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#### HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION New York School

Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted

by

Carole B. Balin

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

# ELBOGEN DER JUEDISCHE GOTTESDIENST IN SEINER GESCHICHTLICHEN ENTWICKLUNG AS STANDARD CLASSIC

Almost 80 years after being written, Ismar Elbogen's <u>Der Juedische</u> Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung is still the standard classic in liturgical philology. Elbogen did not invent the field; Zunz and the early <u>Wissenschaft</u> pioneers did. But Elbogen brought it to its fullest maturity. He was to be followed by other magnificent scholars dedicated to unravelling the secrets of Jewish liturgical textual development — Louis Finkelstein and E.D. Goldschmidt, to name but the two most obvious and influential writers. But Elbogen's <u>magnum opus</u> sits almost alone on the philologist's shelf, a standard reference work brought up to date in 1972 by a coterie of liturgists led by Joseph Heinemann, but nonetheless a worthy and seemingly ageless classic even in its original 1913 edition.

For all his scholarly aptitude, however, Elbogen was also a practitioner of reform, vitally concerned about the spiritual welfare of his people, and central in Jewish communal development as well. Symptomatic of his practical interests was his collaboration in another liturgical venture, the codification of an

Einheitsgebetbuch intended for general use in-liberal congregations in Germany. Of the three editors (Hermann Vogelstein and Caesar Seligmann were the other two), Elbogen was charged with revising the Hebrew text of the classical prayers. There are other instances in which liturgical theory has molded liturgical praxis -- as (for instance) David Einhorn's reliance on Zunz's reconstruction of "original" texts -- but here we have a case of the overlap between academic theory and prayerbook design in the work of a single (and singular) giant of modern Jewish life.

That, at least, is the hypothesis investigated by Carole B. Balin in her ordination thesis (1991). What was the role of Elbogen in determining the manifest content of the Hebrew prayers in Germany's 1929 <a href="Einheitsgebetbuch">Einheitsgebetbuch</a>? To what extent did he apply the fruits of his theoretical investigations of the liturgical past? What, for that matter, were the principles by which he went about his academic investigation in the first place, and is his notion of liturgical evolution evident also in his own work in the latest case of worship reform, the book he himself was editing? Finally, how might one fairly estimate Elbogen's relative merit in the list of worthies who together constitute the roll call of those masters without whom both the academic and the practical work of liturgical modernity would have been unthinkable?

Clearly, this is no ordinary thesis. In both scope and topic, it transcends the normal parameters of senior theses at the College-Institute. Balin worked from the Hebrew text of Der juedische Gottesdienst, reading painstakingly through the entire work so as to isolate clues to Elbogen's method -- the underlying

principles he brought to bear on the vast historical material before him. She then turned to the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, particularly the daily <u>Shacharit</u> service, to investigate Elbogen's changes in the Hebrew text. Working largely from Elbogen's own list of characteristics that mark a book as "reform" -- a list devised and laid out in <u>Der juedische Gottesdienst</u> -- she estimates the extent to which the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> is in fact a "reform" volume. All of this is prefaced with a summary of Elbogen's life, and followed up with a conclusion regarding Elbogen's place in liturgical history.

Indeed, a full review of this extraordinary thesis would take pages. A careful analysis turns up new material regularly. This is a careful scholarly investigation, in which tiny fragments of information are synthetically combined into a larger whole. Abetting the task is the fact that Elbogen wrote extra-liturgical work as well, including an entire volume that was commissioned by the Jewish Publication Society as an addendum to Graetz's history. His own inclusion of the words "in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung" in the title of his liturgical masterwork indicate the importance he accorded history, even (or perhaps especially) in liturgical studies. Balin thus unravels the ways in which Elbogen thought liturgy was really a historical byproduct, even as he viewed his own liturgical editing as such a byproduct of his own time.

One tends to think in advance that Balin's information must surely be known already. In fact, almost none of it has been explored before. To be sure, there is much here that does not surprise us. We do know, in general, the age in which Elbogen

functioned, and we do have methodologies of liturgy that spell out pretty clearly what liturgical philology was all about. But for some reason, no one has looked in depth at Elbogen as a model of his age, and even though everyone depends on his work, no one has investigated with care the method and the biography of the man who wrote it. What we have here, then, is an exceptional case history of the general phenomenon of the overlap between German scholarship and liturgical reform. At the end, we have been treated to a scholarly tour de force, every page packed with detail, each chapter composed of carefully read comparisons. Elbogen himself emerges from these pages -- complete with scholarly foibles, even biases, but above all, a leader who typified an entire fascinating chapter of Jewish life.

The reader will appreciate especially the care with which this thesis is put together. It is exceptionally well written, and reinforced by archival material as well -- Elbogen's own letters on file in the American Jewish Archives -- so that Ismar Elbogen, the flesh-and-blood human being comes boldly to life as the pages unfold. Elbogen, the scholar, turns out also to be Elbogen the pietist, who could denounce merkavah mysticism, while at the same time appreciating its profound spirituality. He is also Elbogen the critic, when it comes to radical American reforms that he considered too reliant on historical conditions, and insufficiently rooted in Israel's past. He is the continuer of the Zunzian paradigm, the loyal synopsizer and codifier of scientific study up to his own day.

This is a work of genuine scholarship. Carole Balin is to be congratulated on a clear and unmistakable contribution to our knowledge. Ismar Elbogen would be proud of her.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman Professor of Liturgy

## THE LITURGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF ISMAR ELBOGEN CAROLE B. BALIN

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Graduate Rabbinic Program New York, New York

> 1991 Referee: Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge with gratitude those individuals who assisted me in my efforts to complete this study.

Dr. Philip E. Miller, Librarian at the HUC-JIR in New York secured a copy of the Einheitsgebetbuch for my use.

Mr. Kevin Proffitt at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, OH made Ismar Elbogen's letters available to me.

Dr. Raymond P. Scheindlin at the Jewish Theological Seminary graciously allowed me to scan his English translation of Hatefillah bevisrael behitpatchutah hahistorit.

Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman's gifts of commitment, intellect and creativity enriched me throughout my rabbinical training. I hope to mirror his example in an academic career of my own.

The love my husband Michael E. Gertzman gives without measure accompanies me on every path my life takes. For that I am most thankful.

בכור זרה להתיקונו ביתולם שהחקיבו ודיטבו והגיעבו דיטו הדה.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Writing in 1924 in the first volume of the Hebrew Union College Annual, Ismar Elbogen posed the questions: "Was the last century of Jewish development destructive constructive?"1 Elbogen made this query in light of the changes that had occured in Jewish scholarship since the second decade of the nineteenth century. Scholarship had been completely transformed by Wissenschaft des Judentums ("the scientific study of Judaism"), a movement that had emerged among German Jewish intellectuals who had been exposed to an impartial, critical and developmental approach to the past.2 This scholarly movement, guided primarily by Leopold Zunz, had given new shape to the inherited content of Judaism and served as a form of legitimation for religious reform. Elbogen was an unequivocal advocate of Wissenschaft. In his words, this new type of analysis and evaluation

stirred the blood circulation within Judaism and became an agent of continuous rejuvenation. Few Jewish movements of any worth have originated . . . which were not directly or indirectly indebted to the scientific and systematic study of Judaism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Ismar Elbogen, "Destruction or Construction?," <u>Hebrew Union</u> College Annual 1 (1924), p. 629.

The movement formally began with the founding of the "Society for Culture and Scientific Study of Judaism" in 1819 in Berlin. For more information on <u>Wissenschaft</u> see Michael Meyer, <u>A Response to Modernity</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 75ff.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Ismar Elbogen, A Century of Jewish Life, trans. Moses Hadas (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), p. xxxvii.

However, unlike many of his contemporaries in the field of Wissenschaft, Elbogen did not always use his scholarship to boost the cause of religious reform. On the one hand, Elbogen did occasionally utilize the fruits of his scholarly research to justify changes in religious practice. Indeed, the very title of his magnum opus, Der juedische Gottesdienst in seiner Geschlichtlichen Entwicklung ("Jewish Liturgy in its Historical 'Development") indicates a self-conscious recognition that liturgy is prone to alteration over time. And, in fact, Elbogen went so far as to collaborate on the Einheitsgebetbuch, the progressive prayer book intended to unify the worship of liberal German Jewry. But, on the other hand, he tended at times to follow the likes of Zacharias Frankel who advocated moderate religious reform and a delicate compromise between textual authority and historical criticism. As Elbogen stated, "It was difficult to draw a line of demarcation where Reform ceased to be legitimate and became illegitimate."4 Thus, Elbogen's question of 1924 could appropriately be put to him, as well as to his Jewish cohorts, with a slight variation: Was the last century of Jewish [religious] development destructive or constructive?

It is my purpose to answer this question on Elbogen's behalf by investigating his attitude toward religious reform as this viewpoint surfaces in his scholarly works on liturgy.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Elbogen, Century, p. 128.

After presenting a biographical sketch of the man, I examine closely his liturgical theory as expressed in <u>Der juedische</u> Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung. I develop my thesis further by analyzing the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>'s Hebrew portions, which Elbogen revised. This study ends with an assessment of Elbogen's attitude toward religious reform in general and liturgical alteration in particular.

#### CHAPTER I

### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ISMAR ELBOGEN

Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions . . . [must] thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, . . . 5

George Eliot's words, written two years after the birth of Ismar Elbogen, may instruct biographers who are in essence "narrators of human actions." A biographer must not only be attentive to the outward actions of her subject, but must also bring to bear, as much as possible, the inner life of her subject, so as to explain, to a large extent, the direction that life took.

Ismar Elbogen, whose life spanned the period from 1874 to 1943, was endowed with an unusually large capacity for intellectual and communal work. He bequeathed to us an enormous collection of scholarly pieces and a legacy of active leadership in the German and American liberal communities. From these, it is possible to determine Elbogen's contribution to Jewish intellectual and communal life. Unfortunately, however, the materials that reveal his "invisible history," that is his inner life, include only a few extant letters, in addition to obituaries and offhanded remarks in the pages of eulogies. In reconstructing Elbogen's life, it is essential to

<sup>\*</sup>George Eliot, <u>Daniel Deronda</u> (London: Penguin Books, 1876), p. 202.

rely on documents such as these to provide insight into his personality and concerns.

Ismar Elbogen was no exception to the rule that people are conditioned by their time and place in history; the impressions of his home and youth seem to have led Elbogen to a lifetime of conservative leanings. He was born on September 1, 1874 in Schildberg, Posen, whose seats of Jewish learning had at that time not yet yielded to the combined pressure of German domination and Jewish mass migration. Elbogen became grounded in Jewish sources from his learned father, and later entered the Breslau Gymnasium. He concluded his formal studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau where he received rabbinical training, as well as a secular education that culminated in a dissertation on one of Spinoza's philosophical treatises.' Breslau, where the traditions of the moderates Zacharias Frankel and Heinrich Graetz persisted in full vigor, evidently reinforced the conservative ambience of Elbogen's home life.

Religion was a "most intimate and private" matter to

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Salo Baron, "Personal Notes: Ismar Elbogen," <u>Jewish Social</u> <u>Studies</u> 1 (1944), p. 91.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Erwin Rosenthal, "Ismar Elbogen and the New Jewish Learning,"

<u>Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook</u> 8 (1963), p. 11 and Marx, "An Appreciation, <u>A Century of Jewish Life</u>, p. xii.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Alexander Marx, "An Appreciation," A Century of Jewish Life, p. xi.

Elbogen. Most of his written works contain only subtle references to his faith. The last paragraph of his popular history entitled <u>A Century of Jewish Life</u>, however, provides strong evidence of his deeply religious nature and strong belief in God. Written in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a time of great mental anguish for the Jews, Elbogen averred:

Though trained in martyrdom, the Jewish people never before has experienced such a cataclysm as has our generation. But we go on! We trust in the unswerving help of our God and the God of our fathers! . . . As long as Israel believes, Israel will not perish! We trust in God, and we go on!<sup>10</sup>

This nechemta ("consolation") indicates Elbogen's reliance on God as redeemer and savior of the Jewish people. Since no other known records directly describe Elbogen's personal religious observance, we can merely surmise that Elbogen "held a position midway between traditional orthodoxy and modern reform."

Yet Elbogen was conscious that the conservative forces that molded him were by no means the only ones possible or

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hugo Gressmann of Berlin University invited Elbogen and others from the <u>Hochschule</u> faculty to present a series of lectures on Judaism during the academic year 1925-6. The lectures were published under the title <u>Entwicklungsstufen der juedische Religion</u> in 1927. In his first lecture, "Ezra and post-exilic Judaism," Elbogen commented on the difficulties facing the lecturers because the subject "concerns the most intimate and private [side] of a man, the religious." (as quoted by Rosenthal, "Ismar Elbogen and the New Jewish Learning," p. 14)

<sup>10</sup> Ismar Elbogen, A Century of Jewish Life, p. 682.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Adolph S. Oko, "In Memoriam," American Jewish Yearbook 45 (1943-44), p. 66.

justified. Later in his life, when congregations or rabbis asked his advice in their efforts to reform the traditional prayer book, Elbogen did not deny their requests. Neither did his faith prevent him from actively participating in the scientific study of Judaism, for Elbogen saw scholarly study as the way to renew Judaism. Accordingly, he contributed extensively to the growth of Jewish scholarship, particularly in the areas of liturgy and history. What is more, according to his own words, Elbogen disapproved of Shulchan Arukh-like codes that "go so much into details." As he put it, "I don't see any value in binding people so heavily."

