. Both continue to be supportive of my work and have offered feedback on this thesis. My thesis advisor, Dr. Wendy Zierler has been a constant source of inspiration. Without her insight and guidance, this thesis would not be what it is. I am blessed with a supportive family. My parents, Barry and Leslie Axler, and my in-laws, Saul and Carolyn Shenberg have encouraged me throughout my journey at HUC–JIR. My wife, Pamela and our son, Lev deserve equal credit for any work that I do. It is only through their love that I am sustained, and for this I am eternally grateful.

I conclude this introduction with Amichai's own words. It is with a sense of profound gratitude that I acknowledge the great gift that this thesis has been for me. I emerge from it confident that Amichai accomplished his goal, as expressed in the following:

> "I think the first major influence [on my poetry] was the rhythm of prayer. My first encounter with the Hebrew language was through prayers, in my fourth or fifth year. I believe that every poem is a prayer, a private prayer, as much as every prayer is a poem. And the poem is also a sermon; I sometimes feel as if I'm a rabbi or a minister of the church who would like to move people with my verse and my preaching, to shape them, to make them better."[1]

1. Interview with Glenda Abramson, in "A Kind of Lay Prophet," p. 10

## Chapter 1: Contextual and Historical Framework for the Liturgical Use of Modern Poetry

It should be clear to any Jew who has had even minimal contact with the Jewish prayer book, the *siddur*, that much of what constitutes Jewish prayer can be seen as (or, indeed, is) poetry. Regardless of the particular version of the *siddur* at hand, irrespective of time or geographic setting – Jewish worship and Jewish liturgy have always been composed largely of poetry. In fact, though identified as "Psalms," the compositions that provide many of the largest portions of the liturgical language of the *siddur* are primarily poetry, written as the "liturgy of Ancient Israel.[2]" Jewish worship in the time of the Temple cult included the recitation (as well as singing) of the poetry of the Psalms. After the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.), the Psalms were taken from the realm of the cult and incorporated into the liturgy. Biblical scholar Nahum Sarna even suggests that part of the reason that the 150 Psalms which constitute the Book of Psalms (as it was canonized) survived over time is due to their place in the liturgy.(Sarna, p.23)

The "liturgy" under consideration in the present question is not the liturgy of the Temple cult in Ancient Israel, but rather the texts that have formed the basis for Jewish prayer in the two millennia since the destruction of the Second Temple. It was the prayer service that took the place of the sacrifices (in Hebrew, both worship and sacrifice are

2. The designation of the Psalms as "liturgy" comes primarily from the frequent markers and "stage directions" that are part of the text itself. Additionally, from the Mishnah to the Talmud there are descriptions of the worship that took place in the Temple, frequently mentioning Psalms (sometimes specifically) which were recited as part of the ritual. The effort to systematize the issue of the initial function of the Psalms, though a subject of much debate, derives from the form-critical work of Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) to determine the *sitz im leben* for specific Psalms. It has been pointed out that the initial liturgy of the Rabbis for Shabbat and weekdays included no use of Psalms, their only incorporation coming in connection with the *Hallel* prayers on New Moons, the prayers of the Pilgrim Festivals and the specific prayers for *Hanukkah*. In contrast, the "non-obligatory" liturgies (i.e., life-cycle and home liturgies) seem to have incorporated the recitation of Psalms from from their inception. (see "Psalms, Book of: In the Liturgy" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, columns 1323-5)

עבודה) specified in the Torah which had been the primary form of Jewish worship while the Temples were standing. Defining the term "liturgy" in a Jewish context is an extraordinarily difficult task, and I do not anticipate being able to provide one single authoritative rendering. There are, of course, the "statutory" prayers which are specified by *halakha* for recitation at specific times and on specific occasions. There are also the texts and rituals that form the "non-statutory" prayers which accompany life-cycle ceremonies and home-based observances. The liturgical history of the Jewish people is filled with various rites employed by communities throughout the Diaspora and within the Land of Israel. My purpose here is not to describe those wanderings, but rather to provide a sufficient context through which to examine the function of modern poetry in Jewish liturgy. Therefore, all I will offer by way of a "definition" of Jewish liturgy is the following from Lawrence Hoffman:

> "It is useful to conceive of Jewish liturgy as the ongoing diary of the Jewish people, wherein each age records its experience in the poetry of prayer. Unlike a real diary, prayerbook entries are not arranged chronologically, but the imprint of every age is just as present, just as real." (Hoffman, Lawrence A., 1975, p. 44)

The "traditional" *siddur*, the inherited liturgy that provided the basic structures and (more or less) the exact texts of the standard prayers through the 19th century, was fixed between 70 C.E.. and 600 C.E., then solidified with the work *Seder Rav Amram* (875 C.E., Babylonia). This, however, is not an indication that the *siddur* became a "closed book,"[3] static in the history of the Jewish people. In fact, I would argue together

3. The *siddur*, while not a "closed book" does certainly have a set order and acquired a fixed text that held until the efforts of the German Reformers. On the fixed nature of Jewish liturgy after the Geonic Age

with others[4] that the *siddur* has never become entirely fixed, but is always in flux - to varying degrees according to the historical context, but always subject to change. Change in Jewish liturgy has occurred over the centuries since *Seder Rav Amram* mostly through additions to the *siddur*. Particularly noteworthy additions to the *siddur* have been the *piyyutim*[5] (liturgical poems), created in various different communities over the centuries. From Palestine to Provence, North Africa to Germany, Southern Italy to Spain, liturgical poets created *piyyutim* for over a thousand years, from the first century of the Common Era through the beginnings of the *Haskalah* movement. These compositions served various functions in relationship to Jewish worship. They

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and *Seder Rav Amram*, Lawrence Hoffman writes:
But the synagogue service was canonized, and in a sense by the geonim, particularly Amram, whose *Seder* became common currency in western Europe, citing, as it did, relevant *Babli* instructions for new communities hungry for roots in traditional sources. As Jews in Spain, Italy, Germany, and France accepted the Babylonian Talmud as their chief source of authority, and their primary legal text to study and act upon, so they were drawn to Amram's *Seder*. But the opinions of other geonim were considered too, as was Palestinian practice to the extent it was known.
It would, therefore, be truer to conclude that the geonim laid the groundwork for liturgical canonization, which then reached fruition in the several rites of the various Jewish communities that matured only after the geonic age had ceased. To a great extent ignored in their own time, the geonim were to achieve a posthumous victory, as their successors in Europe later decided to adopt their Talmud, to accept their authority, and to worship with their version of a canonized synagogue service. (Hoffman, 1979, pp. 170-1)

4. The siddur has always been subject to change, albeit mostly in the form of additions. It is a living classic, not only by virtue of its uninterrupted use but because it breathes the vitality of the Jewish people. (Cohen, 2000, p. 146)
5. I do not pretend to be an expert in the field of Jewish liturgy, and so defer to the wisdom of the great scholars who have given a great amount of attention to the subject. On the particular question of the evolution and function of *piyyutim*, several comprehensive works have been published, including Aharon Mirsky's *The Piyyut* (1990 - Hebrew), Jakob J. Petuchowski's *Theology and Poetry* (1978) and Petuchowski and J. Heinemann's *Literature of the Synagogue* (1975) and chapter 4 of Ismar Elbogen's *Jewish Liturgy - A Comprehensive History*(1913). In discussing the role of the *piyyut* in the canonization of the synagogue service, Lawrence Hoffman writes: "Perhaps the hardest task would be to arrive at an adequate definition of *piyyut*. It is poetry, certainly, but how is it to be distinguished from certain standard prayers which are also couched in poetic form? Fortunately, for our purposes we require no precise definition. We need merely note that some time before the geonic period, certainly before the coming of Islam, and possibly as early as the tannaitic period itself, poets, particularly in Palestine, were experimenting with highly stylized poetic formations of prayers. These were not the standardized liturgical selections in the usual rabbinic *berakhah* prose, designed to express the basic themes mandated by the time of Rabban Gamliel, but additions which could be inserted into such standardized prayers so as to enrich them." (Hoffman, 1979, p. 66)

augmented or commented upon the obligatory liturgy, even at some times replacing particular aspects of the liturgy. *Piyyutim* were composed to accompany specific holidays or life-cycle moments, to memorialize communities that had witnessed tragedies and to mark the sufferings of the Jewish people.

The issue of incorporating *piyyutim* into Jewish liturgy was, however, one which always aroused controversy. Frequently these were debates that centered around the authority of the rabbinical leadership of a particular community versus the leadership of the community from which the specific liturgical creations emerged. Jakob J. Petuchowski points to one significant debate over the acceptability of incorporating the *piyyut* into the worship service, a debate that pitted Palestinian authorities (most of the earliest *piyyutim* find their origin in Palestine) against Babylonian authorities. He brings the responsum of the ninth-century Gaon Natronai as the "compromise" that provided the authority under which piyyutim are deemed halakhically acceptable:

> "As for those who say *piyyutim* in the first two benedictions of the *'Amidah*, and in all the prayers, and include in them the subject matter of the festival on every festival, as well as inserts on the Ninth of Abh and on Purim - if, in every single benediction, they also deal with the subject matter of that benediction, and then, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they add words of appeasement and prayers for forgiveness, they are permitted to do so. But the main thing is that, in every single benediction they bring in the theme of its beginning and of its end. And if, in between, they recite words of *aggadah* and praises of God, that is all right."
>
> The initial *halakhic* argument against the *piyyut* had been that the *piyyut* interrupts the flow of ideas in the traditional prayers and benedictions by introducing thoughts which had nothing to do with the themes of the prayers into which they were inserted. Natronai, in - what we may call - the '*halakhic* compromise,' is willing to set that argument aside as long as the *piyyut*, at its conclusion, provides a 'bridge' to the theme of the concluding eulogy of the traditional benediction. It was on this basis that the *piyyut* won its legitimacy in those communities - and they were to become the majority - which accepted the authority of the Babylonian scholars. (Petuchowski,1978, p. 16)

At other times, the opposition was related to actual content of the *piyyutim* themselves. *Piyyutim* frequently were used to express messages that would otherwise be difficult to accept inside of the context of Jewish worship. At times argumentative, even accusatory towards God, *piyyutim* are a vehicle for the expression of a theological system that pushes the boundaries of the relationship between God and Israel, or God and the individual *payyetan*. In other instances, *piyyutim* may express the thoughts of a particular author or community whose view of God included the vibrant anthropomorphism, best exemplified by the *piyyut* (which retains a presence even today in virtually every *siddur*) "The Hymn of Glory/שיר הכבוד." Jakob J. Petuchowski explores the theologically daring nature of some *piyyutim* in *Theology and Poetry*, arguing:

> If poetry is the medium through which 'normative' theology ('normative' at least for its time and place) best expresses itself, then poetry becomes a still more fitting medium for the expression of theological views which, even if they are not fully heretical, nevertheless represent a challenge to what has become normative and conventional. We are, of course, not speaking of the kind of heresy which is a downright denial of fundamental religious principles, but of the kind of 'argument with God' which is one, though by no means the sole, posture typical of the Jew's relations to the Deity. We mean the challenges hurled at God - in prayer.
>
> Statements and arguments which, in prose, would immediately be branded as 'heretical' have become, once they were couched in poetic form, ingredients of the liturgy, and continue to be rehearsed - often with more devotion than comprehension - by multitudes of the unsuspecting pious who would be utterly shocked to discover the true intent of their authors. (Petuchowski, 1978, pp. 4-5)

Petuchowski's point about the "unsuspecting pious" is a problem of Jewish prayer (which is, at least primarily, prayer in Hebrew/Aramaic) in the modern age, and probably much earlier. Jews held on tightly to the notion of praying in a mixture of Hebrew, with

some Aramaic, for nearly two-thousand years of exile from the Land of Hebrew. In a sense, the use of this "holy tongue" for prayer served as a link or a tie to that Land, maintaining a connection built through words repeated with regularity and consistency. However, as the repetition took on both regularity and consistency, gradually comprehension became less of a necessity. Though I have no specific data on the Hebrew/Aramaic proficiency of Jews in the Diaspora over the centuries between *Seder Rav Amram* and the German Reformers, I have to assume that it follows a gradual downward slope with infrequent peaks which indicate brief periods of revival. What is certain is that, in the wake of the Enlightenment, early German Reformers sought to address the issue of praying with comprehension and intellectual integrity (as they saw their world guided by rationality and science) through the combination of praying in the vernacular[6] and abbreviating or rewriting the liturgy.

While early Reformers in 19th-century Germany set out to edit down the *siddur* in response both to the very real problem of the proliferation of prayers and additions making the service exceedingly long, and to attempt to bring the prayers in line with the Enlightenment-based thinking that formed the impetus for Reform Judaism, they were by

6. On the issue of praying in the vernacular, Michael Meyer writes:
Only one significant step was taken very early: the translation of the liturgy into modern German. Rendering the traditional prayers into the vernacular was not itself a novelty. Translations into Judeo-German had long been available in central Europe, intended especially for women. But now some of the younger women were more at home in High German than in the Jewish dialect. And the earlier translations had left much to be desired with regard to accuracy and literary appeal. Moreover, ignorance of Hebrew had spread as well to many men, so that one maskil could claim that the majority of Jews did not know enough of the sacred tongue to "consider in their hearts what their mouths were jabbering." In response to this situation, two modern German translations of the liturgy appeared, both in 1786. One was in Hebrew characters, the other in Gothic...done respectively by David Friedlander and Isaac Euchel... These translations must have filled a need. Seven hundred and fifty individuals presubscribed to Friedlander's version; close to three hundred copies of Euchel's were sold in advance. They also aroused some opposition. Rabbi Elazar Fleckeles of Prague declared that nothing less than the biblical plague of leprosy befell those who translated Hebrew into other languages. (Meyer, 1988, pp. 24-5)

no means unanimous on the need to discard the *piyyutim* that had accrued over the course of Jewish liturgical history. Petuchowski points to Gustav Gottheil, German Reform rabbi and liturgist who is responsible for many of the translations in the Union Prayer Book, who voiced the following defense of the *piyyut* at the 1869 Israelite Synod in Leipzig:

> I fully recognize the rights of the present to change the prayer, but I believe that the religious consciousness of other times also has the right to find expression in our prayers. I do not believe that our time, with its cold and rational direction, is especially suitable to create warm, heart-stirring prayers. And for these I would rather go back to the warmer religious sentiment of antiquity, and let it supply us with such prayers. Therefore, I must speak out against the generally condemnatory judgement against *piyyutim*. (Petuchowski, Jakob J., *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*, p. 30)

However, the earliest reforms to the prayerbook that were undertaken by the German Reformers were those which would arouse the least opposition – in part because the *halakhic* questions regarding the inclusion of *piyyutim* had never really been settled, and also because of the complex and elusive nature of many of the *piyyutim* that struck the ordinary synagogue-going Jew as inaccessible. Long before the reformers attempted to deal with the truly complex questions of bringing the explicit theology of Jewish prayer in line with their Enlightenment ideals, the great poetry of the prayerbook was largely excised from its place and role in Jewish worship. This tendency gradually spread to the subsequent prayerbooks of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox communities in central and western Europe, as well as the United States.

However, that decision left a void. As Jakob Petuchowski points out:

> Still, the *piyyutim* did have their function. For example, the standard liturgy is identical for all the Three Pilgrim Festivals. With the exception of the naming

> of the given festival in two or three prayers, and with the exception of different Scripture pericopes, there is no difference between a Passover service and a service for Pentecost or Tabernacles. In the traditional synagogue, it was one of the functions of the *piyyutim*, together with the synagogal tunes reserved for given occasions, to bring home to the worshipper the distinctiveness of each specific festival. (Petuchowski, Jakob, 1978, p. 138)

With no specific poetry to mark off these occasions, or to lend distinctiveness to the times of the year, the liturgy became, in a sense, less vivid. The very notion of a fixed liturgy is that the worshippers will repeat the same words over and over again without alteration, allowing the worshippers the sense that they know what their prayers will consist of, they have expectations that will be fulfilled.[7] However, there has existed a counterbalance to this fixity (in the terms the Rabbis used, *keva*) which has stood in tension with it from the very beginnings of Jewish liturgy, the element of spontaneity, *kavvanah*.[8] Perhaps this is the reason why, as Petuchowski continues:

> Hymns, meditations and modern poems in the vernacular have, since the nineteenth century, taken the place of most of the *piyyutim* in the liturgy of Liberal and Reform Judaism. But even here, a few of the old *piyyutim* have been retained or re-introduced - if they met the new standards of aesthetics, brevity and intelligibility. It was the application of those standards which, ever since the 1819 publication of the Hamburg Temple prayerbook, made the Reformers, even in the Ashkenazi realm, partial to the poetic creations of Spanish Jewry.(ibid., p. 138)

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7. Judaism is a liturgical religion. Herein Judaism differs from some other religions which rely on hymns and *ex tempore* prayers exclusively. Judaism has its prayerbook. It, too, knows of the free outpourings of the pious heart, of the prayer uttered by the individual in his joy and in his anguish. But, in addition to those private expressions of devotion, Judaism has, for use in both synagogue and home, the fixed liturgy which is known as the *Siddur*. The name itself (meaning "order") indicates that Jewish prayer follows a definite and established order or arrangement. (Petuchowski, 1968, pp. 22-3)
8. The dialectic of *keva* and *kavvanah* as it is applied to the liturgy is most associated over the last fifty years with the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel on the subject (for example, "The Spirit of Jewish Prayer" in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, pp. 100-126). The question of *keva* in regard to prayer, however, is dated back to the Mishnah, see for example Avot 2:13, Berakhot 4:4.

It is possible that one of the functions of the *piyyutim* was to break up the *keva* with something that would interrupt the flow of the liturgy and cause the worshipper to have a moment to reflect with genuine intention, *kavvanah*, on the themes of the prayers, or the relationship with God which is at the center of the prayer experience. At the very least, the *piyyutim* were an effort to connect the standard words of the obligatory prayers with the world of the present cultural context.[9] This is evident in the fact that *piyyutim* developed in each of the geographical areas of Jewish life from Palestine in the first century C.E. through eighteenth century Italy.

Eric L. Friedland discusses the evolution of the siddur in the time since its canonization through the Middle Ages, into the efforts of Reform Judaism in Germany and then America. He points to two interesting poetic texts that have entered into virtually every prayerbook printed, across the denominational spectrum, since their composition: "The Hymn of Glory" (*Shir HaKavod*)/ *Anim Zemirot* ("Sweet Hymns and Songs Will I Recite"), attributed to Rabbi Judah of Regensburg (d. 1217) and *Yedid Nefesh* (Beloved of the Soul), composed by Elazar ben Moses Azkiri (1533-1600). While there is no way to know conclusively why these two specific texts have survived, I would suggest that a combination of their literary quality and the proliferation of popular melodies that have been composed for each has contributed to that longevity. Friedland

9. Ismar Elbogen writes of "poetic additions" in distinction from the מטבע של תפלה/statutory prayers: But with all of the reverence for this tradition, the religious sensibilities of the Jewish people never allowed them to be enslaved to this traditional prayer; in every age they demanded the right of independent creativity, the freedom to express themselves, and to supplement the traditional forms with a personal or, more accurately, a contemporary tone. Thus alongside the stable prayers handed down by tradition, there arose a fluctuating element whose adoption and use in the liturgy was optional (רשות), left to the judgement of each individual community. The religious needs, attitudes, and tastes of different lands and periods stamped its form; the culture of the surrounding world and political and social conditions increased or diminished its importance, expanding and reducing the space allotted it. Sometimes it dominated the liturgy, sometimes it was strongly suppressed. (Elbogen, 1993, p. 165)

goes on to point to the influences of Polish Hasidism on the prayerbook and liturgy, particularly under the leadership of the first Lubavitcher *rebbe*, Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1887-1959) and Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1811), of whom he writes:

> Nachman of Bratslav ... though certainly no antinomian or nonconformist when it came to statutory prayers and ritual observances, broke new ground, both in what he encouraged and in what he did himself. Solitude (*hitbodedut*) in prayer, especially in a rustic setting, receives a fresh emphasis; so does spontaneous prayer in the vernacular, in this case Yiddish, touching on matters of immediate, pressing concern to the individual. Some of his deep-felt extraliturgical private meditations, as recorded by his key disciple and amanuensis, Nathan of Nemirov, have, not surprisingly, found their way into the most recent official prayerbooks of the Reform and Conservative movements in the United States and their counterparts in Great Britain. (Friedland, Eric L., "Jewish Worship Since the Period of Its Canonization," in Bradshaw and Hoffman, 1991, pp.145-6)

Seen in the context of the *piyyutim* (as well as more specialized forms of liturgical poems, *hizana* and *pizmon*) and the "extraliturgical" creations of hasidism, the incorporation of modern poetry into Jewish worship appears to fit appropriately in the natural flow of ongoing liturgical creativity that has been the full picture of the *siddur* from the point of its "canonization" onwards. A separate subject, and one which I cannot devote more than passing mention to in this context, is the question of liturgical creativity by deleting or altering the inherited obligatory prayers. This was the trend that emerged most out of the early Reform movement in Germany, and has continued through this day primarily in the non-Orthodox streams of Judaism (although, there are some specific instances even within the Orthodox world). As the question that I pose in this thesis - the inclusion of modern poetry (specifically that of Yehuda Amichai) in Jewish liturgy - is not, at its core a part of this difficult *halakhic* argument, I will not attempt to provide

more of that discussion here.[10] It is interesting to note, however, along with Jakob Petuchowski, that:

> ...when all is said and done, *adding* to the inherited liturgy is as much a "reform" as *omitting* from it. Both the adding and the omitting are ways of indicating that the inherited tradition, in its crystallized form, no longer meets the religious needs of a new generation. The true religious conservative takes the attitude of "What was good enough for my grandfather is good enough for me!" It is the religious liberal who, on occasion, feels impelled to "sing unto the Lord a *new* song." Judaism has always been blessed with both its religious conservatives and its religious liberals, and that is why new additions to the Jewish liturgy have always been marked by fierce religious struggles - some of them quite as fierce as were the struggles in the nineteenth century when, for a change, the struggle was about omissions as much as it was about additions. (Petuchowski,1972, pp. 14-5)

The work of the German Reformers and their successors in England and the United States provides a historical backdrop against which the liturgical creativity of the last century may be viewed.[11] From the publication of the Hamburg Temple prayerbook in 1818 through the early competing American prayerbooks of I.M. Wise (*Minhag Amerika*, 1857) and David Einhorn (*Olath Tamid*, 1858) and the first edition of the Union Prayer Book (1896), the questions addressed included what additional prayers (under the community's or the individual's רשות) would reflect the modern world in which they

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10. The questions of *halakhic* and ideological changes following the beginnings of the Reform movement are treated extensively in Michael Meyer's *Response to Modernity*, Jakob Petuchowski's *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* and Eric Friedland's *Were Our Mouths Filled With Song.*

11. Eugene Borowitz writes:

> Nineteenth century Jewry, as it emerged from the ghetto into western culture, properly saw the need for a change in the atmosphere of congregational prayer. Jews could not accept the aesthetic and social conventions of their neighbors in their daily lives without similarly modifying the style and tone of their worship services.
>
> Such cultural adaptation was not new in the history of Jewish prayer. The elegant structures and exalted stance of Spanish Jewish poetry had displaced the intricate word play and learned allusions of the original poets of the Holy Land, only in turn to be succeeded in central and eastern Europe by a more fervent, free-flowing diction. (Hoffman, 1977, p. 57)

located Reform Judaism. Similarly, the non-Orthodox prayerbooks that developed in Europe – Israel Mattuck's *Liberal Jewish Prayer Book* (1923-26), Caesar Seligman's *Israelitisches Gebetbuch* (1910), the French Union Liberale Israelite's *Tefillot Kol ha-Shanah - Rituel des Prieres Journalieres* (1925) and West London Synagogue's *Seder ha-Tefillot - Forms of Prayer*(1925) – all struggled with that same question. In virtually all cases, the answer came in two forms: the combination of modern translations of *piyyutim*[12], at times altered to fit the modern outlook of the communities, and the inclusion of new material, frequently poetic in nature.

Over the course of the twentieth century, non-Orthodox *siddurim* and other liturgical works have seen a steadily increasing amount of space reserved for non-obligatory liturgical creations. This trend has been most pronounced in the United States, but has affected the liberal liturgies in Europe and Israel (and even found its most pronounced expression in the British *Forms of Prayer*, as will be described below). One particularly American proponent of the introduction of non-obligatory prayers into Jewish liturgy is Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881-1983), whose Reconstructionist movement was founded on a principle that Judaism is a "civilization," and as such encompasses art forms which are to be cultivated and integrated into Jewish worship. Kaplan tried his own hand at the composition of modern prayer poems, but lamented that he did not feel

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12. Petuchowski notes:

> Half a century ago, Anglo-Jewry was blessed with a whole galaxy of fine craftsmen (and, it should be noted, craftswomen) in the difficult art of rendering medieval Hebrew poetry into intelligible and pleasing English. Herbert M. Adler, Arthur Davis and Elsie Davis, Alice Lucas, Nina Salaman, and Israel Zangwill, all made the treasures of medieval Hebrew poetry accessible to the non-Hebraist; and, to the extent to which their translations are still included in prayerbooks on both sides of the Atlantic, many a Jewish worshipper to this day is indebted to them and to their work.
>
> Still, when faced by the choice between translating a Hebrew poem literally, thereby preserving its subtle allusions and nuances while sacrificing its poetic grace, and re-creating the poem anew in English, sacrificing allusions and nuances on the altar of English rhyme and meter, the Anglo-Jewish school of translators opted for the latter. (Petuchowski, 1978, pp. 7-8)

himself up to the task.[13] He strongly supported the efforts of other, though, and Eric Caplan points out in *From Ideology to Liturgy* (HUC Press, 2002) that close to sixty percent of Kaplan's *Sabbath Prayer Book*(1945) is devoted to "supplementary readings."[14]

Kaplan clearly saw the fate of Jewish worship in America as tied up with the issue of cultural relevance, and sought to address this problem through his liturgical principles. In his diary from 21 May, 1933, we read:

> And just as we make use of the best thoughts of others in order to channel our own thinking into the surest and most beneficent effectiveness, so should we make use of the most noble and sincere prayer of others to channel our prayers into a life of the greatest nobility and sincerity ... Unfortunately, we Jews have limited prayer to the deadening routine of reciting the few meager passages which make up our official prayer book. If I had [had] anything to do with prescribing the rules of prayer ... I would have insisted that the vast storehouse of religious poetry be drawn upon continuously...(quoted in Cohen, 2000, pp. 64-5)

In addition to providing a link to the cultural past and heritage of the Jewish people (to which end, Kaplan introduced many poems from various periods in Jewish history, particularly Medieval Spain), the *siddur* must represent something current which resonates with the worshipper. Kaplan lamented that he would be happier if "somebody would make a suggestion that a man like Bialik or Tchernochowsky write some Piutim[liturgical poems] in place of the ones we have now."[15] Indeed, later he would be

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13. "Kaplan constantly deplored his inability to express himself poetically. Nevertheless, he considered poetic articulation to be so essential to prayer that he tried his hand repeatedly at composing just such emotion-stirring meditations. He sought an esthetically effective way to give emotional force to his reading of reality." (Cohen, 2000, p. 72)
14. Caplan, 2002, pp. 93-4. This new work provides the most comprehensive analysis of Reconstructionist liturgy to date, and also includes a comparison section between current Reconstructionist liturgies (*Kol Haneshama*) and the other current major non-Orthodox liturgies.
15. Diary of Kaplan, March 17, 1907, cited in Gurock, Jeffrey S. and Schacter, Jacob J., *A Modern Heretic*

one of the first to incorporate the poetry of both in his liturgical collections.

In the generations that followed World War II and the horrors of the Shoah, as well as witnessed the establishment (and fragility of) the modern State of Israel, liturgical creativity manifested in every denomination of American Judaism[16], with a force that continues to the present day. Lawrence Hoffman, writing in 1975, describes the "Creative Liturgy Movement," attempting to understand it in the context of ongoing liturgical creativity, albeit in differing forms (mimeographed services, use of electronic media, instruments, etc.). He points to the initial formulation of Jewish liturgy, around the year 200 C.E., as the structure on which succeeding generations built their prayerbooks, asserting:

> So creativity was the rule not the exception, the norm not the departure from normality. Not that one could do whatever one wanted! By the year 200, the order and the thematic progression of much of the service was fixed, and attempts were made to standardize some rules regarding wording. But even within these limits, creativity abounded. Palestinian poets of the sixth and seventh centuries - and probably earlier; these dates are uncertain - composed separate series of complex poetry for each week of the year, and these were inserted into the basic liturgical structure described above.(Hoffman, 1975, p.43)

He goes on to describe the efforts of the "Creative Liturgy Movement" in its manifestations in *Haggadot* for several occasions, creative services for the High Holy Days, festivals and life-cycle events. In all of these, the distinct mark of the period is left

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*and a Traditional Community*, p.35

16. I include in this liturgical creativity Orthodox Judaism because, within the constraints of *halakha*, there have been significant liturgical developments over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. Chief among these developments have been efforts to address the founding of the State of Israel and the tragedy of the Shoah. These efforts can be seen in the latest edition of Birnbaum's *HaSiddur HaShalem* (1999), which includes a "Prayer for the State of Israel" (p.790) composed by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, as well as the Zionist poem/songs התקוה and Avigdor Meiri's ירושלים (מעל פסגת הר הצופים)(p.791).

on the liturgy (in the time of this article, the Holocaust, the Modern State of Israel, the American Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and the Jews of the Soviet Union), yet it is questionable how much "staying-power" any one of these liturgies have in and of themselves:

> Given how services are compiled and the cultural eclecticism so characteristic of America, one is not surprised to find an unfettered liturgical us of Ecclesiastes, Shakespeare, and Jacques Brel; or Elizabeth Barret Browning, Japanese Haiku poetry, and a quote from the *brit milah* ritual - all in one Sabbath service! Not that Jewish sources are denied priority! In most cases Jewish sources predominate, as in a service tracing the writing of Bialik, Frischman, Tchernichovsky, and Rav Kook; or another given over entirely to poetry and music from the Golden Age in Spain.(ibid., p.47)

Hoffman points to a question that it is essential to address in the current context, with reference to the use of modern poetry in Jewish liturgy – what makes poetry "liturgical"? Literary critic and journal editor Catherine Madsen writes about the effects of new liturgies, composed by individuals who come with a political or theological agenda to promote. More than anything, she laments the use of language in ways that feel artistically cheap and which lack the force of classical liturgy. In order for liturgy to be authentic and effective, Madsen argues, it must make moral demands on the worshipper.[17] Additionally, the artful and conscious choice of words may be one key to creating liturgical language in a modern context:

> Writers of new liturgy knew what they wanted to say, but not how to make it repeatable; they had theological and psychological and sociological views, but

17. A striking example of this is found in the inclusion of the lyric of the current song "Dust in the Wind" between the sections "אדם יסודו מעפר/Each of us originates in dust" and "אל חי וקיים / You are everlasting" in a creative liturgy for the *Musaf* of *Rosh Hashanah*. (*The New Kehilla Makhzor*, 1992, p. 69)

> could not cast them in phrases of emotional and moral weight...Resenting the old language of piety, they neglected old language generally; they did not ransack the dictionaries for disused words with a contemporary bite... The new liturgists wrote with a sweeping sense of political mission...while neglecting all the available linguistic means to develop attention. (Madsen, 2002)

Jakob J. Petuchowski also points to the difficulties which arise on account of the quality of "extempore prayer," as it might appear in a service written by authors who lack the poetic skills and knowledge of the whole breadth of Jewish tradition that the composers of the classical Jewish liturgy (be they second-century Rabbis or twelfth-century *paytanim*) would have put into their prayers. He makes this point in the midst of a discussion of the tension between *keva* (fixed prayer) and *kavvanah* (fluid prayer). The modern discussion of *keva* and *kavvanah* is most frequently associated with the thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel, to whom Petuchowski turns:

> According to Heschel, therefore, and he has the weight of Tradition behind him, it is not at all impossible to use the traditional and fixed words without feeling that a heavy burden is thereby imposed upon us, and to use those words with all the inwardness and all the urgency of the "language of entreaty." Jews have done it for millennia; and it can still be done. Indeed, if we take into consideration the experience of those religious denominations which have substituted the minister's extempore prayer for a printed book, or if we are familiar with the so-called "creative services" of non-Orthodox Jewish youth groups in America today, we may well conclude that the weekly extempore prayer becomes so stylized and so repetitive that it tends to grow stale long before the same fate overtakes the polished and expressive phrases of a classical liturgy. (Petuchowski,1972, pp. 8-9)

Still, Petuchowski is clear that there is a place in the synagogue service for innovation and artistic expression, especially as it increases *kavvanah*, which in this particular work he translates frequently as "relevance." One full chapter of *Understanding Jewish*

*Worship* is dedicated to this type of expression - "Cult, Entertainment and Worship."(pp. 26-34) While his use of the term "entertainment" to describe attempts to add relevance to Jewish worship might initially seem a cheap shot at liturgical creativity, it seems that this is not at all the case.[18] Jack Cohen treats this aspect of Petuchowski's system in a way that I believe appropriately interprets Petuchowski's use of the term:

> Petuchowski entitles this propensity for esthetic embellishment of worship "entertainment," because its purpose is to titillate the worshippers during their prayers. Jewish liturgy even contains a strain of play. Petuchowski cites some of the medieval *piyyutim*, religious poems, that were composed not only as prayers but as riddles and intellectual exercises that were meant to arouse the interest of the congregants. Undoubtedly, entertainment and play become the attractions for many a synagogue Jew. Petuchowski, however, cautions against misplaced emphasis on these features of community worship that are extraneous to the main function of prayer. He indicates that just as there are rules to every game, so must the entertainment and play that we append to public prayer be circumscribed by appropriate modes of guidance. (Cohen, 2000, p. 136)

The influence of the Creative Liturgy movement is certainly felt in proliferation of new non-Orthodox *siddurim*, both movement-endorsed and independent/congregational. The presence of "Additional Readings" sections in virtually every one of these *siddurim*, as well as the foot-note, side-bar and alternative "prayers" that augment the "traditional" liturgy (in its *halakhic*, Orthodox form or in its accepted liberal form) bear witness to the Creative Liturgy movement. New technologies, particularly the ease with which any liturgy committee can utilize Hebrew word

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18. Petuchowski writes:
> It should be clear that, while there is scope for aesthetics, enjoyment and even entertainment in the act of Jewish worship, it is not *any* kind of enjoyment or entertainment, indiscriminately chosen, for which Jewish worship offers scope. There are, after all, certain rules which govern the whole enterprise - rules which address themselves to the propriety of the forms of entertainment selected, and rules which ensure that the whole act will be recognized for what it purports to be: an act of Jewish worship. (Petuchowski, 1972, p. 30)

processing programs and desktop publishing, has pushed the possibilities beyond anything that could have been anticipated in the days of hand-cranked mimeograph machines.[19] Additionally, the simultaneous rise of a strong feminist movement within Judaism which accompanied the Creative Liturgy movement has given voice to new liturgy, possibly more powerfully than any other movement. This is far too great of a topic to discuss here in depth[20], but is evidenced by the fact that the editors of the Central Conference of American Rabbis' (Reform) most recent *haggadah* ("The Open Door," 2002) and *siddur* ("*Mishkan Tefillah*" projected publication in 2005) are women who have spent significant efforts previously in creating new Jewish women's rituals and liturgies (Rabbis Sue Levi-Elwell and Elyse Frishman, respectively). It is interesting to note that in both of these publications, as well as most of the new Jewish women's rituals, both re-written liturgy and modern poetry play a significantly more prominent role than their predecessors in ritual and prayerbook.

