A Guide to Prayer and the Daily Amidah
Through the Eyes of Jewish Thought and Tradition

by

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Digest

While *Mishkan T'filah* is a beautiful prayer book, only a tiny fraction of it is used--let alone opened--on a daily basis. The prayer experience of the Reform Jew is mostly confined to the Shabbat liturgy. Since daily prayer is less a part of that experience, the goal of this thesis is to help inform, and hopefully inspire, Reform Jews to explore the value and function of daily prayer. Admittedly, the liturgy of the daily prayer service is daunting and at times overwhelming. The objective of this thesis is to promote insight and knowledge about various aspects of prayer and the daily Amidah, which help inform the contents of the guide to prayer and the daily Amidah (the project of this thesis, found in the last chapter).

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. Chapter One examines the concept of prayer and, more specifically, petitionary prayer through the lens of Jewish tradition and modern scholarship. Issues discussed include: the efficacy of prayer, the function of *kavanah* (spontaneity) and *keva* (fixity) in the prayer experience, and the value and function of petitionary prayer. Chapter Two systematically examines and analyzes the nineteen benedictions (including the opening and closing scriptural verses) of the daily Amidah as it appears in most traditional prayer books. Chapter Three presents the scholarship devoted to the liturgical history of prayer and the Amidah. Chapter Four builds off of the materials presented in Chapter Three as the background for discussing the liturgical changes to the Amidah in various early European Reform prayer books and North American Reform prayer books from the mid-nineteenth century down to the present day. Finally, Chapter Five presents the

contents of the "Guide to the Daily Amidah and Prayer." While the guide is not a comprehensive product of all the extensive material presented earlier in this thesis, the learning and preparation throughout the process of writing and research were necessary in informing all the content of the guide.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is not a culmination of my studies, but rather, a reflection of my growth and learning throughout my experiences at Hebrew Union College. Naturally, while writing a thesis about the value and centrality of prayer in the lives of Jews and me, I could not help but reflect on the blessings in my life, and the *shehechiyanu* moments along the way; all of which have helped guide me along this journey.

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Ayden, you are the light that shines ever so brightly in my life. You are my source for endless hope and joy. You embody everything this world so desperately needs: love and peace. I am so proud to be the father I have always wanted to be to you, and my love for you is immeasurable.

I dedicate this thesis to all who are the blessings in my life.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Mishkan T'filah is a beautiful prayer book, replete with innovative liturgical additions to the traditional prayers, creative translations in addition to literal translations of the liturgy, and inspirational readings. The problem is, only a tiny fraction of the prayer book is used, let alone opened, on a daily basis. This is evident by the worn pages of only the Shabbat service (and the Torah service, to some extent). The pages of the weekday service are typically pristine. The unfortunate fact is that too many Reform Jews, with the exception of HUC students, generally have never seen the weekday liturgy. Daily prayer is seemingly not stressed in the Reform synagogue community.

One way to bring an appreciation for, and practice of, daily prayer to Reform Jews is to make the prayers more meaningful and accessible to people's lives. People need to know how prayer is relevant to them, what is the power of prayer, and why they should take time out of their hectic schedule to pray. The next question one may ask is, "Where do I begin?" The morning services are simply too long and can be overwhelming to the beginner and veteran alike.

The daily Amidah, unlike that of Shabbat, embodies the very essence of the prayer experience and is the place for one to begin their prayer journey. The themes throughout the daily Amidah extend from communal needs to personal petitions. Its structure ranges from the fully written-out blessings to opportunities for spontaneous petitions to God. Unlike any other rubric, the Amidah is the

occasion when one enters into the realm of the Divine to offer up the words and desires of the heart.

This thesis creates a tangible guide to prayer that provides adult learners with meaningful and informative introspections about the daily Amidah. The results of preliminary research serve as the backdrop to the guide to the daily Amidah. It includes a detailed introduction to the concept of prayer and discusses the reason why the Amidah is the place to begin on a daily basis. The guide then hones in on major themes, histories, and theologies of the prayers of the Amidah on a day-by-day basis, thus providing a framework for the adult learner seeking to integrate prayer into his or her spiritual life. Eventually, this guide will be a more extensive work; however for purposes of this project, thirty days' worth of materials have been completed.