Following graduation from Breslau in 1899, Elbogen taught Bible and Jewish history at the Collegio Rabbinico Italiano at Florence for two years. He subsequently returned to Germany to teach at the Berlin Lehranstalt (1922-23, Hochschule) fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums for the next thirty-six years, with the exception of 1922-23 when he accepted an invitation to be guest-lecturer at the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York.

Although he spent only a single year of his early life at the JIR, Ismar Elbogen took a strong interest in its affairs from Germany. He felt a "solidarity with [Wise's] work and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Abraham Cronbach, 1 March 1924, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the responsibility for [the JIR's] success."13 Through his extensive correspondence with Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Elbogen advised the school's founder on professors, wages and curriculum. As Wise attempted to assemble a worthy faculty for the newly-founded Institute, he would write seeking information on particular colleagues hailing from abroad. Elbogen would reply candidly: "Taubler is a first class scholar . . . but also a primadonna;" or "M. acts like a fool;" or even more humorously,

. . . is an impossible human being, a man who ought to be [incarcerated?] from Sabbath noon until <u>kabbalat shabbat</u> One of his evil habits is the sport of <u>schnorring</u>. 14

Elbogen even went so far as to interview prospective candidates on Wise's behalf. He further advised Wise to make sufficient monies available to fund these distinguished professorships, "The money must be at disposal [sic]; where there is a will, there is a way. Regarding the curriculum, Elbogen wrote:

. . . there were . . . so many text interpretations and no real lectures. Be it far from me not to recognize that sources are the backbone of every sound study, but lectures are fit to broaden and enlighten the minds of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 19 February 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>14</sup> Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 1 August 1926 and 18 October 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (no date evident). Here Elbogen supplies Wise with information on Felix Levy.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

students and to awake their interest."17

The two corresponded almost biweekly from 1922 to 1926. Their letters reveal practical guidance, as well as a deep friendship; each shared frank comments and sage counsel. Elbogen repeatedly urged Wise to exercise moderation in his busy life for the sake of his health. Wise's combined leadership obligations to the Institute and to a synagogue elicited this comment from Elbogen: "Did you not assume too hard a burden? To minister and pastorize [sic] two big congregations with [your] sense of duty . . ., is that not too much for two shoulders?" Two years later Elbogen pleaded again for restraint: "Couldn't you give up some of your many duties . . . and go on horseback one hour daily?"

For his part, Wise implored Elbogen to come to the United States, the "big country, rich in population and wealth--... [where] the future of Judaism [lies]." And in 1923, Wise offered Elbogen a permanent position on the faculty of JIR. But despite his friend's repeated requests, Elbogen declined the offer. His letters plead a variety of reasons. Initially,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 20 December 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 6 May 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 6 August 1925, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Elbogen complained that the salary was too low.20 However, later letters divulge another explanation: "It is not a question of money or salary, it is Mrs. [Regina] Elbogen's attitude."21 Apparently, since her mother's death in 1922, Regina (nee Klemperer) Elbogen had been ill. Given these circumstances, Elbogen could not persuade his wife to "follow [him] into a new world where she [and he] would be shut off from Europe." Indeed, the couple was deeply entrenched in their homeland.

and to the Berlin Lehranstalt fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums in particular until 1938, when Nazi oppression all but eliminated his further usefulmess to this community. The school, which had opened in 1872, had been both a center for the scientific study of Judaism and a rabbinical seminary. With a faculty that included such luminaries as Leo Baeck and Julius Guttmann, the Lehranstalt became an important force in German Jewish scholarship. Elbogen was an integral part of this exceptional institution: he taught liturgy, history, ethics and philosophy, and eventually became chairman of the faculty because of his talent for organization and his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 30 January 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, 29 March 1923, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

readiness for service.<sup>22</sup> He carried heavy administrative duties as well, serving the students and the greater Jewish population of Germany.

As communal leader, too, Elbogen activities proved farreaching. He was a board member of several organizations,
including the Collected Archives of the German Jews, the
Academy for the Scientific Study of Judaism, the Society for
Jewish History and Literature, and the Committee for the
Publication of Jewish Youth Literature of the Order of B'nai
B'rith of Germany. Moreover, he headed the department of
education of the Jewish Communities in Prussia. And after
1933, he held a similar position in the Reichsvertretung der
Juden in Deutschland, which organized primary and secondary
schools for Jewish children prohibited from entering state-run
schools.<sup>23</sup>

Besides these responsbilities, Elbogen was above all a scholar, and a great one at that, writing extensively, and thereby contributing significantly to the body of Jewish knowledge. Salo Baron accredited Elbogen with "truly encyclopedic knowledge." His interests were so wide and so catholic that he defies neat classification. Liturgist and

<sup>22</sup>Alexander Marx, "An Appreciation," A Cenutry of Jewish Life, p. xiii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Bernard D. Weinryb, "Personal Notes: Ismar Elbogen," <u>Jewish</u> Review 1 (1943), p. 230.

<sup>24</sup>Salo W. Baron, "Personal Notes: Ismar Elbogen," <u>Jewish Social</u> Studies 1 (1944), p. 92.

historian, biographer and talmudist, Elbogen's wide scholarship is reflected in no less than a bibliography of nearly 400-items.<sup>25</sup>

of it all, however, his primary academic concern remained the history of Jewish literature, particularly the development of liturgy. He acquired an interest in liturgy as early as 1898, at twenty-four years of age, when he won an award at Breslau for tracing the history of the amidah. In subsequent years, he authored further studies on liturgical subjects which culminated a decade later in Der juedische Gottesdienst in seiner geschictlichen Entwicklung.

Elbogen won wider fame by writing for a popular audience, as well as a scholarly one. As he claimed, "The power must not be underrated which was needed in order to change the gold of scholarly labor into small coin." Faithful to these words, Elbogen published a series of short booklets on the history of the Jews after the fall of the second commonwealth. Intended for Jewish soldiers, they appeared at the end of World War I. In 1927, Elbogen added a popular series on the personalities and events of Jewish history to his bibliography, and ,in 1935, he authored a general history of

<sup>25</sup>Regina Elbogen, "A Bibliography," <u>Historia Judaica</u> 9 (1946), pp. 69-94.

P. 113. As quoted by Rosenthal, "Ismar Elbogen and the New Jewish Learning," p. 10.

German Jewry, devoid of footnotes. He further participated in disseminating knowledge by contributing countless articles to encyclopedias, including the Jewish Encyclopedia, Juedisches Lexikon, The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia and Encyclopaedia Judaica, among others. Writing on such diverse topics as Jewish tradition, historiography, halakhah, Zunz, and music, Elbogen shared his wide-ranging erudition with an international audience. Moreover, Elbogen served as departmental editor for Encyclopaedia Judaica and The Universal Jewish Encyclopdia, and the editor of the periodical Devir (1923-24).

From these myriad activities it is not surprising to read that more than once Elbogen "complain[ed] to friends of the consequent dispersal of his energies." Charged with administrative, organizational and academic duties, Elbogen led an extremely busy life that perhaps left little time for his family. Of his wife, Regina, scant information exists. From letters, we know that she was ill with bronchitis for some time in her life. Nonetheless, she exercised a fairly strong influence on Elbogen. In fact, it is due to her efforts that a comprehensive bibliography of Ismar Elbogen's works remains. Of his two children, Herman and Shoshanah, even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Note that only some of these encyclopedias were of German origin. Others were published in America, England and Palestine.

<sup>28</sup>Salo W. Baron and Alexander Marx, "Ismar Elbogen," American Academy for Jewish Research Proceedings 13 (1943), p. xxv.

less is known. From brief mention in Elbogen's obituary, it is clear that Elbogen's son was a Private in the United States army and that his daughter lived in Tel Aviv with her husband. Perhaps it is for this reason that Elbogen took a keen interest in Palestine, even journeying there in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup>

One eulogist described Elbogen as "neither a Zionist nor an anti-Zionist." But Elbogen's words to Stephen Wise, himself a strong advocate for Jewish statehood, belie that statement:

Elbogen's enthusiasm for the future of Palestine and the endeavors of its Jewish inhabitants is most evident. Short of taking a stand on Zionism, he delights in the progress being made there.

<sup>29</sup> New York Times, 2 August 1943.

<sup>30</sup>Max Wiener, "Ismar Elbogen," <u>Historia Judaica</u> 7 (1945), p. 98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Ismar Elbogen to Stephen S. Wise, no date evident, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. I speculate that this letter was written in the 1920s, probably between 1922-26, the period from which most of the extant correspondence of these two men exists.

By the time conditions began to deteriorate for Jews in Germany, it appears that Elbogen's children had been sent away to distant lands. But Regina and Ismar remained, despite the growing danger of which they were unquestionably cognizant. In a letter addressed to a national conference of American Jewish leaders in 1931, Elbogen called attention to the plight of Jews in eastern and central Europe. He described the forces of discrimination and oppression which were then threatening Jewry. 32 And, in 1935, as head of the Lehranstalt, Elbogen made an arrangement with President Julian Morgenstern, president of the Hebrew Union College, whereby students of the German liberal seminary, confronted by increasing forms of persecution, could pursue their rabbinical studies at the College.33 Aware of the perils, the couple chose to stay in the land of their birth in any case.

Finally, in 1938, when officials of four institutions, the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, the Jewish Institute of Religion, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Dropsie College of Philadelphia, invited Elbogen to come to the United States as a research professor, Ismar and Regina acquiesced. Thus, for the last years of his life, Elbogen, free from official duties at last, devoted himself entirely to

<sup>32</sup>This letter is mentioned in New York Times, 2 August 1943.

<sup>33</sup>Michael Meyer, "A History of HUC-JIR," in <u>Hebrew Union</u>
<u>College-Jewish Institue of Religion at One Hundred Years</u>, ed.
Samuel E. Karff (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1976), p. 123.

scholarly works and occasional counsel to colleagues.34

During those years, he earned two honorary degrees from American institutions of higher learning and served as a fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research from 1939 until his death.

On August 1, 1943, at the age of sixty-eight, Ismar Elbogen died. He suffered from an intestinal obstruction that cut off his long and productive life. Perhaps owing to his traditional bent, the funeral service was held at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the rabbinical school of the American Conservative movement, rather than the Reform movement's institution.

Elbogen lived for a mere five years in the United States. His ideas and scholarship sprouted from German soil, and nurtured the German Jewish community. As one of the foremost intellectual leaders of the moderate wing of the liberal movement in Germany, Elbogen left an imprint on the community that was all but extinguished by the fatal blows to Jewry during World War II. As a result, few of his students remained to venerate their teacher. As they perished, Elbogen escaped to the United States, missing the opportunity because of his relatively advanced age of sixty-five, to make the strong impression on American Jews that he indisputably made on the

Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. In this letter, Elbogen advises on the personalities of recently-arrived rabbis to the United States. Of one he wrote, "he is too highstanding to go to [so] small and philistine [a] congregation."

Germans. His final resolve to leave Germany and settle in America was in essence a sign of the disintegration of Wissenschaft des Judentums in his homeland. But Elbogen's scholarly and communal legacy is a monument to German Jewry in its most creative last period.

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Securely rooted in faith, Elbogen worked to integrate scientific study with talmud torah. To just what extent he succeeded will be explored in the following chapters. By closely examining Elbogen as liturgical theoretician, as reflected in the concepts developed in Jewish Liturgy in its Historical Development, Ismar Elbogen's attitudes toward religious reform will emerge.

#### CHAPTER 2

## ISMAR ELBOGEN AS LITURGICAL THEORETICIAN

"To describe liturgy as it developed in Jewish communities." That, in his own words, is Ismar Elbogen's purpose for writing Der juedische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung ("Jewish Liturgy in its Historical Development)". 35 However, a close reading of the text reveals that the author wrote this book for reasons more complex and personal than it would seem. Other forces motivated his research, and perhaps his conclusions as well. Like all scholars, Elbogen, too, allowed his biases to cloud his objective scholarship. This chapter first presents and analyzes Elbogen's method, which deserves close attention and scrutiny, for it became a model for subsequent generations of liturgists. 36 In the final section of the chapter, Elbogen's agenda will be disclosed and his method will be critically judged.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>For the purposes of this study, I relied on the Hebrew version of <u>Der juedische Gottesdienst in seiner geschictlichen Entwicklung</u>, which was originally published in 1972 with revisions and editorial comments. Ismar Elbogen, <u>Hatefillah beyisrael behitpatchutah hahistorit</u>, transl. Joshua Amir Arakh and Joseph Heinemann in participation with Israel Adler, Abraham Negev, Jakob Petuchowski and Chaim Sherman (Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing House, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Joseph Heinemann broke this pattern in 1966 with his form critical approach to liturgy discussed in <u>Hatefillah betikufat hatanaim vha'amoraim</u>. See Richard S. Sarason, "On the Use of Method in the Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," in <u>Approaches to Ancient Judaism</u>, Vol. I (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), pp. 97-171.