Another contemporary movement in American Jewish prayer which has left a significant imprint on contemporary Jewish worship and *siddurim* is the "Havurah" movement, which brought together independent groups around the United States into non-institutional clusters who gathered primarily for the purpose of communal worship. The full history of this movement is far too complex to consider within this present study, and has been researched thoroughly - most notably by Riv-Ellen Prell in her study of the

19. Lawrence Hoffman is fond of pointing out the dual relationship of "technological and sociological competence" and its impact on the development of liturgy.
20. See the following for excellent studies of new Jewish women's rituals: Debra Orenstein (ed.), *Lifecycles, vol.1*, Jewish Lights, 1994; Debra Cohen, *Celebrating Your New Jewish Daughter*, Jewish Lights, 2001; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Motherprayer*, Riverhead Books, 1995; Sylvia Rothschild and Sybil Sheridan, (eds.), *Taking Up the Timbrel*, SCM Press, 2000, Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig, *Siddur Nashim*, 1976 and Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996

Havurah, *Prayer & Community* (1989). It is helpful, however, to examine some of her account as it relates to the liturgy which was used by the Havurah movement. Prell is clear in noting that the liturgy used by the Havurah on which she bases most of her research, the Kelton Free Minyan, was the "traditional" liturgy, and in indicating that this decision accorded the participants the feeling of participating in "authentic" Jewish prayer. However, as the Havurah movement grew, to a large degree, out of a strong counter-cultural tendency within its members, the "traditional" prayers frequently posed difficulties for the members (whom Prell terms "constituents"). To counterbalance these dissonances, the constituents engaged in "Interpretation" during the worship service, which Prell describes this way:

> Prayer was not exclusively a text, but neither could it be understood apart from its written form. The text of prayer engendered the most problems for group members. In response they developed the single most unique feature of a Minyan prayer service. Their statements of potential dissent were an integral part of the liturgical service. At points in the prayer service where one might want to "study," to examine classical rabbinic texts about Torah or prayer, Minyan members most often raised or responded to questions about whether or not Jewish liturgy adequately reflected or illuminated their life experiences... Members created periods of reflection that, by their position in the liturgical order, made prayer a performance of a given text and a weekly comment upon it. This sequencing and juxtaposition were consistent with the practices of other havurot and unusual in normative Judaism. (Prell, 1989, pp. 175-6)

The function of the "Interpretation" that occurred during worship in the Havurah was not purely academic, it expressed the member's dissatisfaction or dissonance with the "traditional" liturgy as well as their commitment to grappling with their place in relationship to that same liturgy. Whether it took the form of discussion[21] or individual

21. Another treatment of the liturgical nature of study and discussion is highlighted in Eric Caplan's analysis of liturgical trends within Reconstructionist Judaism:

statement, it is clear that this comes within the liturgical context, creating a new form of liturgical expression within Judaism (which finds parallels within liberal streams of Christianity), grown out of the counter-cultural revolution in the United States that encouraged this generation to "Question Authority." For the purposes of the present study of the place of modern poetry in Jewish worship, it is helpful to note the following which Prell writes in connection to the "Interpretation" section of her assessment of Havurah worship:

> Discussion is neither prayer nor performative. To the contrary, it is the exact opposite. Yet within the Minyan's liturgical service, discussion became part of every single performance of the liturgy. Then, contrary to a normative sense of prayer in which a statement of blessing God's name constitutes the act of blessing, something more is at stake...in this context, discussion (a nonliturgical form) became a part of prayer because these men and women made discussion a key form of interaction within the prayer experience.(ibid., p. 178)

With all of the emphasis that Prell gives to the notion that the Minyan kept fairly strictly to the "traditional" liturgy for a sense of "authenticity," her description of one of the Minyan's Shabbat retreats points to an inclination among at least some in the Havurah movement to expand the definitions of Jewish liturgy beyond the inherited *siddur*:

> They prayed the evening service... The service planners included, in addition to the liturgy, a number of additional readings of poetry and comments by rabbis

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In two articles in *The Reconstructionist* during the 1960's, Ira Eisenstein endorsed Kaplan's view that Torah study should form the core of the synagogue service, but his argument was based on the deficiencies of traditional prayer. Specifically, he doubted whether the inherited liturgy could attract thinking people back to the pews. According to him, Jews are unmoved by such payers because they are written in an "obsolete idiom." The repetition of the same prayers each week "dulls the sensitivities ...Singing a different *Ve-Shameru* from time to time is not enough." Only by converting the house of prayer into a house of study can interest in synagogue life be rekindled. (Caplan, 2002, p. 165)

> on the Sabbath. These additions were intended to enhance the prayers by adding insightful and beautiful descriptions of the Sabbath. These readings carried two messages: that liturgy was open-ended and to be added to and that people could bring poetry and prose to enhance the experience of the whole community. These additions, though the source of conflict in discussions of "creative services," were consistent with the community's emphasis on "experience" and on their own activist participation.(ibid., pp. 214-5)

At this point, we turn from the discussion of providing a historical context against which to view the inclusion of modern poetry in Jewish worship and liturgy to that actual process of selection itself. In choosing poetry for inclusion in worship, the question inevitably must be asked: what is religious poetry? Does any one definition of a genre or sub-genre of poetry qualify it for use in worship? These questions are extremely difficult to answer with any objective precision and rest largely on the definition of the purpose of worship and liturgy. Is it talking "to" God or talking about God? Is it a self-reflective process, as has been suggested by Mordecai Kaplan – that is, worship is essentially about community. Does it matter if the community defines itself in relationship with God or in relationship simply with one another? Must "religious poetry" include a notion of God? In attempting to define "Religious Poetry," albeit in a distinctly Christian context, Helen Gardner cites the following by Lord David Cecil:

> A writer's best poetry is usually the expression of his keenest feeling. And though many people have caught a passing whiff of pious emotion, only a few have felt it with the strength and the continuity that they feel sexual love or pleasure in nature. The faintness of their experience reflects itself in the verses in which they seek to communicate it. Further, those in whom the emotion is strong do not always have the faculty to express it. Rarely, indeed, does humanity produce a Blake gifted with the power to forge new and living symbols for the cosmic mysteries of spiritual experience. Most poets fall back on the traditional symbols of the orthodox liturgy. And these, though

> magnificently impressive on the lips of their creators, tend to lose their vitality on those of others. It is the poet's essential quality that he speaks with his own voice.(cited in Gardner,1971, pp. 126-7)

There must be a differentiation acknowledged at the outset that at least two types of poetry are to be discussed here: poetry written expressly for liturgical purposes (for instance, that of Marcia Falk in her *Book of Blessings* or Marge Piercy in *The Art of Blessing the Day*) and poetry written purely as poetry which is then *utilized* by others liturgically (as is the case with Judy Chicago's poem "Merger" from *The Dinner Party*[22]). Though I am not sure that there is any difference in the way in which the poetry is utilized, it is important to be conscious of the intent of the poet. At times, poetry may be used in violation of the intent of the poet - something which I think is a possibility with all forms of art, and the danger any artist accepts in making their art public or accessible. In the specific case of the publishing of prayerbooks, the legal need for permission to reprint a poets work should at least partially remedy the issue of the authors intent being violated, giving the author (or publisher) right of refusal.

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22. Judy Chicago wrote in a letter responding to an article that referred to her poem as liturgical poetry:

> My poem was not written as liturgy but rather, as part of an unpublished mythological manuscript written in the late Seventies. This manuscript provided the philosophical underpinnings of my monumental work of art, "The Dinner Party," honoring the achievements of women in Western Civilization. Some years later, I was commissioned to create an illuminated poster of this poem and it was this image, I believe, that made its way into the hands of various people of differing religions, both Christian and Jewish, who were moved to include it in their prayer books. No one was more surprised than I by what has become a continuing number of requests for permission to incorporate this poem into different liturgies - unless it might be my twenty-three generations of rabbi forefathers who are possibly collectively turning over in their graves because the words of their decidedly secular descendant have taken on liturgical meaning, not only in Reconstructionist Jewish services but in services of several branches of the Christian church. Actually, I must admit that - Madsen's comments notwithstanding - I am pleased that an artist's words have assumed such broad religious meaning. ( "Letter to the editor," Tikkun Magazine, May/June 2001)

From intent, we turn to the question of manifest content of the modern poetry being utilized liturgically. Michael Singer argues for a "Poetics of Liturgy," whereby the approach to liturgy would take into account the "dialectical" relationship between the prayer (or text) itself and the individual (or congregation) who engages with it:

> If the conceptual model of textual communities best describes our liturgical traditions, then the discipline of poetics may provide us with the fulcrum for our critical lever. Poetics, in antiquity and in some of its modern reappropriations, is grounded in the dialectical relationship of reader and text, performer and audience...Poetics examines phrases, paragraphs, or chapters, inquiring about their function rather than their persuasive power. Properly utilized, the poetics of worship would investigate the "poeticity" of liturgy – how the prayers produce meaning in the reader and how the reader produces meaning in the texts that make up prayer.(Bradshaw and Hoffman, 1991, p. 191)

In the current discussion, what is it about particular poems, or the works of particular poets, that "makes prayer possible"? Liturgy, in both its inherited classical sense and in the rewritten liberal versions, is composed largely of metaphoric language. Professor of Theology, David Tracy points out that all religions are founded to a large extent on "root metaphors" which serve to define and limit the experience of what is considered normative within that particular religion.[23] The function of metaphor in liturgical language may be to mediate the God-encounter, which can be terrifying if experienced too directly, without some filter through which to "see" radiant light. The frequent use of metaphor in liturgy also expands the vision of God, allowing the proliferation of God images which is inherent to a Jewish theology. Metaphor serves to

23. Tracy is writing in a collection of essays that forms one of the foundational works on the approaches to the subject of metaphor (Sacks, ed., 1978). His chapter "Metaphor and Religion" (pp. 89-104) and Karsten Harries' "Metaphor and Transcendence" (pp. 71-88) are particularly relevant to the questions raised in examining the role of metaphor in considering modern poetry for use as liturgy.

make tangible that which may otherwise be too abstract to approach for meaning. In short, metaphor is an essential component of liturgy.[24] It is also one of the defining characteristics of poetry.[25] Frank Burch Brown writes:

> What makes the total assertion of a poem metaphoric is less the expressive quality of its constituent semantic units than the mimetic/metaphoric function of the whole. Poems do not simply refer to reality, they also "imitate" reality (or realities) in creative ways. By subjecting phenomena to stylistic "distancing," "perspectival" interpretation, fresh combination, and various kinds of intensification, the "total assertion" of a poem reshapes experience even as it represents it. Thus poems become creations that do not so much duplicate as transform the ordinary world.(Brown, 1983, pp. 32-3)[26]

With Brown's definition, the purpose of metaphor in liturgy would not be to portray reality, but rather to "transform the ordinary world." There is nothing about prayer that is dependent on a analytical, rational view of "reality." In fact, prayer is to some degree the attempt to escape from "reality" into some kind of ideal, the relationship with God and community where the highest ethical and moral strivings of the people, the

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24. Lawrence Hoffman maintains that the themes of Jewish prayer have remained relatively constant over the course of Jewish history, whereas the metaphors and images utilized to convey them have resulted in the various liturgical creations of different ages:
Jewish liturgy, then, expanded mightily through the centuries, but, as has often been remarked, there is a sort of sameness to it, and abundance of verbiage without a corresponding degree of thematic expansion. That is because the theme remained standard. Only the expressions of it changed. We may indeed study these novel expressions for the richness of the metaphors into which the old moral was cast. And just as the study of all the impressionistic painters of the last hundred years is surely more rewarding than a study of just one of them (or worse, a study of impressionism in the abstract and conceptual method), so a study of all the strata of liturgical formulations of the rabbinic myth would be an enriching experience in its own right. But it would not alter the message common to them all: the moral of a covenant broken by Israel, sin punished by God, atonement and performance of *mitsvot* leading to renewed wholeness in the messianic future of Time-to-Come. (Hoffman, 1987, p. 86)
25. This assertion has been challenged in the modern and post-modern discussions of defining poetry. However, for our purposes here, I suggest the assumption that metaphor plays a significant role in most poetry, and certainly the poetry being considered for liturgical usage.
26. A very extensive analysis of the feature of metaphor in "languages of religious belief" is found in Frank Burch Brown's book *Transfiguration*. Especially helpful to me in understanding the function of metaphor in poetry, and how this feature might make poetry more (or less) suitable for liturgical use - that is, the expression of "languages of religious belief" was chapter seven (pp.148-181) on "Metaphor, Theology, and the Languages of Religious Belief."

individual can be expressed. Catherine Madsen points to the potential within metaphor in liturgical language to effect transformation and validation for the individual worshipper:

> One theory of metaphor holds that meaning in the literal sense is never the purpose of imagery: the real function of metaphor is to establish intimacy. Thus the helpfulness of any given metaphor is unpredictable – or rather, depends not on its content but on the candor and humility with which it is offered. We must feel, not that we are being given a meaning that is good for us by someone who knows best, but that we are being trusted to understand. We must feel that we are regarded. We have all experienced the paradox at some time in our lives, that intimacy is the realm of greatest dignity: that the point of utter humility is the point at which we are most truly honored – loved in our nakedness, beyond the possibility of artifice or disguise. Ritual language can do that; it can give back our souls, it can make the best of our privacy available to us in public, it can make us people who remember our worth. Or, in the language of this conference, the people we need. (Madsen, 1998)

Marcia Falk, who both writes liturgical poetry and utilizes the poetry of others in liturgical settings, notes how prayer and liturgical language must speak simultaneously to the heart and the mind. She formulates new blessings in her *Book of Blessings*, where the metaphors for God strive to mediate between the abstract notion of God produced by an avoidance of direct address (as was advocated by Mordecai M. Kaplan) and the longing for a God who is near, immanent and accessible (Falk terms this "God as Person").[27] This tension produces a host of metaphors and imagery in the language of her own compositions and in her choice of other poets whose works she casts into the context of prayer.[28]

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27. See *Book of Blessings*, pp.419-423
28. Falk writes of herself:
> A Jewishly educated Jew who had grown up in a traditional Jewish home, I had become increasingly uncomfortable in my adulthood with the patriarchal theological language of Judaism; at a certain point, the very word "God" felt idolatrous to me. Coexisting with the discomfort, however, was the wish to see Jewish civilization - and, specifically, Hebrew liturgy - continue to survive. While other kinds of Jewish texts - Torah, Talmud, *midrash*, and more - can be kept alive through study, commentary, and

Falk brings up another commonality between poetry and prayer, in their initial forms, that would lead to a natural convergence of the two in the modern context. Both emerge out of cultures of orality, that is the transmission of thought or story verbally. While this has, to a large extent, been altered radically by the invention of the printing press and the publication both of *siddurim* and collections of poetry, both still are associated with oral recitation. In a sense, neither can be fully comprehended as merely words read silently from a page, but demand the worshipper (or bard) to speak the prayer (or poetry).[29]

In the introduction to Falk's "*Amidah: Sevenfold Prayer for the Sabbath*," she explains the liturgical creativity with which she wove together poetry from other women during the course of Jewish history to create a new "*Amidah*." This section of the *Book of Blessings* is unlike any other section, as it is composed of seven sub-sections (structured on the seven thematic pieces of the obligatory Sabbath *Amidah*), each of which begins and ends with a brief introductory meditation by Falk in Hebrew and English (Falk terms these "*kavvanot haleyv*"). In between are a selection of poems in Hebrew, Yiddish and English by a variety of Jewish women. Falk writes:

This new *Amidah* is unlike anything else in this service in that it presents the words of a number of Jewish women, poets whose names appear with their poems. Why this multivocal chorus? Why the names?[30] Because the words of a single tradition - a single

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critique, in order for prayer to survive, it has to be usable as a performance language with which we bring our awareness to the present moment. Thus prayer has to speak honestly to both the heart and the mind. This is the reason, I think, that the *siddur* - the Jewish prayer book - is the one sacred text in Judaism that has never been completed or fixed; rather, it has been adapted and shaped, added to and altered many times over the course of nearly two millennia. My belief is that the evolution of Jewish liturgy must continue if the liturgical culture is to survive. (Barron and Selinger, 2000, p. 60)

29. See Falk in Barron and Selinger (eds.) *Jewish American Poetry*, pp. 63-4. Also included here is an interesting note about the layout of the pages in her *Book of Blessings*, which calls for tremendously more "blank space" than worshippers used to the traditional model of the *siddur* are comfortable with.

30. The debate on the inclusion of the names of the authors of modern poetry is a complex affair. It seems

school or a single liturgist - cannot always speak for every heart. The collage of poems offered here only begins to suggest the diversity of our voices, reclaiming some of the many that have been forgotten or lost in the mainstream of tradition. And because the reclaiming of voices leads to the recovering of identities, we recall the names of the women whose words move us today. Above all, this compilation encourages us to contribute our own voices to the tradition." (Falk, 1996, p. 177)

Falk's alternative *Amidah* appears as well in the Reconstructionist movement's initial publication of the *Kol Haneshama* prayerbook series "Shabbat Eve" (pp.150-178).[31] In the case of Falk's *Amidah*, we see a combination of original poetic material (Falk's *kavvanot haleyv*) and poetry not specifically written for liturgical purposes. Falk likens these poems to *kerovot*, a form of *piyyut* intended to embellish the obligatory prayers of a particular setting. However, it is important to look at the issues posed by selecting poetry written with no intent of its use in prayer, poetry that may well have been written as a rebellion against the world of prayer. Yet, in the rebellion itself, at times, the modern liturgist finds words that express the "truths" that we wish to make the words of our prayers. In the introduction to their recent collection of *Jewish American Poetry*, Jonathan Barron and Eric Selinger write:

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that the trend is currently to identify the author at the point that their work appears. This is certainly connected to the feminist critique of reclaiming voices that had been silent for too long (the principle at work in Falk's *Book of Blessings*). On the other side of the issue is the claim that the identification of a particular author *ad loc.* serves no purpose, and may even interrupt the flow of prayer. Lawrence Hoffman writes:

Even a prayer by someone else is not really a prayer until I, the worshipper, usurp it as if it were my own; and that is why prayer books usually find it superfluous, even misleading, to ascribe their contents to particular authors; whereas books of poetry must necessarily say who the poet was. When we say that a prayer is "a Psalm of David" (as the superscriptions to the psalms often attest), or a prayer of St. Francis, we mean to gloss the words involved with a commentary that says something about the spirituality implicit in the content and transferable to us, the praying community who appropriate the contents as our own. But without such an appropriation, we have merely literary records that may be called poetry or readings, perhaps, but not yet prayers. (Hoffman, 1987, p.7)

31. Though it was not incorporated into the subsequent prayerbooks in the series, there is some debate as to the cause of the decision not to utilize this approach. For some historical notes on this conflict, see Caplan, 2002, pp.229-231

> For many poets the issues of Jewish sources, multiple identities, and even questions of poetics get bound up in the relationship between two archetypal figures, the poet and the rabbi. These figures tend to be presented rather differently, however, by women and men, a contrast that points out the central importance of gender to the work of Jewish American poets. "You've lost your religion, the Rabbi said. / It wasn't much to keep, said I." The poem to which these lines belong, "Debate with the rabbi" by Howard Nemerov, is one of the paradigmatic poems to express this theme. For the women here, by contrast, the figure of the rabbi is more often a synonym for the poet: as we noted before, two of the poets, Marcia Falk and Marge Piercy, are well-known and widely loved writers of new liturgy and liturgically useful verse... for most, but not all, of the men the conflict between community expectations and individual desire marks the speaker as a classically American isolato. And for most, but not all, of the women, community associations prove to be both liberating and enlightening. For others, finally, the poet is a mediating figure, resting uneasily between the two poles of isolato and communal voice. As Norman Finkelstein puts it, in the voice of his renegade rabbi-poet Acher, "They cast me from the congregation / - but they still come to hear me teach." (Barron and Selinger, 2000, pp.18-9)

There are many factors at work in the process of selecting modern poetry for use in a liturgical setting, not the least of which is determining what are the boundaries of appropriate theological expression that will be tolerated in prayer, which is essentially a communal endeavor. This will obviously vary according to the identification (and self-selection) of the particular community of worshippers. The point which this brings up will be extremely pertinent to a discussion of the liturgical use of Yehuda Amichai's poetry: what is the place of irony and even blasphemy in Jewish prayer?

There is at least some basis for this conversation in the context of the traditional *siddur*, where no single vision of God was ever sufficient to represent the total picture of the God of the Jews. Additionally, Jews have taken up the Biblical model of argumentation with God, engagement which sometimes includes powerful exchanges of charges. Jakob Petuchowski includes in his study of surprising themes in the Medieval *piyyut* the striking *piyyut* אין כמוך באלמים by Isaac bar Shalom. It is an example of the

extent to which the liturgical poet might feel authorized to argue with God, and even to accuse God of being mute(!) in the face of Israel's suffering, all within the framework of corporate prayer. The *piyyut* opens with the stunning charge, a twist of the Biblical/liturgical phrase (Ps. 86:8) אין כמוך באלהים, which reads: / .אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בָּאִלְּמִים דּוֹמֵם וְשׁוֹתֵק לְמַעֲנִימִים, "There is none like You among the dumb./ Keeping silence and being still in the face of those who aggrieve us." (translation by Petuchowski).

The charges the author levels against God are delivered in the context of prayer, a fact that in and of itself must be seen as at least ironic. Not only is the context prayer, but the methodology is inherently the Jewish way to argue a point - out of the Bible. One might even imagine God retorting - "Show me a verse!" when charged with being negligent with regard to Divine duty. Catherine Madsen argues for the presence of irony as a key factor in the composition of liturgy, and does so on the basis of established liturgy which incorporates irony. In her essay "Love Songs to the Dead," she opens by detailing her work on a *Chevre Kaddisha*, a Jewish society for the purification of the body prior to burial. After describing the processes by which the body is prepared, Madsen notes the liturgical recitation of Song of Songs 5:11-16, in which the "beloved" is described in vivid, even sexual detail - very much alive. There is, she points out, great irony in chanting this love song to a dead body. There is even more irony when one takes the view that Song of Songs may be a dialogue between God and Israel. Through this essay, Madsen utilizes various theoretical structures from the art world to point out a basis on which to see liturgy in a modern context, and concludes:

My own observation is that the most powerful liturgy admits it is vertiginous:

> absorbs, incorporates vertigo into its order. The liturgist's art is partly quotation and linkage -- the disruption of context, the application of strong words to a purpose for which they were not intended. One can make a case that the true test of liturgical endurance is the ironic misquote...There are serious ironies as well as comic ones ... There is a fearful irony in speaking of Jewish chosenness after the fact of Nazi "selection."...In Jewish liturgy the use of Isaiah's tirade against fasting (57:14-58:14) in the Yom Kippur service is openly and fiercely ironic, and intended to get results....The irony induces the vertigo – whereupon we compensate, balance: we know how to right ourselves. Balance is an inborn human faculty, discovered in desperation, exhilarating to use. The best liturgy schools us in this faculty. It gives us the precipitating irony that compels us into decision, the paralyzing absurdity that impels us to act. (Madsen,1998)

Even the editor of the Conservative movement's *siddur*, Jules Harlow, allows that to speak of a Jewish prayerbook that fails to address the horrors of the modern world would not be possible. The Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom* was published in 1985 and reflects a movement that is trying to confront the same issues that all other new liturgies of the post-Shoah generation were. Liturgical creativity from the middle of the twentieth century until the present is essentially grappling with the questions of the Shoah (and images of God in relation to that great horror), the establishment of the modern State of Israel, and the impact of the growth of the feminist movement (as well as the other movements asserting their right, within the Jewish context, to equality). It is worthwhile to note that many Conservative congregations have, nearly twenty years after its publication, found it impossible to embrace *Siddur Sim Shalom*, for a number of reasons. I would contend, though, that at least one of the reasons is because it has attempted to deal with these questions, albeit in a generally conservative way. Harlow writes:

> Particularly in our time, the acknowledgment of evil in God's world is one of the most difficult challenges encountered in putting together a prayer book. The questions of theodicy defy adequate response, but they may not be ignored on that account. It is important even simply to articulate them during a service

> whose context is faith...*Siddur Sim Shalom* includes passages for supplementing a service on the day that commemorates the Holocaust each year, Yom Hashoah. The mourner's Kaddish designated for that day is a bold modification of the traditional text. It articulates the tension between faith and doubt that the murder of six million Jewish men, women, and children necessarily poses...In this special version of the Kaddish, then, we have interrupted the classic statement of faith-in-spite-of-it-all with names of places where Jews were brutalized and killed: *Yitgadal* –Auschwitz – *ve'yitkadash* –Lodz (etc.)...
>
> Yet the tension between faith and doubt is resolved liturgically at the end of this Kaddish, when the concluding words are recited without interruption. (in Bradshaw and Hoffman, 1991, pp. 132-4)

The very question of prayer after the Shoah is enough of a topic to fill shelves of books. It is not something that I feel qualified to analyze thoroughly, and it needs far more sophisticated theological discussion than can be accomplished in this limited context. However, in that it relates directly to the subject of the use of Amichai's poetry in liturgical settings, the function of irony and even blasphemy as it relates to Jewish prayer after the Shoah demands attention. Catherine Madsen points out the common beginnings of Jewish and Christian prayer in their response to the great tragedy and horrors of the first century:

> From the secure and leisurely amblings of egocentric speech, we arrive at the most difficult speech in our experience: confession, recollection of bewilderment and pain, admission of helplessness, longing and pleading. Western religion, which had a difficult birth, has known all these states. Its rituals of memory trace a series of destructions: destruction of the faithless, destruction of the enemy, destruction of the innocent, destruction of trust between the people and God. Both rabbinic Judaism and Christianity evolved from a catastrophic loss – the wreck of the Second Temple and of the geographical Jewish nation – and their liturgies derive not only from revelation and deliverance but from the knowledge of devastation. When Judaism in exile replaced the sacrifices of the ruined Temple with the "sacrifice of the heart," when Christianity in embryo replaced both the Temple sacrifices and the martyred teacher with the symbolic sacrifice of the communion, they were not only preserving memory; they were ascertaining how much they could live without. (Madsen, 2002)

She goes on to connect that sense of destruction and the liturgical responses it produced to the current sense of devastation in the second half of the twentieth century. Madsen argues that the current modern liturgies have not confronted the real destruction and inhumanity our generation has witnessed. Rather, they have become (ironically) optimistic, retreating into nostalgia and the "old forms of belief."

It is the task of liturgical language to formulate an appropriate response to these horrors, to attempt to confront that which is too terrible to face. Madsen cautions against allowing modern liturgical language the "easy way out" of becoming inappropriately "optimistic." The fact that "all securities have been pared away" in our time is not a call to calm fears and reassure the congregation through mindlessly happy sentiments. Rather, it is the task of liturgy to reflect the times, to allow the worshipper to see themselves in the prayers that are uttered. This cannot occur in our own day without at least some expression of doubt and existential pain. We may look to the classical liturgy to express these concerns, as the generations whose memory of the destruction of the Temple was ever-present certainly did. However, it would be more effective to mine the literature of our own time, the poets and authors who are grappling with the crisis of faith which is closest to our own reality.

It is not only the words of the inherited prayers in their classical formulations that have become inadequate on their own. At least as pertinent to the post-Shoah need to revise the prayerbook as the failure of the classical liturgy, is the failure of the "mission of Israel" optimism of the classical Reform prayerbooks from the time of German Reform Judaism through the Union Prayer Book.[32] This generation is not one which can speak

32. Eric Friedland points to the following example in David Einhorn's *Olath Tamid*: "The sorrow-laden paytanic products of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry clashed with Einhorn's visionary optimism concerning

with such conviction of the Divine plan that has cast Israel among the Nations to bring light and truth to the world. Both the establishment of the modern State of Israel and the experiences of the Shoah and subsequent wars have challenged that theological stance, and must be reflected in the *siddur*.

Though not writing specifically about the presence of modern poetry in prayer, Norman Finkelstein offers two excerpts from poems to conclude his discussion of the influence of Allen Ginsburg's epic poem *Kaddish* on later generations of Jewish American poets. He views these poems as some form of attempt to respond to God after the Shoah, and these types of sentiments provide an indication of what might be needed in the modern *siddur*:

> Through crematorium chimneys
> a Jew curls toward the God of his fathers.
> As soon as the smoke is gone,
> upward cluster his wife and son.
>
> Upward, toward the heavens,
> sacred smoke weeps, yearns.
> God - where are You -
> we all disappear. (Glatshteyn 119)
>
> Where did the Jewish god go?
> Up the chimney flues.
> Who saw him go?
> Six million souls.
> How did he go?
> All so still
> As the dew from the grass.
> ([Harvey Shapiro] *Selected Poems* 39)

> Whether the Jews of the Shoah disappear into God, as in Glatshteyn's "Smoke," or the Jewish God Himself disappears through the witness of the six million, as in Shapiro's "Ditty," American Jews' responses to the Holocaust gravitate toward the culture of holiness, even when the foundations of that culture have been cast into doubt. This accounts in part for Rothemberg's notion of poets, including (or perhaps especially) Jewish poets, as "technicians of the sacred," returning to the poetic origins of sacred (the sacred origins of the poetic) under the aegis of modern ethnography. (Finkelstein, 2001, pp. 181-2)

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Israel's career among the nations. Being obsessed with the persecution-ridden past meant taking a short-sighted view of Jewish history. The sobs of old poems had to give way to exuberant songs of trust in the favorable outcome of Israel's mission. For this reason, and for reasons of stylistic simplicity, the liturgical poems of Spanish Jewry take the place of the sadder Ashkenazic lyrical outpourings. ... Similar considerations prompted the replacement of the Ashkenazic *el male rahamim* with the Sephardic *mah rav tuvkha* and *menuhah nekhonah*." (Friedland, 2002, pp. 38-9)

It may be the case that the theology expressed in these two poems is too radical, the blasphemy too on the surface, to ever warrant inclusion in a liturgical collection. However, this is precisely the question that must be answered by each community for itself: what are the limits of our theology, and how will pushing those limits through our conceptions of Jewish prayer make it relevant to our lives? Again, these are the questions that each community must address on its own, be that a single congregation or a wider movement/denomination.