The first four chapters of the thesis delve into the multiple layers of prayer and the Amidah. The first chapter explores the meaning and power of prayer. This chapter begins with a brief definition of prayer and, more specifically, petitionary prayer. It then examines the subject of the efficacy of prayer, as understood both in Jewish tradition and today. The discussion seeks to answer some of the following questions: What does it mean to pray/talk to God? How is God conceived in the Jewish tradition? What is our personal relationship with God and how does it play out in our prayer experiences and in our daily lives? Does God hear our prayers? Does God answer our prayers? Following is a brief overview of the eternal issue of *kavanah* (spontaneity) versus *keva* (fixity) and how they function in the prayer experience. Finally, this chapter culminates in an overall discussion of the function

of petitionary prayer in our prayer experiences. Some representative sources from rabbinic tradition and some contemporary responses are examined.

The second chapter explores the themes and structure of the traditional daily Amidah. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the nineteen benedictions. The contents of this chapter range from traditional sources and liturgical scholarship research/analysis to homiletical explanations of the benedictions.

The third chapter explores the scholarly issue of the history of the Amidah; in other words, how, according to modern scholarship, did it come into being? This chapter provides a summary overview of the scholarly literature on this question.

The third chapter delves, not exhaustively but in a representative fashion, into the concepts of *kavanah* and *keva* through the eyes of rabbinic and modern commentators. This section proposes to answer the following questions: What is the degree of fixity and flexibility in the wording and articulation of the Amidah? Was the original language fixed and if not, how did it become fixed? How do we account for all the variations among the rites? How much room does rabbinic tradition leave in this rubric for spontaneous, personal prayer?

The fourth chapter explores how each benediction of the Amidah, including the opening and closing readings, have been treated in Reform prayerbooks, through the analysis of some representative early European Reform prayerbooks and North American Reform prayerbooks and modern commentaries.

The fifth chapter provides the contents of the month-long day-by-day guide to the daily Amidah. The concluding appendix provides examples of the formatted guide as it will appear as a final product. The contents of each page are intentional

and systematic, used to help inform and inspire the adult learner/pray-er. The guide is a product of the research in the four areas of prayer and the daily Amidah as found in Chapters One through Four. The material throughout the thesis informs every step of the guide, but the guide (as it appears thus far) is not an exhaustive product of all the information and research provided in the thesis.

Chapter One

Prayer through the Eyes of Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought

Jewish petitionary prayer (*bakashah*) has been the subject of study and debate for countless generations. We find examples of petitionary prayer dating all the way back to the Bible when our ancestors cried out to God to intervene in times of crisis and despair. Most commonly, we find examples of "fixed" petitionary prayer throughout our liturgy (with regard to both prescribed topics and wording), with the main locus being the intermediary blessings of the Amidah (the focus of this thesis). In order to gain a true sense of the centrality of petitionary prayer in our tradition, we must first examine the sources, both biblical and rabbinic. In doing so, we will then begin to understand the tradition of prayer that has been handed down to us from generation to generation.

This chapter will begin by defining prayer, followed by a more specific definition of petitionary prayer. Following the definitions, we will then delve into the efficacy of prayer (i.e does God hear/answer our prayers?), as seen through the eyes of both rabbinic tradition and current scholars and theologians. Naturally, with theological discussions come challenges and difficulties. We will briefly present an overview of the main issues and difficulties of the various theologies, as articulated in the rabbinic texts and the writings of modern scholars and theologians. The discussion on the efficacy of prayer progresses into the way in which we pray. This section will

deal with the eternal issue of *kavanah* versus *keva,* the fluid versus the fixed. Ultimately, the discussion on *kavanah* and *keva* will present fundamental ideas about specific issues we will be discussing (particularly in Chapters Three and Four) regarding petitonary prayer as it continues to evolve over time.

According to Abraham Millgram, "Prayer is not...an invention of religious leaders. It preceded prophets and priests, temples and houses of prayer." [1] While people most often think of the communal nature of prayer, which is argued to have been an innovation of the Yavnean Rabbis (see Chapter Three), we can see clear evidence of individual prayer in the Bible from the earlier narratives in Genesis about the Patriarchs[2] through the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah. The quintessential prayer of Hannah at the beginning of the first book of Samuel is viewed by the Rabbis of the Talmud as paradigmatic for their own ideas about prayer rhetoric, stance, and behavior (see BT Berakhot 31a-b). All of the aforementioned examples of biblical prayer are essentially, as today, "the product of man's yearning for the most intimate of all human communication, for the opportunity to open his heart and his mind in adoration and supplication to the divine presence."[3] Millgram continues, "Prayer is thus the bridge between earth and heaven, between man's despair and his eternal hope, between his depression of the

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[1] Abraham Ezra Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), 9.