#### A. Background Information on <u>Der juedische Gottesdienst in</u> seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung

The book, which initially appeared in Germany in 1913, was one of a series on scientific Judaism compiled by members of the Berlin faculty. It was published two more times in Elbogen's lifetime, in 1924 and 1935, with additional notes, and then again in 1961. Elbogen had wished to rewrite and even enlarge this 400-page study; he felt a complete recasting was required. Nevertheless, his work became the standard text for students of liturgy.

Elbogen divided his study into three parts. In the first section, he described the liturgy from a literary perspective, carefully deconstructing each prayer to determine its original content and form. The second section includes an historical overview of Jewish liturgy. Here Elbogen largely iterated the first section, but delved deeper into the development of liturgy over time. Elbogen explored, what he called, "the external requisites" of liturgy -- places of assembly, roles of functionaries and particular ways of performing the service -- in the third and final section. Unfortunately, the book ends abruptly with no final statement of conclusions. Thus, it is our task to piece together his conclusions as they emerge throughout the book.

<sup>37</sup>Alexander Marx, "An Appreciation," in A Century of Jewish Life, p. xvi.

<sup>36</sup> Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 1.

#### B. Methodology

Method is

the configuration of basic axioms, presuppositions, criteria for deduction and inference, . . . according to which the scholar combines, juxtaposes and otherwise manipulates the data and by which he or she seeks to arrive at a coherent picture of the whole."

In other words, method is how an academician examines material, judges that material and then organizes it. The question of method is of critical importance to scholarly enterprise. In the final analysis, the results of any academic inquiry are only as valuable as the basic assumptions and inferences with and upon which they are constructed. Thus, in our study of Elbogen's liturgical theory, it is absolutely necessary to scrutinize the method he employed and to ascertain the plausibility of its assumptions. We must further question "whether the method flows from the data themselves and is sufficiently responsive to adjustment and correction or whether it is imposed onto the data and forces them into a pre-conceived mold."

<sup>3</sup>ºSarason, "Method," p. 97.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid.

## C. The Philological Approach

Philologists seek to peel back layers to arrive at the original core of a text. They search for the <u>Urtext</u>, the text that lies at the base of all liturgical rites. To them, development always proceeds in a simple, evolutionary manner - from simplicity to complexity. Hence, by uncovering later variations and additions, they can determine what they regard as the earliest passage.

In 1832, Leopold Zunz introduced philology to the discipline of Jewish liturgy. In his monumental work, Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden ("Sermons of the Jews"), Zunz was the first to stress the gradual, evolutionary development of the siddur ("prayer book") and its prayers. By comparing various manuscripts, he reconstructed the so-called original text in its pristine form. Differences in wording among the texts he attributed to variations on and additions to a single Urtext. Those elements and actual phrases common to all the rites, he explained, must necessarily be of higher antiquity than those which vary among the rites. And the latter consequently must be viewed as later additions to the "basic" text.

This model is monolinear. That is, various developments follow each other in time in a cumulative fashion, rather than occurring simultaneously. Such an approach presumes that changes and additions are instituted in an orderly fashion at a certain point in time and that textual

variations can best be explained sequentially. 42

Zunz's analysis became paradigmatic for all subsequent investigations, including Elbogen's. Writing over eighty years later, Elbogen's literary analysis of the statutory prayers clearly demonstrates how philological axioms, presuppositions and criteria for deduction and inference underlie much of his work.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

## D. Elbogen's Philological Approach

Using Isaac Seligman Baer's Ashkenazic version of the prayer book as his basis, Elbogen attempted to reconstruct the most ancient form of each prayer using a philological approach." In his analysis, he drew a distinction between "the essential content and the external form, the kernel and the shell." That is, he set up a number of criteria to date parts of individual prayers, thereby attempting to strip them down to their earliest, purest state. These criteria include:

#### 1.) Dating material based on agreement between rites.

Elbogen supposed that when two or more rites shared common language this fact demonstrated the antiquity of the language. So, for instance, Elbogen explained that since the hymn nishmat kol chai ("the breath of everything that lives") of the morning service of Shabbat is identical in all rites, it is of very early origin. As he concluded, "[This prayer] must have been composed no later than the end of the talmudic

<sup>&</sup>quot;According to Elbogen, and following Zunz and most Jewish historians, there were originally two basic groups of Jewish rites (i.e. liturgical traditions): Palestinian and Babylonian. Elbogen argued more precisedly, however, that over the course of centuries, the Palestinian rite was preserved in the prayer book of Rav Saadia Gaon (882-942) and eventually found strong influence in Germany and came to be known as the "Ashkenazic rite." The Babylonian rite was preserved in the prayer book of Rav Amram Gaon (mid-9th century) and eventually found strong influence in the countries of the Iberian peninsula and came to be known as the "Sephardic rite" (Elbogen, Hatefillah, pp. 6ff). Elbogen used Isaac Seligman Baer's prayer book as his basis for it "represents perfection as regards accuracy of text and correctness of vocalization" (Ibid., p. 293).

<sup>&</sup>quot;Elbogen, "Destruction or Construction?," p. 635.

period, for [it] has been adopted in all rites." When determining the age of torah service liturgy as well, Elbogen applied this criterion. And Elbogen asserted that the converse is true; the fact that the kaddish was not said everywhere is "[perhaps] evidence that it is a late custom."

#### Dating material based on its uniformity.

To Elbogen, litanies--which express language in a repetitive and consistent way--must be of late origin. The alchet ("on account of the sin") of the yom kippur service is a prime example. This well-known prayer repeats alchet shechatanu lefanekha ("on account of the sin that we have sinned before You") in each of its stanzas, followed by a description of a sin. This leads Elbogen to deduce that "the uniformity [of the alchet] makes it likely that the passage derives from the last century of the Amoraic period [i.e. the sixth century]."

#### 3.) Dating material based on its acrostics.

An acrostic is a verse or arrangement of words in which certain letters in each line, as the first or the last, when taken in order spell out a word. Elbogen claimed that later composers of prayer used alphabetical or other acrostics to

<sup>&</sup>quot;Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 86.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 114.

adorn their liturgy. They would begin each stanza with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet or would spell out their name by beginning each stanza with the appropriate letter. Thus, according to Elbogen, the acrostic found in the el barukh gadol deah ("to blessed God, great in knowledge," which uses consecutively the Hebrew letters aleph, bet, gimel, daled, etc.) section of the yotzer or ("creator of light") proves it is of relatively late origin. 50

#### 4.) Finding the Urtext by eliminating the superfluous.

For arriving at the <u>Urtext</u>, Elbogen recommended omitting any portions of a prayer that seemed extraneous to the contents. The theme of the <u>yotzer</u> is the daily renewal of light as a renewal of the act of creation. The beginning and end of the prayer, twelve words in all, are the only relevant parts of this prayer, thought Elbogen. As he suggested, "it is possible to omit the rest [of the <u>yotzer</u>] without depriving its contents of anything." Consequently, he preferred the <u>yotzer</u> of Saadia, who recovered the "original" stock of the prayer by cutting it to only those passages that were germane to the theme. As an adjunct to this, Elbogen contended that the shortest versions of prayers found among the rites must be the earliest. 52

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Service (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1979), p. 34 and Elbogen, Hatefillah, pp. 20-21.

## 5.) Dating material as early based on its inclusion in rabbinic sources.

Elbogen believed that prayer passages whose wording could be located in a rabbinic text were of early origin. For example, Elbogen labelled the first line of the <u>yotzer</u>, which can be found in <u>Berakhot</u> 11b, as an early part of the prayer.

#### 6.) Dating material based on its content.

Related to #4 above, Elbogen reckoned that similar content between prayers indicated that one was later joined to the other. So Elbogen asserted that the <a href="mailto:shema">shema</a>'s first two biblical passages from Deuteronomy, which contain analogous ideas, found their way into the liturgy successively: "the second passage, similar in content to the first, [was]

#### . . . probably appended. "53

Applying these criteria lead to Elbogen's realization that the prayer "service did not always have its present form. It was not always so long, nor were all its parts originally included." However, Elbogen did not believe that prayers were edited according to a plan, by a single person at a single time. Rather, he believed that they appeared and joined each other throughout the course of centuries. So in most cases, Elbogen preferred to rely on the wording of the prayers themselves to determine their age and origin. But

<sup>53</sup>Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 12

even then, for example in the case of the amidah, one could "only conclude that [the benedictions] contain various elements from various periods," while ascertaining the exact age and origin could prove near impossible.

Elbogen rejected fabrications that tried to excuse discrepancies in rabbinic texts. In three separate places, the Talmud discusses the age and origin of the amidah:

\*the men of the Great Assemby instituted [the amidah] (Berakhot 33a)
\*one hundred twenty elders . . . drew up the [amidah] (Megillah 13b)
\*Simon the Flaxworker formulated the [amidah] in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel II . . . in Yavneh (Megillah 13b)

To reconcile these conflicting accounts, the Talmud explains that the <u>amidah</u> was forgotten and created anew in a later time period. This Elbogen flatly refuted:

It is contrary to the course of the nation's life; it is merely an attempt at harmonization that runs completely counter to both history and common sense.<sup>57</sup>

But, at the same time, Elbogen himself used talmudic statements to guide his judgment. He dated the first three benedictions, the earliest stratum according to Zunz, to pre-Hasmonean times, because the rabbinic attribution of the amidah to the men of the Great Assembly seemed to indicate their antiquity.

Elbogen criticized philologists who failed to make a

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

"conceptual penetration of the investigated material." He clamored for something more than a picayune, detailed collection of material. He thought there was too much attention paid to minutia and not enough to the systematic thinking which alone "would bring to us the great points of view." Accordingly, Elbogen strived to place the yields of his philological research into a coherent framework. To this end, he systematized his work in Der Gottesdienst, especially in the second section of the book, by drawing on history and its method.

<sup>58</sup> Ismar Elbogen, <u>Neuorientierung</u> as quoted in Rosenthal, "Ismar Elbogen and the New Jewish Learning," p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## E. The Historiograpical Approach

Historiography, or the critical study of history, first emerged in the Jewish community in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Up to this point, Jews had seen "history" as a series of divinely-ordained events, dependent upon their behavior. Jews supposed that if, for instance, they disobeyed the commandments delineated in the torah, God would punish them by sending plagues, floods, etc. However, if they followed the divine commandments, peaceful conditions would result. However, once Jews began to rely on the tools of secular scholarship to examine their past, they started to regard themselves as active participants in the historical process. As a result, Jewish history, for the first time, was considered to be an evolutionary unfolding that was governed, to a large extent, by world history.

Elbogen joined the ranks of Jewish historians by writing popular and scholarly accounts of the past. 60 He acknowledged that Jewish lives "were bound up with those of the people among whom they lived. More specifically, however, and more important to this study, in the second section of <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, Elbogen tried to show the driving force of historical development in the formation of liturgy.

<sup>\*</sup>See chapter one for an account of Elbogen's contributions to the field of history.

<sup>61</sup>Elbogen, Century, p. xxv.

## F. Elbogen's Historiographical Approach

The very title of Elbogen's book, Jewish Liturgy in its Historical Development, provides evidence of his self-conscious awareness that worship emerged in stages, at times through existing institutions. He looked, therefore, to rabbinic sources, primarily the Babylonian Talmud, to furnish historical clues as to how liturgy developed. But direct contemporary sources were lacking altogether for the most ancient period. And by the time literary sources appeared, "they were already finished products that did not contain evidence of the centuries of their emergence and the first steps of their development." Frequently changes occurred long before they are mentioned in sources. Furthermore, as Elbogen explained,

Tradition is reported from a later point of view, and institutions of an earlier period are often described as if they were then familiar, without thought to contrast them with their original form or to the intermediate stages. 63

Without explicit information, definite answers are impossible to formulate. So Elbogen resorted only

to conjectures, deduced from such facts as the Temple ritual and the evolution of Jewish religious history as they might have affected the development and early shaping of liturgy. 64

He found a proto-worship in the daily service of the

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

Temple, which was based on such biblical passages as the Decalogue and the shema. But he attributed the origin of the public daily religious assembly to those exiled to Babylonia. Since in Babylonia Jews lacked a religious center, they regularly "assembled to give expression to the ideas and feelings within all of them." The liturgy's oldest components consisted of the teaching and the confession of the faith. It was in the post-exilic period, however, that a closer relationship between the people and the cult emerged, demanding personal piety and participation of every individual in religious life. "

In order to guarantee people's participation in worship, the maamadot were established. These groups, which represented the rank and file of the people, went to Jerusalem for one week every half-year in order to pray and offer sacrifices. During this week, they would hold four daily services, involving petitions and a torah reading. Through them, worship was transformed into a weekday service that could be held at any location.