In a very strong and passionate article, Catherine Madsen offers a cautionary note to the composers of new liturgy, defining much of what she has witnessed as "kitsch" and even a "pornography" of liturgy. The critique is voiced quite uniquely from the "left-wing" of religion, whereas most critique of new liturgy comes from "traditionalists." Madsen's claim is that the liturgical creations of past decades lacks the genuine emotion and intent of liturgy, that it fails to accomplish the task of liturgy. I quote it here at length because it is one of the only serious attempts to be analytical about the presence and function of modern poetry in contemporary liturgy, and also because I hear Madsen's words as a call for caution before continuing into the subject of the liturgical use of Amichai's poetry:

> People in the demographic profiles for whom these efforts are intended—modern skeptical people, young people, feminists, sexual outlaws—are supposed to greet this vernacular with relief. We are supposed to find it fresh and creative; it is supposed to make us "comfortable" at worship; it is supposed to compensate for centuries of oppression. If we find it galling and dispiriting we are dismissed as mere ingrates. But it *is* dispiriting; it is exhausting. The direct emotions of ardor and terror and inarticulate joy—the real stuff of religion—are all quite off limits; not only are they never invoked at full strength, they are scarcely alluded to in recognizable form. One has to keep holding back, pretending that prayer is not a bodily instinct, pretending that we

> come to religion with our problems already solved rather than out of a desperate urge to confront them. (Madsen, 2001)

In the article, Madsen brings as examples of new liturgy which does not accomplish the task of "the real stuff of religion" liturgical creations by Judy Chicago (though without citation), Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Rabbis Mordecai Kaplan, Ira Eisenstein and Eugene Kohn and Rabbi Jack Riemer (also without citation). In her comparisons of the new liturgy with kitsch and even pornography, Madsen laments the failure of the language of liturgy in a modern vernacular to make emotional demands of the worshipper. She writes: "There is no reason why the use of a modern vernacular—the lessening of a linguistic demand—should entail the lessening of an emotional demand." Though dissatisfied with the present efforts at new liturgy, Madsen appears committed to seeing the creation of new liturgy that does make emotional demands of the worshipper, and which functions as powerfully as the traditional liturgy does. Interestingly, she even writes:

> I have heard it suggested that the real Jewish liturgists of our time will turn out to be Yehuda Amichai and Leonard Cohen. Certainly the rough edges of disillusion and irony in their work serve the same function as the severe looks of icons. Severity is a kitsch-repellent: it does not permit the second tear [as described in Milan Kundera's definition of "kitsch" from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* cited earlier]...
> "And what about God?" asks Amichai, employing a barely translatable liturgical pun. "Once we sang *Ein keloheinu,* there is none like our God. Now we sing *Ein eloheinu,* there is no our-God." A lesser poet might have turned the next line—"But we sing. We still sing"— into a ringing affirmation, the sort of thing that blurb-writers call a triumph of the human spirit. Amichai makes it any number of things: defiance, chagrin, bewilderment, liberation. We sing through historical compulsion, because we were chosen to; because we choose to; *because*. The unresolved meaning is impossible to kitsch liturgy, which must present one identifiable meaning; it signals the simultaneous presence and absence of transcendence, which kitsch cannot handle. But that is what we must

> handle; it is what Jews (and except for three years of their history, even Christians) have always been required to handle, in the form of an invisible God. The makers of modern liturgy, in refusing this paradox, have misunderstood their task and their opportunity. (ibid.)

Rabbi Rami Shapiro writes his own response to Madsen's assertions regarding the "kitsch" of new liturgy in the same issue of Tikkun Magazine (March/April, 2001). While he partly agrees with Madsen's assertions regarding the critique of organized religion and worship, he laments that she did not offer "a way out" - that is, a solution to the dilemma that while the traditional liturgy is problematic in a modern context, the modern attempts at re-writing liturgy have been largely "vapid." Shapiro offers his own solution, which does not directly address the question of composing new liturgical works (although his own poetry is being used increasingly in non-Orthodox worship). He contends that modern Jewish worship should be structured on the notion that the verb *lehitpalel* is reflexive, and therefore expressed the concept of prayer as self-directed. To that end, he suggests that the components of modern Jewish prayer should be "*niggunim* (wordless melodies), Hebrew chanting (à la Shefa Gold), and silent meditation."

And yet, the fact remains that Shapiro is an author of modern liturgical poetry, widely in use across several denominations, and even translated into Hebrew for use in non-Orthodox Israeli liturgies. We are a hopelessly textual community, tied to words and expressions of religious feeling through the poetic use of letters. Therefore, it is incumbent upon any author or editor of modern liturgical texts to give thought to precisely what texts, which modern poems will accomplish the goals of added relevance, increased power and approximations of actual truths that are at the heart of the worship experience. Today, liturgists must find ways to respond to the events of modernity, to the

horrors and the accomplishments – both on scales unimaginable to the composers of the traditional, inherited liturgy. The task is to find language that expresses all of the complexities of a community of "faith" living in a post-modern world: to utilize the vernacular which is so integral to making worship accessible, without losing the artful grandeur of liturgical language; to negotiate the relationship of the individual to the community through text and ritual; and to mediate the demands of responsibility to "the tradition" while valuing the authenticity of our own voices.

## Chapter 2: Liturgical Allusion and Intertextuality in the Poetry of Yehuda Amichai

"מִלִּים מְלַוּוֹת אֶת חַיַּי - words accompany (or guide) my life"[33] This is the title of a poem by Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000), arguably the most significant poet of Israel's "Statehood/*Palmach* Generation" of poets, and there is no other statement more suitable for introducing a discussion of the role of intertextuality, specifically related to liturgical allusion, in his poetry. Born in Ludwig Pfeuffer in Würzburg, Bavaria, Amichai grew up in an environment of strict Orthodox observance – first in the land of his birth, then in the land of Israel, having made *aliyah* together with his family in 1936. The family eventually settled in Jerusalem, where Yehuda continued his education in a fairly rigid religious environment. However, during his adolescence, Amichai moved away from the *halakhic* religious observance of his parents' home, and began on a road that led him through the decades during which he asked (and even occasionally answered) profound questions about religious belief, the nature (or existence) of God, the demands of Jewish history and the fate of the Jewish people. In addition to the issues raised by Amichai's rejection of his parent's Orthodoxy, Amichai bears the awareness that he and his family were among the few German families who survive the Shoah virtually intact. He is constantly aware of the fact that the town of his childhood had been completely devastated by the Shoah, the Jewish population nearly extinguished entirely. These questions played out most visibly in Amichai's poetry, which accounts for the bulk of his writing – though he also wrote children's literature, novels, short stories, essays and

33. "מנוחת קיץ ומלים" in the collection ...גם האגרוף, pp. 65-6

plays. It is worth noting as an introduction to the poet that the primary factors that shaped his life and work include his experiences in war and love. both relating to his personal life and national/cultural/religious identity, as well as the ongoing struggle to reconcile the guilt of abandoning the religion/God of his parents in his move away from Orthodox Jewish practice. However, in line with the notion that words "accompany" his life, Amichai said in a 1968 interview:

> Every word we use carries in and of itself connotations from the Bible, the Siddur, the Midrash, the Talmud. Every word reverberates through the halls of Jewish history. Coming from a religious background the spoken language I use still retains for me the original traditional flavor. In my poems I try to recreate and reinterpret. In this sense my writing is genuinely Jewish.[34]

This statement, made towards the beginning of his long career could have just as easily (maybe even more so) been made on the occasion of the publication of his final collection of poetry in 1998. The "sources" which surrounded Amichai in his childhood continued to find their way into his writing as an adult who had moved far away from that childhood.

The subject of this section will be an examination of the presence and function of these sources, intertextual allusion and quotation of the classical Jewish liturgy in Amichai's poetry. Several examples will be offered and analyzed at length, representing the many distinct ways in which Amichai utilizes liturgy.

The topics of intertextuality and allusion are complex enough to be the subject of many significant studies, offering varied viewpoints on what constitutes intertextuality or

34. As quoted in Abramson (1989), p. 14

allusion, and the very possibility of examining a single literary work apart from literary history in general, and apart from other words and associations.. When applied specifically to Israeli (or Hebrew) literature, these questions take on added layers of complexity due to the "new-old" nature of the Hebrew language[35] – that is, it was effectively "frozen" in the realm of religious discourse for nearly a thousand years and then "reconstituted" in the decades from the Haskalah to the founding of the modern State of Israel.[36]

Chana Kronfeld offers an analysis of the current trends in approaching the subject of allusion in modern Hebrew literature ("Allusion: An Israeli Perspective") in which she presents the viewpoints of several of the leading critics in Israel who propose uniquely Israeli structures for examining the questions of allusion and intertextuality. Kronfeld refers to the most decisive research on the subject, the work of Ziva Ben Porat and Benjamin Hrushovski (Harshav) as well as Meir Sternberg.(pp. 140-146) In contrast to contemporary "Post-Structuralist theories of intertextuality in Western Europe and the United States ... Israeli theories have clearly evinced a growing specificity... offer[ing] a systematic account of allusion as a well-defined literary device rather than of intertextuality as a general textual condition."(p. 145) Kronfeld introduces Ben-Porat's

35. In trying to explain the difference in the nature of allusion in Hebrew writing as opposed to, for example, English writing (where the literary corpus from which to draw allusion goes back only hundreds, not thousands, of years), Robert Alter writes: "The literary effect of this ineluctable engagement in a long tradition is not easy to fathom for a reader unacquainted with Hebrew. First, it means that allusion is not an occasional or even frequent elective device but in many texts the woof and warp of the poem, from line to line and phrase to phrase, even from one grammatical form to another." (Alter, pp. 10-11)

36. This is clearly an overly-simplified version of the evolution of modern Hebrew literature, however, this is not the place for (and I am not the authority for) a nuanced account of that process. For more detailed accounts of the processes that go into the formation of a modern Hebrew literature, see: Robert Alter, *Modern Hebrew Literature*(1975) and *After the Tradition* (1969); Shimon Halikn, *Modern Hebrew Literature* (1950); Gershon Shaked, *Hasifrut Halvrit/Modern Hebrew Literature* (trans., 2000)

terminology in defining literary allusion (as distinct from allusion in a general sense), noting that the components are the "alluding text" and the "evoked text." Both are simultaneously "activated" by the process of allusion, and Ben-Porat maintains that the result of this "activation" is necessarily unpredictable. In an attempt to provide useful categories for approaching the subject of literary allusion, Kronfeld provides a chart which details "five key features of allusion" with cross-references to examples from the Statehood Generation poets, and theoretical definitions arising out of "Israeli Theories of Allusion" and "[T.S.] Eliot/Modernism." (p. 148) Among these key features, I propose that "Mutual Intertextual Modification" (in terms of modification of both evoked and alluding text) as well as "Deviance" are essential to an analysis of the function of intertextual allusion in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai. Through "Mutual Intertextual Modification," both the evoked text and the allusive text are impacted by the presence of allusion or quotation, either through the deflation of the presumably sacred text or the sanctification of the presumably mundane allusive text. In "Deviance," by this definition, the allusion or quotation is put to some type of iconoclastic purpose, it is intended to challenge and even shock the reader.

Several critics have suggested contexts in which to view Amichai's abundant use of intertextual allusion (as well as direct quotation) in his poetry. Their interpretations vary, to a large extent depending on the specific viewpoint that they bring to reading Amichai. Among the first to comment on Amichai's use of traditional sources was Baruch Kurzweil, who latched on to Amichai with a special fervor in order to criticize the simultaneous secularity and blasphemy of the Statehood Generation of poets. While acknowledging the "importance of the liturgy, the prayer book, and the *machzor* in

Amichai's poetry," Kurzweil regards much of his intertextual allusion as "self-indulgent licentiousness."[37]

Boaz Arpaly describes what he feels is the political significance of Amichai's use of traditional sources from the religious realm, in the context of explicitly secular poetry. His analysis of this import is dependent on viewing the intended audience of Amichai's poetry as the typically secular, modern Israeli. Arpaly points out that, while the audience may be cut off from traditional observance, frequently the Israeli (secular) public will buy into and even endorse certain assumptions and stances which emerge out of a traditionally religious world-view. Amichai's use of the sources acts as a corrective to that possibility:

> Pseudo-religiosity of this type, no matter how abstract and sentimental it may be, obscures unpleasant truths, creates conscious and unconscious hypocrisy, and directly and indirectly helps provide ideological reasons for actions that are driven by militaristic political interests... Amichai's poetry obviously helped, perhaps indirectly, to expose sentimentality, to disclose hypocrisies, and encourage a more sober view of the "metaphysical" world.(in Abramson, ed., 1997, p.42)

Others identify Amichai's intertextual allusion as a purely playful, even technical endeavor, one which is more dependant on the rhythms and sounds of the words which are alluded to than their meaning in the evoked text.

Glenda Abramson points to the "penetrating irony" of Amichai's poetry which, she claims, saves it from being considered blasphemous:

By building secular structures on sacred foundations Amichai does not reject the

37. Quoted in Milman (pp.100, 102) from Kurzweil's חיפוש הספרות הישראלית.

> original but debates with it and scrutinizes it with the logic born of twentieth-century experience...He is homo sapiens in all his weakness shaking his fist at implacable powers beyond his understanding. (Abramson, 1984, pp. 116-7)

The role of Amichai's poetic "I" assumes different dimensions throughout his work. Abramson points out the universality of the poetic "I" as "homo sapiens," whereas Benjamin Sommer casts the poetic "I" in a more defined, specific role. He quotes Amichai's self-description of being a "poor prophet," only collecting and piecing together the cast off scraps of all the prophets of old, creating out of them something which is inherently composite, even recycled. In this particular instance, Sommer uses the image to introduce a discussion of the function of allusion in "Deutero-Isaiah." However, he offers an insight into the same in Amichai's work:

> Even as an inheritor, as a revisor, Amichai cannot but see himself as a latecomer, for the most prominent genres in the Hebrew literary tradition have long centered around the reworking or interpretation of the Source. Some of these genres are overtly exegetical: these include the *midrash* of the rabbis, the *pesher* of the Dead Sea community. Others are more bold and revisionary: think, for example, of attempts to create new scripture based on the old, such as the Temple Scroll, produced by the Dead Sea community, of the New Testament. Allusive or anthological genres exist as well: for example, both liturgical and secular poetry written by Jews in the Middle Ages. If Amichai seeks consolation as he attempts to reread what was reread many times before, he can at least recall that he is in good company: Hillel and Jesus and Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness, Akiva and Paul and the kabbalists all stood where he stands, gathered in the field where he gathers. (Sommer, pp. 1-2)

Placing Amichai in that "good company" within the Jewish tradition is not the unanimous view of critics. Yosef Milman explores the many approaches critics have brought to Amichai's use of sacred text. His article "Sacrilegious Imagery in Yehuda

Amichai's Poetry" (translated and revised from a paper presented originally in Hebrew at the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1989) presents an analysis of the general question of intertextual allusion in Amichai's poetry, as well as observations (by Milman and others) on Amichai's intent in his use of these sources. Milman observes with regard to Amichai's approach to God that:

> "the God Amichai is referring to ... is no mere figure of speech. He is not the exalted, fictitious notion apostrophized by truly secular modern Israeli poets like Ayin Hillel and Chaim Guri ... Similarly, God in Amichai is not a mere verbal entity with no real existence ... Nor is Amichai's God the abstract universal providence ... He is much more authentically the One God of the Jewish religion, the God of the Bible and the other sacred texts of Judaism, the highest expression of religious and national faith, commandments and ethos." (pp. 106-7)

Milman goes further, to propose that Amichai's use of the sources, the evoked text, is "at one and the same time, deconstructive-reconstructive" and represents an attempt to "raise an edifice on the ruins, to revive values suppressed and dimmed, and to set up a new, ideal model for religion which will not be confused with the religious establishment, but will be no less rooted in the sources and no less faithful to the essence of Judaism."(pp. 114-5). It is truly an extreme suggestion to view Amichai as a sort of modern-day religious radical, aiming at the establishment of a new, true religion. However, a constant trope within Amichai's poetry from the very earliest collections through the final volume is the suggestion (typically applied to inherently human processes), "וגם זו התחלה של דת חדשה - This too could be the beginning of a new religion."[38]

Warren Bargad points out, among the uses of intertextual allusion noted by

38. As in *פתוח סגור פתוח*, p. 81, #2

others, that sometimes, it is not "twisted meanings" or parody that Amichai is striving for. Rather, Bargad contends, Amichai "obstinately presses for the literalness of a familiar phrase, in order to convey an ironic message."(Bargad, 1996, p.21) He goes on to cite "אל מלא רחמים - God Full of Mercy" (*Shirim*, pp. 69-70)[39] as the paradigmatic example of this tendency. However, this poem is by no means the only instance where Amichai brings literal meaning to bear on the traditional liturgy in order to produce an ironic result.

In an analysis of Amichai's use of "Allusion and Irony" (Abramson, 1989, pp. 33-49), Glenda Abramson identifies the prominent presence of intertextual allusion (to traditional sources) as both "a residue of rejected worship but also as something of a salute to the aesthetics of orthodoxy." She goes on to categorize three main main methods through which Amichai utilizes the evoked text: "by parodying the original text, by quoting from it verbatim and then providing a commentary to it, and by alluding to it through misquotation, distortion, wordplay and so on."(p.35). Abramson sees intertextual allusion to traditional texts as one of the defining elements of Amichai's poetry:

> [Amichai] rechart[s] the map of the sources, in this way remaining exclusively within his own tradition, learning from Auden, Eliot and others those features that prove conformity to that tradition even if by analogy alone. Amichai has practiced deliberate interpretative "error" by which he has generated an *alternative* orthodoxy, made to respond to his own and his time's interests and needs. (p.34)

Abramson notes, along with other critics writing in the 1980s, that Amichai's

39. The most complete analysis of this poem is Naomi Sokoloff's "*On Amichai's* El male rahamim" (1984)

poetry is less allusive in the collections published after the early 1970s. While this does hold true for these specific collections, the trend is reversed with 1989's *גם האגרוף היה פעם יד פתוחה ואצבעות(1989)* - *Even a Fist Once Was and Open Palm With Fingers* (1991), where all forms of intertextuality begin to appear with more frequency. Amichai's final work, 1998's *פתוח סגור פתוח* - *Open Closed Open* is by far his most densely allusive collection of poetry, with allusion to or quotation of some source in the textual tradition on virtually every page.

Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld translated part of Amichai's final book *פתוח סגור פתוח(1998)*, *Open Closed Open*, 2000. Writing after the publication of their translation, Bloch and Kronfeld note that Amichai appears, in this collection, to be selecting various themes and tropes that he has utilized throughout his career in poetry and creating from them a coherent "counter-theology."("Amichai's Counter-Theology: Opening *Open Closed Open*") Particularly in the cycle "Gods Change, Prayers are Here to Stay," Amichai voices "a critique of monotheism, the idea of chosenness, and Jewish religious practice."(p.159) While clearly indicating that Amichai is not to be viewed as a religious poet (as they claim that many English readers naively do), he may be seen in agreement with "the rabbis" in a desire to maintain Judaism's textual tradition, joining his poetry to the "living process of shaping and reshaping the meaning of Torah."(p. 161)

Relevant to the present study, Bloch and Kronfeld note that the textual tradition that gets the most amount of attention in this volume is the liturgical tradition. Their observation that Amichai's approach to prayer/liturgy is based in the "human form of prayerful address... [that] the human capacity for language [is] the one transcendence he

believes in"(p.162) may well hold true across the wide body of his poetry. Amichai himself referred to his "post-cynical humanism"[40] as the basis for his system of beliefs, an acknowledgement which is important for any study of his poetry. In a sense, what makes Amichai's poetry so modern is its reliance on that strong sense of humanism[41] joined to the constantly questioning "I," the cynical non-believer testing the waters of apostasy. At the same time, what keeps Amichai's poetry Jewish is the constant engagement with the "sources," the textual traditions of the Jewish people, and even the ongoing conversation with the Jewish God. This is the ever-present tension between Judaism and modernity, pulling in opposite directions. The result of this tension in Amichai's poetry is the visible presence of lexical pairs which are seemingly opposite (Remembering and Forgetting, Past and Present, Male and Female, Dark and Light, etc.), and which are brought somehow into harmonious co-existence.

I will now present analyses of eight poems that I have selected from across the spectrum of Amichai's published poetry, each of which highlights one particular element of Amichai's use of intertextual allusion to and quotation from the body of traditional[42] Jewish liturgy. These eight poems have been selected as a representative sampling after

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40. Amichai used this term to refer to himself in many interviews, for example:
"I've often said that I consider myself a 'post-cynical humanist.' Maybe now, after so much horror, so many shattered ideals, we can start anew–now that we're well armored for disappointment. I think my sense of history and God, even if I am against history and God, is very Jewish. I think this is why my poems are sometimes taught in religious schools. It's an ancient Jewish idea to fight with God, to scream out against God." (Joseph, 1992, p. 239

41. Boaz Arpaly writes:
Amichai's poetry is humanistic in the literal sense of the term, not because it is associated with a lofty grouping of values but because at the centre of its values stand "people" and their experience. This signifies a refusal to subjugate their lives in the "here and now" to the historical past, or to mortgage them for the sake of an unknown future. If we add another word we could say that Amichai's humanism is *democratic.* In Amichai's poetry, there is not the slightest trace of élitism of any kind. (in Abramson, ed., 1997, p.47)

42. Again I am compelled to note the over-simplification of assuming that there is any such thing as one "traditional Jewish liturgy," as opposed to the complex history of multiple rites and customs which spans nearly two thousand years of ongoing liturgical development.

my identification of all instances of liturgical intertextual allusion and quotation within Amichai's poetry. While I have selected them to demonstrate specific uses of the liturgical text, a larger study of the other citations I have identified seems a logical next step. Many scholars writing on Amichai have noted this component of his work, but none has (as far as my research could ascertain) fully examined the role of intertextuality in Amichai's poetry.[43]

43. A full examination of this source would seek to identify all of the occurrence of intertextuality where the evoked/quoted text emerges from the Jewish religious textual tradition (Bible, Rabbinic, Liturgical, etc.). This would be combined with a categorization of specific recurrent methods in which Amichai utilizes the evoked/quoted text. A recent article by Yehudit Tzvik (Hebrew, 1996) offers a brief account of intertextuality in Amichai, examining evoked texts from the Bible, Rabbinic Literature and Liturgy.

יהודה עמיחי, "זכרון באבו טור", מתוך *שלוה גדולה: שאלות ותשובות*, 80
Yehuda Amichai, A Memory in Abu Tor, from *Great Tranquility: Questions and Answers*, Tudor Parfitt and Yehuda Amichai (translators), p. 57

| | |
|---|---|
| זִכָּרוֹן בְּאַבּוּ-טוֹר | A Memory in Abu Tor |
| שָׁם, עַל הַגְּבוּל, עָמַד צְרִיף יָשָׁן | There on the border stood an old hut |
| חָצְיוֹ בֵּית כְּנֶסֶת וְחָצְיוֹ מִקְלַחַת לַחַיָּלִים: | Half synagogue, half soldier's shower room |
| הַדּוּד בַּמְּרוֹמִים שֶׁסִּפֵּק מַיִם לַגּוּפִים מְכַסֵּי הָאָבָק, | The tank up above, which supplied water |
| סִפֵּק גַּם מַיִם לִנְטִילַת יָדַיִם. | For the dust-covered bodies, |
| וְהָאֵל מִמַּעַל סִפֵּק בְּצִנּוֹרוֹתָיו | Supplied water for the ritual washing of hands too. |
| שָׂפַע לִשְׁנֵיהֶם. | And through his water pipes, God on high supplied |
| | Enough for them both. |
| זְמִרַת "לְכָה דוֹדִי" עָלְתָה מִלְּמַטָּה | A Sabbath hymn from below rose |
| עִם זַעֲקוֹת הַשְּׁעִירִים הַמִּתְקַלְּחִים. | With the shouts of hairy men in the showers. |
| אֲדֹנָי אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה, | The Lord is a man of war |
| אֲדֹנָי צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ, | His Name is the Lord of Hosts |
| הַחַיָּל אִישׁ צָעִיר | The soldier is a man of youth |
| וְעַל דִּסְקִית חֲרוּטִ שְׁמוֹ. | His name is engraved on a disc. |
| אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם | He who created man |
| וְעָשָׂה בּוֹ נְקָבִים, נְקָבִים | And filled him full of holes |
| יַעֲשֶׂה כָּךְ גַּם לַחַיָּלִים | Will do the same to soldiers |
| אַחַר כָּךְ בַּמִּלְחָמָה. | Afterwards, in war. |

## זִכָּרוֹן בְּאַבּוּ-טוֹר - A Memory In Abu Tor

This poem presents an account of Amichai's experience in war, a memory of a particular place and time, though Amichai does not indicate which war he refers to. It is most likely that this memory relates to the War of Independence, but it is not necessary to know that, as time and place are only tentatively set in Amichai's poetry. Glenda Abramson notes that, especially with reference to his poetry dealing with landscapes of his war experience, "Amichai renders the space he encounters subservient to his desire, which, in most cases, is memory or memorialization. His landscapes are therefore not spatial but temporal elements."(Abramson, 1997, p. 59) "Abu Tor" is the setting, but the experience is generalized to all wars, all bases "at the border." The very indication of "border" leads to the feeling that this is something extreme, and in fact the juxtaposition of synagogue and shower room provides just that type of extreme clash of images. In reality, the place referenced by Amichai in the title of the poem is indeed just over the border that divided Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967. It is situated just south of Mount Zion, across the Valley of Ben Hinom.[44] A single hut split between these two activities indicates the pull in two directions, the simultaneous need on the battle front for care of the body and care of the soul. They are linked through the image of water, flowing from a common source and supplied by a common God.

Spatial terms are also part of the juxtaposition in this poem, with the connotations that they bring along with them. The water tank is located "בַּמְּרוֹמִים" , which is by no means effectively translated as "up above," for it is an unusual use of this word resonant of the descriptions of God's abode, the domain of the angels (as in Job 25:2 עושה שלום

44. See maps in *Carta's Historical Atlas of Jerusalem*, 77, 88-89

...במרומיו and Ps. 92:9 וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעֹלָם ה', both with liturgical connotations). It is from this common source that "שפע/splendor or abundance" (another word with theological/liturgical implications) is supplied to both endeavors. The song of "לכה דודי" rises together with the "shouts of hairy men" (surely intended to indicate the unholy contents of shower-room talk) from below "מִלְמַטָּה," resonant of the human realm with all of its flaws. While the root מטה certainly has a spatial element to it, and is not uncommon in modern Hebrew in that sense, the connotation may also be of "down underground," the way it appears in Ecclesiastes 3:21. There, the context is a fatalistic discourse on the nature of the soul and the difference between animal and human being. In the verse prior, another intertextual tie to this poem may be revealed:

קהלת ג:כ הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד הַכֹּל הָיָה מִן־הֶעָפָר וְהַכֹּל שָׁב אֶל־הֶעָפָר׃ כא מִי יוֹדֵעַ רוּחַ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם הָעֹלָה הִיא לְמָעְלָה וְרוּחַ הַבְּהֵמָה הַיֹּרֶדֶת הִיא **לְמַטָּה** לָאָרֶץ׃ .

This tie between the spatial relations of God and human activity also highlights the notion that "everything is from dust and to dust all returns." Dust becomes a metaphor for human beings, especially in Amichai's (and others') war poetry – a metaphor made more tangible by the real presence of dust and dirt on the battlefield.[45] The shouts or songs of the soldiers, together with the dust coming off their bodies provides the symbolic "spirit" which ascends to the highest realm. In this way, the mundane is elevated and assigned tremendous importance, even transcendent power.

Though I imagine that any "Sabbath Hymn" could have been referenced here in line 7, the use of "לכה דודי"[46] highlights the gritty fatalism that will come at the end of

45. See אלה תולדות האבק in *מארחי כל זה*... pp. 97-8

46. An additional word play present in the poem may be the unvocalized similarity of the Sabbath hymn, לכה דודי and the modern Hebrew word for water-tank, דוד.

the poem. The absolute optimism (more appropriately, messianism) of this prayer even includes the link (through semantic, but not linguistic correlation), "התנערי מעפר, קומי"[47]. The "shouts of hairy men" may not even be too distant from the sexualized messianism of the (male) Jewish people greeting the (female) Sabbath bride (complete with wedding imagery throughout).

The third stanza of the poem juxtaposes a quotation from Exodus 15:3 and a phrase found throughout Isaiah and Jeremiah, both with triumphalist God-as-Warrior connotations with the description of the "soldier," who is the simple "every-youth" (an image with paramount cultural resonance in Israel). Both God-images occur frequently in the liturgy, both in their exact phrasing and as images ("Song of the Sea" in every morning service, Birnbaum p. 67, and Isaiah 6:3 –one of Amichai's favorite evoked texts– Birnbaum, p. 73 and elsewhere). There is also a conscious play on the dual meaning of צְבָאוֹת, as a description of God being "Lord of (angelic) hosts" and the Israel Defense Forces - צְבָא הַגָּנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. The parallelism of this stanza leads to the contrast of God as "Lord of Hosts" with the young soldier's name "inscribed on a disc." While the contrast first points to that of the tangible, mundane dog-tag versus the Supreme commander of the angelic hosts, the verb חרוט leads to the association of God's name being "engraved," as it were, in certain protective amulets. Moses' staff, according to the Midrash was "engraved" with the Tetragrammaton.[48] Could the implication of this verb

47. Birnbaum, *HaSiddur HaShalem*, p.245

48. The tradition of Moses' staff being engraved appears many places, as in *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, Piska 19:6 : "*I am the Lord thy God, who stirred up the sea, that the waves thereof roared; the Lord Sebaot is His name*(Isa. 51:15). What did the Red Sea see and flee from? On this point R. Judah and R. Nehemiah differ. According to R. Judah, the Sea saw Moses' staff and fled. But according to R. Nehemiah, His Name, the Ineffable Name of *The Lord Sebaot*, was graven upon the staff, and seeing the Name, the Sea fled." (Braude and Kapstein, p. 328) The verb used in PRK is not חרוט but חקק.

be that the name of the every-youth is as holy as the Name? Amichai writes elsewhere "We have no Unknown soldier."

In the final stanza of the poem, the clearest liturgical allusion appears. and is transformed by a word-play. The first two lines are an incomplete quotation of a blessing in the preliminary morning service (Birnbaum, p. 13), which follows immediately after the blessing for נְטִילַת יָדַיִם, mentioned in line four. The blessing begins with the standard blessing formula, followed by Amichai's אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם, but Amichai does not finish the phrase, בְּחָכְמָה, וּבָרָא בוֹ... which leads into Amichai's continued ,נְקָבִים נְקָבִים. Either through incorrect remembrance of the exact text of the prayer, or through conscious intensification of the meaning, Amichai substitutes the verb וְעָשָׂה בוֹ for the evoked text's וּבָרָא בוֹ.

A demonstration of the ways in which intertextual quotation such as this can lead to allusion is that the person familiar with the prayer through repeated recitation of it every day will not need the phrase which follows to hear Amichai's word-play. In the evoked text, the prayer continues חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים..., which certainly has enough resonance with Amichai's לַחֲיָלִים. From the standpoint of operative imagery in the poem, the evoked text of this prayer resonates with the image of God's "water pipes," providing sufficient supply for both sides of the hut in the first stanza. As the prayer is, in one sense, a recognition of the role that the channels and pipes of the human body play in maintaining our health, as well as the role of God as central water supplier.

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However, it is interesting that the verse which provides the source-text in the midrash is one of the places where our exact verse, ה' צבאות שמו appears.

The prayer, in its original context, is meant to be said after voiding ones bowels or urinating, but has been incorporated into the preliminary service on the opinion that one has done so by the time they arrive for prayer (Talmud Bavli, Berachot 11a and 60b). In fact, Abramson and Parfitt include the following note in their translation: "The Hebrew refers to a prayer said after defecating, thanking God for having created man with orifices."(p.57)

With reference to the final two lines of the poem, the Hebrew contains a fair amount of ambiguity. The line might read as a supplication in a prayer form, yielding the meaning, "So may He do for soldiers / Afterwards, in war." With this reading, Amichai may express an awareness of the wonder that is our physical health, and the Divine Providence by which our bodies function under normal circumstances, let alone under the constraints of war. However, it is far more likely that the intended reading of this line is the shockingly bold, "Will do the same to soldiers / Afterwards, in war," as Abramson and Parfitt have rendered it. In Kronfeld's definition, this twist of the liturgical evoked text will certainly demonstrate deviance, "iconoclastic punning on biblical/religious evoked text."