[2] See Genesis 19:27, 24:63, and 28:11.

[3] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 9.

soul and his spiritual elation."[4] Prayer is an essential element of the Jewish soul. It is just one of many important vehicles for our connection to God and, while many people tend to turn to God in moments of need and crisis, prayer also functions as a way to show God our love and gratitude for the blessings God bestows upon us. In responding to the divine blessings that surround us daily, Abraham Joshua Heschel likens prayer to "radical amazement." He writes in his book *Man's Quest for God* that prayer "is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments."[5] Prayer allows us not only to turn to God in moments of need and crisis, and to offer thanksgiving for the blessings in our lives, but also simply to recognize our awareness that God exists in our lives and of the daily miracles that take place around us. Prayer thus reflects our need and our means to connect to God that may help us put our lives into perspective.

While prayer is a way for us to recognize God's presence in our lives, prayer is also designed to meet our human needs. Dudley Weinberg writes, "Prayer is awareness--awareness not only of God but of oneself as well. God is what he is and we are what we are whether we recognize and welcome it or not. Prayer is a joyous recognition and deliberate thankful acceptance of

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[4] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 10.

[5] Heschel cited in Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: a Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service,* (New York: Schocken, 1994), 41.

what we are."[6] Prayer helps us put life into perspective, not only regarding the God who exists in our lives, but also regarding our own existence in this world. It is a celebration of who we are. Weinberg also writes that prayer reminds us of our "longing to be worthy of God's love, to come to deserve it through the doing of his will."[7] When we pray, we may be uplifted by the idea that we are worthy of God's love and it is a blessing to have the opportunity to do God's will. As Leo Baeck writes, "Ultimately prayer is a way of experiencing the reality of God in the world and of relating to that reality. In Revelation God reaches out to us, but in prayer we reach out to him."[8] In essence, prayer is not only about our recognition of God for God's sake, but so, too, for our sake.

While prayer functions as our recognition of God's greatness and our acknowledgement of our worthiness of God's blessing, prayer also functions in a petitionary way. Simply put, when we need something, whether in times of crisis or need, we not only praise God for God's greatness, but we ask God to fulfill our needs. Petitionary prayers are the supplications of our hearts. Milligram discusses the idea that "prayers of petition have been relegated by some to the lowest rung of the ladder of worship" when in fact, "supplication is the heart of all prayer, and those who would remove supplications from the prayer book would only succeed in stripping it of its religious vitality and

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[6] Dudley Weinberg in Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1972), 124.
[7] Weinberg in, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 132.
[8] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 7.

emptying it of all personal relevance."[9] Prayer is as much about the individual as it is about God. The prophets teach us that God does not need our sacrifices; we do. We have needs and often we turn to God for the answer.

Jacob Petuchowski lists a few examples of what constitute petitonary prayers: "for material goods as well as for spiritual blessings, for physical healing as well as for messianic redemption, for the destruction of arrogance as well as for the granting of peace, and for intelligence as well as for divine pardon."[10] The Talmud explicitly states what we should include in our petitions to God. For example, BT Berakhot 32a teaches that we should pray for God's intervention for the benefit of others and YT Berakhot 4:7 teaches that we must pray only for the betterment of the community and the lot of Israel as a whole.[11] In essence, the talmudic guidelines for public prayer are only for the good of humanity, being for our fellow individuals, the community in which we live, or for the whole of Israel. This is also evidenced by the fact that the majority of Jewish liturgy is written in the first person plural, not the first person singular.

While the Talmud is explicit in what one should pray for, so too, is it even more specific in what one should not pray for. Among the many examples in the Talmud of what not to pray for, we learn the following:

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[9] Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, 12.

[10] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 35.

[11] Lindsey Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer" (Rabbinic Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1996), 21.

praying for something that can be resolved by human action (YT Sanhedrin 10:5), anything that would tempt fate (BT Moed Katan 18b), not to pray against our fellow man (BT Baba Kamma 92b), and not to cry out over a past occurrence, such as praying for the sex of an unborn child, which has already been determined even if it is still unknown (BT Berachot 9:3).[12] Having now defined the simple meaning of prayer and petitionary prayer, we will delve into the heart of the matter, that is, does God hear our prayers?