Once public worship became a fixed institution, the formation of a fixed liturgy was inevitable. But Elbogen found'that written collections of prayers were a relatively late phenomenon in Judaism, for originally it was forbidden to

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

reduce the prayers to writing. Only after the close of the Talmud, when other parts of the Oral Law were written down, were prayers also reduced to writing. Even by the first century, prayers had lost their free form and started to become crystallized. But these were not prayer books in the present-day sense. for many rubrics remained incomplete and prone to change.

#### G. Influences on Liturgy, according to Elbogen

According to Elbogen, prayers were always subject to alteration. "The need for innovation, changes in taste, outside influences and the practice of individual holy men" led to unintentional expansion, deletion or modification. Following this line of thinking, the second section of Der Gottesdienst is infused with specific examples of how outside forces had and continued to have an influence on liturgy, even in Elbogen's day. Elbogen dwelled on six historical phenomena that he believed led to significant changes in the liturgy:

1.) repeated persecutions against the Jews, 2.) political circumstances, 3.) the advent of printing, 4.) trends of the host culture, 5.) local variation and 6.) innovative religious thought.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

#### 1.) Persecution:

In the 1920s, Salo Baron coined the phrase "the lachrymose conception of Jewish history" to describe the history written by those, like Heinrich Graetz, who "overemphasi[zed] Jewish sufferings and [thus] distorted the total picture of the Jewish historic evolution." To Graetz, Jewish history was a series of misfortunes. Therefore, he constructed Jewish history, stressing national content, based on the persecutions suffered by Jews over the course of centuries. It is clear that Elbogen idolized Graetz. In his book he frequently extolled his predecessor's scholarship. In fact, his a Century of Jewish Life was designed to bring Graetz's history up to date. Utilizing Graetz's idea to a certain extent, Elbogen frequently attributed modifications in internal liturgy to external subjugation.

Elbogen argued that the placement of certain prayers was altered on account of persecution. For instance, he explained that the strange appearance of the <a href="mailto:shema">shema</a> in the <a href="mailto:kedushah">kedushah</a> of the Shabbat <a href="musaf">musaf</a> ("additional") service was occasioned by religious oppression in the Byzantine Empire." Officials

<sup>&</sup>quot;Salo Baron, "Newer Emphases in Jewish History," in <u>History</u> and <u>Jewish Historians</u> (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p. 96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Jonathan D. Sarna, <u>JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture</u>, <u>1888-1988</u> (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 200.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Elbogen, Hatefillah, p.49.

had prohibited the recitation of the <u>shema</u>, which they took as diluting the Church's doctrine of the trinity, and had appointed guards to oversee Jewish worship until the usual time for reciting the <u>shema</u> had passed. So Jews simply moved the <u>shema</u> to the <u>musaf</u>, a much later part of the service.

Similarly, basing himself on the Talmud, Elbogen explained the two-fold shofar blowing on rosh hashanah -- once during the morning service and again during the additional service--as another case of a ritual's changed placement provoked by outside forces (P.T. Rosh Hashanah 4:8). The shofar had originally been blown only during the morning service, but was later moved to the additional service on account of an incident in which Romans had interpreted these sounds as a call to rebellion and had fallen upon the Jews and massacred them. Oddly, Elbogen assumed that "the sounding at a late hour left no doubt [in the eyes of the Romans] as to the festive character of the ceremony [and so they would not be apt to attack the Jews]. "74 Eventually, however, the shofar blowing was re-introduced earlier in the service "so the congregation would not be forced to wait too long to hear it," and, though the later blowing was retained, Elbogen claimed that the Jews forgot the actual reason by the year 300 C.E.. 76

Changes in the form and theme of prayer also arose out of

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

religious persecution. Elbogen argued, for instance, that once external oppression had put an end to the sermon--long customary in the synagogue -- the Jewish community had lacked a form for religious instruction. Thus, the piyut ("liturgical poem") originated to fill that void. To defend his viewpoint, Elbogen cited Rabbi Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona to the effect that: " The piyut was introduced at a time of persecution because the Jews were unable to speak the words of In another instance of the same argumentation, Elbogen held that such themes as the longing for messianic salvation and the yearning for the ingathering of the exiled were introduced into Jewish liturgy in reaction to religious persecution of Antiochus in the second century B.C.E. These hopes for the future, drawing especially on images from Ezekiel, manifested themselves in the national petitions of the amidah. 76

#### 2. Politics

Elbogen believed that politics could bring about

<sup>&</sup>quot;The editors deny Elbogen's assertion that the Jews first composed <u>pivutim</u> as a direct result of persection. They explain that in place of prohibited prayers (or sermons), Jews did indeed insert poems containing the prohibited content without the gentiles noticing. However, they argue, the art of the <u>pivut</u> could have been developed during previous centuries without any connection to persecution (Ibid., pp. 214ff).

There Elbogen was drawing on the work of Moritz Steinschneider, (1816-1907), a prolific bibliographer, whose work contains this quote by Rabbi Judah b. Barzilai (Ibid., pp. 213 and 438, footnote 3).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

liturgical stagnancy. He tells us, for example, that at times of inner ferment in the community, Jewish leaders relied on prayer to serve as a unifying force. Only uniformity "guarantee[s]...unity." Hence, we find that the precarious state of the Jewish people produced uniform liturgy." Rabban Gamaliel II thus exemplifies a leader who, by giving his official stamp to a prayer service that up to the second century had been only customary, froze prayer in a time of political upheaval. Following the Bar Kochba rebellion of 132-135 C.E., which brought about a collapse of Jewish public life and a dissolution of institutions, it was necessary to restore the service of the synagogue. Elbogen thus concluded,

[It is] doubtless that certain individuals with authority took only their own personal traditions or views as their criteria and unilaterally suppressed customs different from their own . . . \*1

Those who "bound prayer in chains" stifled creativity to protect their positions, thus depriving the liturgy of its dynamism.\*2

#### 3. Printing

Elbogen added that the advent of printing, centuries later, contributed to a fixed form of liturgy as well by

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>\*1</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>\*2</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

reducing the great number of variants. When printers, rather than scholars, determined what would enter prayer books, decisions were usually made by chance and, in most cases, by the balance sheet. Books were slimmed down to avoid large expenses, leading to a reduction in the content and thus in the variety of rites. True, the tradition became more reliable, but as Elbogen understood it, even this gain was mitigated by the large numbers of errors due to the negligence and ignorance of the printers and typesetters."

#### 4. Trends of Host Culture

Every age, thought Elbogen, expands the traditional prayers in accordance with its own contemporary taste. In order to do so, Jews borrow freely from the trends of their neighbors:

Life does not allow people to seal themselves off from each other. Different strata of society influence each other's customs and practices. [There is a] constant give and take. 55

For instance, Hebrew poets learned about rhyme, meter and acrostic from their Arab neighbors, thereby embellishing their own liturgical poetry. This form of piyut spread and

<sup>&</sup>quot;3Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid., p. 279. Elbogen acknowledged as well that scribal errors of the past had created confusion in the transmission of manuscripts. They would arbitrarily shorten liturgy that seemed too long and skip whole sections of piyutim (Ibid.,p. 278).

<sup>&</sup>quot;5Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>&</sup>quot;According to the editors, Elbogen dates the first sparks of piyut to the sixth century. However, the editors push that date back to the third century in light of more recent scholarship which

enjoyed such popularity that its status sometimes even overshadowed that of the statutory prayers. 67

#### 5. Local Variation

But in most cases change was dependent upon geography.

Not all Jewish communities at one given point in time shared a common liturgy. As Elbogen argued, "The "[particular] history of the congregation fixed the shape of its liturgy. Factors like education, culture, custom, language, outlook and behavior of surrounding populations resulted in various liturgies for different communities. Prayer and synagogue custom diverged even in adjacent places; a relative freedom of liturgical expression emerged from community to community. A new force had arisen that was responsible for the editing of prayer books; "namely," the local prayer rite. Each congregation established its own distinctive prayer rite, dependent on circumstances particular to it. This, according to Elbogen, showed the extent of

led them to believe that we "can no longer distinguish between the period of statutory prayers and the period of pivut that followed it." For them, it is even possible to find some trace of pivut in the statutory prayers themselves. Yet, only over time (especially as Jews began to borrow poetic forms from the Arabs), did an elaborate type of poetry develop with forms specific to it, such as acrostic, rhyme and alliteration (Ibid., 211ff).

<sup>\*7</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Zunz first claimed that geography was one of the factors affecting liturgical differences. See Lawrence A. Hoffman, <u>Béyond the Text</u> (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 46-59.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 267.

individual participation in liturgical development. 90

# 6. Innovative Religious Thought

The final phenomenon that influenced liturgy, as Elbogen discussed it in <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, is innovative religious thought. "The history of liturgy," said Elbogen, "is a product of religious thought; whatever is in the foreground of religious thought tends to make its mark on worship as well." The two best examples, on which he dwelled extensively, were mysticism and nineteenth-century reform. He attempted to show how these advances not only gave rise accidentally to one liturgical development or another but even demanded specific changes in worship, as necessary consequences of their coming about. 92

The merkavah ("chariot") mystics arose in opposition to what they saw as the one-sided preoccupation with religious law that left the heart cold. "They emphasized prayer rather than study as the highest expression of piety. As early as the pharisaic period (second century B.C.E.), they devised specific techniques to enhance devotion and to create ecstatic intensity in relation to God. They would observe fasts on consecutive days and hang their heads toward the ground murmuring hymns all the while in order to become filled with

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tbid., pp. 280ff.

the divine. The group had a tremendous impact on the liturgy. Its affinity for heaping up, synonyms to describe God is characteristic of many prayers, including the <u>kaddish</u>, the <u>yotzer</u>, <u>emet veyatziv</u> ("true and certain") and <u>yeyishtabach</u> ("praised be"). Later mystics, guided by Isaac Luria (1534-1572), were instrumental in creating the <u>kabbalat shabbat</u> ("greeting of the Sabbath") service. Under his control, efforts to fix prayer escalated. Tradition needed to be followed exactly, for only in this way could one exercise influence on the "upper world.""

But for Elbogen mysticism, though important, played a secondary role to modern Reform. In the last part of the historical section of <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, therefore, Elbogen devoted nearly thirty pages to discussing how the changed social conditions and the rise in the educational level of the Jews in the nineteenth century induced alterations in the liturgy. As Jews were swept up in the current intellectual trends, critical thinking came to dominate religion as well.

Finding its main center in Germany, a tiny group of intellectuals sought reforms that introduced a new aesthetic affect of and conduct to liturgy without, however, attenuating its essence. Forms of liturgy no longer suited to the demands of the age were reshaped or eliminated altogether. They shortened the service length, deleted unintelligible

<sup>&</sup>quot;'Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>%</sup>Ibid., pp. 292ff.

liturgical poetry and curtailed disruptive commotion during the torah reading.\* To beautify the service, they inaugurated changes that had more to do with form than with content, such as choral singing and organ playing. Translations of traditional prayers also became widespread, making comprehension of the liturgy accessible to those who did not know Hebrew.

Overall Elbogen believed that change in the prayers during the early Reform movement in Germany were not very significant; "they did not touch on the main parts, only on the details of style." Two changes, however, did have fundamental importance:

- 1.) The petition for re-building the Temple and restoration of the sacrificial cult was replaced with a petition that prayer be accepted in place of sacrifice.
- 2.) The petition for the coming of the messiah was revised to include a request for the bringing of the messianic age.

These alterations lent the prayer service a more symbolic and less nationalistic nature. But even these, according to Elbogen, were moderate, for the early reformers did not want to break with the Jewish community.

By the time the Reform movement reached its height in Germany in the 1830s and 1840s, the situation had changed. A

<sup>%</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

new generation with different opinions and aspirations had arisen, for, according to Elbogen:

The Science of Judaism had come into being and the way had been found to the historical understanding of Judaism. Zunz . . . had irrefutably proved . . . the fact that religious institutions had evolved. It had shown that the liturgy did not originally have the same fixed form, nor was it of the same extent, but that liturgy had been subject to constant alteration, . . . [thus,] there was by now a significant number of rabbis with modern academic education who were convinced of the need for liturgical reform."

To this end, a rabbinical conference, intended as a nonpartisan meeting in which representatives of all approaches would convene to take common counsel, had been convened in Brunswick in 1844 to explore issues of liturgical reform acceptable to the community at large. Lacking, what Elbogen called "a guiding principle, and [too] eager to please all," the annual conferences dismantled by 1846, after only a total of three meetings had occurred."

Though short-lived, the conferences are significant, for as Elbogen would have had us believe, they demonstate just how potently Wissenschaft des Judentums had permeated the collective mindset of the Jews. Thanks to the efforts of scholars like Zunz (and Elbogen), a new generation of Jews had emerged in Germany--enlightened and acculturated--who understood the evolving nature of Judaism and its liturgy. No longer satisfied with the ossified and pedantic forms that had

<sup>&</sup>quot;\*Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Tbid., p. 309. See chapter three below for more information on these rabbinical conferences.

prevailed in Germany heretofore, they yearned for an "attractive form of religious activity." The scientific study of Judaism had aroused religious ferment, leading to religious renewal.