## יהודה עמיחי, שיר י' מתוך "שירי אכזיב," *עכשיו ברעש*, 199-200

## Yehuda Amichai, Poem #10 from "Poems of Akhziv," *Now In the Din Before the Silence*, Benjamin and Barbara Harshav (translators), p. 153

[י]

בְּחוֹל הָיִינוּ קֶרְבֶּרוּס שְׁנֵי רָאשִׁים
רוֹשְׁפֵי שִׁנַּיִם. בַּצָּהֳרַיִם
הָיְתָה רַגְלְךָ הָאַחַת בַּמִּזְרָח וְהַשְּׁנִיָּה בַּמַּעֲרָב
וַאֲנִי בָּאֶמְצַע, שָׁעוֹן עַל רַגְלֵי הַקְּדָמִיּוֹת,
מְסִתַּכֵּל לִצְדָדִים בַּחֲשָׁד, שׁוֹאֵג נוֹרָאוֹת,
שֶׁלֹּא יִקְחוּ אֶת טַרְפִּי מִמֶּנִּי.

מִי אַתָּה?
יֶלֶד יְהוּדִי קָטָן מִן הַגּוֹלָה
כִּפָּה עַל הָרֹאשׁ. מִשָּׁם. מִן הַזְּמַן הַהוּא.

בַּלֵּילוֹת אֲנַחְנוּ יַחְדָּו בְּלִי זִכָּרוֹן
כְּבֵדָה, בְּלִי רְגָשׁוֹת דְּבִיקִים. רַק
הִתְאַסְּפוּת שֶׁל שְׁרִירִים וּפִזּוּרָם.

מֵרָחֵק מִכָּאן, בְּיַבָּשֶׁת אַחֶרֶת שֶׁל זְמַן,
נִרְאִים בְּבֵרוּר הָרַבָּנִים הַמֵּתִים שֶׁל יַלְדוּתִי,
מַחֲזִיקִים גָּבֹהַּ מֵעַל לְרָאשֵׁיהֶם
אֶת אַבְנֵי הַמֻּצָּבוֹת. נַפְשָׁם צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר חַיַּי.
אֵלִי, אֵלִי,
לָמָּה לֹא עֲזַבְתָּנִי!?

10.

In the sand we were a two-headed Cerberus
Baring our teeth. At noon
Your one leg was in the east,
the other in the west,
And I in the middle, leaning on my forelegs,
Looking suspiciously to the sides, roaring terribly
So they wouldn't rob me of my prey.

Who are you?
A little Jewish boy from the Diaspora,
A *yarmulke* on his head. From there. From that time.

At night we are together with no
Heavy memory, no sticky feelings. Just
Ingathering of muscles and their dispersion.

Far away from here, in another continent of time,
You can clearly see the dead rabbis of my childhood,
Holding high above their heads
The tombstones. Their souls bound in the bond of my life.
My God, my God,
Why did You not forsake me!?

## שיר י' מתוך "שירי אכזיב" - Poem #10 from "Poems of Akhziv"

This poem reflects a tension throughout of feeling rooted within Judaism and yet attempting to break away from it at the same time. The shocking opening lines depict the lyric "I" in the position of a sexual predator who has captured his prey, violently referencing the familiar intertext of Yehuda HaLevy's "לבי במזרח, ואנכי בסוף מערב". In Amichai's vision, however, he is positioned precisely between מערב and מזרח, as they are represented by the legs of his lover. The metaphor is more explicitly drawn to the character out of Greek mythology, Cerberus. Its role was as the ferocious, monstrous guard-dog of Hades, keeping mortals out of the underworld. This imagery will link with the poem further one, where Amichai imagines the ever-present gaze of his dead childhood rabbis. In this scene, he is holding on tight to this position, afraid that someone might rob him of his prey. Casting his lyric "I" as a sexual predator, Amichai sets up a break from the conventional notion of Jewish male sexuality – the hunter being consistently represented as Esau to the Jewish Jacob. The use of the term טרפי to symbolize the female lover further hints at this association.

However, in the second stanza (lines 7 through 9), the actor is unmasked with the question מי אתה? The answer that follows leads to the ultimate realization that, as far as Amichai has deviated from "there, that time" he is still *of* "there, that time." Even with the sexual machismo of the first stanza, he remains at his core a "little Jew." The final section allows for a temporary reprieve from the memory of "that place, that time," which might best be interpreted as being symbolic of the *galut* and Europe (Germany) of his childhood, with all of its religious and cultural Otherness. The motions that symbolically

allow Amichai (and his lover) to separate from that heavy/sticky Other are, paradoxically, phrased in the verbs התאספות and פזורים (line 12). The verbs apply equally well to the tension and extension of muscles during lovemaking and to the theological representations of the dispersion/ingathering tied up with the Land of Israel. These ideas manifest themselves in the liturgy, with varied terminology, but with the clear theological message that the Jewish people were dispersed from their Land, and the coming of messiah involves an ingathering of the exiles (see eighth blessing of the traditional שמונה עשרה, which includes וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ, Birnbaum, p. 87). Even in the act of lovemaking, Amichai cannot avoid theological and liturgical resonance.

Amichai's lovemaking occurs under the watchful gaze of the ever-present rabbis of his childhood, reminding him of his connection not only to the place and time of his childhood, but also his connection to the totality of the Jewish people. Within that connection is its reciprocal responsibility to the memory of those dead rabbis on that "other continent of time." Amichai makes frequent use of key phrases from the memorial prayer, אל מלא רחמים, which first appeared in the liturgy during the Middle Ages in Western and Eastern Europe, primarily in response to the devastating loss of life during the Crusades and the Chmielnicki Massacres. Though said during the Torah service and at the special Yizkor services by one memorializing the yahrtzeit of a family member (see Birnbaum, p. 605), the prayer has more resonance in the Israeli context as a prayer recited at funerals and memorial services. The regular attendance at commemorations(*tekasim*) for Israel Memorial Day, the Day of Remembrance for Heroes

and Martyrs of the Shoah and other specific commemorations, as well as military funerals and those for civilians killed in terror acts makes אל מלא רחמים one of the most resonant liturgical texts for Israelis. In fact, an additional versions has been composed by the Chief Rabbinates of Israel for public usage, one of which is entitled "אזכרה לחיילי צה"ל" (see *Siddur Rinat Yisrael - Ashkenaz*, p. 393). Among the phrases which Amichai has written on are the title/beginning[49] (as in his well-known poem of the same name), the notion of "מנוחה נכונה"[50] and our current "ויצרור בצרור החיים."[51] Here, the metaphor of "bound in the bond of" is applied to the ever-present living force of the dead rabbis of Amichai's childhood. Perhaps they are the weight of history, perhaps they are the lingering guilt over his apparent apostasy. They hold their tombstones high over their heads, proclaiming some kind of message to Amichai, though he never lets the reader in on the content of the message.

We can be sure, without knowing the content of the dead rabbis' message for Amichai, of his reaction to their presence. Amichai recasts the Psalmist's urgent question (Psalm 22:2), "My God, My God - why have You forsaken me?" Through minimal textual modification, Amichai turns the theological message on its head "אֵלִי, אֵלִי, לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי?! לא". Glenda Abramson points out that Amichai has utilized this same mis-quotation of Psalm 22 in a total of three poems, each representing a different constraint (in the guise of God) from which Amichai seeks to escape. (Abramson, 1984, pp. 121-2) I read the instance in the present poem as indicating a desire to distance

49. See פתוח סגור פתוח, p.115
50. See *Shirim*, p. 40, *She'at HaHesed*, p.69, פתוח סגור פתוח p. 102
51. See *Gam HaEgrof...*, pp. 27, 53, פתוח סגור פתוח, p.101

himself from the terrible burden of history, particularly in the context of the Shoah, and a desire to flee from the reality that was too terrible to face. While there is no clear connection that would make this claim stronger, the notion of wishing for God's absence is similar to Richard Rubinstein's theological reaction to the Holocaust, which emerged shortly before this poem was written.[52] In the poem "סוף אלול" (עכשיו ברעש, pp. 94-5) it would seem that the constraint is that of the religious duty and obligation, characterized by the strict observance of his parent's house. In Amichai's epic auto-biographical poem, "מסעות בנימין האחרון מטודילה" (עכשיו ברעש, p.102) the verse is applied to a desire to escape from the confines of social constructs, particularly the collective imperative which defined the ethos of the Statehood generation of which Amichai was a part.

The intertextual use of Psalm 22:2, while not explicitly part of the liturgy, comes in a setting and a style that characterizes a particular stance in Jewish prayer – "I am a worm, less than human, scorned by men, despised by people,"(22:7, JPS translation) as the continuation of the Psalm reads. Amichai turns that traditional stance on its head, countering, as Glenda Abramson has suggested the new text be read, "why don't you leave me alone?" To some degree, this sentiment is the quintessentially modern, even universal ideal – to live quietly an unremarkable life. And yet, as the ever-present rabbis remind him, this simply is not an option.

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52. From a 1955 lecture by Rubenstein:
"...there is the problem of the God after the death of God. The focus of the synagogue upon the decisive events and seasons of life gives us a clue to the meaning of God in our times. At one level, it is certainly possible to understand God as the primal ground of being out of which we arise and to which we return. I believe such a God is inescapable in the time of the death of God. The God who is the ground of being is not the transcendent, theistic God of Jewish patriarchal monotheism. Though many still believe in that God, they do so ignoring the questions of God and human freedom and God and human evil. For those who face these issues, the Father-God is a dead God. Even the existentialist lead of faith cannot resurrect this dead God after Auschwitz." (Rubinstein, 1966, pp. 238-9)

יהודה עמיחי, "בית-הכנסת בפירנצי", מתוך *מאחורי כל זה מסתתר אושר גדול*, 125
Yehuda Amichai, The Synagogue in Firenze, from *Behind All That Lies a Great Happiness*, Benjamin and Barbara Harshav (translators), p. 255

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|---|---|
| בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת בְּפִירֶנְצֵי | The Synagogue in Firenze |
| רַכּוּת אָבִיב בֶּחָצֵר, | Softness of spring in the yard. |
| עֵץ פּוֹרֵחַ, אַרְבַּע יְלָדוֹת מְשַׂחֲקוֹת | A blossoming tree, four girls playing |
| בֵּין שְׁנֵי שִׁעוּרֵי לְשׁוֹן-הַקֹּדֶשׁ | Between two lessons of the Holy-Tongue |
| לִפְנֵי קִיר זִכָּרוֹן עָשׂוּי מְשַׁיִשׁ: | Before a memorial wall of marble: |
| לֵוִי, סוֹנִינוֹ, קַסּוּטוֹ וַאֲחֵרִים | Levi, Sonino, Cassuto, and the others. |
| בְּשׁוּרוֹת יְשָׁרוֹת כְּמוֹ בְּעִתּוֹן | In straight lines as in a newspaper |
| אוֹ בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה. | Or a Torah Scroll. |
| וְהָעֵץ לֹא עוֹמֵד לְזֵכֶר דָּבָר, | And the tree stands in memory of nothing, |
| אֶלָּא לְזֵכֶר הָאָבִיב הַזֶּה, | Just in memory of this spring, |
| אַרִיבֶּדֶרְצִ'י, אָבִינוּ | Arrivederci, *avinu*, |
| בּוֹנָה נוֹטֶה, מַלְכֵּנוּ. | Buonna note, *malkenu*. |
| דְּמָעוֹת בָּעֵינַיִם | Tears in the eyes |
| כְּמוֹ פֵּרוּרִים יְבֵשִׁים בַּכִּיס, | Like dry crumbs in the pocket, |
| שֶׁל עוּגָה שֶׁהָיְתָה. | Of a cake that was. |
| בּוֹנָה נוֹטֶה, סוֹנִינוֹ | Buonna notte, Sonino, |
| אַרִיבֶּדֶרְצִ'י, הַשִּׁשָּׁה מִילְיוֹן, | Arrivederci, the six million, |
| הַיְלָדוֹת וְהָעֵץ וְהַפֵּרוּרִים. | The girls, the tree, the crumbs. |

## בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת בְּפִירֶנְצֵי - The Synagogue in Firenze

I have brought this poem to demonstrate briefly the way in which Amichai can at once turn playful intertextual allusion into a deep theological statement. Additionally, the depths of the theological statement are frequently abandoned before they are ever explored in depth. The poem opens as a sort of travelogue, a common feature of Amichai's poetry. As noted before, Amichai utilizes spatial areas in order to aid memory or memorialization, particularly when it fulfills a personal need for that remembering. He manipulates the space, in the present poem, the courtyard of the famous synagogue in Florence, Italy. Picturing first, in lines 1 through 3 an idyllic scene of life and rebirth of spring. However, the very fact that only four girls are playing, "between two lessons of the Holy Tongue," by a (presumably) male, older teacher points to an imbalance in the scene. Where are the boys, the young men?

Next, Amichai casts the girls against the backdrop of a "memorial wall of marble." In and of itself, the reader has yet to discover anything distinctive about this memorial wall. In fact, the names Amichai presents will have little resonance for one without an encyclopedic or intimate sense of the names of Florence's Jewish families.

A search yields any number of possibilities for Levi's in Florence, apart from the reality that an entire tribe is titled after that Biblical character. However, one possibility is Giulio Augusto Levi (1879-?), an Italian literary critic who, though born Jewish in 1926 was baptized in the Roman Catholic church and thereby survived the massive destruction which came upon Florence's Jewish community during the Shoah. An additional Levi who is associated both with the Shoah and Italy (though not specifically

Florence) is Primo Levi, who related his experiences during the Shoah in several books and essays.

Sonino is somewhat less of an obscure historical figure, as it is the surname of one of the most influential politicians of the early twentieth century in Italy. Sidney Sonino (1847-1922) was born to a Jewish father and Protestant mother, whose faith he adopted. He was twice prime minister, and as foreign minister, signed the Treaty of London in 1915, which allied Italy with the Allies in World War I. Though he died well before the Shoah, there can be little doubt that his Jewish parentage was sufficient to cause persecution, and possible deportation for his children and grandchildren.

Finally, the clear link to Cassuto is the famous Biblical commentator of the twentieth century, Umberto Cassuto. He was born and spent much of his life in Florence, but left in 1939, making aliyah and accepting a post teaching Bible at the Hebrew University. What would be less remarkable elements of his biography provide important links to the present poem. Cassuto's son, Nathan Cassuto assumed the post of spiritual leader of the Florence community during the Shoah, and was among the first of 243 Jews deported from Florence to Nazi death camps in 1943. Only 13 out of 1600 returned at the end of the Shoah. Umberto Cassuto's daughter-in-law, who made aliyah as well, was killed in a 1948 ambush of a convoy returning to Mount Scopus and the Hebrew University. The final link in this reconstructed history of the poem is that Amichai studied Bible at the Hebrew University in the years immediately following his service in the War of Independence, and likely was instructed by Cassuto. All of these details may serve as an important backdrop to Amichai's visit to the Florence synagogue.

The image that Amichai employs to depict the names "in straight lines" on the

memorial wall is also striking. "As lines in a newspaper / Or on a Torah scroll" is the perfect example (though not liturgical allusion) of mutual intertextual allusion and juxtaposition whereby a mundane object/text (the newspaper) is elevated and sanctified through association with a sacred object (the Torah scroll). The memorial wall is thus invested with the ironic combination of the mundane and the otherworldly/sacred.

Contrasting the tree in the courtyard with the memorial wall, essentially new life and rebirth next to cold, dead stone, highlights the constant tension for Amichai between Remembering and Forgetting. While the tree is free to memorialize nothing, the wall, and by extension Amichai, is compelled to bear the weight of history, heavy as marble. The intertextual reference which follows appears at first to be a playful twist on the way in which an Italian might say "*arrivederci, signor.*" The phrase אבינו מלכנו, either used whole or broken into its elements is found throughout Amichai's poetry, and frequently plays on the image of Amichai's (human) father and his father's God.[53] While the most familiar and resonant connection with the phrase אבינו מלכנו is from the climactic moment of the liturgies on Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur (see Harlow, 1972, pp.152-5, 472-5), the Jew who prays every day will reference the extended litany of אבינו מלכנו which precedes the תחנון section of the morning service of fast days (Birnbaum, pp. 97-102). In both cases, the prayers seek Divine protection and aid. Amichai's typical stance, the one operative here, is to utilize the figure of the Father/King-God to demonstrate the failures of the Divine to provide precisely that type of protection to the Jewish people as a whole and to himself as an individual.

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53. See for examples: *עכשיו ברעש* p. 29-30, *...מארזרי כל זה* p. 15, *פתוח סגור פתוח* pp. 8, 143, 165

The imagery of the third stanza connects with other Amichai poems, in which "crumbs" represent memories which begin to disintegrate over time, and may even lose their hold on the individual. They are, however, the still-present reminder of "that which was," either faith in the Father/King-God and the memory of Jewish community (in this case, Florence) or individuals whose deaths have left a void. Amichai turns the simultaneously playful and sober tone of lines 10 and 11 into the deeply sober conclusion in the final stanza. The Italian "farewells" he applies to the Father/King-God are applied with sadness to Sonino and "the six-million" (a reference Amichai only very infrequently makes explicitly in his poetry), the implication that he similarly says *arrivederci* to any notion of a God who provides Divine protection. What remains are "the girls, the tree, the crumbs," alive and yet imbued with an overarching sense of loss and disintegration.

## יהודה עמיחי, "אלים מתחלפים, התפילות נשארות לעד, #11"
## מתוך *פתוח סגור פתוח*, 9-10

## Yehuda Amichai,"Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay, #11"
## from *Open Closed Open*, Craig Axler (translator)

11

"אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין כַּאֲדוֹנֵנוּ" כָּךְ מִתְפַּלְלִים.
"אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין כַּאֲדוֹנֵנוּ" שָׁרִים בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל
וְהוּא לֹא מֵגִיב. וְאָנוּ מַגְבִּירִים אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ וְשָׁרִים
"מִי כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ, מִי כַּאֲדוֹנֵנוּ" וְהוּא לֹא זָז
וְלֹא פּוֹנֶה אֵלֵינוּ. וְאָנוּ מוֹסִיפִים עוֹד בְּכֹחַ תַּחֲנוּנִים
"אַתָּה הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אַתָּה הוּא אֲדוֹנֵינוּ". אוּלַי יִזְכֹּר
אוֹתָנוּ עַכְשָׁו? אֲבָל הוּא נִשְׁאָר אָדִישׁ, אֲפִילּוּ
פּוֹנֶה אֵלֵינוּ בְּעֵינַיִם זָרוֹת וְקָרוֹת.
וְהִפְסַקְנוּ לָשִׁיר וְלִצְעֹק וְאוֹמְרִים לוֹ בִּלְחִישָׁה
וּמַזְכִּירִים לוֹ מַשֶּׁהוּ פְּרָטִי, מַשֶּׁהוּ קָטָן
"אַתָּה הוּא שֶׁהִקְרִיבוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
אֶת קְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּים" אוּלַי יִזְכֹּר עַכְשָׁו?
(כְּמוֹ אִישׁ שֶׁמַּזְכִּיר לְאִשָּׁה אַהֲבָה יְשָׁנָה:
אַתְּ לֹא זוֹכֶרֶת אֵיךְ קָנִינוּ נַעֲלַיִם
בַּחֲנוּת הַקְּטַנָּה בַּפִּנָּה וְיָרַד הַרְבֵּה גֶּשֶׁם
בַּחוּץ וְצָחַקְנוּ הַרְבֵּה?)
וְנִדְמֶה שֶׁמַּשֶּׁהוּ מִתְעוֹרֵר בּוֹ וְאוּלַי זָכַר,
אֲבָל הָעָם הַיְּהוּדִי כְּבָר נִגְמַר.

11

"There is none like our God, there is none like our Lord," this is how we pray.
"There is none like our God, there is none like our Lord," we sing with a great voice
and He doesn't react. So we bolster our voices and sing
"Who is like our God, who is like our Lord?" but He doesn't move
and doesn't turn towards us. So we add on with powerful supplication
"You are our God, You are our Lord." Perhaps He will remember
us now? But He remains nonchalant, even
turns toward us with cold and distant eyes.
We have ceased singing and crying, and whisper to Him
reminding Him of something private, something small
"You are the One to whom our ancestors brought
the fragrant incense." Perhaps He will remember now?
(Like a man who reminds a woman of old love:
"You don't remember how we bought shoes
at that small store on the corner, and it rained so much
outside, and we laughed so much?")
And it seems as if something awakens within Him, and perhaps He remembered,
but the Jewish People is already finished.

## אלים מתחלפים, התפילות נשארות לעד, #11 - Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay, #11

In this poem from Amichai's final work, we see an example of what Bloch and Kronfeld have called Amichai's "counter-theology." It is couched in an engaging, even playful reworking of the classic synagogue hymn אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ (Birnbaum, pp. 407-8), which is a series of laudatory praises in parallel structures heaped upon the unique God in four stanzas, concluded by a fifth stanza of praise and reference to the merit of ancestors. The hymn has been part of the Jewish liturgy since at least the Geonic period, included in the *mussaf* service of Shabbat/holiday in the Ashkenazi rite and in the daily morning service of the Sefaradi rite. Of all the hymns, אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ is sung with absolute fervor and devotion, the subject of a multitude of tunes in various communities.

Amichai reworks the meaning of this text through quotation and commentary, setting it first as a scene between two lovers (lines 1-12, 18-9) in which one is the unrequited (female) lover and the other is the cold, indifferent (male lover). Then, the gender roles are reversed and the male lover attempts to remind the female lover of an "old love," which presumably he wants to rekindle. The flip in gender roles seems a very appropriately modern approach to a theological relationship between the people of Israel and their God, and yet it is similarly based in the strong mystical notion of theurgic unification of the (male) Jewish people with the (female) Divine Presence.[54]

In addition to the quotation of אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ in the poem, the terminology which Amichai uses to describe the tension between his lovers is laden with theological, and

54. See for example *Zohar*, Parshat Bereshit 98b-99a.

even liturgical associations. The verb פנה is used in lines 5 and 8, first to express the longing of the lover for the attention of the beloved, then to describe the undesired reaction of "turns toward us with cold and distant eyes." As a metaphor for the attention of God, this verb has strong resonances, as in Song of Songs 6:1 (where the metaphor is, of course, similarly structured on lovers whose representational nature flips gender continually):אָנָה הָלַךְ דּוֹדֵךְ הַיָּפָה בַּנָּשִׁים אָנָה פָּנָה דוֹדֵךְ וּנְבַקְשֶׁנּוּ עִמָּךְ . The implicit message of the poem is: "You may ask for God to "turn" towards you, but you won't necessarily like what you get."

Assigning to God the attributes of אָדִישׁ and עֵינַיִם זָרוֹת וְקָרוֹת seems blasphemous, and yet represents one traditional view of God as disengaged from activity in the world. And yet, the claim of the lover (Israel) is the same as it is throughout the liturgy - You are the one who "remembers." The central role that the verb זכר plays in this poem (lines 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17) echoes the constant reference to God as "זוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת" (Birnbaum, p. 81 and throughout), or "זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית". It is ironically implied God neither remembers or recognizes Israel, and yet this principle underlies worship – that God must be constantly reminded of the special relationship with the people of Israel through (initially) sacrifices and (later) prayer.

In this poem, Amichai's "counter-theology" attempts to refute the notion of Israel as a people with a unique, exclusive relationship with the Divine. This notion is traditionally encapsulated in אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ through the plural-possessive ending of every phrase in the first four stanzas of the evoked text. There is almost childishly possessive tone to the poem: "He's our God, and your can't have Him! We found Him first, and we

won't share!" Fitting with Amichai's "post-cynical humanism," which is equally the result of the modern/post-Enlightenment experience of Universalism. Amichai (along with others) exposes the immature nature of a theology which is rooted in a hermetically sealed exclusive relationship. Though this is not the full picture of Jewish theology, it is one reaction found predominantly in an ultra-orthodox world-view which Amichai would, no doubt, seek to dispel (as noted by Boaz Arpaly above). The consequence of stubbornly sticking to that world-view, ominously contained within the final line of the poem, could be disastrous.

## יהודה עמיחי, "שמות שמות, שמות שמות, בימים ההם בזמן הזה, #15"
## מתוך *פתוח סגור פתוח*, 9-138

## Yehuda Amichai, "Names, Names, in Other Days and in Our Time, #11" from *Open Closed Open*, Chana Kronfeld and Chana Bloch (translators), p. 132

| 15 | 11 |
|---|---|
| הוֹ, שֵׁמוֹת מְמֻחְזָרִים בַּמַּחֲזוֹר, | All those names, cleansed and purified, recycled |
| בִּמְעָרְבֶּל הַשֵּׁמוֹת אַחַר נְקִיּוּ, אַחַר טָהֳרָה, | in the cycle, in the big mixer of names, |
| הוֹ שֵׁם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם וְשֵׁם נִשָּׂא לַשָּׁוְא, | the name for its own sake and the name taken in vain, |
| שֵׁמוֹת מִשָּׁם וְשֵׁמוֹת לְשָׁם | names from over there and names |
| שֵׁמוֹת שְׁמָמָה וּשְׁמוֹת דְּמָמָה. | for over there, names of silence, |
| | names of welter and waste. |
| רוּת רוּת שֶׁהֵקְדַּמְתְּ לְפָנַי לָמוּת, עַכְשָׁו | Ruth, Ruth, who died in my youth, now the two giants, |
| שְׁנֵי הֶעָנָקִים, יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ יִשְׁמְרוּ עַל מוֹתֵךְ | Yitgadal and Yitkadash, Magnified and Sanctified, |
| בִּמְקוֹם שְׁנֵי הָעֲנָקִים, יְבָרֶכְךְ וְיִשְׁמָרֵךְ, | will watch over your death |
| שֶׁנִּכְשְׁלוּ וְלֹא שָׁמְרוּ עַל חַיַּיִךְ. | in place of the two giants, |
| רוּת רוּת שְׁמָהּ רַבָּא. | May He Bless and May He Keep, |
| יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא, שְׁמֵךְ. | who failed to watch over your life. |
| | Ruth Ruth, thy hallowed name |
| | magnified and sanctified, |
| | His hallowed name, thy name. |

שמות שמות, שמות שמות, בימים ההם בזמן הזה, #15 - Names, Names, in Other Days and in Our Time, #11[55]

From Amichai's auto-biographical canvas, this poem emerges as the final tribute to Ruth, his childhood love who was killed during the Shoah, and whose presence accompanies his writing throughout the decades. Though he and his extended family were able to make aliyah before the Shoah, the survivors' guilt, as well as the theological void which was left behind by witnessing the destruction of European Jewry and the most brutal representation of man's inhumanity, occupy a central place in Amichai's poetry. The vehicle for expressing these complex emotions is the character of Ruth.[56] In much of Amichai's work, Ruth is used as a personalized embodiment of the millions who perished in the Shoah.

What is known about Ruth from Amichai's previous poetry is that she was his first love and that she disappeared with the rest of Würzberg's Jewish community. Her function in the poetry is similar to that of Amichai's father after his death – the dead who live on in the poet's consciousness. The loss of life during the Shoah plays a considerably smaller role in Amichai's earlier poetry when viewed against the role of loss with regard to the War of Independence. This is not surprising, as the subject of the Shoah seemed too enormous and terrible (even inconceivable) for most Israeli authors

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55. In presenting materials from *פתוח סגור פתוח / Open Closed Open*, there are instances where the number which provides the only indication of the specific poem will be different between the original Hebrew and the English translation. This is due to the fact that Bloch and Kronfeld's translation is not a full translation of the Hebrew, and they have chosen to number their translations consecutively as opposed to correspondingly to the Hebrew. Hopefully my references will clear up any difficulties in determining original sources.

56. For other "Ruth" poems, see *...מאחורי כל זה* p. 50, *ולא על מנת לזכר* p. 114, *פתוח סגור פתוח* p. 20, 145

during the decades that followed its end. Amichai explores the subject, interestingly enough, more explicitly in his novels and plays (particularly *לא מעכשיו לא מכאן* and *פעמונים ורכבות*). In the present poem, Amichai says a sort-of-*kaddish* for Ruth, putting to rest the burden of her memory.

The poem opens with a meditation on "names," as do all of the poems in this grouping of poems. Here, Amichai contextualizes the "names" בַּמַּחֲזוֹר, that is – in the "cycle." The significance of this term for the present study goes beyond this literal meaning, for מַחֲזוֹר is also the term applied to the "cycle of prayers," and the specific prayerbook for holidays and festivals. The term has additional resonance in the modern usage, as it signifies a particular class or year of students, as in מַחֲזוֹר '34 "the class of '34"(significant in that Amichai will now memorialize his schoolmate, Ruth). Finally, the other present association of מַחֲזוֹר at work is the technical term for a cycle of poetry, this entire collection (*פתוח סגור פתוח*) being the only work of Amichai's written entirely in "cycles." Amichai runs the names through multiple processes, including the industrial sounding "big mixer" and the ominous "purification," associated both with "ethnic cleansing" and the traditional Jewish preparations for a dead body – טָהֳרָה.

The use of intertextual quotation from two opposing sources provides the key to the present poem. While Amichai has frequently used the words of the קדיש for allusive purposes before,[57] typically it is done in an ironic, even bitter way. Though the קדיש is by no means a prayer-for-the-dead at its core, the place it has occupied in the Jewish

57. For other poems that utilize the Kaddish as an evoked text, see ...מאחורי כל זה p. 72, 108, ולא על מנת p. 83, לזכר p. 15, 21, מאדם אתה ואל אדם תשוב p. 90, 168 פתוח סגור פתוח

tradition has become just that, with the institution of קדיש יתום (Birnbaum, p. 137 and elsewhere) becoming an honor bestowed upon mourners and those observing yahrtzeit. The custom seems to have originated in Germany in the 13th century, primarily in response to the devastation felt in the Jewish community after the Crusades. The opening two words, יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ themselves are an intertextual allusion to the prophet Ezekiel (38:23), where the full phrase reads:וְהִתְגַּדַּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדַּשְׁתִּי וְנוֹדַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי ה', in its context a messianic promise of theodicy.[58] This message is taken and transposed by the liturgist into a human-initiated process of "magnifying and glorifying" God's Name. The resonance of קדיש in the Israeli context is similar to that which I described above regarding אל מלא רחמים. Sadly, Israel's history has made it a country where the most culturally relevant prayers are those said over the dead.

The lexical pair that Amichai juxtaposes with יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ in the present poem are יְבָרֶכְךָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ, again a piece of liturgy which is in itself intertextual quotation from the ברכת כהנים of Numbers 6:24-27. Though the liturgical use of this passage ends with verse 26, the continuation of verse 27 provides an important tie to this poem: וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲנִי אֲבָרֲכֵם. The point of the ברכת כהנים being recited over the people of Israel is that God's "name" will be pronounced over them, yielding blessing. In its liturgical manifestation, the formula is utilized at different points in the calendar dependent on the rite being followed and the location of the synagogue.[59](Birnbaum, p.357 and elsewhere) From a standpoint of the initiator of blessing with regard to the

58. For a fuller discussion of the Mourners *Kaddish*, see Hoffman, ed., 2002, pp. 24-27, 149-161
59. For a discussion of the evolution of the ברכת כהנים in Jewish liturgy, see Elbogen, pp. 62-6)

ברכת כהנים, the impetus comes from God toward the people. The priests, acting as God's agents, pronounce blessings of protection upon the people, opposite of the directional flow of praise from the people towards God in the doxology of the קדיש.

The symbolism of calling these lexical pairs "two giants" is not immediately evident, but appears again in the same collection (p.168) applied only to the phrase from קדיש. Interestingly, Amichai invokes the protective power of these two words/giants upon his children (whose enlistment in the army is the subject of that cycle). There, Amichai uses as the basis for his children deserving protection the fact that these "two giants" had protected his father and mother: "וַאֲשֶׁר לִילָדַי וְלִנְסִיעוֹתֵיהֶם מָחַיִּים,/ שְׁנֵי הָעֲנָקִים, יִתְנַדֵּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ,/ יִשְׁמְרוּ עֲלֵיהֶם כְּשֵׁם שֶׁשָּׁמְרוּ עַל אַבִּי וְעַל אִמִּי, / עַל אַלָּה בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וְעַל אַלָּה בְּמוֹתָם." The personification of the word pairs as "two giants" is simultaneously playful and menacing. Amichai indicated in interviews that German fairytales were as much a part of his childhood as the Biblical tales were, and both include that playful yet dangerous character of the "giant."[60]

The notion that words might protect an individual from harm (or even protect the soul of a departed relative) is at the same time inherently, traditionally Jewish and quintessentially Amichai. Words are the only reality which Amichai can believe in "with perfect faith."[61] Therefore, they are assigned powers that he will not give over even to the God that he struggles with. At the same time, words may fail in their task, as was the

60. For instance, the report of the spies who return with an assessment of the Land of Canaan in Numbers ch. 13.

61. As in the poem (7-6 ,*פתוח סגור פתוח*) #3 אלים מתחלפים, התפילות נשארות לעד where Amichai declares:

"אֲנִי אוֹמֵר בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵימָה / שֶׁהַתְּפִלּוֹת קָדְמוּ לָאֱלֹהִים. / הַתְּפִלּוֹת יָצְרוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים, / הָאֱלֹהִים יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם / וְהָאָדָם יוֹצֵר תְּפִלּוֹת // שֶׁיּוֹצְרוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים שֶׁיּוֹצֵר אֶת הָאָדָם."

case with ברכת כהנים for Ruth. Amichai assigns the blame for Ruth's death not to God, as it were, but to the pair of words/giants who failed in their task of providing Divine protection and blessing. This may certainly be seen as an indictment of God and God's name (from verse 27 cited above), and yet Amichai goes on to put some measure of "faith" in God's name, while joining to it Ruth's name.