The Bible is the source for the traditional Jewish view on the efficacy of prayer. There are a many examples in which God hears and answers prayer. In Numbers 12:13-14 Moses prays on behalf of his sister Miriam and her leprosy is cured. In I Kings 17:20-22, the prophet Elijah prays on behalf of a lifeless child and the child is subsequently restored to life. In the Book of Jonah 3:5-10, the people of Nineveh cry out to God and are saved from impending doom. [13] In the book of I Samuel 1:20, as mentioned previously, God hears Hannah's prayer and she then conceives a child. [14] The Bible is the basis for rabbinic thought and the Rabbis used the above examples as evidence for the efficacy of prayer. As will now be shown, the Rabbis carefully thought about the value and effectiveness of prayer.

Ruth Langer writes, "[The Rabbis'] system established that God hears, desires, and is pleased by prayer, and that the person who prays properly can

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[12] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 19-20, 22.
[13] Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, 19.
[14] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer: A Theological Exploration* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1989), 63.

expect certain rewards in this world and the next."[15] The Talmud is rife with examples of the efficacy of prayer. For example, "Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: When you pray and pray again, know that your prayer is heard, and that there will come a time when God will do what you ask. And the proof? *Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let thy heart take courage; yea, wait thou for the Lord.* [Ps. 27:14] (Braude, Midrash on Psalms, 1:374)[16] As can be seen throughout the Talmud and the corpus of rabbinic literature, the Bible is the basis for this theology.

The Rabbis are traditionally known to have innovated communal prayer, unlike the spontaneous, personal or intercessory prayer seen throughout the Bible. In response to the destruction of the Second Temple they had to create a replacement that would keep the Jewish people in contact with God, hence, prayer. However, as Ruth Langer writes, "The Rabbis themselves always considered their system a poor substitute. They looked forward to the speedy rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple where God would again be worshiped properly and they certainly assumed that any sacrificial worship outside of Jerusalem would be decidedly un-pleasing to God."[17] Rabbinic prayer, from one perspective, is thus just a weak and temporary substitute for the sacrificial cult of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the Rabbis were intentional in creating a theology that

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[15] Ruth Langer, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1998), 19.
[16] Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, 19.
[17] Langer, *To Worship God Properly*, 10.

would give people hope and a way to turn to God in times of tremendous despair and loss of hope. Thus the following tradition in BT Berakhot 32b: Rabbi Eleazar said, 'The gates of prayer have been closed since the day the Temple was destroyed. Though the gates of prayer are closed, the gates of weeping are not closed, as it says, *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give an ear unto my cry: keep no silence at my tears* (Ps 39:13)."[18] The Rabbis were clearly responding to the shock of the loss of the Temple. The passage in BT Berakhot 32a continues by noting that, "In spite of the 'wall of iron'... certain parts of prayer do elicit a response from God... When Israel responds 'May his great name be blessed' in the synagogue or study hall, God nods his head and, while enjoying their praise, commiserates with them when they are in exile."[19] A tradition in BT Megillah 21a further asserts that, "When one stands to read Torah, it is as if God stands alongside."[20] The Rabbis sought to create a theology that would keep the Jewish people faithful to God. In a time in which the Jews were coping with the loss of the Second Temple, the central place of Jewish worship, they needed an efficacious substitute. The Rabbis were able not only to keep the Jews faithful but also to establish their authority as the "keepers of the Jewish faith."

Seeking to bolster the faith of the righteous and encourage righteous behavior, the Rabbis often spoke of the efficacy of the prayer of the righteous. For example, BT Yoma 29a compares the prayer of the righteous to the hind

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[18] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 29.
[19] Langer, *To Worship God Properly,* 14.
[20] Langer, *To Worship God Properly,* 14.

of the dawn in Psalms 22:1. The Talmud states, "R. Benjamin bar Japheth said in the name of R. Eleazar: 'Why is the prayer of the righteous compared to a hind? To tell you that as with the hind, whose antlers keep producing more and more branches every year as long as it grows, so with the righteous–the more they pray, the more will their prayer be heard."[21] In BT Yevamot 64a it is written, "Why is the prayer of the righteous likened to a shovel? In the same way that a shovel removes produce from one place to another, so the prayer of the righteous turns God's attribute of anger to one of compassion."[22] All of the above examples, which are just the tip of the iceberg, illustrate a theology that comports with the rabbinic understanding of God's will, as interpreted in the rabbinic system of laws that are found throughout rabbinic literature. In other words, rabbinic prayer was put forward as the hallmark of efficacious prayer, coupled with living in line with rabbinically ordained practice.