In a lenghty one hundred fifty pages Elbogen showed how influences upon liturgy resulted in an unfolding of richly diverse prayer, dependent upon geographical and historical circumstances for its evolution. Having delineated both the form and content of his method, it is incumbent upon us to determine Elbogen's biases and then to evaluate him as liturgical theoretician.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

# G. Elbogen's Biases as Evident in Der Gottesdienst

Wissenschaft des Judentums demands objectivity. For scholars who apply the critical tools of scientific study, a disinterested and detached approach to the material is a requirement. Yet as objective as his research might have been, Elbogen's analysis frequently included cantankerous remarks targeted at those he thought to be frustrating the ultimate goal of liturgy; "namely," the devotion of the worshipper. Of particular note is Elbogen's fluctuating opinion of liturgical poets, mystics and reformers. Occasionally he sang the praises of all three groups, though more regularly he attacked them for destroying what he regarded as the sanctity of liturgy.

on the one hand, Elbogen appreciated the creative advantage of the piyut: "Neither wording nor number nor order of the poems was subject to any regulation or limitation.. [The] main power of poetry resided in its flexibility."

It introduced to liturgy a welcome modification, one that allowed for artistic innovation and, more important to Elbogen, heightened piety. Moreover, the piyut performed a valuable service as a medium for disseminating religious ideas. As Elbogen put it: "How great was the religious feeling excited by the piyut! What consolation it instilled in the despairing!"

Liturgical poetry accurately reflected the

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

mood of Jews; it fulfilled their religious needs.

Yet, on the other hand, Elbogen warned that the accumulation of so much poetry could "easily be an inducement to facile rhyming, encouraging many who were not poets to try their hand at piyut." Consequently, routine cliches and linguistic errors became common. Elbogen, as Zunz, further lamented the fact that later poets, especially, made indiscriminate use of the entire vocabulary of available literature. They borrowed words from Aramaic, Latin and Greek and treated them as if they were pure Hebrew. This linguistic mix created faulty hybrids and made synagogue poetry incomprehensible. Even more confusion resulted when poets used rare Hebrew words that posed riddles to the reader. Nevertheless, Elbogen praised the poets who

went about their work with admirable daring, . . . who provided new generations with spirituality . . . [and who] advanced the Hebrew language. 105

The error was not, it would seem, in the composing of the liturgical poetry itself, but rather in the emphasizing of the form over content that lead to the creation of complicated and obscure poetry.

For the mystics, Elbogen had little appreciation. In the very introduction of <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, the author criticized

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

Here Elbogen relied on Zunz's <u>Die Synagogale Poesie des</u> Mittelalters, Berlin, 1819 (Ibid., pp. 223 and 448, footnote 50).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

mysticism for "stress[ing] the secondary and obscur[ing] the essential."10% Its influence on Jewish life "was a lasting and unhappy one. H107 Although Elbogen acknowledged that Jews inherited "many prayers of beauty" from the mystics, there are also many in which "verbiage overwhelms feeling and thought. "108 In particular, Elbogen censured the mystical custom of stacking synonyms in order to express an intense veneration of God. This, according to Elbogen, said almost nothing and acutally retarded the train of thought. He regarded the whole movement as one of "unhealthy extremes, deficient in clear and prudent thinking and . . . [prone to] superstition. "109 But once again, Elbogen could not deny the importance of the "profound piety they taught--they afforded German Jews an uplifted spirit [emphasis mine] so long denied. H110

At first, Elbogen complimented the reformers for divorcing themselves from those who were so deeply wedded to ancestral custom that they prohibited any change. He warned that care for customary practice could become a "morbid obsession." Elbogen denounced those who allotted

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

exaggerated importance to practices of the past while ignoring history's influence on liturgical development. In the course of time practices long considered customary routinely acquired a fixed form and binding character. But Elbogen favored prayer that remained in flux, thereby permitting the congregation or the precentor to put "as much emotion into them as they wished." He took pride in the fact that

. . . with all the reverence for the tradition, the religious sensibilities of the Jewish people never allowed themselves 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 . . . a contemporary tone. 114

Thus, in Elbogen's eyes, the early Reform movement in Germany performed a valuable service to the liturgy:

Only the critique of . . . the Reform . . . brought about an effort to elevate and refine the worship of the synagogue . . . The synagogue needed renewal and revivification if it was to survive. 115

Consequently, Elbogen heartily approved of alterations in the external form of worship such as choral singing, organ music and sermons in the vernacular. 116

However, Elbogen was less appreciative of the later reformers, particularly those who arrived on America's shores.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>114</sup>Tbid., p. 153.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 2 and 291.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

In his opinion, the reformers let themselves be guided by opportunism: "Everything they did was determined by external circumstances."117 Their modifications resulted in a "half-Jewish liturgy," according to Elbogen, who complained that they changed liturgy to such a large extent that "its Jewish character could hardly be recognized."118 Rather than developing a new religious conception, they were motivated by an overly influential concern for Americanization. For example, some stripped the traditional messianic ideal of its religious content and replaced it with a hope for achievement of worldly success and political equality.119 Fortunately, David Einhorn brought significant deepening to the reform movement when he placed Israel's messianic calling to all humanity at the center of religious thought. However, "even he could not sufficiently repress Americanization as a central idea. "120

As Elbogen interpreted it:

Reform in the true sense proceeds from dogmatic considerations that re-interpret or contest religious doctrine... But dogmatic considerations ... never aroused much interest. [There was a] split between the efforts of the theologians and the understandings of communities.... In their idealistic enthusiasm, the leaders of the reform movement lost sight of actual conditions and severely overestimated the general progress of their age .... The broad masses, whose lives were

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 298. ~

<sup>11</sup>e Ibid., pp. 311 and 317.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

anchored in views and forms of the past, were lost in both directions: theological reform was not strong enough to carry them along and dogmatic decisions did not have enough force to spark their enthusiasm. Moreover, conditions of the time set people off in pursuit of wealth and pleasure, alienating them from the pursuit of the messianic ideal.<sup>121</sup>

Nevertheless, Elbogen considered the reformers to be courageous and competent, albeit a bit too hasty in making changes. In religion, as in all other areas: "Only a steady development rooted in the past is justified." For Elbogen, enthusiasm and understanding for liturgy among the people must be awakened first. In renovating prayer, one "must [never] neglect the demands of feeling."

<sup>121</sup> Tbid., pp. 321 and 322.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

Having presented Elbogen's theories in <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, it is necessary to evaluate this scholar as liturgical theoretician. Specifically, we must determine to what extent Elbogen made innovative contributions to the field of liturgy and to what extent he synthesized the work of others. In addition, the plausibility of his assumptions must be ascertained. Finally, we will end the chapter by uncovering the underlying motivations driving Elbogen to write <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>.

Elbogen characterized Zunz as "the guide for all scholars who followed in his footsteps." We find evidence of this, especially insofar as Elbogen is concerned, for he relied heavily on Zunz's innovations to inform his "own" theories. In the course of his writing, Elbogen drew extensively on his predecessor's groundbreaking work <u>Haderashot beyisrael</u> to enrich his scholary work. Even despite the fact that he had a substantially greater amount of material available to him than Zunz, on account of the genizah material discovered in 1896, Elbogen retained many of Zunz's conclusions because his method was nearly identical.

The two shared a philological bent; each peeled back accumulated layers of liturgical prayer to reveal an <u>Urtext</u>. Echoing Zunz's claim that liturgy had been subject to continual alteration over time, Elbogen went about reconstructing the most ancient form of a prayer known and

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

following its development through various rites until his own day, in much the same way that Zunz had done. Both acknowledged that historical circumstances could either enhance or interrupt that development, sometimes in a sporadic fashion. The impact of a historical event on liturgy could take a generation or two to emerge. Textual variations made at one time could be dropped early on but then picked up by a later age. Hence, liturgical development did not always evolve in a sequential or orderly fashion.

Though neither attempted to systematically explain liturgical formulation, each did delineate some of the factors that went into the process. Not surpringly, their lists of factors overlapped considerably, both included persecution, printing, cultural diffusion, and local variation. However, to Zunz's list, Elbogen added the phenomenon of innovative religious thought. Claiming that the novel ideas inherent in both mysticism and Reform dramatically marked prayer, Elbogen was the first to explain the effects each had on liturgical development.

Although the profuse number of footnotes in <u>Der</u> <u>Gottesdienst</u>, totalling 1714 (!), prove Elbogen's strongest efforts being exerted on synthesis rather than creativity, his lengthy sections on mysticism and Reform offer fresh insight. From Elbogen, we learn in great detail how mysticism gave rise to liturgical innovations, such as the heaping up of synonyms to describe God and the creation of the <u>kabbalat shabbat</u>

service. Reform, too, introduced to the liturgy startling new changes. A modernized service of shorter length, with additions like choral singing and organ playing, altered the face of worship without attentuating its content. Elbogen's solid research offers an overview of liturgical development seen through the eyes of other scholars, with the addition of original analysis of how mysticism and Reform influenced Jewish worship.

Original contribution aside, we must define the problems inherent in Elbogen's work. Occasionally Elbogen resorted to arbitrary assumptions, especially when the results attained by philological examination of prayer text and those arrived at by historical examination were in conflict. For instance, in discussing the three blessings said on the first night of Chanukah, Elbogen found evidence of the initial blessing in the Talmud. The others are absent. Thus, he explained:

The text of the other two [blessings] appears to have been omitted from the Talmud editions by a printer's error, but it is no less ancient than the first [because their content is so similar]. 125

Behind the specific case is the philologial assumption that similarly-worded texts necessarily derive from a common time. Wedded to philology, Elbogen thus preferred to fabricate an explanation for the contradiction (i.e. the printer made an error), rather than admit to the shortcoming in his methodological presupposition.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

Further examples of reliance on faulty presumptions abound. Elbogen asserted that the language of the first three benedictions of the amidah justified attributing them, as did Zunz, to an ancient period. He then added, "Their content does not afford any contradiction to this assumption, if one overlooks the resurrection theme in benediction two [emphasis mine]." Once again the author's complete acceptance of the presuppositions of the philological method lead him to ask the reader to ignore relevant facts.

The examples above make us increasingly more cognizant of Elbogen's tendency to force data into a pre-conceived model -- that of philology. At times he falls prey to his own approach, compelled to draw conclusions grounded on assumptions. To some extent, the scholar has been imprisoned by the parameters of his method. 127

Despite the detectable weaknesses in his scholarly liturgical analysis, however, Elbogen's scientific studies significantly advanced the cause of practical religious reform. With a penchant for renovation in prayer, he utilized his research to justify making changes to liturgy. Elbogen believed that the religious reform, triggered by Wissenschaft des Judentums, could lead to religious renewal. But a fuller understanding of Elbogen is necessary to understand his reasons for staunchly advocating for moderate reform of

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> Sarason, p. 109.

prayer. That his ties to the progressive movement in Germany were undoubtedly strong is reflected in his multiple leadership roles in the liberal community. However, Elbogen was a moderate who only gingerly allowed for alteration of Jewish tradition. So precisely why and when did Elbogen allow for change?

Elbogen shared Zunz's position that "any Jewish authority or community has the right to introduce new prayers or to remove . . . additions [to liturgy, due to] length, incomprehensibility, or offensive content." In all cases, Elbogen supported change when it reawakened an enthusiasm for worship and intensified the "prayerful spirit." For him, the source of prayer's vitality is the devotion of the heart. "Public worship was originally instituted because of the need of the believer to lift his [sic] heart to God" and, thus, every innovation in liturgy of a later time is acceptable if it derives "from a desire to intensify the service of the heart."

hallow . . . a period of time . . . in order to forge a bond between mundane and divine, . . . elevat[e] . . . the workday to a festival, [and]. . . cultivat[e] religion.

Clearly put, liturgy has as its goal the "deepening [of] one's

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>129</sup> Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 324.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

piety."131 Accordingly, Elbogen's <u>Der juedische Gottesdienst</u>
in seiner geschichtlen Entwicklung is a grand defense for
liturgical change, but only when that change achieves his
stated end.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

#### CHAPTER 3

### ISMAR ELBOGEN AS PRAYER BOOK EDITOR

Between 1816 and 1967, editors generated one hundred seventy-five liberal prayer books in Europe. To no surprise, the prominent liturgist Ismar Elbogen participated in this endeavor. During the second decade of the twentieth century, he collaborated with Hermann Vogelstein and Caesar Seligmann on a revision of the traditional siddur and machzor fittingly entitled Gebetbuch fuer das ganze Jahr ("Prayer Book for the Complete Year"), and known more widely as the Einheitsgebetbuch ("Union Prayer Book"). Intended for progressive German Jewry, their two volume Hebrew and German prayer book was published in 1929. While Seligmann primarily concerned himself with the translation of the prayers into German, Elbogen revised the Hebrew texts, and Vogelstein worked closely with both to enhance their

<sup>132</sup>Elbogen, <u>Hatefillah</u>, p. 324, as noted in an editorial comment.