In designating Ruth's name by the Aramaic phrase שְׁמַהּ רַבָּא, traditionally associated with God in the *kaddish* prayer, Amichai is suggesting a radical notion that Jewish dead of the Shoah or Israel's wars partake of or even supplant the greatness of God's "name." Perhaps they are competing with God's "name" for greatness, attracting followers of their own, for instance Jews whose primary identification with Judaism is based on the suffering of the Shoah.[62] Ruth, as the exemplary victim of the Shoah, represents in Amichai's consciousness the purity and blamelessness which would seem to eclipse God's apparent inaction and willingness to witness the deaths of so many in silence. Or, they may in some way effectively add to the greatness of God's name for having perished. This later notion, which borders closely on the traditional notion of those who die על קדוש השם, cannot be Amichai's intention, as he has explicitly distanced himself from that notion elsewhere. And yet, in this poem, at the end of his life (*פתוח סגור פתוח* reads in many ways like a last will and testament) Amichai is putting to rest Ruth's name, setting it under the competent care of the two words/giants יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ. There may even be a note of resignation in this notion, acknowledging that these "word-giants" can only protect her because she is already dead. The final word of

62. Kronfeld and Bloch note that Amichai has invented a phrase for those who profit from the memory of the Shoah: "professional Holocausters / שואן מקצועי (2000[1], p. 156)

the poem one expects to read, the seal of the קדיש, should end with a final אמן. There is certainly ample precedent for Amichai concluding a poem with אמן, one of his tropes, the "secular Amen."[63] And yet, in a moment of sheer transcendence, Amichai ends the poem/eulogy for Ruth with שְׁמֵךְ instead, highlighting the absolute power and meaning that Amichai places in words and names, the repositories of memory.[64]

63. For some example of poems in which Amichai uses his "secular Amen," see: *שירים* p. 151; *עכשיו ברעש* pp. 14, 83-4, 173; *ולא על מנת לזכור* pp. 12, 25, 83; *הזמן* p. 5; *פתוח סגור פתוח* pp. 101, 111

64. This notion of names as repositories of memory has strong precedence within Judaism, from the symbolic and theophoric names throughout the Torah to the descriptive names of the Rabbis and even the adoption of symbolic, new names by early Zionists coming to reclaim Hebrew (as Ludwig Pfeuffer became Yehuda Amichai).

## יהודה עמיחי, "מים אינם יכולים לחזר בתשובה",
## *מתוך גם האגרוף היה פעם יד פתוחה ואצבעות*, 121

## Yehuda Amichai, "Waters Cannot Return to their Source," from *Even a Fist Was Once an Open Hand with Fingers*, p. 121, Craig Axler (translator)

| | |
|---|---|
| מַיִם אֵינָם יְכוֹלִים לַחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה | Waters Cannot Return to their Source |
| מַיִם אֵינָם יְכוֹלִים לַחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה. | Waters cannot return to their source. |
| לְאָן יַחֲזֹרוּ: לַבֶּרֶז, לַמְּקוֹרוֹת, לָאֲדָמָה, לַשָּׁרָשִׁים, | To where would they return? |
| לֶעָנָן, לַיָּם, לְתוֹךְ פִּי: | To the faucet, to the spring, to the earth, |
| מַיִם אֵינָם יְכוֹלִים לַחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה. | to the roots, to the cloud, to the sea, |
| כָּל מָקוֹם הוּא יְמֵיהֶם כְּקֶדֶם, מֵימֵיהֶם כְּקֶדֶם, | to my mouth? |
| כָּל מָקוֹם תְּחִלָּה וְסוֹף, וְהַתְחָלָה. | Waters cannot return to their source. |
| | Every place is their *days of old*, |
| | their *waters of old*, |
| | Every place is beginning and end, and beginning. |

## מַיִם אֵינָם יְכוֹלִים לַחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה - Waters Cannot Return to their Source

From ruminations on death and loss, we turn to the theme of cycles of renewal and hope. This short poem falls into the category of allusion and distortion/commentary. The image sustained throughout the poem is allusive to Song of Songs, 8:7a. מַיִם רַבִּים לֹא יוּכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת־הָאַהֲבָה וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטְפוּהָ – "Vast floods cannot quench love, nor rivers drown it."[65] Yet, this image is blurred with an allusion to Lamentations 5:21: הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה חַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם – "Take us back, O Lord, to Yourself, and let us come back; Renew our days as of old!", the penultimate line which is repeated to close the public reading on *Tisha BeAv*. This is done both because of its hopeful, prayerful message and because of the absolute fatalism of the final line of the book:כִּי אִם־מָאֹס מְאַסְתָּנוּ קָצַפְתָּ עָלֵינוּ עַד־מְאֹד – "For truly You have rejected us, bitterly raged against us."[66] Aside from its presence in the lectionary, the phrase has gained widespread recognition in its function at the close of the rituals for returning the Torah scroll to the ark on Shabbat and festivals, one of the moments of Jewish worship with the highest emotion and pageantry.(Birnbaum, p. 389)

The poem seems to revolve around being read backwards first, in order to make the association between מים and תשובה, not apparent at the outset. It is dependent on a conscious misreading of the evoked text, first presented as allusion, then as distortion with the wordplay of יְמֵיהֶם כְּקֶדֶם turning into מֵימֵיהֶם כְּקֶדֶם. Amichai is not the first to

65. Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical translation follows *The New JPS Translation* (1985)
66. For other poems that utilize חדש ימינו כקדם as an evoked text, see ולא על מנת לזכר p. 18; שעת החסד p. 55; פתוח סגור פתוח p. 14

hear this sound-play in the verse. In fact, as far back as *Midrash Eicha Rabbah* (redacted by the fifth century C.E.), Rabbi (Judah HaNasi) comments on the the verse:כימי עולם כימי נח שנא' ( ישעיהו נ"ד) כי מי נח זאת לי – "'As days of old.', that is, as the days of Noah, as it is written (Isaiah 54:9) 'For this is to Me like the waters of Noah.'".[67]

The phrase "לַחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה" which titles this poem and repeats as lines 1 and 4 is an equally resonant phrase in Rabbinic Hebrew (meaning to return to God in penitence) and Modern Hebrew (meaning to return to strict ritual observance). Neither seem applicable to "waters," and so one must pose the counter-argument: If waters cannot "return," does that mean that human beings can? This question of the human capacity to change and repent has obsessed Jewish commentators for two thousand years, and Amichai places himself squarely within that exegetical tradition. The implicit message of the poem is that, while waters cannot return to their "source," human beings indeed can, as they know their "Source." The same midrash cited above for picking up on the sound-play between ימים and מים also portrays the people Israel telling God, on the basis of this evoked text, that God is responsible for making the first move (as it were) toward return and restoration. God answers back, with an equally supportive prooftext, that it is human beings who are responsible for making the first steps. This argument is left (perhaps purposefully) unresolved in the tradition, suggesting, perhaps, the necessity for a middle group position, embracing both God and Israel as agents in the process of *teshuvah*/return.

Amichai, constantly aware of the faith and practice that he rejected in moving

67. מדרש רבה איכה פרשה ה סימן כא

away from the Orthodox observance of his parents, carries no small measure of guilt and conflict, as evident in much of his poetry. In the same collection as this poem is found, Amichai begins his poem "יְלָדַי" : "אֲנָנִי יוֹדֵעַ עִם יִהְיֶה לִי חֵלֶק בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא / אֲבָל בָּעוֹלָם יְלָדַי לֹא יִהְיֶה לִי חֵלֶק."[68] The question of whether he has strayed too far from the path to ever return is more than an academic question for Amichai, and he constructs his commentary on the verse from Lamentations in order to buttress his system already in place – that there is no before or after, there is only the present. Amir Eshel, in an article on what he terms "Eternal Present" writes that in Amichai's work, a sense of "continuity" is removed from the realm of time on both a personal and communal level. As proof, he brings the following statement by Amichai from a 1984 interview:

> I live without before and after, it's not even the memories, memories are not mere recollections; I live because I am the child I was, and the lover I was, and the father of my children, and the son of my dead parents, and my parents are present. Everything exists. Nothing is dead for me. This is a Jewish characteristic – in the Torah there is no before and after. (Eshel, 2000, p. 155)

Amichai's final line in the present poem echoes one of his frequent liturgical allusions, the phrase from אדון עולם, which applies there to the Divine characteristics, בלי ראשית בלי תכלית.[69] While Amichai makes no specific reference to אדון עולם in this poem, the final line resonates strongly with the liturgical depiction of God as having no beginning and no end. Elsewhere, Amichai removes that concept from its application

68. ...גם האגרוף p. 133

69. For examples of בלי ראשית בלי תכלית as an evoked text, see: מאדם אתה ואל אדם תשוב p. 9; גם ...האגרוף pp. 26, 27, 78, 142; פתוח סגור פתוח pp. 6, 26, 174

to God, and turns it into the "eternal present" with reference to human beings and history. Here Amichai applies the same logic to the "waters" – that is, organic matter which persists and therefore has no beginning and no end. Human beings, history and elements all share in common this "eternal present" with God. Thus, as he writes here, there is no "return" because all that exists is the present in both temporal and spatial realms (and the convex is also true – all that has ever existed exists now).

## יהודה עמיחי,"רקוד אחר חצות", מתוך *ולא על מנת לזכר* , 25
## Yehuda Amichai, After-Midnight Dance, from *Not for the Sake of Remembering*, p. 25, Craig Axler (translator)

| | |
|---|---|
| רְקוּד אַחַר חֲצוֹת | After-Midnight Dance |
| בִּשְׁתַּיִם אַחַר חֲצוֹת שַׂמְתְּ תַּקְלִיט, | At two past midnight, you put on a record, |
| אִלַּצְתְּ אוֹתִי לִרְקֹד | you forced me to dance |
| אֶת הָרִקּוּדִים שֶׁל יָמַיִךְ, 1970, | the dances of your day, 1970, |
| כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא נִבְכֶּה. | so that we shouldn't cry. |
| לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אוֹתָם, אַךְ עָשִׂתִי | I didn't know them, but I did |
| תְּנוּעוֹת שֶׁל נְטִילַת לוּלָב | movements of shaking the *lulav* |
| וְשֶׁל קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ | and of *holy! holy!* |
| וְשֶׁל עֲטִיפָה בְּטַלִּית וַהֲנָחַת תְּפִלִּין סוֹבֶבֶת | and of donning *tallit* and wrapping 'round *tefillin* |
| וְשֶׁל כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים. | and of *bowing and prostrating*. |
| רְקוּד מוֹבִיל לַחֻפָּה | Dancing leads to the *huppah* |
| וּלְמָוֶת. לֹא לְמַעֲשִׂים | and to death. Not to |
| טוֹבִים, אָמֵן. | *good deeds*, Amen. |

## רְקוּד אַחַר חֲצוֹת - After-Midnight Dance

From the sound play and exegesis of the previous poem, we move to the deflation of the sacred in the present text. An entire separate study might be devoted to the ways in which Amichai selects items, texts and ritual from the realm of the sacred and transposes them into the realm of the sensual, erotic, and even the sexual. This is not the place for a full discussion of that topic, and yet I bring this poem as an example of just that tendency within Amichai's poetry. In רְקוּד אַחַר חֲצוֹת, Amichai's lyric "I" is engaged in an erotic relationship with a younger woman, acted out in their dancing in the middle of the night. Amichai sets the poem during the period of time which is associated with the blurring of boundaries, the time Kabbalists might express the same longing for (spiritual) sensual unification with the *Shekhina* through the tradition of תקוני חצות.

The final stanza contains an intertextual allusion to the communal responsive blessing upon the completion of circumcision. There, the blessing reads: כשם שנכנס לבריתו, כן יכנס לתורה, לחופה ולמעשים טובים – "Even as he has been introduced into the covenant, so may he be introduced to the Torah, to the marriage canopy, and to a life of good deeds."(Birnbaum, pp. 743-4) Though I am not sure what to make of Amichai's rejection of the connection between חופה and מעשים טובים, substituting מוות for the end result, another widespread Jewish custom that cuts across communities is that of a special all-night protective vigil (in Yiddish, *vakhnakht*) to protect a baby boy on the night before circumcision from sudden death (or demons). As well, Amichai has removed תורה from the formula of the blessing, perhaps reflecting his own life experience of moving away from Orthodox practice and study.

Amichai acknowledges that this ritual/dance used to initiate a sexual encounter may well result in marriage, but not necessarily in "good behavior/good deeds," as the tradition prescribes. The ritual of *brit milah*/circumcision is, on one level, a preparation for the later sexual encounter within a Jewish framework, the relationship which is consummated under the wedding canopy. Great mystical significance has been attached to the removal of the foreskin and the sexual activity (and procreation) parallel to theophany that can only result once that has been achieved.[70]

The bulk of the intertextuality of the poem occurs in the second stanza, where the references are to both liturgical text (כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים and קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ) and to rituals associated with liturgy (לולב, טלית ותפלין). Interestingly, all of the rituals are traditionally observed only during the daylight hours. The liturgical texts referenced in the second stanza include a quotation from the bowing section of the prayer of conclusion, עלינו (Birnbaum, p. 135 and elsewhere) and a partial quotation of the קדושה[71], itself a quotation of Isaiah 6:3 (Birnbaum, p. 83 and elsewhere). Both the rituals and the liturgical texts are cast as substitutions for "the dances of your day, 1970." In this way, Amichai connects to his own generation, the Palmach/Statehood generation which is characterized by having grown up in a religious environment that they rejected

70. See for example, *Zohar* III 72b-73a:
R. Abba said: Praiseworthy is the portion of Israel, for the Holy One, blessed be He, desired them more than all the idolatrous nations. And on account of His love for them He gave them His laws of truth, planted the Tree of Life in their midst, and placed His *Shekhina* amongst them. Why? For Israel are marked by the holy sign on their flesh, and it is known that they are His, from those who belong to His palace. Therefore all those who are not marked with the holy sign on their flesh do not belong to Him; it is known that they all derive from the side of impurity. It is therefore forbidden to join with them and to converse with them concerning words (or matters) of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is also forbidden to instruct the person who is not marked by the holy sign on his flesh in the words of Torah. How much the more so to be engaged in it!

71. For other poems in which Amichai utilizes the thrice-repeated קדוש, see: הזמן p. 2; ...שלוה גדולה p. 86; ...גם האגרוף p. 49

in their youth. As well, the rituals/texts are put through a process of deflation, as they become empty movements, mere substitutions for frivolous dancing. Alternatively, the "frivolous" dancing may be assigned sacred significance in Amichai's modern worldview.

Conflicting accounts of the power of the dance/ritual are presented in the first and last stanzas. First, it would seem that the dance/ritual has some kind of protective, even salvific power. Engaging in them is the only way to fight back the tears, be they tears of loss or tears of desperation and hopelessness. In the final stanza, Amichai contends that dancing, while temporarily leading to (presumed) happiness, symbolized by the wedding canopy, ultimately leads to death. While they may be good enough to get the lovers/worshippers through the night, ritual/dance will not prove sufficient to repair a world which is seemingly bound for sadness.

# יהודה עמיחי, מתוך "בנימן האחרון מטודלה" - *עכשיו ברעש 63-68*, 105-106

## Yehuda Amichai, from "Travels of the Last Benjamin of Tudela"
## Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (translators), p.65-6

כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו נִסָּה אָבִי לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתִי לְגֶבֶר,
שֶׁיִּהְיוּ לִי פָּנִים קָשׁוֹת כְּמוֹ קוֹסִיגִין וּבְרֶז'נֶב
כְּמוֹ גֶנֶרָלִים וְאַדְמִירָלִים וְאַנְשֵׁי בּוּרְסָה וַאֲמַרְכָּלִים,
כָּל אֵלֶּה אָבוֹת מְדֻמִּים שֶׁקָּבָעְתִּי אוֹתָם
בִּמְקוֹם אָבִי, בְּאֶרֶץ הָרַכָּה שֶׁל שִׁבְעַת הַמִּינִים
(לֹא רַק שְׁנַיִם, זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, אֶלָּה שִׁבְעָה מִינִים
מֵעֵבֶר לָנוּ, תְּאֵבִים מַאֲתָנוּ, קָשִׁים וּמְמִיתִים מִשֶּׁלָּנוּ).
אֲנִי צָרִיךְ לְהַבְרִיג עַל פָּנַי הַבָּעַת גְּבוֹר
כְּמוֹ נוּרָה מֻבְרֶגֶת הֵיטֵב לְתוֹךְ סִלְיֵלֵי בַּיִתּוּד הַקָּשָׁה,
לְהַבְרִיג וּלְהַבְרִיק.
כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו נִסָּה אָבִי לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתִי
לְגֶבֶר, אַךְ אֲנִי תָּמִיד גּוֹלֵשׁ בַּחֲזָרָה
לְתוֹךְ רַכּוּת יָרֵכַיִם וְנַעְגּוּעִים לְבָרֵךְ
שֶׁעָשָׂנִי כִּרְצוֹנוֹ. דִּרְצוֹנוֹ אִשָּׁה.
אָבִי פָּחַד לְבָרֵךְ בְּרָכָה לְבַטָּלָה.
לְבָרֵךְ בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֵץ וְלֹא לֶאֱכֹל אֶת הַתַּפּוּחַ.
לְבָרֵךְ בְּלִי לֶאֱהֹב לֶאֱהֹב בְּלִי לְהִשְׂבַּע.
אָכַלְתִּי וְלֹא שָׂבַעְתִּי וְלֹא בֵּרַכְתִּי.
חַיַּי מִשְׁתָּרְעִים וְנִפְרָדִים אַלָּה מֵאַלָּה:
בִּילְדוּתִי הָיוּ עוֹד סִפּוּרֵי מְלָכִים וְשֵׁדִים
וְנַפָּחֵי־סוּסִים, עַכְשָׁו בָּתֵּי זְכוּכִית וּכְלֵי חֶלֶל
מַבְרִיקִים וּדְמָמוֹת זוֹהֲרוֹת שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם תִּקְוָה.
יָדַי מוּשָׁטוֹת אֶל עָבָר לֹא לִי וְאֶל עָתִיד לֹא לִי:
קָשָׁה לֶאֱהֹב, קָשָׁה לִסְגֹּר חִבּוּק
בִּיָדַיִם כָּאֵלֶּה.
כְּקַצָּב הַמַּשְׁחִיז סַכִּין בְּסַכִּין בְּמִצַּלְפָּיִם
אֲנִי מַשְׁחִיז בִּי לֵב בְּלֵב. הַלְּבָבוֹת
הוֹלְכִים וְחַדִּים וְקַלִּים, אַךְ תְּנוּעַת נַפְשִׁי
נִשְׁאֶרֶת תָּמִיד הַמַּשְׁחֵזֶת, וְקוֹלִי יֹאבַד בְּקוֹל מַתֶּכֶת.

All the days of his life my father tried to make a man of me
so that I'd have a hard face like Kosygin and Brezhnev,
like generals and admirals and stockbrokers and financiers,
all the unreal fathers I've established
instead of my father, in the soft land of the "seven kinds"
(not just two, male and female, but seven kinds
beyond us, more lustful, harder and more deadly than we are).
I have to screw onto my face the expression of a hero
like a lightbulb screwed into the grooves of a hard socket,
to screw in and to shine.
All the days of his life my father tried to make
a man of me, but I always slip back
into the softness of thighs and the yearning to say the daily blessing
*who hath made me according to his will.* And his will is woman.
My father was afraid to say a wasted blessing.
To say *who hath created the fruit of the tree* and not to eat the apple.
To bless without loving. To love without being filled.
I ate and wasn't filled and didn't say the blessing.
The days of my life spread out and separate from one another
in my childhood there were still stories of kings and demons
and blacksmiths; now, glass houses and sparkling
spaceships and radiant silences that have no hope.
My arms stretched out to a past not mine and a future not mine.
It's hard to love, it's hard to embrace
with arms like that.
Like a butcher sharpening his knife on knife.
I sharpen heart on heart inside of me. The hearts
get sharper and sharper until they vanish, but the movement of my soul
remains the movement of the sharpener, and my voice is lost
in the sound of the metal.

## מתוך "בנימן האחרון מטודלה" - from "Travels of the Last Benjamin of Tudela"

This final selection is brought from out of Amichai's epic auto-biographical poem, "Travels of the Last Benjamin of Tudela." Perhaps no other poem of Amichai's has received as much attention as this larger work, and with just cause. It is rich in imagery and intertextual allusion to the Bible, Rabbinical texts and the liturgy. It also is an attempt to dramatize the efforts of the Statehood generation to navigate the demands of their new nationality. This new nationality was born together with the establishment of the modern State of Israel and emphasized the collective to the exclusion of the individual, a central component of early Zionist ideology which became difficult for subsequent generations to accept. This poem also is one of the most significant attempts by a soldier of the War of Independence to confront the experience of that war through the medium of poetry.

"Travels of the Last Benjamin of Tudela" presents many recurrent themes throughout its forty-two pages of epic poetry. Chief among these are the relationship between Amichai and his father, the Land of Israel and the world of traditional observance that he had rejected. Frequently, the conflicts and tensions are cast in the context of his sexual development as a teenager and young adult experiencing love and war. The poem questions the established Zionist ethos of the pre-State generation, as well as their assumptions about masculinity. At the heart of the selection that I have brought here there are several liturgical intertexts. One refrain which runs throughout "Travels" is the phrase from ברכת המזון which appears both as direct quotation and as

an evoked text (itself a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:10), וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבָעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לָךְ – "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you." (Birnbaum, p. 763-4) Amichai's father adheres to the traditional order of events: first you eat - then you are satisfied - then you bless. In altering the text, Amichai comments on his father's faith, that it led him to bless - love - and be satisfied. This faith, which elsewhere Amichai has referred to as a sort of childish, even naive religiosity, here connects to what Amichai has said repeatedly in interviews: "My father was a German Jew, very Orthodox, a strong believer, in the best sense of the word."[72] In contrast, Amichai writes about his lyric "I": "I ate and wasn't filled and didn't say the blessing." In some way, the traditional order of the sequence in the evoked text does not work for the poet. Eating was supposed to produce satiation, which would lead the individual to bless. This notion of not feeling satisfied follows throughout the poem, and continues in Amichai's subsequent poetry. In a sense, it is the breaking point at which Amichai separates from the "God of his father and mother." Additionally, the blessing in context indicates that the satisfaction from eating would lead the individual to bless "the good land" which God has given to them. It is possible that latent within this recurrent corruption of the blessing is a questioning of the nature of the Land. This is not to suggest that Amichai was not grateful for the Land of Israel, but rather that he viewed his relationship to the Land through a network of complexities.

While the images that open this section of the poem portray the father trying to mold the son into a stereotypical "man," elsewhere in Amichai's poetry, the father moves

72. Interview with Lawrence Joseph, 1992, p. 215

freely between the feminine and the masculine. Nili Scharf Gold has written on "The 'Feminine' in Amichai's Poetry," and remarks with regard to the father:

> The Amichai father "cooks jam stirring ... white, sweet foam for future generations" (*Y.A.: A Life*, p. 274) and is always there for his son, even after death: "...Happy are those / who have a patisserie next door to a coffee house, / you can call inside: 'Another cake, more / Sweetness, let's have more'/ / Happy is he whose dead father is next door to him / and he can call him always" ("A second meeting with my father", *Shalvah*, p. 88). The equation father = cake and sweetness, father = womb or box, is perhaps another aspect of man = woman.[73]

From the gender ambiguity of the father, we turn to the same characteristic in the son. Lines 13 and 14 of the presented section indicate Amichai's desire לְבָרֵךְ שֶׁעָשַׂנִי כִּרְצוֹנוֹ, expressing both the inclination to be anything which is opposite to what his father wanted of him, and to (in the quite literal sense), bless his true (God-desired) self.[74] The liturgical reference is to the daily blessing said by women, who would not say the standard (male) blessing ברוך ... שלא עשני אשה .(Birnbaum, p. 17) This, in his father's system, would be tantamount to saying a blessing in vain (בְּרָכָה לְבַטָּלָה) as it is not the appropriate blessing said by a man at any point. His father was not prepared to say the blessing over fruit without eating the fruit, let alone pronounce a blessing that upsets the gender identity scheme. However, this only highlights the breakdown of communication between the father and the son,[75] between the collective and the individual. The son

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73. In Abramson, 1997, p. 84

74. Amichai returns to this desire to bless שעשני כרצונו in פתוח סגור פתוח, p. 17. According to Bloch and Kornfeld, in that work as a whole, "women are the bearers of special wisdom, keepers-of-the-code for the language of love. They mediate between past and future, life and death, knowing both the danger and the privilege of that in-between state, and they have a thing or two to teach God Himself: that true mercy is 'born of the womb, true mercy, / true womb, true love, true grace' ('In My Life, On My Life,' #13)" (2000[1], p. 155)

75. Amichai said in a 1988 interview:
"I remember my father with love and affection. He was a religious man like his father before him and he believed strongly in what he was doing. But I rebelled against tradition and religion and he couldn't understand this. This caused both of us a great deal of pain." (Abramson, 1988, p. 11)

needs to bless his feminine side, to take refuge in that which is soft (רכות is another strong lead-word in Amichai's poetry). Though they do not see "eye-to-eye," the dialogue between father and son (or individual and collective) which began in this seminal early poem will continue throughout the rest of Amichai's long and prolific career. The musings of a soldier-poet who prefers to "make love not war" will forever be imbued with a bitter sense of irony alongside a weary sense of hope.

## Chapter 2 Conclusions

Through the eight poems presented here, I have attempted to portray a broad representation of the many ways in which Amichai utilized liturgical allusion in his poetry. In some cases, it has provided the entire key to unlocking the deep meaning of the poem, and in others it was simply an ornament on the structure of an otherwise secular poem. Some of Amichai's poems demonstrate the blasphemous leanings of this iconoclast, while others place him alongside the great authors of the Jewish tradition. In all cases, though, these poems emerge from the personality of a writer who heard deep resonances in every word of Hebrew spoken or written, and who consciously used those associations to built structures of meaning for the benefit of his audience.

## Chapter 3: The Liturgical Use of Yehuda Amichai's Poetry

As discussed in chapter 1, the liturgical use of modern poetry can be viewed largely within the context of ongoing liturgical creativity. The movement to create new liturgical paradigms is a response to cultural context, the need to respond to major historical events (beneficial or catastrophic), the aesthetics of a particular community or age, and the drive to bring *kavvanah* to the *keva* of the established, inherited liturgy. The criterion by which additions are introduced into the liturgy seem similarly fluid, and this can make it exceedingly difficult to establish in any formulaic manner the characteristics by which modern poetry (not written explicitly *as* liturgy) may be incorporated into Jewish worship.

In an attempt to formulate some principles of poetic inclusion, I solicited feedback from individuals who have been responsible for editing the literary sections of several of the prayerbooks which utilize modern poetry most effectively. None who responded were able to articulate a set formula or list of principles for inclusion. Several have noted that, in order for modern poetry to "work" as liturgy, the poetry must reflect some generalized or universal message; it cannot be so personal as to be inaccessible to a community.

An additional concern for these writers was to differentiate between utilizing modern poetry in the traditional sense of liturgy (that is, the same text repeated in the same way at regular intervals) and the occasional incorporation of specific texts specifically to "interrupt" the flow of that routine liturgy or to provide additional comment on a liturgical theme or section. This is especially relevant when one contemplates "canonizing" a particular poem in a specific setting through publication in a

prayerbook (which is meant to have an extended "shelf-life"). The experience of the "Creative Liturgy Movement" pointed towards one-time use photocopied services. However, three decades later, *siddurim* are still the norm. The creative liturgy impact, though, is certainly visible in the vastly expanded sections of "additional readings" and "interpretations" that appear in those *siddurim*, as well as the practice of creating a "service-insert" for a particular service.

Finally, a general concern of several individuals with whom I spoke regarding this topic was that liturgy, in order for it to be used in a collective or communal setting, must be easily understood. In spite of this, virtually every one of those individuals then went on to detail the process by which repeated readings of the inherited liturgy will yield new and nuanced understandings of the text over time. Therefore, I remain ambivalent on the question of whether or not modern poetry must be easily understood on the first reading in order to be suitable for use in worship.

The ways in which prayer leaders utilize readings will certainly effect the communal experience with the text. If a text is used for silent reflection and meditation, the experience is likely to be significantly different from that if the text is read responsively aloud. When a prayer leader offers an introduction to a text (inherited or innovative), layers of meaning are added. The act of reading in liturgical "performance" becomes simultaneously individual and communal, the "sacred drama" is played out on multiple stages. Ultimately, the community is the barometer by which the success of a particular text as liturgy can be measured.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the "liturgical" use of Yehuda Amichai's poetry, and to draw from that use implications for further use. I have

researched past use of his poetry through two primary methods. First. I have examined as many published liturgical works as I could find which make use of Amichai's poetry. These included *siddurim*, *machzorim*, *haggadot* and life-cycle liturgies.(Appendices A-C) I found only a handful of the liturgies in which Amichai's poetry had been used, as most often it is found in independently produced sources not readily available. The other way in which I sought out this information has been through an e-mail query which I circulated on several rabbinic "listserves."[76] The query was as follows:

> Research Query:
> I am a 5th year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR in New York, working on my thesis and seeking information "from the field." I am writing on the liturgical aspects of the poetry of Yehuda Amichai -- both the ways in which his poetry utilizes liturgy and can be used "liturgically." My question to you concerns the second liturgical aspect. Have you (or has anyone you know) every used any of Amichai's poetry in a liturgical setting (i.e., worship, life-cycle, study session, as an "iyyun tefillah")? If so, what poems have you made use of, and (briefly) why?
> Additionally, any general thoughts about the use of modern poetry in worship would be appreciated.
> Appropriate acknowledgement "b'shem om'ro" will certainly be given.

Over the course of roughly one month, I received nearly one-hundred responses to my query, many of them very enthusiastic. Because my intention was not to analyze the responses, but rather to record the anecdotal use of Amichai's poetry, I have included the responses of individuals who were able to give specific citations for poems they had utilized in a table at the end of this thesis (Appendix D). The vast majority of the

76. The specific listserves which I was able to circulate on, with the gracious help of the individuals in parentheses were: the Central Conference of American Rabbis' RavKav (Rabbi Elliot Stevens), the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association's RRANet (Rabbi Jonathan Malamy, the Rabbinical Association's RavNet (Amy Gottlieb), the Renewal/Havurah net (Rabbi Arthur Waskow), the Academy for Jewish Religion (Rabbi Andrea Myers), the Israel Progressive Rabbi's MARAMlist (Rabbi Naamah Kelman-Ezrachi) and the alumni oriented HUCalum.

respondents to the query did not specify individual poems, but indicated that they had utilized Amichai's poetry successfully in liturgy, primarily as part of Shabbat worship.

I was pleased to receive several responses from colleagues working in Israel, all of them in non-orthodox settings. They indicated, much as I had assumed at the outset, that through the incorporation of modern poetry (in their case, primarily Hebrew) into the worship service, Israelis who did not define themselves as "religious" were able to find meaning in Jewish worship. The initial cognitive dissonance of seeing a poem by a modern Israeli writer in a *siddur* is quickly overcome by the acceptance that Jewish tradition is about an ongoing, dynamic process. Additionally, as Marcia Falk has pointed out previously, the literal understanding that a secular Israeli brings to the Hebrew worship service may be more of a barrier to prayer than a conduit. On the specific topic of the use of Amichai's poetry in Israeli liturgies, I will share this telling story related to me by Rabbi Naamah Kelman-Ezrachi. She reports that several days after our initial conversation about my thesis, during a weekday morning *shacharit* service with students of the Israeli Progressive Rabbinical training program, the student leading the prayers introduced an Amichai poem as : "ועכשיו, מן הסדור התילוני". It is an ironic remark that would have been sure to make the poet himself laugh.