<sup>&</sup>quot;cycle" is the prayer book used for the Jewish new year and the day of atonement. Traditionally it is the name applied also to the liturgy for the three pilgrim festivals, but Reform Jews tend to integrate this liturgy into the siddur.

<sup>134</sup>See below for the history concerning this book, including a brief biography of each of the other two editors.

efforts.135

The prayer book is of significant consequence to this study. A thorough analysis of its contents will yield three important insights about Elbogen:

- 1) to what extent he put his scholarly research to practical use
- 2) to what extent his liturgical contribution is innovative
- a) to what extent Elbogen's Hebrew emendations reveal his personal preference for changing liturgy

  The exploration of these issues will provide further evidence for Elbogen's attitude toward prayer reform. Before considering these, we must put the prayer book in its context, determining the steps that led to its formation and recalling its history.

Preface, Gebetbuch fuer das ganze Jahr (Frankfurt am Main: M. Lehrenberger & Co., 1929); pp. xi-xxi. I relied on the English translation of the preface in Jakob J. Petuchowski, Prayer Book Reform in Europe (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), pp. 206-213.

# A. Background Information on the Einheitsgebetbuch

The prayer book's lengthy preface, written by the three editors, reveals its history. 136 By the mid-nineteenth century, the leaders of liberal German Jewry sought to unify nonorthodox Jews by creating a single prayer book. As early as 1844, progressive rabbis formed a commission, chaired by Leopold Stein, whose task was to find agreement on basic liturgical issues such as: 137

- (1) the amount of Hebrew to be used in a service
- (2) how references to the messiah should be handled
- (3) whether or not the amidah should be repeated
- (4) whether or not an organ should be included in worship
  The commission presented its recommendations in Breslau in
  1846, after which Stein tried to introduce in southwestern
  Germany a unified prayer book called Gebetbuch fuer
  israelitische Gemeinden ("Prayer Book for Israelite
  Congregations"). In 1860, when his efforts failed, he
  published a prayer book especially for the new synagogue built
  by the Frankfurt community in 1860.136

In the meantime (1854), Abraham Geiger, had prepared a

provided by the preface to the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>.

<sup>137</sup>Leopold Stein (1810-1882) was a moderate reformer who became rabbi of the Frankfurt Temple in 1843.

<sup>136</sup> Meyer, Response to Modernity, p. 186.

prayer book for the liberal sector of the Breslau community.139 As his predecessors, he retained much of the Hebrew, while radically altering the German "translation." Thus, for example, the German transformed the Hebrew expression techivat hametim ("resurrection of the dead") into the more ambiguous "renewal of life." What is more, Geiger introduced certain ideological changes even in the Hebrew. Specifically, the Hebrew text eliminated from the blessing before the Torah reading the words "from among all the nations" alluding to the chosenness of Israel. Geiger also altered the Hebrew prayers concerning sacrifice and the restoration of Zion. 140 Liberal rabbis, other than Geiger, composed prayer books so that by 1871, every large city, including Hamburg, Frankfurt-on-the-Main, Berlin and Breslau. possessed its own unique liturgy. Thus, liturgical unity on a large scale was not achieved in Germany during the nineteenth century.141

Ultimately the financial havor of World War I indirectly caused the formation of a reformed liturgy that could be shared by all German congregations who, in one way or another,

Days will in her

<sup>&</sup>quot;Michael Meyer asserted that the title "founding father of the Reform movement" belongs most deservingly to Abraham Geiger. Although a figure of the second generation of reformers, he gave Reform a rationale and a sense of purpose. Though he would have preferred to be a university professor, anti-Jewish Germany of the nineteenth century kept Geiger in rabbinical positions in Wiesbaden, Breslau, Frankfurt and Berlin. (Meyer, Response to Modernity, pp. 89-99).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

in 1894, liturgical unification was successful in America.

had departed from orthodox ritual. Because of the war, many congregations lacked the funds to reprint their own prayer books. Therefore, the Union of Liberal Jewry and the Union of Liberal Rabbis took over the matter. At a rabbinical conference in the '20s, Caesar Seligmann of Frankfurt suggested that at least the congregations of Berlin, Breslau and Frankfurt—who had adopted the Hebrew text of Geiger's book, though in different versions—could unify their liturgy. Consequently, the three communities embarked on this joint venture with Seligmann, joined by Ismar Elbogen and Hermann Vogelstein, at the helm. 143

At first, the Berlin congregation commissioned Ismar

Hermann Vogelstein (1870-1942) occupied the rabbinical post in Breslau. Son of the founder and president of the Union of Liberal Rabbis, Heinemann Vogelstein, he emigrated to the United States in 1938. He wrote the standard history of Jews in Rome (Geschichte der Juden in Rom, 1895-6) with Paul Rieger of which the Jewish Publication Society of America published a revised edition in English (Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 16, p. 204).

<sup>142</sup>In the years preceding World War I, liberal Jewish leaders established a solid organizational structure. Settled into the denominational status "Liberal Judaism," they established ongoing national associations, including: (1) Union of Liberal Rabbis in Germany--established in 1898 by Heinemann Vogelstein and which by WWI had seventy-two members; and (2) Union for Liberal Judaism in Germany--formed in 1908 and boasted a membership of 5,000 by 1909. The Union of Liberal Judaism created a periodical, Liberales Judentum, edited by Caesar Seligmann (Meyer, Response to Modernity, p. 210).

<sup>143</sup> Caesar Seligmann (1860-1950), was appointed the preacher of the Liberal temple in Hamburg in 1889, and from 1902 to 1939 he officiated as rabbi in Frankfurt. In 1910 he published a two-volume prayer book (<u>Israelitisches Gebetbuch</u>) that was more extreme than any proposed by the German progressive movement to date, but reproduced the Hebrew portions almost unchanged. In 1939, he moved to London where he lived until his death (<u>Encyclopaedia Judaica</u>, Vol. 14, p. 1132).

Elbogen to develop an elaborate scientific study, which together with a second study by Seligmann, became the basis of the prayer book. Then for three years, the three editors dealt with issues of principle and of detail until they fashioned complete Hebrew and German texts for Gebetbuch fuer das ganze Jahr. They later consulted experts to review the galley proofs before the book was sent to the printer for publication. 144

#### B. The Composition of the <u>Binheitsgebetbuch</u>

According to those who edited the Hebrew version of <u>Der</u>
<u>juedische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichten Entwicklung</u>,
Elbogen's liturgical treatise, there are three types of
mainstream liberal prayer books:

- 1) Those books that abridge material and make minor changes in the wording as necessitated by beliefs of the age. Some prayers may appear in the vernacular, though there is little innovation and in general a maintenance of traditional forms of public worship.
- 2) Those books that hardly take the tradition into account whatsoever. They largely remove Hebrew and make no attempt to shape the form and content after rabbinic liturgical patterns.
- 3) Those books that fall somewhere in between the former.
  They try to be true to tradition, but alert to the demands of

<sup>&</sup>quot;In their preface, the editors mention Dr. Michael Holzmann.

the modern age.145

In conscious departure from the Liberal prayer books of nineteenth-century Germany which fall mostly into category one above, the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> conforms, to a large degree, to the criteria outlined in category three. As Elbogen, Seligmann and Vogelstein stated, the German translation of the prayers

aims at being as literal as possible, but also-strives to do justice to the different syntax and spirit of the German language as well as the poetic beauty of the prayers. 146

Yet, as they explained, since the majority of congregations for whom the book is intended desired to "maintain their individuality," there are no far-reaching Hebrew innovations. Rather, in order to give congregations the widest possible freedom, there are extensive rubrics, carefully noted in a detailed index. These gave each congregation an opportunity to conduct its worship according to local tradition and needs, and to retain or omit this or that prayer. Thus, the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> is a reformed prayer book which allows every congregation to contribute its own native <u>minhag</u> ("custom").

It is our objective to examine closely the first volume of <u>Gebetbuch fuer das ganze Jahr</u>, particularly the daily

<sup>145</sup> Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 325.

<sup>146</sup>Preface, <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, as translated by Jakob J. Petuchowski, <u>Prayer Book Reform in Europe</u>, p. 209.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

shacharit ("morning") service. 146 Volume one is six hundred eleven pages in length, in addition to an extensive appendix of one hundred twenty-four pages consisting of hymns and prayers in German drawn from other reformed prayer books. It opens in a traditional manner, from right to left, and has Hebrew text on the right-hand page--opposite the German text, which is on the left.

In order to determine the revisions Elbogen made in the Einheitsgebetbuch, we must first review the "traditional" daily shacharit service. The morning service, as it has come down to us, contains the following sections:

- I. <u>Birkhot hashachar</u>: the morning benedictions, consisting of thanksgivings for the divine benefits bestowed upon us; originally designed as home meditations to be recited upon waking
- II. <u>Pesukei dezimrah</u>: verses of song, consisting mainly of Psalms 145-150, ending with the song of Moses (Exodus 14:30-15:18)
- III. Shema and its Blessings: an affirmation of

<sup>148</sup>We are most interested in the daily <u>shacharit</u> service since it forms a core around which Sabbath and other holiday expansions are appended.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Traditional" service consists. (see chapter two above) Our eference points for determining the contents of a traditional hacharit service are Isaac Seligman Baer's Seder Avodat Yisrael Order of Worship of Israel"), an Ashkenazic prayer book that Ibogen relied upon for his research, and Philip Birnbaum's Desiddur Hashalem ("The Complete Prayer Book"), a book that is idely used by Ashkenazic, Orthodox congregations today.

monotheism surrounded by two preliminary blessings (yotzer and birkat hatorah), the first emphasizing creation and the second revelation; succeeding blessing (geulah) focuses on the Exodus as redemption

- IV. Amidah (also known as tefillah or shemoneh esreh): the petitionary prayer par excellence that contains nineteen benedictions in the following structure: the first three benedictions praise God, the last three acknowledge God's blessings and the middle section is a series of requests, of both a personal and national nature 150
- V. <u>Tachanun</u>: a sequence of supplications, recited on weekdays, recalling the sufferings of the Jewish people
- VI. Torah Service: occurs only on Monday, Thursday and Saturday; reading from torah, in addition to prayers surrounding the ritual
- VII. Concluding Prayers: consists of the <u>aleinu</u>, a prayer expressing the chosenness of Israel and proclaiming God as ruler over a united humanity; the <u>kaddish</u>, a liturgical doxology that eventually became a prayer for the dead, though it contains no reference

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controversy surrounding the origin of the <u>amidah</u> and at what point it became a staple daily liturgical portion (see chapter two above).

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Although the Hebrew portions of the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> contain all six of these sections, key differences are apparent. The text is marked by abbreviations, additions, the restoration of old passages, and the substitution for what the editors called "unsuitable portions." 151

# C. Elbogen's Changes to the Hebrew Text Section I

The introductory material of the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> includes several revisions. Traditionally upon rising, the worshipper recites <u>elohai</u> <u>neshamah</u> ("my God, the soul"), thanking God for restoring the soul to the body for another day. Elbogen replaced the explicitly non-rational <u>chatimah</u> ("eulogy"), <u>hamachazir</u> <u>neshamot</u> <u>lifgarim</u> <u>metim</u> ("who restores the souls to the dead") with <u>mechayeh</u> <u>hametim</u> ("who revives the dead"). Perhaps the traditional text posed a problem for Elbogen since an image which clearly supposes individual souls returning to individual bodies was not in keeping with the rationalistic thought of the day. For liberals who demanded that religion be reconciled with reason, this image needed to be eliminated, or at least mitigated. Hence, Elbogen sought to substitute outmoded theology with language that was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup>Preface, <u>Einhertsgebetbuch</u> as translated by Jakob J. etuchowski, <u>Prayer Book Reform in Europe</u>, p. 209.

<sup>152</sup>A chatimah ("eulogy") is the closing section of a blessing that iterates its main idea.

more appropriate to the age.

Of greater significance are the numerous omissions evident in this first section of the Einheitsgebetbuch. Elbogen not only shaved the fifteen morning blessings down to four, but also rearranged the order of those he spared. For no readily apparent reason, he preserved the benedictions thanking God for "removing sleep from my eyes," "giving strength to the weary," "guiding the steps of humanity," and "providing for all my needs." As expected of a German Liberal who attempted to capture the universalism inherent in Judaism, Elbogen removed benedictions that expressed ethnocentrism or particularity of any kind; those that thanked God "who has not made me a heathen," "who has not made me a slave," "who has not made me a woman" are eliminated. Similarly, most benedictions that catalog God's miraculous (i.e. supernatural) nature are removed; "who opens the eyes of the blind," "who clothes the naked," "who sets free the captive," etc. Yet, the four blessings Elbogen did retain could be similarly construed as expressing God's miraculous powers.