Some of the respondents answered the general question about the use of modern poetry liturgically, and gave examples of other poets/specific poems that they had successfully utilized. Frequently included in this list were Marcia Falk, Zelda, Bialik, Leah Goldberg, Anthony Hecht, and Marge Piercy. Included among the general responses were also several questions regarding the appropriateness of Amichai's poetry for religious usage. These tended to focus on the deep sense of irony in Amichai's

poetry, as well as questions regarding Amichai's suitability from a theological perspective (these responses characterized Amichai, I believe incorrectly, as an atheist). Many of the respondents were encouraging of my work and expressed an interest in gaining access to more poetry suitable for liturgical use.

I will now turn from the anecdotal questions to my own analyses of eight Amichai poems that I have discovered over my reading of the full body of his published poetry, and which I would advocate have liturgical potential. At the outset though, I must note that in reading Amichai's poetry it is clear that the vast majority of the work is not suitable for liturgical use. In some cases, the poetry is simply too personal for any universal/communal significance. In others, the subject matter is of no relation to worship or liturgy. There are, as well, many poems which express religious or theological views that would be inappropriate for worship. One of Amichai's standard practices was the juxtaposition of the sacred/ritual with the sensual/sexual/violent.[77] These poems, though interesting from the perspective of study, would not be suitable in liturgical settings.

With all of those caveats, I have selected eight poems to analyze from dozens that, upon first reading, I noted for potential liturgical utilization. I have consciously selected poems that were not mentioned by respondents to my e-mail survey, as a way of broadening the scope of the poetry being considered in this thesis. As well, I have attempted to select poems that have varied settings in which I would envision their

77. Some would find reason to exclude the poetry of Amichai from a place in the worship on account of his explicit, even semi-pornographic writings. However, those individuals would do well to consider some of the secular writings of the great liturgical poets of medieval Spain. In fact, so many of those poets wrote both secular/sexual and sacred literature that Professor Raymond Schiendlin published separate books on the same group of poets, *The Gazelle* (1991) and *Wine, Women and Death* (1986). Amichai noted the profound impact of the Spanish Jewish poets on his own writing.

utilization. In one case ("מותו של פרדסן"), I have selected a poem which has been previously untranslated, and therefore inaccessible to the non-Hebrew speaking world.

This brings up the question of the specific utilization of Amichai's (or other Hebrew writer's) poetry outside of the setting of a Hebrew-literate community. I would strongly advocate utilizing Hebrew alongside translation, even in communities where the Hebrew-literacy of the bulk of the members is minimal. The poem may be utilized in translation (as additional meaning is one of the purposes in incorporating modern poetry in the first place), but its appearance alongside the original text gives a sense of context and continuity within the world of Jewish ("sacred") literature.[78] Amichai himself has noted in several interviews that he feels as though the integrity of his poetry is maintained in translation (with some exceptions, in which case he would not recommend translating). In fact, he noted the joy that he received at encountering his own poetry in translation as if it were fresh and new to him, the (original) author. Before turing to the poems themselves, I offer the following from Amichai himself in an interview with Glenda Abramson:

> "I think the first major influence [on my poetry] was the rhythm of prayer. My first encounter with the Hebrew language was through prayers, in my fourth or fifth year. I believe that every poem is a prayer, a private prayer, as much as every prayer is a poem. And the poem is also a sermon; I sometimes feel as if I'm a rabbi or a minister of the church who would like to move people with my verse and my preaching, to shape them, to make them better."[79]

78. Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings* is a good example of this impulse. There, she presents the poetry of others in her translations alongside the original texts, including Yiddish and Hebrew. The reverse side of this same trend has been the incorporation of Hebrew translations from original English compositions in the *siddurim* of the Israeli "Progressive" and "Masorti" movements.
79. Interview with Glenda Abramson, in "A Kind of Lay Prophet," p. 10

יהודה עמיחי,"הַיָּם וְהַחוֹף", *גם האגרוף היה פעם יד פתוחה ואצבאות*, 48
Yehuda Amichai, The Sea and the Shore,
Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (translators), p. 176

## הַיָּם וְהַחוֹף

הַיָּם וְהַחוֹף זֶה לְיַד זֶה תָּמִיד. שְׁנֵיהֶם
רוֹצִים לִלְמוֹד לְדַבֵּר, לִלְמוֹד לוֹמַר
רַק מִלָּה אַחַת. הַיָּם רוֹצֶה לוֹמַר "חוֹף",
וְהַחוֹף רוֹצֶה לוֹמַר "יָם". הֵם מִתְקָרְבִים,
שְׁנוֹת מִילְיוֹנִים, אֶל הַדִּבּוּר, אֶל אֲמִירַת
הַמִּלָּה הָאַחַת. כְּשֶׁהַיָּם יֹאמַר "חוֹף",
וּכְשֶׁהַחוֹף יֹאמַר "יָם",
תָּבוֹא גְּאֻלָּה לָעוֹלָם,
יַחֲזֹר הָעוֹלָם לַתֹּהוּ.

## The Sea and the Shore

The sea and the shore are always next to each other.
Both want to learn to speak, to learn to say
one word only. The sea wants to say "shore"
and the shore "sea." They draw closer,
millions of years, to speech, to saying
that single word. When the sea says "shore"
and the shore says "sea,"
redemption will come to the world,
the world will return to chaos.

## הַיָּם וְהַחוֹף - The Sea and the Shore

I have selected this poem for several reasons, not the least of which is that Amichai posits here a suggestion for when "Redemption" will come to the world, a central question of Jewish existence. Redemption will come, says Amichai, when the "sea" and the "shore" learn to speak each other's language. This is not the only poem in which Amichai offers a condition which would bring "redemption" (which I doubt he means in the same way that a traditional Jewish stance would envision the days of the Messiah). In the second paragraph of his poem תירים (*Shalvah Gedolah...*, 82)[80], he suggests that "redemption" will come when tourists in Jerusalem are less fixated on the details of an ancient architectural structure and more on the humanity of the city's inhabitants (symbolized by the poet's lyric "I").

The message appears to be relatively consistent between these two poems: "Redemption" will come to the world only when humanity learns to listen as well as to speak, to see as well as to look. The "sea" and the "shore" may certainly be seen in this poem as being symbols of human beings who live side by side, unsuccessfully yearning to communicate. Whether that is symbolic of the divide that separates individuals from their loved ones, political or ideological groups from one another, peoples of faith from one another or any other distanced grouping, the message is profound: their efforts to understand one another will bring about "Redemption."

It is certainly symbolic that each of the elements strives to be able to name the other in this journey toward "Redemption." One can assume that sea knows how to say

80. This poem was mentioned by several of the respondents to the survey as one that they utilize liturgically in the context of "redemption."

"sea" and shore knows how to say "shore." In this sense, it is empathy which is required to bring about "Redemption." Not simply to be able to see the other, but to be able to feel or understand the other, in all of their foreign-ness.

Additional imagery that would help this poem in a setting alongside the section of the liturgy whose theme is "redemption" (Birnbaum, pp. 77-82, and elsewhere) is the established intertextual reference in the inherited liturgy of the "Song of the Sea" (Exodus 15:1-18). Redemption is inherently tied to water as a universal archetype, and in the specific Jewish context, the "shore" is also tied into that liminal space of Redemption. The acknowledgement in the poem that over "millions of years," the two draw closer to communicating with one another gives the sense of slow progress on a road towards "Redemption."

In an ironic twist, having posited the moment of "Redemption," Amichai concludes the poem with "the world will return to chaos." In some senses, this would not be the desired goal of working toward "Redemption." "תֹּהוּ," especially in the English translation of "chaos," has an extremely negative association. However, in that the world began as "תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ" (Genesis 1:2), the end of the world would be a return to that same mixture of "nothingness." I believe that, if I were utilizing this poem in translation, I might choose "nothingness" over "chaos" as the translation, though I am not sure that "chaos" needs to have a negative valence to it. Our modern world has become so hyper-ordered that "chaos" and paradise might well be synonymous.

Alternatively, the symbolism of ending the poem with "תֹּהוּ" may symbolize a response to the human desire to compartmentalize and draw definite borders. The

dividing of land from water, day from night, heaven from earth are all responses to the "תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ" of first chapter of Genesis. Perhaps Amichai's poem comes to suggest that the inclination to draw boundaries and lines has gone too far, that human beings have subdivided creation to the point where it is rendered uninhabitable. In that sense, the return to "תֹּהוּ" might be viewed as a prophetic message of universalism, where all will become one mixture of undifferentiated nature/humanity.

## יהודה עמיחי, #9 מתוך "אֱלִים מִתְחַלְפִים, תְּפִלּוֹת נִשְׁאָרוֹת לָעַד,"
## *פתוח סגור פתוח, 9*

Yehuda Amichai, #9 from "Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay,"
Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld (translators), p. 42

| 9 | 9 |
|---|---|
| עַם יְהוּדִי קוֹרֵא בְּאָזְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה<br>בְּמֶשֶׁךְ כָּל הַשָּׁנָה, כָּל שָׁבוּעַ פָּרָשָׁה,<br>כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֶרְדָה שְׁסִפְּרָה סִפּוּרִים כְּדֵי לְהַצִּיל אֶת חַיֶּיהָ,<br>וְעַד שֶׁמַּגִּיעִים לְשִׂמְחַת תּוֹרָה<br>הוּא שׁוֹכֵחַ וְאָפְשָׁר לְהַתְחִיל מֵחָדָשׁ. | The Jewish people read Torah aloud to God<br>all year long, a portion a week,<br>like Scherazade who told stories to save her life.<br>By the time Simchat Torah rolls around,<br>God forgets and they can begin again. |

"אֱלִים מִתְחַלְּפִים, הַתְּפִלּוֹת נִשְׁאָרוֹת לָעַד" מתוך 9# - #9 from "Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay"

From a message of universalism and nature, we now turn to a particularistic message which is dependent on being read in a specifically Jewish context. Contained within this very short poem (Amichai's body of poetry contains a variety of styles and lengths, as has been pointed out in all studies of him) is a world of exegesis. My initial attraction to the poem was on account of the reference the poet makes to *Simchat Torah* and its relationship to the Jewish people. Though he frequently denied that he spoke in any way for the Jewish people (or for Israelis), Amichai assumes the plural voice and makes grand sweeping proclamations here. I would argue that this poem could be included in the liturgy for *Simchat Torah* at any point, but might be best placed within the rituals for reading the Torah, as the two *parshiyyot* are read, both concluding and beginning the Torah.

The imagery in the poem points to the ongoing relationship between the Jewish people and God, mediated through the public, audible recitation of the Torah. It reflects the view that Torah is holy because of its relationship with the Jewish people. Without that ongoing engagement the Torah ceases to function as sacred. The mutuality of this relationship between God (Giver of the Torah) and Israel (keepers of the Torah) is a deeply rooted traditional theological stance which continues to speak to Jews today.

The cultural reference Amichai makes to Scherazade is an example of one of his masterful turns of a phrase which opens up multiple associations. There might be some who would object to bringing to mention a character such as this who is so clearly removed from any Jewish connection in the context of worship. Each community must

set its own levels for what is acceptable or not in its worship. However, for me, the image of Scherazade works for several reasons. The reference is, obviously, to the collection of folktales, "The Arabian Nights."

The story of Scherazade (which I assume is part of many peoples cultural repertoire) is that she saves her life (and the lives of the other women who are potential wives for the Sultan) by continually telling the Sultan stories. That is enough of a reference is enough to make the metaphor work powerfully. In this case, it is the people of Israel who continually (weekly) tell the stories of the Torah to the God, who forgets each year and prods Israel to retell the story again and again. By this analogy, the Torah becomes the ultimate salvific force – language and narrative as lifegiving, notions that are strongly supported within the tradition. The radical proposition here is that God needs constantly to be reminded (via Torah) who the people are. This idea, in less radical form, derives from the tradition of invoking "the merit of the ancestors" in Jewish worship as a way to bring about a favorable response from God. Underlying this approach is the acknowledgement that God may not recognize us, but rather continual reminders of this ancestral merit.

One final note on this poem is just to point out the power of good translation. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld translated much of Amichai's final collection in their volume, *Open Closed Open*. Though Amichai makes no overt reference to it, Bloch and Kronfeld chose to translate the fifth line of this poem "By the time Simchat Torah *rolls* around."(emphasis added) In this way, they have added a layer onto the allusiveness of the text, introducing the visual association of re-rolling the Torah at the end of Deuteronomy, bringing the story back to Genesis and, like Scherazade, beginning again.

## יהודה עמיחי, #14 מתוך "בְּחַיַּי, בְּחַיַּי", *פתוח סגור פתוח*, 114
## #12 from "In My Life, on My Life,"
## Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld (translators), pp. 112-3

| 13 | 12 |
|---|---|
| אֲנִי, עָלַיו הַשָּׁלוֹם, אֲנִי הַחַי אוֹמֵר עָלַי הַשָּׁלוֹם<br>אֲנִי רוֹצֶה שָׁלוֹם כְּבָר עַכְשָׁו בְּעוֹדֶנִּי חַי.<br>אֲנִי לֹא רוֹצֶה לְחַכּוֹת כְּמוֹ אוֹתוֹ הֶחָסִיד שֶׁבִּקֵּשׁ רֶגֶל אַחַת<br>מִכִּסֵּא הַזָּהָב בְּגַן עֵדֶן, אֲנִי רוֹצֶה כִּסֵּא אַרְבַּע רַגְלַיִם<br>כָּאן, כִּסֵּא עֵץ פָּשׁוּט. אֲנִי רוֹצֶה שָׁלוֹם עָלַי עַכְשָׁו.<br>חַיַּי עָבְרוּ עָלַי בְּמִלְחָמוֹת מִכָּל הַמִּינִים : קְרָבוֹת חוּץ<br>וּקְרָבוֹת בְּפָנִים, קְרָבוֹת פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים וְהַפָּנִים<br>הָיוּ תָּמִיד הַפָּנִים שֶׁלִּי, פְּנֵי אוֹהֵב וּפְנֵי אוֹיֵב.<br>מִלְחָמוֹת בְּנֶשֶׁק יָשָׁן, מַקֵּל, אֶבֶן, גַּרְזֶן פָּגוּם, מִלִּים,<br>סַכִּין קָהָה וְקוֹרַעַת, אַהֲבָה וְשִׂנְאָה<br>מִלְחָמוֹת בְּנֶשֶׁק חָדִישׁ, מִקְלַע, טִיל,<br>מִלִּים, מוֹקֵשׁ מִתְפּוֹצֵץ, אַהֲבָה וְשִׂנְאָה.<br>אֲנִי לֹא רוֹצֶה לְקַיֵּם אֶת נְבוּאַת הוֹרַי שֶׁהַחַיִּים הֵם מִלְחָמָה<br>אֲנִי רוֹצֶה שָׁלוֹם בְּכָל גּוּפִי וּבְכָל נַפְשִׁי. עָלַי הַשָּׁלוֹם | I, may I rest in peace–I, who am still living, say.<br>May I have peace in the rest of my life.<br>I want peace right now while I'm still alive.<br>I don't want to wait like that pious man who wished for one leg<br>of the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged chair<br>right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my peace now.<br>I have lived out my life in wars of every kind: battles without<br>and within, close combat, face-to-face, the faces always<br>my own, my lover-face, my enemy-face.<br>Wars with the old weapons–sticks and stones, blunt axe, words,<br>dull ripping knife, love and hate,<br>and wars with newfangled weapons–machine gun, missile,<br>words, land mines exploding, love and hate.<br>I don't want to fulfill my parents' prophecy that life is war.<br>I want peace with all my body and all my soul.<br>Rest me in peace. |

## "בְּחַיַּי בְּחַיַּי" מתוך 14# - #12 from "In My Life, on My Life"

Amichai begins this poem with the ironic demand, "אֲנִי, עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם" which is almost untranslatable due to the very specific use of the phrase עליו השלום[81] in Hebrew (Rabbinic and Modern) to indicate that someone has died and that we hope that s/he rests in peace. The personal experience of war and loss from the distinctly Israeli perspective, is one of the strongest themes of Amichai's poetry from his first collection to his last. The poet Anthony Hecht has described Amichai's poetry as "refined and cast in the desperate foundries of the Middle East, where life and faith are always at stake."[82] It is impossible to remove him from that context, and so this poem can only be viewed through that prism. For that reason, I suggest (in opposition to the counsel of others that poetry for liturgy should not be overly personal) the inclusion of this poem in a service where one of the desired liturgical "goals" is producing a resonance with the complexities of life in Israel, of never-ending wars and terrorist attacks. This might be during a prayer for peace on a week that has seen increased violence in Israel. It might be during a special service or commemoration for *Yom HaAtzmaut*, *Yom Yerushalayim* or *Yom HaZikaron* .

The sentiments expressed in this poem are conveyed with equal measures of desperation and irony. When Amichai describes the "pious man who wished for one leg of the golden chair," he is making a religious and political statement about extremism. He, in contrast to the "pious man" (in a sense, the "pious man" that he might have become had he not strayed from orthodoxy) is not willing to wait for (messianic)

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81. Elsewhere, Amichai has referred to "my childhood, of blessed memory/ילדותי, עליו השלום.
82. Book jacket quotation on *Open Closed Open*

paradise. Rather, he will settle for a simple wooden chair–but it must be delivered "speedily and in our day." In that sense, the (counter-)theological message here is the rejection of an eschatological, end-of-days messianism (which has strong proponents within modern Zionism) and an embracing of present-day messianism. that is–we may build the paradise in our own time.

The recognition which Amichai makes in lines six through eight, that his internal and external battles have always pitted him in some way against himself, is a powerful modernist perspective. It is also, on the surface, untrue. Amichai himself fought in wars where the enemy was a real, identifiable enemy. However, towards the end of his life, this warrior determines that the major battles of his life have truly been those by which he has fought to become himself–with others and himself. In the case of the real enemies that he has fought, Amichai recognizes that viewing in their faces his own reflection may be the only way to find peace.

The final line carries within it what I assume to be a liturgical intertextual allusion to the section of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which is canonized in the liturgy as "ואהבת," following the recitation of שמע ישראל.(Birnbaum, p. 75 and elsewhere) Amichai has frequently alluded to this verse in other poems, and here does so with a partial quotation, saying that he wants peace "בכל גופי ובכל נפשי – with all of my body and all of my soul." The pattern of "בכל___ ובכל___" alludes to this section, particularly because of the common word נפש. In context, the prayer is referring to the commandment to "love" God. Brought into the context of Amichai's poem, the statement relates to a demand from God, to grant peace now (in a voice that sounds at times even like a toddler

having a fit– "I want my peace NOW!"). The poem may play as well on the name of one of the most established contemporary Israeli peace organizations (and one of the only political groups that Amichai ever lent his public support to), שלום עכשיו/Peace Now.

One of the factors that I identified in chapter 1 as leading to a proliferation of the incorporation of modern poetry into current Jewish liturgical practice is the impetus to find authentic ways to reflect the reality of the modern State of Israel and its place in Jewish life. That is one additional factor that would lead me to advocate utilizing this specific poem (in addition to others) liturgically. The strength of the poem is that it does not offer any easy answer to the complexity of life in Israel over the past fifty years. It does, however, express the undying desire for the most elusive of commodities, שלום.

יהודה עמיחי, "מוֹתוֹ שֶׁל פַּרְדְּסָן," *מאדם אתה ואל אדם תשוב*, 67
Yehuda Amichai, "Death of the Citrus-Grower," in *From Man You Came, and to Man You Shall Return*, Craig Axler (translator)

| מוֹתוֹ שֶׁל פַּרְדְּסָן | Death of the Citrus-Grower* |
|---|---|
| לִפְנוֹת עֶרֶב לְיַד הַפַּרְדֵּס<br>אֲשֶׁר נוֹשֵׂא אֶת פֵּרוֹתָיו כְּמוֹ תִּקְוָה,<br>אֲנִי זוֹכֵר אֶת הָאִישׁ שֶׁשָּׁתַל אוֹתוֹ,<br>אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא אֶת תִּקְוָתוֹ הַגְּדוֹלָה, כְּמוֹ פֵּרוֹת. | Just before evening, near the grove<br>which brings forth its fruits like hope,<br>I am remembering the man who planted it,<br>who brought forth his great hope, like fruits. |
| הַבְּרוֹשִׁים הָאֲפֹרִים עֲדַיִן עוֹמְדִים שָׁם<br>זְקוּפֵי קוֹמָה, כְּמוֹ שְׂכִירֵי חֶרֶב<br>הַמּוּכָנִים לְהִשָּׁלַח לְכָל מָקוֹם לַמִּלְחָמָה,<br>בַּפַּרְדֵּס נֶגֶד הָרוּחַ<br>וּבְבֵית-הַקְּבָרוֹת נֶגֶד הַשִּׁכְחָה. | The gray cypress-trees remain there<br>standing straight upright, like mercenaries<br>ready to be sent anywhere, to war.<br>In the grove, they stand against the wind,<br>in the cemetery, against forgetting. |
| עַכְשָׁו הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר שָׁתַל,<br>הוֹלֵךְ לִמְקוֹמוֹת שָׁבָּהֶם הַבְּרוֹשִׁים לְבָנִים,<br>וְהָעָלִים לְבָנִים וְהַפֵּרוֹת לְבָנִים<br>וּמְלֵאֵי וִתּוּר וְשַׁלְוָה. | Now, the man who planted,<br>has gone to places<br>where the cypress-trees are always white,<br>and the leaves are white, and the fruits are white,<br>and filled with resignation and calm. |
| אֲבָל הַתִּקְוָה הַגְּדוֹלָה נִשְׁאֶרֶת לָנוּ<br>יְרֻקָּה כֶּעָלִים וּכְתֻמָּה כַּתַּפּוּזִים<br>וַחֲזָקָה כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר שָׁתָל. | But the great hope remains for us,<br>green as the leaves, and orange as the fruits,<br>and strong as the man who planted. |

*Though an in-elegant term, there is no other English language equivalent for the Hebrew term, *pardesan*.

## מוֹתוֹ שֶׁל פַּרְדֵּסָן - Death of the Citrus-Grower

According to the comprehensive index of all of Amichai's works in translation (Lapon-Kandelshein, 1994), this poem has never appeared before in translation. This may be due to two factors. First, I was unable to determine a more elegant way to translate פרדסן than "citrus-grower." Second, it is included in one of his collections of poetry which has received relatively little attention (*מאדם אתה ואל אדם תשוב*). The fact that it appears nowhere in translation cannot be attributed, however, to any literary flaw within this exquisite poem.

I would suggest incorporation of this poem into a service or *seder* for *Tu Bishvat*, as well as any occasion where the contributions of the founding generations of Zionist pioneers would be called to mind (i.e., *Yom HaAtzmaut*). Though related to the subject of "death," this poem is such a celebration of life and hopefulness, that I would not see it purely as a memorial prayer.

The internal structure of this poem lends strength to the powerful imagery that Amichai brings to it. In the first stanza, the juxtaposition of trees that "bear fruit like hope" and the man who "bears great hope like fruits" is a quintessentially Zionist image.[83] As well, the Hebrew word תקוה can hardly be heard without immediate allusion to the Israeli national anthem, התקוה.

The appearance of the "cypress" tree in the second stanza is another occasion for Amichai to explore the imagery on one of his favorite species of trees. Several studies have been made of the specific role of flora in Amichai's poetry[84], and I could not hope to

83. One is reminded of the images of labor-Zionists like A.D. Gordon.
84. The most significant being Nili Gold's לא כברוש.

add to them. The cypress was not initially native to Israel, but was brought there and planted, as the second stanza declares, to protect groves against the strong winds. Growing dense and tall, the rows of cypress trees can be seen throughout Israel to this day. Amichai, however, sees multiple roles for the cypress. Yes, in the orchard, it protects against the wind. However, in the cemetery, it protects against "forgetting." The tension of "remembering and forgetting" is one of the most common themes that runs throughout Amichai's poetry.

Glenda Abramson has pointed out that "Amichai's loci in poems about memory of war often unite landscape and text so that the landscape is preconditioned by the text...The natural landscape is the only true memorial, one unknown to the geography books." (Abramson, 1997, p.62) Cypress trees, orange grove and wind all symbolize his experiences in the War of Independence on the specific level, and in all of life on the more universal level. Abramson goes on to point to a poem from the same collection as the poem under present consideration, "טקס זכרון הנופלים ברמת יוחנן" (מאדם אתה..., 70). There as well, the planting of groves, cypresses, graves, fruit and wind all combine to portray a picture of memory.

The third and fourth stanzas present the contrast between the bright white "resignation and calm" which greet the citrus-grower and the vibrant green and orange that are his legacy to "us." Though not directly engaged in a dialogue with or about God (certainly one of the characteristics of liturgy), this poem holds out the human capacity to create a legacy that abides. The "citrus-grower" is rewarded for the hope that he brought forth like fruits (like "fruits of the World to Come"?), in that the hope which he leaves

behind is a blessing to "us." Though this is an explicitly human-centered poem, there is surely a measure of sanctity in that message. The hopes of the citrus-grower are the hopes of the entire people of Israel, the rebuilding of the Land, the flourishing of its "fruits" and the continued hope for peace.

## יהודה עמיחי, "אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו", *שעת החסד*, 50-51

## Yehuda Amichai, "A Man in His Life,"
## Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (translators), pp. 158-9

| אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו | A Man in His Life |
|---|---|
| אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו אֵין לוֹ זְמַן שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לוֹ<br>זְמַן לַכֹּל.<br>וְאֵין לוֹ עֵת שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לוֹ עֵת<br>לְכָל חֵפֶץ. קֹהֶלֶת לֹא צָדַק כְּשֶׁאָמַר כָּךְ. | A man doesn't have time in his life<br>to have time for everything.<br>He doesn't have seasons enough to have<br>a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes<br>was wrong about that. |
| אָדָם צָרִיךְ לִשְׂנֹא וְלֶאֱהֹב בְּבַת אַחַת,<br>בְּאוֹתָן עֵינַיִם לִבְכּוֹת וּבְאוֹתָן עֵינַיִם לִצְחֹק<br>בְּאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לִזְרֹק אֲבָנִים<br>וּבְאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לֶאֱסֹף אוֹתָן,<br>לַעֲשׂוֹת אַהֲבָה בַּמִּלְחָמָה וּמִלְחָמָה בְּאַהֲבָה. | A man needs to love and hate at the same moment,<br>to laugh and cry with the same eyes,<br>with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,<br>to make love in war and war in love. |
| וְלִשְׂנֹא וְלִסְלֹחַ וְלִזְכֹּר וְלִשְׁכֹּחַ<br>וּלְסַדֵּר וּלְבַלְבֵּל וְלֶאֱכֹל וּלְעַכֵּל<br>אֶת מַה שֶּׁהַסְטוֹרְיָה אֲרָכָה<br>עוֹשָׂה בְּשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת מְאֹד. | And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,<br>to arrange and confuse, to eat and digest<br>what history<br>takes years and years to do. |
| אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו אֵין לוֹ זְמַן.<br>כְּשֶׁהוּא מְאַבֵּד הוּא מְחַפֵּשׂ<br>כְּשֶׁהוּא מוֹצֵא הוּא שׁוֹכֵחַ,<br>כְּשֶׁהוּא שׁוֹכֵחַ הוּא אוֹהֵב<br>וּכְשֶׁהוּא אוֹהֵב הוּא מַתְחִיל לִשְׁכֹּחַ. | A man doesn't have time.<br>When he loses he seeks, when he finds<br>he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves<br>he begins to forget. |
| וְנַפְשׁוֹ לְמוּדָה,<br>וְנַפְשׁוֹ מְקֻצוֹעִית מְאֹד<br>רַק גּוּפוֹ נִשְׁאָר חוֹבֵב<br>תָּמִיד. מְנֻסֶּה וְטוֹעֶה<br>לֹא לוֹמֵד וּמִתְבַּלְבֵּל<br>שִׁכּוֹר וְעִוֵּר בְּתַעֲנוּגָיו וּבְמַכְאוֹבָיו. | And his soul is seasoned, his soul<br>is very professional.<br>Only his body remains forever<br>an amateur. It tries and it misses,<br>gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,<br>drunk and blind in its pleasures<br>and in its pains. |
| מוֹת תְּאֵנִים יָמוּת בַּסְּתָו<br>מְצֻמָּק וּמָלֵא עַצְמוֹ וּמָתוֹק,<br>הֶעָלִים מִתְיַבְּשִׁים עַל הָאֲדָמָה,<br>וְהָעֲרֻמִּים כְּבָר מַצְבִּיעִים<br>אֶל הַמָּקוֹם שֶׁבּוֹ זְמַן לַכֹּל. | He will die as figs die in autumn,<br>shriveled and full of himself and sweet,<br>the leaves growing dry on the ground,<br>the bare branches already pointing to the place<br>where there's time for everything. |

## אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו - A Man in His Life

At a reading that brought together several poets to mark the second anniversary of Amichai's death, poet and translator Chana Bloch introduced this poem by indicating that she had chosen to read it at her own mother's funeral some years before.[85] Bloch had earlier written about the phenomenon of Amichai poems being recited in Israel at funerals and weddings (1996, p. 300). This poem sums up Amichai's stance on the fragility of life, a stance formed by the multiple losses he suffered over the years (personal and national), all of which have left their mark on his poetry. While in many ways these experiences are specifically Israeli, there is a more generalized, even universal tone to the "אדם" who is the subject of the poem.

Beginning with the contradiction of Ecclesiastes (3:1-8), which has entered the popular consciousness through song and recitation, Amichai establishes his premise–life as temporal construct is finite. Here Amichai contradicts the accepted, limited understanding of the verses from Ecclesiastes. Typically, people familiar with this quotation will assume that it means that there is a time for everything in life. In reality, the more accurate meaning of the text in context is that God has determined a specific time for everything that is to happen, and it is not up to humans to plan or try to control these events. Human beings need only go along with God's plan and greet the good as a "gift from God," as the evoked text continues. In either case, Amichai disagrees with that premise of temporal order. His counter-argument is that all of life must happen within the very same moment–a view consistent with the approach that has already been

85. Comments at "A Tribute to Yehuda Amichai," Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, September 19, 2002

discussed that neither time nor space are ever really fixed in Amichai's poetry, but rather they are constantly compressed into the same time/place/memory.

In the second stanza, Amichai continues to play on the imagery and specific words of Ecclesiastes (with the exception of stones, where Amichai replaces the Bible's להשליך/כונס with his own לזרק/לאסף, probably to be in alignment with the construction of the other verbs he previously uses in the stanza). The third and fourth stanzas, though also rooted in Ecclesiastes, succinctly represent the tension throughout his poetry of remembering and forgetting, finding and losing, loving and hating.

The fifth and sixth stanzas present what might be viewed as a fatalistic view of the end of life, certainly at odds with traditional notions of the dead awaiting the arrival of the messiah, and with it their resurrection. Amichai compares the dead to the forgotten fruits on the fig tree, growing sweeter and sweeter until they simply fall off the tree and rot together with the leaves on/in the ground, where there is "time for everything."

The final two lines of the poem depict a scene of resignation, of recognition that there is no other way out of life other than death. Within the associations of the Hebrew, though, there are myriad interpretations. First, the phrase "וְהָעֲרֻמִּים," which Bloch and Mitchell translate as "the bare branches" creates strong imagery of a person compared to a tree, the bare branches of which might point down (towards the earth where all matter decomposes) or up (towards "heaven," where the souls of the departed await resurrection). However, the Hebrew is not sufficient to indicate that Amichai is referring explicitly to "branches," only something "bare/naked." The root ערמ has many meanings and Biblical associations which would certainly have occurred to Amichai. In the

account of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the fact that they were naked (עֲרוּמִּים) initially caused the prime-couple "no shame"(Genesis 2:25) Then when this state was brought to their consciousness through the ingestion of "knowledge," it led to their hiding from God, as "Adam" explained: "וָאִירָא כִּי־עֵירֹם אָנֹכִי וָאֵחָבֵא." Just before this, the snake is described as "עָרוּם מִכֹּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה," yielding another meaning for the root–that of wisdom or cunning.

This double meaning is also played on in the book of Job, a particular favorite target of Amichai's "exegesis." In response to the first of the tragedies which come upon him, Job declares the ultimate "justice of God," but first indicates his own mortality as follows: "וַיֹּאמֶר עָרֹם יָצָאתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרֹם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה ה' נָתַן וַה' לָקָח יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבֹרָךְ." (Job 1:21) The bitterness of this צידוק הדין is a recurrent theme in Amichai's poetry, and certainly arises out of a deep sense that there was no "Divine justification" for the suffering and death that he witnessed. The sense of ערמ being "(human)wisdom or cunning" is brought in response to Job's predicament by Eliphaz the Temanite, who notes in his reply that God is (among other things), "מֵפֵר מַחְשְׁבוֹת עֲרוּמִּים וְלֹא־תַעֲשֶׂינָה יְדֵיהֶם תּוּשִׁיָּה." Human beings may plan and devise methods or technologies by which they can fit more experiences into the day. And yet, there will always be only twenty-four hours in a day and, as Amichai elsewhere writes, the years of a life-span are still "x" (that is, finite). The "bareness" of the branches in Amichai's poem could be seen to represent the ultimate failure of even the wisest or most cunning human plan to cheat death.