We can solve the puzzle over Elbogen's choice to keep only these four benedictions in a newly-altered order by examining them closely. In fact, based on their content, Elbogen placed them in a very logical sequence. Upon waking, a worshipper would initially thank God for "removing the sleep from [his or her] eyes." Then, as the worshipper stretched and rose from the bed, it would be reasonable to thank God for

"giving strength to the weary." As the worshipper took the first steps across the room, thanking God for "guiding the steps of humanity," would be appropriate. And finally, as the new day unfolded, the worshipper would want to thank God for "providing for all needs." Elbogen's suggested arrangement functions rather effectively. He retained those blessings that are self-evidently about the individual waking, and removed those that seem to be concerned with other people.

Further deletions are evident in Elbogen's liturgy.

Based on the principle of avoiding repetition of the same prayer, Elbogen eliminates all recitations of the chatzi-kaddish ("half-kaddish"). This prayer, that traditionally serves as a transition between distinct sections of the worship service, is absent from the Einheitsgebethuch.

Moreover, Elbogen removed the usual blessings for torah study from the morning benedicitons so as not to repeat what would appear later in the torah service. By keeping the preliminary

material to a minimum, he could cut down on the overall length

# Section II

of the service.

Elbogen similarly reduced the <u>pesukei dezimra</u> but mentioned that some, though not all, lacking parts were distributed throughout the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>. For example, though Elbogen does not include the <u>ashrei</u> (Psalm 145) in the <u>shacharit</u> service, he does mention it as appearing elsewhere

in the prayer book. 153

### Section III

In this section, Elbogen's editorial hand fell most heavily upon the yotzer. As we learned in Der Gottesdienst, Elbogen argued that everything except the core, or what he called the Urtext, of prayer is superfluous and artificial. Thus, he believed he could eliminate much of the yotzer text without great loss. In fact, as Elbogen perceived it, this was to be considered as a gain in the sense that "purity" of the text was obtained. Preferring the earlier prayer with less expansion, Elbogen removed five parts of the traditional yotzer, including hamelekh hameromam, elbarukh (the acrostic discussed in chapter two above), titbarakh, the kedushah (also discussed in chapter two above) and or chadash. With the exception of the emet veyatziv, in which he omitted eight of the so-called dispensable synonyms, Elbogen left the other prayers of section three intact.

# Section IV

The <u>amidah</u>, especially the intermediary petitions of national content, provided Elbogen with much grist for the reforming mill. As other Liberal editors, Elbogen modified the wording of the prayers in those instances where the traditional formulation seemed to contradict the outlook of

<sup>153</sup> Elbogen, Einheitsgebetbuch, Vol. I, p. 44.

<sup>154</sup>See chapter two above.

Liberal Judaism. In concert with progressive ideology of the day, Elbogen carved out of his liturgy references to a return to Zion of the exiled, to a personal messiah and to a reinstatement of the sacrificial cult.

The major departures from the traditional text occur in petitions 10, 11, 15 and 17. The tenth petition, in which the worshipper customarily asks for an ingathering of the dispersed of Israel to Zion, traditionally reads:

teka beshofar gadol lecherutenu vesa nes lekabetz galuteinu, vekabtzeinu yachad mearba kenafot ha'aretz barukh atah Adonai mekabetz nidchei amo yisrael ("sound the great shofar for our freedom; lift up the banner to bring our exiles together, and assemble us from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, Adonai, who gathers the dispersed of the people Israel") [emphasis mine]

Compare this text to Elbogen's:

teka beshofar gadol lecherutenu vesa nes lekabetz yarekha bearba kenafot ha'aretz, barukh atah Adonai mekabetz amo yisrael ("sound the great shofar for our freedom; lift up the banner to bring your reverent ones on the four corners of the earth, blessed are You Adonai who gathers the people of Israel") [emphasis mine]

Like other Liberals, Elbogen removed any blatant allusions to the concept that Jews are exiled from their homeland of Israel. Traditional Jews regard the dispersion of Jews around the world as only a temporary condition. They believe that with the coming of the (personal) messiah, God will gather exiled Jews from the four corners of the earth to live once again in Zion. This concept was at odds with the attitudes of acculturating Jews of the nineteenth century who wished to be considered citizens of and loyal to the lands of their birth.

Elbogen's innovative editorial sleight of hand, found in no earlier prayer book, could assuage any suspicion on the part of non-Jews who looked for proof of Jews' disloyalty to their homeland of Germany.

In the eleventh petition, which is a prayer for the restoration of Jewish judicature, Elbogen relied on the wording that appears in Geiger's 1870 prayer book. The traditional prayer reads, "Restore our judges as at first, and our counselors as at the beginning." In constrast, Elbogen's (Geiger's) version asks God to "restore to us the joy of Your salvation, and may our judgment go out before You." The latter reflects a divine, rather than a human, restoration of power where God judges who will be saved.

Elbogen eliminated references to a personal messiah in the fifteenth petition by appropriating the language used in the Brunswick Liberal prayer book of 1906. The traditional petition begins:

et tzemach david avdekha meherah tatzmiach ("speedily cause the offspring of Your servant David to flourish")
[emphasis mine] 155

Traditional Jews believed that at the end of days God would send a personal messiah who would be a descendant of David, former king of Israel. Elbogen replaced the specific reference to the scion of the Davidic empire with a more generalized hope for salvation:

<sup>155</sup>Unlike the Brunswick prayer book Elbogen added the word speedily."

et tzemach yeshuah meherah tatzmiach ("speedily cause the
sprout of salvation to flourish") [emphasis mine]
The Einheitsgebetbuch substituted "de-personalized" redemption
for a personal messiah.

We see in petition seventeen that Elbogen used the wording of Geiger (who had in turn borrowed the language from the Hamburg prayer book of 1868), with the exception of a single clause evident only in Elbogen's text: utefillatam tekabel beratzon ("and accept their prayer with pleasure"). In the seventeenth petition, rather than asking God to accept fire-offerings and prayer, Elbogen's words beg for divine acceptance of prayer alone. Additionly, in no place in the Einheitsgebetbuch do we read the traditional line: vehashev et ha'avodah lidvir beytekha ("restore the worship to Your most holy sanctuary"). Liberal German Jews wanted no part of a religion that beckoned toward a past replete with animal sacrifice and cultic worship.

Like section one, the fourth part of the Einheitsgebetbuch is heavily laden with universalistic, rather than particularistic, tendencies. Longing to eradicate differences that separated Jews from others, progressive prayer book editors eliminated references to Jewish uniqueness. Elbogen, like others, made the eulogy of the eighth petition more inclusive by simply replacing the words, rofe cholei amo visrael ("who heals the sick of the people Israel") with the more general rofe cholim ("who heals the sick"). Likewise, as opposed to the typical first line of

petition sixteen which reads

ki atah shome'a tefillat amkha yisrael ("for You hear the prayer of Your people Israel") [emphasis mine],

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ki atah shome'a tefillat kol peh ("for You hear the prayer of every mouth") [emphasis mine].

Here as well universalist tendencies guided Elbogen's revisions as well as those others who similarly had emended this petition.

There are some notable exceptions to Elbogen's deference to modern sensibilities. As in the birkhot hashachar where he preferred mechayeh hametim to hamachazir neshamot lifgarim metim, Elbogen retained the traditional chatimah of petition two, which expresses an accepting view toward resurrection. Here it would seem that Elbogen was running counter to the rationalism of his age. However, unlike the Reform Americans who made the denial of resurrection practically an article of faith, not one of the European Liberal editors found it necessary to change the Hebrew under consideration. Similarly in petition one, like most of his counterparts, Elbogen used mevi goel ("bring a redeemer") rather than the more progressive mevi geulah ("bring redemption").

Petition twelve, which traditionally is a malediction against slanderers and the wicked, was originally directed against the Judeo-Christians and the Roman oppressors. In

rayer books--twenty-seven in all, including the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>
Petuchowski, <u>Prayer Book Reform in Europe</u>, pp. 215ff).

spite of his opinion that "the most sensible change is to eliminate [birkat minim ("blessing of the heretics")] entirely," Elbogen included it in the Einheitsgebetbuch. 157
However, his version furnishes no specific reference as to who these apostates are, as the more antagonistic traditional prayer does. Lifting the precise wording of the text from Geiger's prayer book of 1870, Elbogen stressed, in a more compassionate way than the traditional prayer, the hope that evil would disappear, rather than enemies be destroyed.

#### Section V

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An extremely abbreviated <u>tachanun</u> appears in the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>. After listing the occasions on which these supplications ought to be recited, Elbogen presented a <u>tachanun</u> consisting of an introductory passage, followd by Psalm six. He retained the traditional concluding paragraph known as <u>anakhnu lo yeda</u> ("we do not know") that portrays humans as sinful.

The inclusion of this passage suggests Elbogen's acceptance of negative Jewish anthropology stemming from rabbinic ideology. The Rabbis believed that sin is inevitable and leads to suffering, but humans repent, and are forgiven; until they sin again. This cycle of sin, repentance,

<sup>157</sup> Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 40.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, Gates of Understanding 2 (New York: Contral Conference of American Rabbis, 1984), p. 142.

atonement and pardon pervaded much of rabbinic thought and led to the writing of prayers that reflected this moral. While many Liberal Jews had transformed this age-old cyclical moral into a faith in the steadiness of change and the inevitability of progress, Elbogen had retained the traditional Hebrew text exhibiting the thinking of earlier generations.

#### Section VI

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Elbogen recommended new readings in place of the traditional portions taken from the torah and the prophets. He had no compunction about introducing different texts, even from the writings, in place of meaningless or distasteful traditional selections. As expressed by the editors, "in place of the monotonous portions, or of those with little religious content, new portions [had] been chosen." So, for instance, for the second day of Passover, Elbogen substituted the report in Chronicles about Hezekiah's Passover observance for the prophetic portion. And for the first day of Rosh Hashanah, he replaced the traditional torah portion (vayera, "the birth of Isaac and the casting out of Hagar") with "the doubtlessly more suitable reading" of Deuteronomy 29 (nitzavim, "you stand"), which articulates the religious options available to people planning for their future. 160

Petuchowski, Prayer Book Reform in Europe, p. 210.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

In terms of the liturgy of the torah service, Elbogen made few--but significant--modifications, based once again on the principle of reducing redundancy. Traditional prayers before the reading he left untouched. But he removed psalm 24 (hodo al eretz, "[God's] majesty is above the earth"), which follows the reading. Moreover, as in the yotzer, Elbogen deleted the kedushah [desidra] and all references to the angels that had become integrated into the final section of the torah service. He further eliminated references to the messiah and to olam habah ("the world to come") that traditionally appear in this passage. As we recall from our discussion of birkhat hashachar, Elbogen reserved the birkhot hatorah for the torah service itself, removing them altogether from the former. For Elbogen, the torah reading played the central role in worship.

As far as the sermon is concerned, we know from <u>Der</u>

<u>Gottesdienst</u> that Elbogen favored guidance of a religious.

nature during the worship service, especially words delivered in the native language. In his opinion:

Thanks to the last seventy years we have seen regular religious instruction at the time of prayer successfully reassert itself in Jewish communities, irrespective of religious inclination, . . . and the vernacular sermon has once again become a part of Sabbath and festival worship. 162

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<sup>161</sup>Specifically, <u>kedushah desidra</u> ("of the portion") is affixed to the paragraph beginning <u>uva letziyon goel</u> ("a redeemer shall come to Zion").

<sup>162</sup>Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 146.

Likewise, from <u>Der Gottesdienst</u>, we surmise that Elbogen detested any sort of "uncivilized conduct" during worship, especially while the torah was being read. He was grateful to the reformers for eliminating "noisy disturbances . . . in every country."

On both Purim and Simchat Torah, celebrations known for their merrymaking, Elbogen preferred congregations who exercised restraint to those "less cultivated . . . places [which] degenerated into wild excesses and undecorous behavior."

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As expected, Elbogen departed from the customary formulation of the <u>aleinu</u> in order to reflect a more universalistic attitude. In place of the line,

shelo asanu kegoyey ha'aratzot velo samanu kemishpachot ha'adamah ("who has not made us like the nations of the world and has not placed us like the families of the earth") [emphasis mine]

the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> declares, without the use of negatives or comparison,

shebachar banu leyached et shemo vekeravnu la'avodato
("who chose us to unify [God's] name and drew us near
to [God's] work").

Whereas the traditional <u>aleinu</u> sharply distinguished Israel's destiny from other peoples, Elbogen's version blurs the particularisms that set Jews apart. Here he spun chosenness into a responsibility, rather than a privilege. Jews were

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

obligated to live among other peoples, to work for an improved world in which all humanity would flourish.

Elbogen's text is markedly similar to that of Abraham Geiger, who wrote in his prayer book of 1870:

shesam chelkenu levached et shemo vekeravnu la'avodato
("who appointed our portion together with [God's] name
and drew us near to [God's] service")

While Elbogen retained the direct reference to Israel's election, both praise God for entitling Israel to work for the sake of tikkun olam.