Finally, the Hebrew word "הַמָּקוֹם" cannot be used in a poem without deliberate associations; for, in addition to "place," the word is one of the most common and

resonant appellations of God. Amichai elsewhere plays on the duality of this word, titling the second and third sections of his collection ....*מאדם אתה* with the evocative "בין אדם למקום" (a rabbinic phrase typically applied to commandments whose primary force is between an individual and God) and "בין אדם למקום אחר" (which could either be translated as "Between a man and another place," or "Between a man and another god"!). In the present poem, "הַמָּקוֹם" is designated as the "place where there is time for everything." The association of God with "Time" and "Place" is made in Amichai's "תחנת אוטובוסים ישנה"[86]. There, Amichai describes the old bus station and explores life and death, love and loss, place and time, concluding: "הַתַּחֲנָה עֲדַיִן שָׁם. אֱלֹהִים עֲדַיִן / נִקְרָא "מָקוֹם, וַאֲנִי, לִפְעָמִים, / קוֹרֵא לוֹ 'זְמַן'." Indeed, a human being does not have time for everything. However, a God whose essence is "Time" and "Place" provides antidote enough to the fatalism which might result from the recognition that, as Amichai began, Ecclesiastes was wrong.

86. ...גם האגרוף, 45

יהודה עמיחי, "כְּמוֹ רַב חוֹבֵל", *שלוה גדולה: שאלות ותשובות*, 71
Yehuda Amichai, "Like a ship's captain"
Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt (translators), p. 49

| כְּמוֹ רַב חוֹבֵל | Like a ship's captain |
|---|---|
| כְּמוֹ רַב חוֹבֵל, אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הָאֲרוּחָה | Like a ship's captain who, after the dinner party, |
| הַחֲגִיגִית מַרְאָה לְאוֹרְחָיו אֶת חֲדַר הַמְּכוֹנוֹת | Shows his guests the engine room |
| בְּמַעֲמַקֵּי הָאֳנִיָּה, (נָשִׁים יָפוֹת דָּרְשׁוּ זֹאת), | In the bowels of the ship (beautiful women requested it) |
| וְהוּא מוֹרִיד אוֹתָם בְּמַדְרֵגוֹת הַבַּרְזֶל, פּוֹתֵחַ | And he takes them down the iron steps, opens |
| דְּלָתוֹת בְּנְקִישׁוֹת מַתֶּכֶת וְסוֹגְרָן שׁוּב, | Doors with a clang and closes them, |
| וְהֵם עוֹמְדִים וּמִתְפָּעֲלִים מִכָּל הַמַּבְרִיק | And they stand marveling at all the shining |
| וְהַמִּסְתּוֹבֵב וְהָעוֹלֶה וְהַיּוֹרֵד, | And the spinning and going up and down |
| כָּךְ אֲנִי מַרְאֶה לְאוֹרְחַי אֶת חֲדַר הַשֵּׁנָה | In this way I show my guests my children's bedroom, |
| שֶׁל יְלָדַי, פּוֹתֵחַ דֶּלֶת וְסוֹגֵר אוֹתָהּ בְּשֶׁקֶט | Open a door and close it quietly |
| וְאָנוּ שׁוֹמְעִים שְׁלֹשָׁה מִינֵי נְשִׁימָה | And we hear three different sorts of breathing |
| בְּקִצָּבִים שׁוֹנִים בַּחֶדֶר הַקָּטָן, שֶׁהוּא אֵין-סוֹף. | In different rhythms in the small room which is infinite. |
| וְאוֹר כְּחַלְחַל וְקָטָן מֵאִיר מֵעַל לַמִּשְׁקוֹף. | And a faint bluish light shines above the door. |

## כְּמוֹ רַב חוֹבֵל - Like a ship's captain

I have included this poem as one of the many I could suggest for incorporation into life-cycle liturgies, particularly birth- and naming-ceremonies. In the first chapter, I noted that much of the proliferation of modern poetry being utilized liturgically is tied to life-cycles. This is possibly the result of the increased tendency to mark significant moments in the Jewish individual's or family's life with a combination of traditional ceremonies and new, innovative rituals. These new rituals call for the creation of liturgy, which is most often a mixture of adapted traditional materials and poetry or readings selected from modern sources.

Amichai's poetry from the middle of his career through the end is filled with poems on the subject of parenthood, and his particular views of the role of his children (Amichai had two sons and a daughter) in his life and the world. In this particular poem, Amichai constructs an extended metaphor for the "proud father" impulse which he feels to show off his sleeping children. Anyone who has ever watched a child of any age sleep should clearly resonate with the imagery.

If not for the conclusion of the second to last line, it would be a simple, beautiful metaphor and nothing more. In describing the small room of his sleeping children as "אֵין-סוֹף," Amichai has both played on the irony of something so small being "infinite" and alluded to an important theological position which he has assumed time and time again. Amichai may have difficulty with belief in his "father's God," or even the God of the Bible, with all of the varied descriptions of God contained therein. However, there is no question that Amichai believes in "love" and in the power of his love for his children,

through which he sees the workings of God in the world. In essence, Amichai has humanized and shrunk God into the image of a sleeping child. The "אַין-סוֹף" which he stares at is nothing less than the infinite Divine potential he sees in each of his children

As a term for God, "אַין-סוֹף" comes from the Kabbalistic tradition, entering the lexicon formally in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is initially developed to approach the mystical notion that, as many names and descriptions as were available to our ancestors, none of them fully described God because each was, in its own way, too specific. "אַין-סוֹף" was an attempt to create a name for God that transcended all else, in that it was completely infinite and intangible. In taking the term and applying it in this case, Amichai has effectively turned the intent on its head. The intangible, Infinite God is now on view in the form of three sleeping children in a small bedroom. Adding to the god-like nature of the scene is the "faint bluish light" shining around the door frame, as though the very presence of God was descended upon Amichai's sleeping children.

One might counter that the representation of children as God is an overly humanistic portrayal to qualify for liturgical usage (and again, I will admit that every community needs to set its own standards). Yet, it also strikes me as an extraordinarily effective and inherently Jewish idea – seeing human beings as the ultimate representations of the Divine presence in the world.

יהודה עמיחי, "יַלְדִּי נוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם", *עכשיו ברעש: שירים 63'-68'*, 21
Yehuda Amichai, "My Child Wafts Peace,"
Benjamin and Barbara Harshav (translators), p. 88

| | |
|---|---|
| יַלְדִּי נוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם | My Child Wafts Peace |
| יַלְדִּי נוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם.<br>כְּשֶׁאֲנִי רָכוּן מֵעָלָיו,<br>זֶה לֹא רַק רֵיחַ הַסַּבּוֹן. | My child wafts peace.<br>When I lean over him,<br>It is not just the smell of soap. |
| כָּל הָאֲנָשִׁים הָיוּ יְלָדִים שֶׁנָּדְפוּ שָׁלוֹם.<br>(וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ לֹא נִשְׁאַר<br>אֲף גַּלְגַּל טַחֲנָה אַחַת שֶׁיִּסְתּוֹבֵב.) | All the people were children wafting peace.<br>(And in the whole land, not even one<br>Millstone remained that still turned.) |
| הוֹ, הָאָרֶץ הַקְּרוּעָה כִּבְגָדִים<br>שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם תִּקּוּן.<br>אָבוֹת קָשִׁים וּבוֹדְדִים גַּם בִּמְעָרוֹת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה.<br>דְּמָמָה חֲשׂוּכַת בָּנִים, | Oh, the land torn like clothes<br>That can't be mended.<br>Hard, lonely fathers even<br>in the cave of the Makhpelah.<br>Childless silence. |
| יַלְדִּי נוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם.<br>רֶחֶם אִמּוֹ הִבְטִיחָה לוֹ<br>מַה שֶּׁאֱלֹהִים אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל<br>לְהַבְטִיחַ לָנוּ. | My child wafts peace.<br>His mother's womb promised him<br>What God cannot<br>Promise us. |

## יַלְדִּי נוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם - My Child Wafts Peace

This next poem also utilizes the experience of being a parent to convey deep theological messages, albeit from a distinctly more challenging theological standpoint. Here, we find Amichai, towards the beginning of his career weighing the balance of the need to protect the perpetually besieged country, and the protective instincts of a parent. The father, who has left the child repeatedly to fulfill his army service and participate in the wars of defense inhales the scent of peace, the potential which is bundled up in the sheets. Recognizing the purity of the child, the poetic "I" must conclude that, at one point, all people were children who "wafted peace," even his enemies.

The third stanza speaks to the very center of the Israeli setting of most of Amichai's poetry. Filled with a love of the Land and a dream for the continued flourishing of the State of Israel, Amichai's poetry is also acutely aware of, and frequently honest about, the complexities of Israeli society. Envisioning the "land torn like clothes," Amichai brings to mind multiple associations. There is the custom of "קריעה" after the death of a loved one–a symbolic tear which can never be fixed, either literally or metaphorically. The image of the Land torn in that same way is intentionally disturbing, and highlights the fact that in Israel too many grieving parents and children perform *keriah*.

The image of the cave of Makhpelah provides a connection between the ancestors and the current inhabitants of the Land. Tradition holds that six of the seven patriarchs/matriarchs are buried in this cave, a site which has been a locus for violence in the ancient as well as modern world. Hebron was the site of some of the bloodiest

anti-Jewish rioting in the pre-State era and remains a flash-point for violence in the contemporary conflicts with Palestinians. In some sense, the theme of losing a child to violence pervades the Biblical narrative of the patriarchs[87], though it never occurs.

The silence of the cave is contrasted to the silence of the child, as the title line repeats to begin the fourth stanza. The final stanza poses the greatest theological challenge. Here a comparison is drawn between an impotent (male) God and the fertile (female) "mother." Playing on the common root of womb (רֶחֶם) and the (Divine) attribute of mercy (רַחֲמִים), Amichai places his trust in the mother's womb. God's "mercy" has been absent or ineffective in protecting the children and parents of the Land, let alone the Land itself. Therefore, in another humanization of Divine processes, Amichai suggests that it is the human task to bring enough compassion and mercy in order to realize peace.

The suggested use I might see for this poem would be in the context of praying for the peace of the State of Israel, whether in a regular worship service or as part of a *tekes* for one of the holidays concerned with the State. The message is appropriate as well to one Zionist viewpoint, that the notion of "trusting" (בטח) in the deliverance from a Divine source will not bring about the renewal of the Land. Rather, the reasoning goes, human beings must realize their own promise (בטח) in order to cause that to happen. It is though, in the softness of a mother-God (רחם אמו) that this renewal will come about, and not in falling back on the old, hard ways of the fathers.[88]

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87. This theme is present in the *Akedah*, the sending of Ishmael into the wilderness, the fratricidal impulses of Jacob and Esau, and the instances in which Jacob nearly loses Joseph and Benjamin. Later in the Biblical narrative, Judah, Aaron and David (among others) will experience the actual loss of children.
88. Amichai has been noted for having a strong "feminine" side to his poetry, in contrast to many of the Hebrew poets of the generation which preceded his. This is not to say that his persona is a feminine

יהודה עמיחי, "יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מְלֵאָה יְהוּדִים מְשֻׁמָּשִׁים", *שלוה גדולה: שאלות ותשובות*, 57

Yehuda Amichai, "Jerusalem is Full of Used Jews,"
Chana Bloch (translator), p. 135-6

| | |
|---|---|
| יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מְלֵאָה יְהוּדִים מְשֻׁמָּשִׁים | Jerusalem is Full of Used Jews |
| יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מְלֵאָה יְהוּדִים מְשֻׁמָּשִׁים בְּהִסְטוֹרְיָה,<br>יְהוּדִים יָד שְׁנִיָּה, עִם פְּגִימוֹת קַלּוֹת, זוֹלִים יוֹתֵר.<br>וְהָעַיִן לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה כָּל הַזְּמַן. וְכָל הָעֵינַיִם<br>שֶׁל חַיִּים וְשֶׁל מֵתִים נִשְׁבָּרוֹת כְּמוֹ בֵּיצִים<br>עַל שְׂפַת הַקְּעָרָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הָעִיר<br>עֲשִׁירָה וּשְׁמֵנָה וְתוֹפַחַת. | Jerusalem is full of used Jews, worn out by history,<br>Jews second-hand, slightly damaged, at bargain prices.<br>And *the eye yearns toward Zion* all the time. And all the eyes<br>of the living and the dead are cracked like eggs<br>on the rim of the bowl, to make the city<br>puff up rich and fat. |
| יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מְלֵאָה יְהוּדִים עֲיֵפִים<br>וְהֵם מֻצָּלָפִים תָּמִיד מֵחָדָשׁ לִימֵי זִכָּרוֹן וְחַג<br>כְּמוֹ דֻּבִּים מְרַקְּדִים בְּכְאַב רַגְלַיִם. | Jerusalem is full of tired Jews,<br>always goaded on again for holidays, for memorial days,<br>like circus bears dancing on aching legs. |
| מַה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם צְרִיכָה? הִיא לֹא צְרִיכָה רֹאשׁ עִיר.<br>הִיא צְרִיכָה מְנַהֵל קִרְקָס, עִם שׁוֹט בְּיָד<br>לְאַלֵּף נְבוּאוֹת וּלְאַמֵּן נְבִיאִים לִדְהֹר<br>סָבִיב סָבִיב בְּמַעְגָּל, וּלְלַמֵּד אֶת אֲבָנֶיהָ לְהִסְתַּדֵּר<br>בְּמַבְנֶה טוֹעֵז וּמְסֻכָּן בְּקֶטַע הַסִּיּוּם. | What does Jerusalem need? It doesn't need a mayor,<br>it needs a ring-master, whip in hand,<br>who can tame prophecies, train prophets to gallop<br>around and around in a circle, teach its stones to line up<br>in a bold, risky formation for the grand finale. |
| אַחַר כָּךְ הֵן קוֹפְצוֹת לְמַטָּה עַל הָאָרֶץ<br>לְקוֹל תְּשׁוּאוֹת וּמִלְחָמוֹת. | Later they'll jump back down again<br>to the sound of applause and wars. |
| וְהָעַיִן לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה וּבוֹכִיָּה. | And the eye yearns toward Zion, and weeps. |

persona, but rather that there is a definite use of feminine imagery in his poetry. Nili Scharf Gold has written on this.(in Abramson, 1997, pp. 77-92)

## יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מְלֵאָה יְהוּדִים מְשֻׁמָּשִׁים - Jerusalem is Full of Used Jews

Any reader who has examined even just a fraction of Amichai's poetry cannot help but be struck by the central place that the city of Jerusalem occupies in that work. Some have even called him a "Jerusalem poet," a term he adamantly rejected for fear of being pigeonholed. And yet, it is impossible to ignore the complex relationship between Amichai's poetic "I" and the city where he chose to spend nearly all of his life. I present this particular poem as a text that might find meaningful setting liturgically in a commemoration of *Tisha BeAv*, though poems with a message more appropriate to the joy of *Yom Yerushalayim* may also be found among the dozens of Amichai's poems on the theme of Jerusalem. Boaz Arpaly has pointed out with regard to Amichai's poetry on the subject of Jerusalem that the city acts as a "metonymy for the entire Land of Israel, as a mirror reflecting the 'external' struggle between peoples and religions, and the internal political controversies, as well as a metaphor for the Jewish-Israeli entity as a whole."(in Abramson, 1997, p. 38)

While the tendency amongst most of the earlier poets who wrote on Jerusalem was to coat its blemishes with a layer of fine gold, Amichai was among the first boldly depict Jerusalem as a complex and sometimes ugly place. He could do so because he wrote with the authority of a lover of Jerusalem and one who chose to remain in the city through all conditions. However, the layered portrayals were not always greeted with applause by other lovers of Jerusalem. Glenda Abramson provides an analysis of Amichai's two largest poem cycles on Jerusalem ("Jerusalem 1967" and "Songs of Zion and Jerusalem"), both of which contain materials suitable for liturgical use.(Abramson,

1989, 124-143) This poem comes from a later collection than either of those cycles and finds the poet relating to the city with a mixture of sadness and irony.

The opening image of "used Jews" is disturbing in many ways, and is only intensified by the intimations of being damaged or of lesser worth. These images imply that those who remain in Jerusalem become more bruised by the processes of history which wear them out.

The intertextual reference to התקוה in line three has the feel of the liturgical allusions discussed in chapter 2. In fact, התקוה has been liturgically canonized in many communities. If nothing else, it has a sacred feel in the Israeli context, where its utilization is appropriately somber. Amichai iconoclastically shatters the decorum and gravity of *Hatikvah*'s imagery, turning the hopeful "eye" of the Jewish people into "eggs cracked on the rim of the bowl." The culinary image of eggs making the dish simultaneously rich and puffy brings to mind the traditional foods of religious Jews, which permeate the air of Jerusalem on Friday evening. Challah and matzah balls and kugels, all rely on the dual properties of eggs to enrich and puff up.

Bringing the circus imagery into the poem in the second and third stanzas adds other implications. From a rabbinic perspective, the "circus" is typically associated with the most base and idolatrous behaviors, particularly the Roman circus which is the scene of so many rabbinic tales of martyrdom. Possibly Amichai intends to lament the ongoing martyrdom tradition in present-day Jerusalem, where suffering is frequently the norm. Turning the city (and its inhabitants) into dancing bears and galloping prophets poses the question of who exactly is the mayor/ring-master. In many poems, Amichai presents an

abusive God who oppresses a submissive Jerusalem. In others, the city assaults God. In this poem, the former pattern seems to apply, as if God has orchestrated the fate of Jerusalem for His own entertainment or gain. The theological positions of *Tisha BeAv* are not far removed from that realm, although cast in somewhat different imagery.

The posing of "קוֹל תִּשׁוּאוֹת וּמִלְחָמוֹת" as the response to the grand messianic finale calls to mind the frequent warnings of the prophets against rejoicing for the victories of Jerusalem. Isaiah 22:1-14 makes a pronouncement which scholars take to be directed against the population of Jerusalem. First, they are castigated for rejoicing in the time when they should have been in mourning:תְּשָׁאוֹת מְלֵאָה עִיר הוֹמִיָּה קִרְיָה עַלִּיזָה – "O you who were full of tumult, you clamorous town, you city so gay" (22:2a). Then they are warned: חֲלָלַיִךְ לֹא חַלְלֵי־חָרֶב וְלֹא מֵתֵי מִלְחָמָה – "Your slain are not the slain of the sword, nor the dead of battle." (22:2b). The oracle ends with a characteristic proclamation that the people will be held responsible for their actions. Though there can be no way to know if Amichai was referencing this text, it is significant that Isaiah used the same pair of words (not commonly found together) to proclaim an oracle calling Jerusalem to account for itself. This has a modern resonance as well, in the history of the triumphalist exalted mood in Israel after the 1967 re-unification of the city.

The fifth stanza places the circus image into the scope of the history of the city. There have constantly been "final acts" that brought extreme shows from false messiahs. In fact, a distinct disease has been identified as "Jerusalem Syndrome" in which the individual experiences delusions of grandeur and messianic fantasies. Yet the city (and, indeed, the world) has always continued, despite the predictions of doom. The final line

supports that same conclusion: "the eye yearns toward Zion, and weeps." Here, Amichai conflates two great Jerusalem texts, התקוה which has been operative throughout the poem and the book of איכה which is referenced with a single word. "בוכיה" is sufficient to bring an association with all of the book of Lamentations, the classical text which is most associated with weeping over a devastated Jerusalem. This is because this unusual construction of the verb root בכה appears only once in the Bible, in Lamentations 1:16:

עַל־אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בוֹכִיָּה עֵינִי עֵינִי יֹרְדָה מַיִם כִּי־רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם מֵשִׁיב נַפְשִׁי הָיוּ בָנַי שׁוֹמֵמִים כִּי גָבַר אוֹיֵב – "For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with tears: Far from me is any comforter who might revive my spirit; My children are forlorn, for the foe has prevailed." In Lamentations, the first-person voice assumes the role of the collective in weeping for the loss of Jerusalem. In Amichai's poem, he also weeps in the first-person for his own city. However, within his personal lament is a collective weeping and mourning over the fate of Jerusalem. In the first stanza, the "eye" of the Jewish people was shattered on the rim of the bowl, sacrificed in the interest of making the city puff up "rich and fat." Here, on the other side of the "grand finale," the "eye" still looks in hope (albeit through tears) as if to say "our hope is not lost."

## Conclusions

Through this thesis I have attempted to explore three distinct, but related topics: the place of modern poetry in contemporary Jewish worship; the role of liturgical intertextuality in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai, and; the liturgical use of Yehuda Amichai's poetry. It is clear that a thesis of this length could have been devoted to any one of the individual topics. While I am satisfied with the initial investigations I have presented here, I am happily confident that there is significantly more work to be done.

In the area of providing a context for the use of modern poetry in contemporary Jewish worship, I have posited the following conclusions. Modern poetry, just as the medieval poetry which was incorporated into the liturgy after the statutory prayers were set and codified, comes to respond to the set nature (*keva*) of the liturgy with added relevance (*kavvanah*) that emerges out of its contemporary nature. As well, liturgical innovation seems to occur in times of great societal change as a response to major events, catastrophic or advantageous. This can be seen in the case of those *piyyutim* which were added in the aftermath of the Crusades, or in the incorporation of prayer in the vernacular by classical German Reformers responding to the perceived demands of modernity and societal aesthetics.

In the current context, the proliferation of poetic additions to contemporary Jewish worship seems to be a response to three primary factors: the need for liturgical acknowledgment of theological crisis in a post-Holocaust world; the drive to connect in meaningful ways with the modern State of Israel, and; the demands which emerge out of the feminist critique of prayer and religion. All of these were factors in the Creative Liturgy Movement and the Havurah Movement. These movements, in turn, have exerted

significant influence on the contemporary liturgies where modern poetry is utilized.

Further research in this topic might include a full analysis of the function of modern poetry in contemporary worship, even with a comparison to current trends in Christian worship. While I have presented a survey of poetic content in several of the current liturgies, I did not analyze the materials presented or evaluate their effectiveness. Additionally, I have attempted to solicit from several of the literary editors of these collections their criteria for inclusion, yet have not established any conclusive principles. This would be an interesting next step.

My analysis of liturgical intertextuality in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai demonstrated several major trends in Amichai's poetic use of liturgy. In some cases, Amichai presents quotation or allusion in order to take the sacred and transform it into the mundane, to deflate it of any level of sanctity. This can be viewed as iconoclastic, even blasphemous, and is certainly rooted in his auto-biographical account of tension with the strict observance of his childhood (frequently represented by his father and God). Another trend is a subtle variation on that same theme, whereby Amichai juxtaposes objects or ideas from the two opposing realms (sacred and secular) in order to lend a level of sanctity to the ordinary, to bolster his "post-cynical humanism." There is a certain amount of playfulness in Amichai's use of allusion and quotation, as well as a deeply serious theological critique. Further research might concentrate on systematizing Amichai's "counter-theology" (Bloch and Kronfeld's term) over the body of his work or in particular collections. Additionally, a full study of Amichai's intertextual engagement with the "Sources" has never been completed (although several minor studies have). Such a study would likely yield new insights into this great poet.

In chapter three, I began with an admission that most of Amichai's poetry does not seem suitable for liturgical use. Before engaging in the background research necessary for this thesis, most of Amichai's poetry that I had encountered was of the "greatest hits" variety, especially because I was reading bi-lingual collections culled from his larger works. In the course of reading Amichai's full body of poetry in the Hebrew original, I have discovered many more sides to the poet. Some yielded poems I would consider for liturgical use that I had never encountered before. Others offered an explanation as to why some Israelis with whom I had discussed utilizing Amichai's poetry as prayer looked at me as if I was from another planet!

While only portions of Amichai's poetry are suitable as liturgy (the same could probably be said of most modern poets whose work is used liturgically), those poems that do work are extraordinary. I believe that some of the rationale for utilizing Amichai's poetry liturgically derives from the fact that his poetry provides a bridge to meaningful engagement with all three of the factors I identified in chapter 1. The Shoah, Israel and feminism (to an admittedly lesser degree) are all recurrent themes in Amichai's poetry. Amichai also speaks to a humanization of religion which is one of the current trends defining religion, seeing the Divine through the filter of the human. Amichai remained engaged with God and history even while he struggled against God and history. The everpresent tension of memory and forgetting frequently lends his poetry some of the tone of prayer. Whether or not particular poems of Amichai's function well liturgically will ultimately be determined only through their thoughtful integration into liturgical settings, and the solicitation of feedback from professionals and laity. This is the logical extension of my research in chapter three.

## Appendix A: Modern Poetry in current SIDDURIM/MACHZORIM

GATES OF PRAYER, GOP (Central Conference of American Rabbis Press. 1975)

Writing in the companion volume of essays and source citations which accompanied the publication of GOP, Lawrence Hoffman noted the GOP was in many ways a response to the liturgical creativity which was gaining success at the grassroots level. Though it was clearly too early to know what the effect of the Creative Liturgy Movement would be on modern liturgies at the end of the twentieth century, Hoffman notes:

> *Gates of Prayer* ...was preceded by a movement which bore the name Creative Liturgy. How really "creative" it was is a matter of aesthetics on which I have no desire to pass judgement. Seen in its historical context, however, the thousands of mimeographed services which constitute the Creative Liturgy movement represent a significant attempt to present a novel Jewish consciousness. Like prayerbooks at other times and places, these services provide their own message in which content (manifest and symbolic), structure, and choreography all combine to give a consistent picture of American Judaism as defined by the services' authors. Like it or not, this became the staple of liturgical diet for many Jews, a fact which alone testifies to its valid comprehension of how some Jews, at least, viewed themselves. (Hoffman, 1977 151)

Gates of Prayer would respond to the needs of the day just as the Creative Liturgy Movement had. However, there was a significant difference between the publication of a major denominational prayerbook and the distribution of a mimeographed service intended for use on a single Shabbat. In order for materials to be suitable for GOP, they had to speak to larger, more universal issues which were likely to reshape the ways in which Jews saw themselves and their worship. Among the most obvious of realities which GOP needed to respond to were, of course, the Shoah and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Many have credited these events with leading to the wave of return to ritual and worship within the Reform movement at the end of the twentieth

century. Hoffman continues:

> To what do we owe the rediscovery of ourselves as a people, not just as a religion? Israel's birth certainly, but also the Holocaust preceding it, which tragically underscored the Zionist argument. This too is part of our heritage now. Just as similar disasters of the past gave rise to prayers expressive of their role in the changing configuration of Jewish identity, so, now, does Holocaust literature find a place in our prayerbook. The haunting words of Hannah Senesh (*Eli Eli*) who dies behind enemy lines trying to rescue her fellow Jews has long been sung by youth groups and incorporated in creative services. It is now in *Gates of Prayer*. Similarly, our introduction to the *Kaddish* speaks of our martyrs who fell at Dachau and at Buchenwald, and special readings speak plaintively, yet comfortingly, of Jewish suffering. ... [after having been removed from the *Union Prayer Book*] Tisha Be-Av is now back with us, connected inseparably with Yom Hashoah, the day of the Holocaust. A special service for the occasion includes the vow of Abraham Shlonsky, "I have taken an oath: to remember it all/ to remember, not once to forget!/ Forget not one thing to the last generation/ When degradation shall cease/ To the last, to its ending ..." (Hoffman, 1977, 153-4)

A significant part of the liturgical reaction to Israel and the Shoah was played out through the poetic additions brought to the service from modern sources in GOP. As a principle, the editorial committee did not attach any author's name (modern or ancient) to any particular reading, but rather indicates authorship in the companion volume, *Gates of Understanding*. There is a tremendous amount of modern poetry in GOP, by Jewish and non-Jewish authors, famous and obscure. Here are some of the poets whose works are included: Joseph Zvi Rimmon (p. 162); Chaim Nachman Bialik (p.190); Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 240); Abraham Shlonsky (p.573); Nelly Sachs (p. 574); Avigdor HaMeiri (p. 594); Walt Whitman (p. 651); Leonard Cohen (p.655); Hannah Senesh (p. 671); Saul Tchernichowsky (p. 690); and Archibald Macleish (p. 692).

SIDDUR SIM SHALOM (The Rabbinical Assembly/The United Synagogue of America, 1985)

An excellent example of the impetus to place readings (scriptural, traditional and modern) based on the theme of the particular prayer in the liturgy, beneath a line (here,

quite literally) is in *Siddur Sim Shalom*, the Shabbat and Festival Services Evening Service "*K'riat Sh'ma and its Berakhot*," pp. 278-293. There, on virtually every page, the liturgical text appears at the top of the page in Hebrew (right-side) and English (left-side), and below a solid line are texts for "reflection and meditation." There are no specific instructions for how to utilize these readings, though frequently they end with the closing formulation of the liturgical piece whose theme they are reflecting. It is interesting to note that the prayerbook returns to a "traditional" page layout (i.e., text and translation presented on opposite pages) for the remainder of the service (pp. 294-327).

Another feature of *Siddur Sim Shalom* is the presence of "alternative" sections of the prayerbook, exemplified by the "Alternative Amidah" for Weekdays (pp. 232-235), for Shabbat (pp. 328-330) and for Festivals (pp. 331-333). In these cases, prose-style prayers are presented only in the vernacular (in this case, English), with a structure and thematic base that reflects the structure and theme of the corresponding section of the classical liturgy. each begins with the phrase "Help me, O God, to pray." *Sim Shalom's* editor, Rabbi Jules Harlow writes:

> Inevitably, the work of editing prayer books generates tension between tradition and change. Discussions of new prayer books generally emphasize change. Therefore it is important here to stress the great blessing of continuity.
>
> There is far more continuity than change in the Conservative movement's prayer books. Most of their Hebrew texts would be familiar to a Jew from ninth-century Babylonia who knew the Hebrew prayers. Despite the modifications and additions that we made, we saw our major task as simply editing and retranslating the traditional Hebrew text.
>
> The language of prayer in Jewish tradition is Hebrew, the language of revelation. Jewish tradition does permit reciting even the central obligatory prayers in the vernacular, but Conservative Jews have always seen Hebrew as the preferred vehicle for liturgical expression. At the same time, however, we had to unlock the meaning of the Hebrew texts for congregants who do not yet read Hebrew or who do not read it with full comprehension. The purpose of providing a translation of the prayer book is not to help teach the Hebrew language but to produce a devotional text for those who are confined to prayer in English, in the hope that they may have an emotionally satisfying devotional experience to the greatest degree possible, experiencing at least part of what it is to pray in the manner that we call *davening* in Hebrew.
>
> The editorial decisions that went into *Siddur Sim Shalom* were many and varied, but those that give this prayer book its own character can be captured in five basic categories: (1) liturgical responses to the reality of a State of Israel in the Land of Israel; (2) liturgical responses to the Holocaust; (3) the introduction

> of texts from the past; (4) modifications rooted in the changing role of women; (5) personal prayer and meditation. (Harlow, Jules, "Liturgy for Conservative Jews" in *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, Hoffman and Bradshaw, eds., pp. 130-1)

FORMS OF PRAYER for JEWISH WORSHIP - III, Prayers for the High Holydays (The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1985 - Magonet, Jonathan and Blue, Lionel - eds.)

The "Forms of Prayer" series that represents the liturgical tradition of Reform Judaism in Great Britain, under the editorship of Rabbis Jonathan Magonet and Lionel Blue represent one of the most comprehensive attempts to enter contemporary materials into Jewish worship - having produced a *Siddur* (1977), *Machzor* for the High Holydays (1985) and *Machzor* for the Pilgrim Festivals (1995). These editions and dates are all the most recent editions of these liturgical works - earlier editions were also called "Forms of Prayer." The editors are quite explicit about their intent in including the multitude of voices that find expression in the pages of these three collections, as they write in the Introduction to the volume for the High Holydays:

> New material, both contemporary and traditional, has been used to join our present needs to the faith we have received. This new material can be found in the anthologies, commentaries and the calendar of readings. The use of this material, especially the calendar, joins the worshipper's life to the liturgy and prevents the reduction of the latter to a formal act. As in the Siddur (Forms of Prayer Vol. I) we have used whatever seemed genuine and relevant in the spirituality of our people. We have tried to avoid rhetoric and given more weight to what is said than to the eminence, or acceptability, or the speaker. In the confusion of our times, the word of God has come to us (as perhaps it always has) in unexpected ways and through unexpected people; in social workers' reports, on wrapping paper found in a concentration camp, or written on cellar walls in time of persecution. We find our spirituality in the diaries of an adolescent girl, in the records of ghetto doctors, and in the honesty of modern Jewish writers. In diverse ways they experienced the great realities and their words are words of truth. They are His witness to us, willing or unwilling, conscious or unconscious of their burden. (Forms of Prayer, Vol. III, pp. ix-x)

Another interesting feature in the Forms of Prayer series is the inclusion of the names of authors for liturgical texts – not just new texts, but also inherited tradition. Whereas a particular prayer may have been familiar before to the average worshipper, an author is

now assigned to the text. And where a new text appears, a name – familiar or foreign - is indicated. To enhance the personalization of this effect, each volume includes a "glossary" which gives a one or two line biographical description for each of the authors included in these repositories of Jewish literature. The glossary in volume III runs to 19 pages! One additional feature of this series is the unusual inclusion of graphics and prints by Jewish artists reflecting on the themes of the various prayer services. This convention is picked up by the Kol HaNeshamah series (with extraordinary artwork by Betsy Platkin Teutsch) and even in the pilot version of *Mishkan Tefillah*, the future CCAR prayerbook.