# D. Miscellaneous Observations about the Einheitsgebetbuch

Before turning to an assessment of the prayer book, it is necessary to make some miscellaneous observations which will enable us to draw fuller conclusions regarding the Einheitsgebetbuch's liberal proclivities. While our primary concern is the daily shacharit service, other parts of the prayer book deserve our attention. For example, despite the Liberal aversion toward reestablishing the sacrificial cult and the adoption of the philological principle "the shorter" the better," Elbogen--like others--oddly included a musaf ("additional") service for rosh chodesh ("new moon"), for Sabbath. Additionally, festivals for the Einheitsgebetbuch ironically contains aravit ("evening"), shacharit and minchah ("afternoon") services for tisha be'av ("the ninth of Av"), the holiday that mourns the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem. In fact, a

total of seventy pages in the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> are devoted to a service for <u>tisha</u> beav.

An attempt to explain these anomalies will be made in the final portion of this chapter.

# E. An Assessment of the Einheitsgebetbuch

In his own words, Elbogen identified a prayer book as "reformed" by relying upon the following ten criteria:

- abridgement of traditional prayers, especially the elimination of poetry
- 2. use of vernacular

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- 3. elimination of references to angels
- 4. reduction of particularism'
- removal of the petition for gathering the exiled and returning them to Zion
- 6. removal of the petition for reinstatement of sacrifice
- substitution of messianic age and redemption for allusions to a personal messiah and a redeemer
- 8. substitution of eternity of the soul for resurrection
- 9. distribution among several services throughout the prayer book of prayers which belong to a single service in the traditional <u>siddur</u>
- addition of prayers expressing aspects of modernity<sup>165</sup>

Using Elbogen's criteria and the analysis above, we can

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

clearly characterize the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> as reformed. We saw how the editors joined the Hebrew text to a corresponding German one and eliminated material they considered superfluous. References to angels, gathering of the exiled and reestablishment of the sacrificial cult were omitted. As evident in their words, universalism triumphed over particularism, and modern ideas suffused their language. Additionally, they spread several prayers over a variety of different services.

Yet there are two notable exceptions to contend with, specifically numbers seven and eight. Whereas Elbogen deleted references to the ancestry of the messiah in birkat David of the amidah, he retained the notion of a personal messiah in the avot. He did not, that is, take the "progressive" step of inserting ge'ulah ("redemption") for go'el ("redeemer"). Furthermore, non-rational images of God are found in the Hebrew portions of the Einheitsgebetbuch. For instance, Elbogen preserved the traditional language of the gevurot, which promises resurrection of the dead at the end of days.

To explain these anomalies, we need look no further than the preface to the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>. As evident in the preface, the editors wanted as many congregations as possible to use their prayer book. They yearned to disseminate their book throughout the Liberal Jewish community of Germany. By including nothing too outlandish and by toeing a moderate,

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<sup>166</sup>See page 62 above.

Liberal line, the editors hoped to achieve this goal. If the book was to serve the needs of a maximum number of progressive congregations, it was essential that it be as inclusive as possible. Hence, the editors retained prayers even they may have found unacceptable for worship.

The editors assumed that each congregation would deem which parts of the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> liturgy appropriate to incorporate into their worship and which to exclude. Liturgical decision-making depended upon the discretion of each individual congregation. Thus, for instance, by including the <u>musaf</u> in the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, those congregations who opted for it could be equally content with the prayer book as those who did not, who could simply skip over this part of the prayer book.

What is more, as noted throughout the analysis, the editors of the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> were for the most part following the unarticulated guidelines of those who had come before them. Progressive Judaism in Europe maintained the structure and, to a considerable extent, also the form of the traditional Jewish liturgy. Modifications in language are indeed evident: all shortened the worship service, eliminated all or most of the <u>piyutim</u>, introduced German prayers and altered texts based on dogmatic consideration. But, for the most part, we notice the remarkable attempt on the part of editors, including Elbogen, to depart as little as possible from traditional writing, even in certain cases where the

dogma underlying the traditional formulation had been amended or given up altogether.

So the editors of the <u>Finheitsgebetbuch</u> were of two minds. On the one hand, they wanted to unify Liberal congregations with a single, fixed liturgy. But, on the other, they deliberately fashioned their liturgy so that each congregation could effortlessly make changes dependent upon minhag hamakom ("local custom"). If the autonomy of each congregation was to be respected, liturgy had to be fluid. Consequently, the so-called fixed liturgy contained in the <u>Finheitsgebetbuch</u> was anything but fixed, for each congregation altered it according to its needs.

We know that Elbogen had concluded in his scholarly work that, throughout history, Jewish liturgy had insisted on changing and developing. And he put this knowledge to work in the editing of the Hebrew portions of the Einheitsgebetbuch. By removing, for instance, overt references to a return to Zion of the "exiled" in the tenth petition of the amidah, Elbogen sought to reconcile liturgy with historical realities facing nineteenth-century Jews. Reassured by his philological findings as well, Elbogen boldly made changes to liturgy. Most conspicuously, he pared down the length of prayers to restore them to, what he perceived, as

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<sup>167</sup> See chapter two above.

their "orginal" state. The most obvious example is his treatment of the <u>yotzer</u>, which he reduced to approximately fifty words from the two hundred fifty (!) that appear in a traditional <u>siddur</u>. His two-fold methodology, of historiography and philology, visible in <u>Der Gottesdienst</u> is very much alive in the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> as well.

But scholarly research alone guided Elbogen to a limited extent in his editorial tasks. More noticeable is Elbogen's reliance on Liberal prayer books published before his own, especially Geiger's 1870 edition. As we recall, the congregations of Berlin, Breslau and Frankfurt were already using Geiger's book when the Union of Liberal Rabbis called on Elbogen, Seligmann and Vogelstein to create a prayer book that could serve the needs of these three progressive communities. Thus Elbogen understandably drew heavily upon Geiger's Hebrew texts to fashion his own.

Indeed, Geiger exerted a decisive influence on Elbogen's text. Specifically, the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>'s eleventh, twelfth and seventeenth petitions of the <u>amidah</u> and a line of the <u>aleinu</u> contain the precise wording Geiger used in his book. In addition, Elbogen borrowed text from the Brunswick prayer book of 1906 and Seligmann's prayer book of 1910. But Elbogen's small bursts of creativity ought not be overlooked. Innovative clauses here and there distinguished his liturgy from his predecessors', albeit in a negligible way.

However, it was neither his scholarship nor his borrowing

that guided Elbogen's liturgy in the most profound way. Ultimately, the single most important yardstick by which he measured the value of maintaining or eliminating certain prayers or sections of prayers was piety. According to his words, Elbogen would modify liturgy only if that modification would elevate the religious mood of the congregation. Alterations of prayers depended most on the piety of those of the current generation of worshipping Jews. As he put it.

The genius of the synagogue has never rested: one generation after another has been striving to renew devotion and piety. Every generation has revived the ancient heritage through the expression of its own time. 168

In this prayer book, Elbogen presented an expression of faith to nineteenth-century German Jews struggling to become a part of the greater society. He strived to create, what he thought to be, a meaningful prayer service for Liberal Jews. Through his work on the Hebrew portions of the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, Elbogen attempted to stimulate Jewish piety in his own time.

Petuchowski, Prayer Book Reform in Europe, p. 213.

How would Ismar Elbogen have assessed the years of religious reform that spanned the greater portion of the nineteenth century? As we saw in the introduction of this study, Elbogen posed this very question in 1924. Having himself lived through the latter part of this era, Elbogen called on his colleagues to judge if those one hundred years of development had been destructive or constructive. Unfortunately, Elbogen never answered this question in any direct way. Therefore, it has been our task to examine his life, his major scholarly work pertaining to liturgical development (Der juedische Gottesidienst in seiner geschictlichen Entwicklung), and his Liberal prayer book (Einheitsgebetbuch) in order to unearth information that would aid us in answering the question on Elbogen's behalf.

We can conclude that Elbogen regarded change as a constructive force. He contended that the body of knowledge society calls tradition is and ought to be in an active process of change. Tradition should therefore never evoke a mere reverence of the past. We observed in chapter two especially how Elbogen sought to show how historical circumstances had always influenced liturgy. Singling out six factors in <a href="Der Gottesdienst">Der Gottesdienst</a>, he demonstrated how each had made its mark on prayer. These diverse effects had resulted in an unfolding of richly diverse liturgy. As an auxiliary observation, Elbogen criticized those who "bound prayer in

chains." Stifling creativity could lead to stagnation, thereby depriving the liturgy of its characteristic dynamism.

In many ways, we can argue that Elbogen's theory fueled his ideology. As a leader of German Liberal Judaism who advocated religious reform to at least a moderate extent, his <a href="Der Gottesdienst">Der Gottesdienst</a> provided a rationale for reducing, eliminating, adding, or in any way modifying prayer. His historical analysis, that traced the ways in which liturgy had perpetually evolved, justified the editorial alterations he undertook in the <a href="Einheitsgebetbuch">Einheitsgebetbuch</a> in his own day. The conclusions he drew as liturgical theoretician entitled him to liturgical freedom as prayer book editor.

Yet Elbogen, as we recall, did not view any and all changes to liturgy as constructive. To the contrary, he branded certain innovations of the poets, mystics, and reformers as destructive. He criticized the indiscriminate use of foreign words in Hebrew poetry and the overwhelming verbiage of the mystical writings. In addition, he was unusually severe in castigating American reformers, complaining that their modifications diluted the historical liturgy to such an extreme that its Jewish character was hardly visible.

For Elbogen, as we discovered in <u>Der Gottesdienst</u> and the preface to the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, it is piety that must ultimately inform liturgical change. Every age is authorized to alter prayer, if and only if that change will result in

heightened religiosity for the community. In fact, rather than ending his massive academic study of liturgy with an intellectual statement of formal conclusions, as other scholars might have, Elbogen concluded abruptly, with an emotional outpouring describing what he perceived as the task of liturgy:

To assemble a congregation for collective devotion, to elevate its spirit toward [God] and to draw from the eternally-flowing well of its holiness. 169

similarly, in the <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u>, Elbogen seemed most concerned with the religious needs of his readers. He not only allowed, but longed for, congregations to contribute their local practices to this prayer book in order to deepen their worship experience. Elbogen perceived any change that achieved this objective as constructive.

Having answered Elbogen's question regarding the propriety of religious reform, we turn to our own pressing question that emerges from this study: To what extent does Elbogen deserve his reputation as world-renowned liturgical theoretician and prayer-book editor? As we learned in chapter two, Elbogen's Der Gottesdienst remains the standard work for students of liturgy. Every major liturgist since has drawn heavily on Elbogen's study. In his volume, he captured on paper all scholarship on liturgy that had been written up to the turn-of-the-century. Utilizing primarily, but not exclusively, the work of Zunz, Elbogen presented the

Elbogen, Hatefillah, p. 380.

philological approach to prayer in four hundred pages and 1,714 footnotes. Though far from concise and at times repetitive, his study includes a great breadth of knowledge that enriches our understanding of liturgical development.

Moreover, his <u>Einheitsgebetbuch</u> served as a unifying agent for the Liberal communities of Breslau, Berlin and Frankfurt. For nearly a century, progressive German Jewry had attempted to unite its members through liturgical uniformity. Thanks to the efforts of Elbogen, Seligmann and Vogelstein, three large congregations could comfortably utilize the same prayer book. The editors carefully tempered their changes, especially in the Hebrew, to accommodate to the needs of a broad worshipping community. As a result, they succeeded in uniting Jews for heightened religiosity.

However, despite their assets, Elbogen's contributions to liturgical theory and prayer-book editing contain a distinguishable flaw. To a certain extent, we inherited a marvelously detailed collection of data with a conceptual penetration of the material that fails to reach beyond the system already defined by his precursors. As already pointed out, Elbogen drew extensively on the work of others for both Der Gottesdienst and the Einheitsgebetbuch. From this, we might conclude that, following Zunz in scholarship and Geiger in liturgy, Elbogen was basically a loyal disciple and final codifier of a school of thought that had already reached maturity.

But a conclusion such as this would be measuring Elbogen's contributions by the standards of scholarship we evoke today. Perhaps our contemporary yardsticks for gauging the worth of a scholarly work are not suitably applicable to the products of nineteenth-century Wissenschaft des Judentums. This radically new approach to studying Judaism, which entailed applying the tools of secular scholarship to the past, only gradually pervaded the Jewish intellect. And even then, though Zunz's groundbreaking work of 1832 caused a stir among the intellectual elite, the passing of at least another generation was required before most Jewish scholars and some among the Jewish masses assimilated these points of view.

Elbogen was born a mere forty years after the spark of Wissenschaft had been ignited in Germany. His synoptic work enabled his generation of scholars and lay people to understand the novel ways of thinking introduced by Zunz and others. He became the great codifier of liturgical theory, playing an essential role in the dissemination of knowledge. Elbogen's German colleagues and students appreciated his unflagging scholarly and communal labors. But because he came to the United States at a relatively late age and because he was prone to criticizing American Reform, Elbogen did not receive equal esteem in this country. His valuable liturgical contributions deserve to be elevated to their rightful place of honor, and Elbogen deserves to be judged within the context from which he emerged.

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