*Forms of Prayer, vol. III for the High Holy Days* is probably the first prayerbook of the British Reform movement which incorporated modern Israeli poetry into the worship service. Rachel (p.104) and Zelda (p. 478) are both included, in addition to many new liturgical creations from the history of British Reform liturgy. One of the most interesting additions is the update that is given to the Selichot hymn (repeated on Kol Nidre), "*mi she-anah...hu ya'anenu*" in which "the Besht, Moses Mendelssohn, Leo Baeck, Anne Frank, the *halutzim* and the survivors of the Shoah" are each given additional verses in the course of Jewish history that begins at Mount Moriah.[89]

An in-depth analysis of the poetry included in the Forms of Prayer series is a task which exceeds the parameters of this study. However, I will list the modern poets included in the largest of these volumes, vol. III - Prayers for the High Holydays. Poets included:

Alice Lucas (p.9, 368, 829), Abraham Reisen (p. 11), Moshe Shimmel (p. 14), Zisha Landau (p. 16, 800), Abraham Vievorka (p. 101), Malka Heifetz Tussman (p. 103, 369, 755-7), Rachel (p. 105, 369), Charles Reznikoff (pp. 125-7, 597, 629, 746-7), Yuli Daniel (pp. 249-50, 775), Howard Harrison (pp. 266-7), Zelda (pp. 278-81), Ethne Freedman (p. 342), Yehoash (p. 368, 748-9), Pamela Melnikoff (p. 421), Umberto Saba (p. 449, 772-3), Dave Alland (p. 529), Jan Fuchs (p. 589), A. M. Klein (p. 594), Hilda Schiff (pp. 595-6), Barry Holtz (pp. 596-7), Allen Ginsburg (pp. 597-8), Nelly Sachs (p. 598, 823-4), Joseph

89. For a detailed analysis of this hymn as well as the entire subject of British Reform liturgical creativity, see "Hebrew Liturgical Creativity in British Reform" in Friedland, Eric *Were Our Mouths Filled With Song* (pp.89-145)

Rolnik (p. 599), Martin Buber (p. 602), Meir Gertner (p. 602), Leah Goldberg (p. 603), Joseph Lefwich (p. 603), Rose Auslander (p. 628), Paul Simon (pp. 699-700), I. L. Peretz (p. 722), Alter Brody (p. 722), Jacob Israel de Haan (p. 725), Leib Quitko (pp. 747-8), Joseph Brodsky (p. 755), Mark Warshawsky (p. 758), Shin Shalom (p. 759, 891), Kadia Molodovsky (pp. 759-60), Y. Dobrushin (p. 762), Abraham Isaac Kook (p. 767), Saul Gottlieb (pp. 771-2), Karl Wolskehl (p. 773, 800, 801), Mark Schweid (pp. 773-4), Israel Jacob Schwartz (p. 774), I. J. Segal (pp. 774-5), Arnold Schoenberg (pp. 775-6), d. a. levy (pp. 777-9), Zev Shanken (pp. 779-80), Jascha Kessler (pp. 780-1), Erich Fried (pp. 781-2), Edith Bruck (pp. 787-8), Benjamin Fondane (pp. 802-3), Paul Celan (pp. 803-5), Janusz Korczak (p. 807), Anthony Hecht (p. 819), Binem Heller (p. 820), Hava Rosenfarb (pp. 820-2), Lotte Kramer (pp. 822-3), Arthur Jacobs (pp. 836-8), Haim Guri (p. 862), Reisel Zichlinsky (p. 891), Yehuda Amichai (p. 893), A. G. Jacobs (pp. 893-4), Moses Hakohen Niral (p. 924), David Rosenberg (pp. 972-5)

KAVVANAT HA-LEV (Machzor of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, 1989)

Under the influence of earlier *machzors* from the American Conservative and Reform movements, the editors of *Kavvanat ha-Lev* include in their "Martyrology" section both Bialik's "City of Slaughter" and Hillel Bavli's "Letter of the Ninety-Three Maidens," but then move on to include Israeli poets Yosef Rokover, Shin Shalom, Avraham Shlonsky and Hayyim Guri. In an additional reading to go along with the Mourner's Kaddish, *Kavvanat ha-Lev* includes Hannah Senesh's "There are stars." Hannah Senesh - אלי אלי p. 14, Hanoch Jacobson - התיחדות p. 29, Rachel - רק המתים לא ימותו p. 33, Jack Reimer/Yehoram Mazor(trans.) - p. 34, Mordechai Rotem - ברוך אומר p. 45,

HA-AVODAH SHEBA-LEV (Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism *siddur*, 1982, revised 1991)

Contained within this small volume, intended for daily, Sabbath and home usage by Progressive (Reform) Jews in Israel, are many additional readings, primarily the work of modern Israeli poets. Most of the additions are included in extra-liturgical settings,

sections titled רשות היחיד and רשות הרבים as well as the special services for סדר יום השואה והגבורה/יום הזכרון/יוסהעצמות. Poets include Yehuda Karni (p. 251), Tuvia Rubener (p. 252), Rahel (p. 253), Abraham Shlonsky (p. 258) and Yehuda Amichai (pp. 258-9). However, effective use of modern poetry is made within some of the statutory services, as when "למדני" לאה גולדברג, is included in a prayer for Peace (p.85).

GATES OF REPENTANCE (GOR) (Central Conference of American Rabbis,1984)

Among the poets whose works appear in this most recent Reform *mahzor* are: Ruth Brin; Alvin Fine; Haim Lensky; Jack Reimer; Joanne Greenberg; Stephen Spender; Karl Shapiro; Hayyim Nachman Bialik; Siegfried Sassoon; and Rainer Maria Rilke.

Particularly powerful use of modern poetry is made in the insertions of the "עבודה/From Creation to Redemption" service for Yom Kippur afternoon, pp. 410-449. Similar to GOP, the authors of poems (or any section of the service) are not indicated either on the page or fully in the *mahzor*. Full citation is available only in *Gates of Understanding*, vol. 2.

SIDDUR HADESH YAMEINU (Rabbi Ron Aigen, Congregation Dorshei Emet, 1996)

Poets represented in this siddur which has been printed by the Reconstructionist synagogue of Montreal and their rabbi, Ron Aigen, reveal a truly conscious effort to cover a wide spectrum of modern Jewish writers, and to sensitively introduce them into the liturgy. All authors, both of "traditional" materials and new additions are identified on the page where they are presented. A brief "Glossary" contains biographical information for the authors (pp. 692-700). Among the poets included are: Hannah Szenes, Natan Alterman, Shaul Tchernichowsky, Yehuda Amichai, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, Hillel Zeitlin, Leah Goldberg, Shin Shalom, and Rachel (among the Israelis); Penina Adelman, Leila Gal Brenner, Charles Reznikoff, Ruth Brin, Judy Chicago, Stephen Mitchell, Kadia Molodowsky, A.M. Klein, Marge Piercy, Leonard Cohen, and Rav Kook.

MAHZOR HADESH YAMEINU (Rabbi Ronald Aigen, 2001)

This *Mahzor*, also from the Reconstructionist synagogue of Montreal, includes readings by most of the same poets, with some new additions (Rami Shapiro, Carol Rose, Muriel Rukeyser, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko) as well as work published by poets included in the earlier *siddur* (particularly by Yehuda Amichai). The layout and use of the liturgy (including the large amounts of poetry) is the same as the *siddur*. There is no glossary or biographical information offered in this volume, as there was in the *siddur*.

KOL HANESHAMAH (Reconstructionist Press, *Shabbat Eve* 1989, *Shirim Uvrahot* 1991, *Shabbat Vehagim* 1994, *Li-Ymot Hol* 1996 and *Mahzor Leyammim Nora'im* 1999)

By far the most ambitious project on the integration of modern poetry into Jewish worship is the *Kol Haneshamah* series of the Reconstructionist movement. In fact, the expansiveness achieved by their inclusion of myriad additions and alternatives has created in their last publication, the *Mahzor Leyammim Nora'im*, a prayerbook of 1276 pages (compared with GOR's 545 and the Harlow *Machzor*'s 789) weighing in at quite a large book to hold throughout the High Holy Days! However, the achievement cannot be measured in page numbers or weight, but rather in the broad range of modern poetry that is included in each of these volumes (Hebrew, Yiddish and English), as well as the complex theological statements that are allowed to emerge within these pages. The series is reviewed briefly in Eric Friedland's *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song* (pp. 244-58) and much more extensively in Eric Caplan's *From Ideology to Liturgy* (pp. 164-372), as well as elsewhere. Friedland comments:

> The Supplement (or *Readings*, as it is now called) and commentary in *Kol Haneshamah* are ensemble efforts, drawing upon the gifts of rabbis and laity, women and men, religionists and secularists. Although in the main the selections are scrupulously and becomingly made, the diversity of the contributors accounts for an inevitable unevenness in quality. The number of banal or affected passages can be counted on one hand; the others are notable for their ring of honesty and ability to stir the heart and mind. (Friedland, 1998, 250)

BOOK OF BLESSINGS (Marcia Falk, 1996)

Included in Falk's "multivocal chorus" for the Shabbat Amidah are Leah Goldberg "מבית אמי" (p. 182-3), "בכל דבר יש לפחות שנינית" (pp. 196-7), Malka Heifetz Tussman "בלעטער" (pp. 198-9), "איך בין פרוי" (pp. 186-9), "ייִנגלינג מיט אן עפל אין האנט" (pp. 184-5), "הייִנט איז אייביק" (pp. 220-3), "הייליקע שטילקייט" (pp. 232-5), Zelda "לכל בריה יש שם" (pp. 209-11), "הפוגה" (pp. 252-5), "הגשם הראשון" (pp. 256-7), Rachel "אל ארצי" (pp. 230-1), and Emma Lazarus "The New Colossus" (p. 236). Each poem links thematically with the section of the traditional Shabbat Amidah where it is presented.

MISHKAN TEFILLAH - Shabbat Eve (CCAR Press, pilot edition - 2002)

Poets included: Marge Piercy (p. 15, 39-adapted), Ruth Brin (p. 15, 37-adapted), Sidney Greenberg (poetry only cited, not prose, p. 2), Leah Goldberg (p. 19, 23, 29-adapted, ), Marcia Falk (p.21, 49, 53), Richard Levy (p.25), Elyse Goldstein (p.41), Ferdinand M. Isserman (p. 46), as well as liturgical projects not indicated by proper names (The Havurat Shalom Siddur Project, Shma Koleinu - A Liturgy of Healing)

At least one question to address on the function of modern poetry in Jewish worship is whether the poetry (or story or reading) functions *in place of* the specific prayer that it is placed alongside in the *siddur* or if it is used *to enhance* the meaning of the prayer that it is linked to by means of thematic connection. The actual layout of the pages of the *siddur* do much to encourage one approach or the other.[90] *Mishkan Tefillah* is experimenting with a layout that places Hebrew text of the liturgical section on the right-side page, and interpretive readings or contemporary materials on the left-side. The implicit message is that the prayer-leader, congregation or individual should chose one option.

90. I am grateful to Rabbi William Dreskin for alerting me to this key question through conversations we had regarding the "trial run" of the Reform movement's new *siddur* "*Mishkkan Tefillah*".

## Appendix B: Modern Poetry in current HAGGADOT

THE SCHOCKEN PASSOVER HAGGADAH (ed. by Nahum Glatzer, 1996)

In a section of modern readings that follows the traditional *haggadah* and commentary, poems by Marge Piercy (p. xxxvi), Primo Levi (p. xxviii), Binem Heller (p. xxiii) and two children at Terezin (pp. xxii-xxiii) appear.

A DIFFERENT NIGHT Haggadah (Noam Zion and David Dishon, The Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997)

Stanley F. Chyet (p. 89), Naomi Shemer (p. 166)

A NIGHT OF QUESTIONS (The Reconstructionist Press, 2000)

Among the poets who appear in this new Reconstructionist *haggadah* are: Ruth Sohn (p. 67), Tamara Cohen (p. 88), Marge Piercy (pp. 102-3), Emma Lazarus (p. 109), Primo Levi (p. 142)

THE OPEN DOOR Hagaddah (CCAR Press 2002)

Modern Poetry included:

Rachel Bluwstein (p.xxiii,), Adrienne Rich (p.6), Yehuda Amichai (pp. 22, 67, 112), Sharona Ben Tov (p. 49), Eleanor Wilner (p. 52), David Rosenberg (p. 70), Samuel Halkin (p. 72), Alan Shapiro (p. 90), Primo Levi (p. 91), Feiga Izrailevna Kogan (p. 101), Hannah Senesh (p. 112)

Marge Piercy notes that she has "written poems for all the items on the Seder plate as well as a *maggid* poem." These are part of an as-yet unpublished *haggadah*. (in Baron and Seliger (eds.), *Jewish American Poetry*, p. 131)

## Appendix C: Modern Poetry in current LIFE-CYCLE AND HOME OBSERVANCE LITURGIES

NESHAMA HADASHA (Kehillat Kol Haneshama, Laura Janner-Klausner, ed.)

This spiral-bound volume was produced by Congregation Kol Haneshama in Jerusalem, one of the most successful non-Orthodox congregations in Israel. It represents the collective creativity of the congregants and their spiritual leader, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman with specific regard to creating new life-cycle rituals for the birth of a child. Presented as both a printed resource and an electronic format (floppy disc), it was designed for use in helping others create their own, personalized life-cycle rituals. The editor details a structure on which the ceremony might be based (one which is drawn largely from the inherited structures of Jewish liturgy) - but makes the following caveat: "The strength of a lifecycle ceremony is its ability to combine spontaneity with the use of traditional formats. The fixed elements of prayer - the repetition of established prayers - give them a depth and resonance whilst more spontaneous and creative prayers allow for individual expression. PLEASE NOTE - the process that is taking place in **Neshama Hadasha** strengthens the fixed elements of prayer and may cramp our creativity. The evolutionary nature of writing your celebration based on your own ideas, as well as those of others, might be inhibited by this anthology. PLEASE read, enjoy, adapt, accept or reject different ideas and DON'T STOP CREATING!" (p. 10).

In its structure, this volume certainly demonstrates the impact of both the Jewish feminist movement (particularly the life-cycle liturgy end of feminism) and the Creative Liturgy movement - in its encouragement of "single-use" rituals. Modern poetry plays a significant role in the collection, as well as being an encouraged feature of all liturgies created out of this model. The section of modern poetry is presented in Hebrew and English (as are all texts in the book, owing to the large Anglo-Jewish presence at Kol Haneshama) and arranged according to language of origin: Hebrew (Zelda, Yehuda Amichai, Dahlia Rabikovitz), English (Abraham Joshua Heschel, Si Kahn, Rabbi Maggie Wenig), Spanish (Pablo Casals), German (Nelly Sachs), Chilean (Pablo Neruda), and Yiddish (Avrom Reyzn). These poems are meant, clearly, to be only an inspiration in selecting poetry for incorporation into the specific ritual.

ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE (CCAR, 1994)

This very extensive resource produced for use primarily as a "home" prayer book, makes tremendous use of modern poetry and prose throughout the life-cycle rituals and other liturgies that are included. In addition, there is a lengthy section of "Psalms, Poems and Readings" (pp.263-332), which includes many modern poets from various faith traditions. As a rule, in this resource, the poetry utilized in liturgies or in the "Readings" section are not given citation on the page where they appear, but rather are identifiable only by cross-reference with the notes provided by the editors at the end of the volume. Some of the poets whose work appears in "On the Doorposts of Your House" are: Denise Levertov, Howard Nemerov, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Aaron Zeitlin, Walt Whitman, George Santayana, Rumi, Anne Sexton, Hillel Zeitlin, Wallace Stevens, Yehuda Amichai, e.e. cummings, Rabindranath Tagore, Kadya Moldovsky, Leah Goldberg, Emily Dickenson, Zelda, Charles Resnikoff, Anthony Hecht, Hayim Gouri, Nelly Sachs, Paul Celan, Abba Kovner, Rachel, Sh. Shalom, and Nathan Alterman.

## Appendix D: Collection of citations of AMICHAI in current liturgies

Amichai in FORMS OF PRAYER

III - p. 893, "On the Day of Atonement" in "interpretations" section for Torah reading second day Rosh Hashannah

II - p. 679 prose section quoted from "Once I was sitting on the steps near the gate at David's Citadel" Tourists, p.806 under the heading "The World to Come", quotation "I remember my father waking me up / for early prayers. He did it caressing / my forehead, not tearing the blanket away. / Since then I love him even more./ And because of this / let him be woken up / gently and with love / on the Day of Resurrection."

Amichai in סדור העבודה שבלב (IMPJ, 1991 revised)

Only two Amichai poems are included in this *siddur* of the Israeli Progressive movement, though I am told that individual rabbis within the movement frequently supplement the *siddur* with Amichai poems not found here. The two poems are presented in the section titled רשות הרבים, and so are suggested for some undefined public usage. Poem #36 from שירי ארץ ציון ירושלים is on p. 258, and "גורל אלהים" flows from p. 258-9.

Amichai in the *KOL HANESHAMAH* series of prayerbooks (The Reconstructionist Press) In *Kol Haneshamah: Shabbat Eve*, the "Readings" section contains "An appendix to the vision of peace"(p. 202) and "Wildpeace" (pp. 202-203), both in English translation only. They are both repeated in *Shabbat Vehagim*, but with Hebrew original alongside (pp.

776-777). In *Kol Haneshamah: Mahzor Leyamim Nora'im*, the poem "The Real Hero of the sacrifice was the ram" is presented in English translation only, placed during the Torah reading for the Second Day of Rosh Hashannah (the *Akedah*). In a "Prayer for Peace," the poem "Sort of an Apocalypse (The man under his vine telephoned the man under his fig tree)" is presented in English translation only (p. 584). In the beginning of the martyrology service on Yom Kippur, "#34 from *Songs of Zion the Beautiful* (Let the memorial hill remember...)" is included in both Hebrew and English (p. 899). There as well, "All the generations that preceded me" is presented in English translation only (p. 900). In the *Yizkor* service, "Little Ruth/רות הקטנה" is included in both Hebrew and English (pp. 1013-1016).

Amichai in נשמה חדשה, collection of life-cycle liturgies on childbirth created by Congregation Kol HaNeshama in Jerusalem:

"Advice for Good Love"/עצות לאהבה טובה

Amichai in "On the Doorposts of Your House" (CCAR, 1994)

"Every evening, God, You take Your burnished goods from Your shop window..."(pp. 288-9), "Your fate, God, / is now the fate / of trees and stones, of sun and moon..." (p. 289)

Amichai in "P'nai Shabbat : The Shabbat Family Siddur" (Behrman House, 2002)

note: this is the Shabbat Family Siddur that emerged out of the work of Congregation

B'nei Jeshrun in NYC and was published by Behrman House

"Wildpeace" (p. 41) - only the last four lines of the poem quoted, as a bridge between the ending of השכיבנו and the additional song/prayer עוד יבא שלום. It feels to me like the quotation is too abbreviated.

"Forgetting Someone" (p. 58) - only 5 lines quoted, as an introduction or set for Mourner's Kaddish, effective on both the human and God levels. "Forgetting someone is like / Forgetting to turn off the light in the yard. / It stays on all day; / And that means also remembering / By the light."

Amichai in "*SIDDUR HADESH YAMEINU*" (Rabbi Ron Aigen's *siddur*, 1996)

In the context of suggested meditations based on the themes of the Shabbat/Festival *Amidah*, Aigen includes "רועה ערבי מחפש גדי בהר ציון/*An Arab Shepherd is Searching for His Goat on Mount Zion*" (Chana Bloch/Stephen Mitchell translation) under the rubric "'*Avodah* :Fulfillment (*EretzYisrael*)" (p.295); In a *Musaf* section, again structured around theme-based meditations, Aigen includes "שיר אינסופי / *Poem Without an End*" under the rubric "Passages: The Individual" (p. 330); In that same *Musaf* section, Aigen includes "כל הדורות שלפני / *All the Generations Before Me*" (Harold Schimmel, trans.) under the rubric "Life and Death" (p.357); In the *Yizkor* section of the *siddur*, Aigen uses "אדם בחייו / *A Man Doesn't Have Time*" (Bloch/Mitchell translation) (pp.550-1); In the service for *Yom Ha-Zikkaron*, Aigen uses "קטר הפצצה / *The Diameter of the Bomb*" (Chana Bloch translation) (p. 569); The single line (in English only) "Jerusalem is a port city on the shore of eternity" is used to begin a chain of

readings for *Yom Yerushalayim* (p. 578)

Amichai in "*MAHZOR HADESH YAMEINU*" (Rabbi Ron Aigen, 2001)

This is, to my knowledge, the first liturgical work to contain excerpts from Amichai's final collection, *Patuach Sagur Patuach*. Use of his earlier works is also present, so that there is poetry that spans the full body of Amichai's work, from *Shirim '48- '62* to *Patuach Sagur Patuach* (1998). In a section of "Meditations on Prayer," Aigen uses numbers 3 and 12 from the prayer cycle "אלים מתחלפים, התפילות נשארות לעד / *Gods Change, Prayers Remain the Same*" (p. 88); In a section of responses to the Torah Reading for the First Day of Rosh Ha-Shanah (Genesis 21), Aigen uses numbers 1, 2 and 3 from "לאם / *For the Mother*" (translation by Chana Kronfeld, Benjamin and Barbara Harshav) (pp. 192-3), the effect is the shocking identification of the Israeli archetypal mother placing her son, as Hagar, under one of the bushes so as not to witness the death of her son (Ishmael) in one of the wars; In a commentary section for the Second Day of Rosh Ha-Shanah Torah reading (Genesis 22), several Amichai poems are used. An excerpt from "תנ"ך ותנ"ך, אתך אתך, ומדרשים אחרים / from *The Bible and You ... and Other Midrashim*" Aigen brings seven lines, beginning "כל אחד שמשכים בבקר / Everyone who rises early in the morning" (Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld translation) (p. 205); on the next pages, again from the same cycle, Aigen brings six lines, beginning "שני אוהבים שוכבים יחדיו עקודים בעקדה / *Two lovers lie together like Isaac on the altar*" (Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld translation), and "טיול יהודי / from *A Jewish Tour*" (translated by the author) beginning "אברהם אהינו לוקח את שני בניו להר המוריה

/ Abraham our father takes his children every year to Mount Moriah" (pp. 206-7); In the *Yizkor* service for *Yom Kippur*, Aigen brings numbers 7 and 11 from the cycle "בחיי בחיי / *I Swear on My Life*"(p. 559) as well as "נפש האדם / *A Human Soul*" (p. 560); and in a section of "Meditations on Teshuvah V" intended for use during the *Yom Kippur Ne'ilah* service, Aigen brings "בטרם / *Before*" (Stephen Mitchell, trans.), which utilizes the imagery of the closing of gates (p.743).

## Appendix E: Table of respondents to e-mail survey on anecdotal use of Amichai's poetry

Table of Amichai poems cited for liturgical use from anecdotal e-mail survey. Citations conform to Amichai's original works (Hebrew) and selected translation (English only) all of which are given full detailed entry in the Bibliography section. Entries here reflect only responses generated by private e-mail correspondence, not presence of Amichai's poetry in published liturgies, which is described in Appendix B. There were also responses from individuals who were unable to give sufficient information for determining specifically what poem(s) they were referring to, and therefore do not appear here.

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #19 | פתוח סגור פתוח (פס"פ), 14-13 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 44 | Dan Belm (D.B.) | |
| אני לא הייתי אחד משבת המליונים. #1 | פס"פ, 126 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 7 | Jeremy Schwartz (J.S.) | In Eleh Ezkerah service on YK |
| אני לא הייתי אחד משבת המליונים. #2-4 | פס"פ, 127 | Bloch/Kronfeld, pp. 5-6 | D.B. | D.B. notes using these poems "for Asher Yatzar," |
| איזה מין אדם | גם האגרוף היה פעם יד פתוחה ואצבעות (גם האגרוף) | Bloch/Mitchell, p. 171 | D.B., J.S. | J.S. notes that it leads well into the "Halleluyah" Psalms at the end of "Pesukei DeZimra" |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #7 | פס"פ, 8 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 41 | J.S. | J.S. reports use as an alternative or addition to *Avinu Malkeinu* |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #12 | פס"פ, 10 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 42 | D.B. | As introduction to Amidah |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #3 | פס"פ, 6 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 40 | D.B. | As introduction to Amidah, |

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| בחיי, ברחי #13 (אני, עליו השלום) | פס"פ, 114 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 112-3 (#12) | D.B., Tamar Malino, Lisa Izes (L.I.), Yoel Kahn (Y.K.), Neil Kominsky (N.K.) | D.B. suggests between "Aleynu and ve'ne-emar"; T.M. as intro. to Kaddish; L.I. used in memorial for Amichai; Y.K. reports using it as a setting for *Hashkiveinu* and *Birkat HaShalom* |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #6 | פס"פ, 8 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 41 (#6) | N.K., Michael Fessler (M.K.) | N.K. says as a theological meditation |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #19 | פס"פ, 14-13 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 44 (#16) | M.K., David Nelson (D.N.) | M.K. reports using as a *kavvanah* for putting on *tallit* |
| היהודים | גם האגרוף..., 137-135 | Harshav/Harshav, pp.462-3 | D.N. | |
| תנ"ך תנ"ך אתך אתך, #6 | פס"פ | Bloch/Kronfeld, pp. 21-22 (#5) | D.N. | D.N. notes use on 2nd day of *Rosh HaShannah* to respond to *Akedah* |
| טיול יהודי, השנוי הוא האלהים, והמות נביאו, #5 | פס"פ, 119 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 119 | D.N. | D.N. notes on 2nd day of *Rosh HaShannah* to respond to *Akedah* |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #27 | פס"פ, 19-18 | Bloch/Kronfeld, pp. 47-8 (#23) | D.N. | D.N. notes use for confronting theologically the reality of the Shoah |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #11 | פס"פ, 10-9 | No published translation, but translated here in Appendix F | D.N. | |
| פצצת הזמן היהודית | פס"פ, 178 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 1 | D.B. | D.B. suggests before Kaddish, |

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| פעם כתבתי, עכשיו ובימים האחרים, כך עוברת התהילה, כך עוברים התהילים, #3 | פס"פ, 22-21 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 32 (#3) | D.B. | D.B. indicates use "for Ahavah Rabah/ Revelation" |
| ירושלים, ירושלים, למה ירושלים #20 | פס"פ, 150 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 142 (#19) | D.B. | D.B. indicates use during "Pesukei DeZimra |
| הגוף הוא הסבה לאהבה | מאדם אתה ואל אדם תשוב (מאדם), 17 | Harshav/Harshv, p. 370-1 | Barry Leff | B.L. reports his use of the poem during Y.K. *Yizkor* service, "It's a beautiful poem and very appropriate to remembering our loved ones who are no longer with us." |
| #77 (אלוהי, הנשמה שנתתה בי) | הזמן, 77 | Harshav/Harshv, p.304 | (J.S.) | J.S. says "as a supplement/alternativ e to its namesake" |
| ערב קיץ ליד חלון עם תהילים | גם האגרוף..., 63 | Harshav/Harshv, p. 427 | J.S. | J.S. reports use as part of "Pesukei D'Zimra" |
| עדף פרחים בעולם | גם האגרוף..., 116 | Harshav/Harshv, p. 451 | J.S. | J.S. uses it, through textual allusion to lead into Ps. 121 |
| אלים מתחלפים, התפלות נשארות לעד #1 | פס"פ, 5 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p.39 | J.S. | J.S. uses it as an introduction to prayer service, especially a learner's service |

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| #20 (קוטר הפצצה) | הזמן, 20 | Bloch/Mitchell, p. 118 | J.S., Amy Gottlieb (A.G.)m Susan R. Schorr (S.R.S.), N.K., D.N. | J.S. reports use during *Eleh Ezherah* on YK; A.G. reported on the controversy at the Rabbinical Assembly press on the proposal to include this poem in a new *siddur* for *Tisha BeAv*; S.R.S. reported on the poem's use in a martyrology service on Y.K. at a Manhattan synagogue following Sept. 11, 2001; |
| רות הקהנה | גם האגרוף..., 70 | Harshav/Harshav, p. 431 | J.S. | J.S. reports use during *Eleh Ezherah* on YK |
| שמות שמות, בימים ההם בזמן הזה, #14 | פס"פ, 138 | Bloch/Kronfeld, pp. 131-2 (#10) | J.S. | J.S. reports use during *Eleh Ezherah* on YK |
| שמות שמות, בימים ההם בזמן הזה, #15 | פס"פ, 9-138 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 132 (#11) | J.S. | J.S. reports use during *Eleh Ezherah* on YK |
| #45 (ערב ראש השנה.) | הזמן, 45 | Bloch/Mitchell, p. 122 | J.S. | J.S. used in *Selichot* service: "one of the purposes of the traditional piyutei selichot is to do 'tochechah': to rouse us to repentance by shining a light on the nasty turns our lives sometimes take. This poem does that very well." |
| תירים | שלוה גדולה: שאלות ותשובות, 82 | Bloch/Mitchell, pp. 137-8 | L.I., Billy Dreskin (B.D.), Reuven Goldfarb (R.G.), D.N. | B.D. reports using in *ge'ulah* section of prayer |

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ביום שבו נולדה בתי לא מת אף איש | שלוה גדולה, 44 | Harshav/Harshav, p. 324 Abramson/Parfitt, p. 27 | R.G., Cathy Felix (C.F.) | C.F. notes use at *b'not mitzvah* celebrations |
| אדם בחייו | שעת החסד, 51-50 | Harshav/Harshav, p. 351; Bloch/Mitchell, pp. 158-9 | L.I. | |
| ירושלים, 1967, #5 | עכשיו ברעש, 12-11 | Bloch/Mitchell, p. 49 | L.I. | Incorporated, for reference, into *Ne'ilah* service. |
| תוספת לחזון השלום | שלוה גדולה, 33 | Abramson/Parfitt, p. 30 | T.M., Elias Lieberman, Paul Yedwab | Used within *Birkat Shalom*; |
| נסיונות התאבדות של ירושלים | שירי ירושלים, 34 | Schimmel, p. 35 | T.M. | T.M. reports use in context of *Tisha BeAv* service |
| רועה ערבי מחפש גדי בהר ציון | שלוה גדולה, 14 | Harshav/Harshav, p. 312 | L.I., N.K. | In context of prayer for peace and in prayer for State of Israel |
| ירושלים, 1967 #10 | עכשיו ברעש, 14 | Harshav/Harshav, pp. 82-3, Schimmel, p.60 | Eve Ben-Ora (E.B.O.) | Utilized in silent meditation |
| שירי ארץ ציון וירושלים, #21 | מאחורי כל זה מסתתר אושר גדול, 17 | Schimmel, p. 89, Bloch/Mitchell, pp. 109-110 | E.B.O. | Utilized in silent meditation |
| שלום בר | ולא על מנת לזכור, 52 | Bloch/Mitchell, p. 88 | Robert Waxman, L.I., T.M. | As supplement for prayer for peace |
| תנ"ך תנ"ך אתך אתך#3 | פס"פ, 28 | Bloch/Kronfeld, pp. 19-20 (#2) | Jonathan Gerard (J.G.) | J.G. uses together with *ahavat olam* |
| תנ"ך תנ"ך אתך אתך#28 | פס"פ, 40 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 25 (#14) | J.G. | J.G. uses with *ve-ahavtal* |

| Title of Poem | Source Citation | Translation Citation | Name(s) of Respondent | Additional notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| אלים מתחלפים, והתפלות נשארות לעד #12 | פס"פ, 11 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 42 (#10) | J.G. | J.G. uses with *r'tzei* |
| טיול יהודי, השנוי הוא האלהים, והמות נביאו, #10 | פס"פ, 71 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 71 (#6) | J.G. | J.G. uses as an introduction to *Kaddish* |
| ירושלים, ירושלים, למה ירושלים #12 | פס"פ, 146 | Bloch/Kronfeld, p. 139 | D.B. | D.B. indicates use during "Pesukei DeZimra |

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