While the rabbinic and traditional view of the efficacy of prayer presumes that God will grant our petitions, sometimes God simply says no, which also shows that God hears our prayers. There is a story of a little girl who prayed repeatedly for a bicycle without success: "You see," taunted her unbelieving friend, "God does not answer prayer." "Oh yes, he does,"

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[21] Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah. Legends from the Talmud and Midrash.* Translated by William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 525.

[22] A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1949), 81.

answered the girl, "His answer was no!" [23] Jacob Petuchowski writes, "God must also be thought capable of saying "No!" Perhaps that is indeed the major difference between engaging in magic and engaging in prayer."[24] Thus, "No" can be as much of an answer as "Yes."[25] Furthermore, "man in fact, may voice requests which, in the long run, are not for his own good. If God were to grant such requests, then he would not really be concerned with man's true welfare."[26] The idea behind all of the above examples is that we really do not know if our prayers have been answered or not. In a way, the ability for God to say "no" to us can be seen as enabling us to remain faithful and hopeful for a better and more fulfilling future.

While the rabbinic notion of the efficacy of prayer is clearly defined in the above examples, it is also fraught with theological difficulties and even contradictory beliefs. The theological challenges regarding the efficacy of prayer have been long debated and argued over centuries. The following discussion will offer a summary of the challenges.

Dan Cohn Sherbok discusses the question of how God can grant contradictory requests by different people; "Some want rain while others want drought."[27] Additionally, Petuchowski takes the challenge further by discussing God's actual granting of our prayers. He writes, "It would be a

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[23] Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer,* 70.
[24] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer,* 40.
[25] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer,* 40.
[26] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer,* 40.
[27] Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer,* 63.

rather primitive concept of God if one were to regard him as a kind of cosmic vending machine. You insert a prayer, and out comes whatever boon you have selected!"[28] In other words, using the terms of Dudley Weinberg, God is not "a kind of Arabian nights genie" [29] who will grant our wishes. While the Rabbis argued for the efficacy of prayer, it seems reasonable to believe that people have lost faith over time due to the perceived lack of God's response. Additonally, as Cohn-Sherbok points out, "In many cases where petitionary prayers were not fulfilled...this constituted a serious problem for the rabbis. If the requests were reasonable and if God had the power to grant them, there was every reason to think these requests would be granted. But since they were not, one could conclude that petitionary prayers are not in fact efficacious – this however was a view the rabbis consistently resisted."[30]

Futhermore, there is an even deeper theological question about the efficacy of prayer: how can our prayers change God? Simply put, how can an all-knowing God not already know our prayers? As Petuchowski writes, "How then can petitionary prayer be justified theologically?"[31] Does God need to be told and made aware of our needs? If we do not challenge the rabbinic theology, then we are seemingly limiting God and God's omniscience in the world. The medieval philosopher Joseph Albo argued that if God had

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[28] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 39.
[29] Weinberg in Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 133.
[30] Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer,* 65.
[31] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 35.

decided what he's going to do, then there is no point in praying because God is unchangeable.[32]

Often times, the questions raised above can lead one to face serious theological issues. One may question the efficacy of their prayers and ask larger, more unanswerable questions about God (such as about evil, death, violence, etc. in the world). In this state of doubt or disbelief, one may feel entirely out of place in a liturgy that is so "God-heavy." Unlike traditional prayer books or even earlier modern prayer books, today's modern liberal prayer books seek to meet the theological needs of a variety of Jews. The authors of these modern prayer books recognize and affirm that people may grapple with their belief in God and their faith. Therefore, the authors of these prayer books intentionally build in readings and space for people who do struggle with these theological difficulties. For example, *Gates of Prayer* contains a section of readings entitled "Doubt" and *Mishkan T'filah* contains a variety of readings that focus on multiple theologies and the challenges one may face in their own spiritual quest.

Despite these theological difficulties raised above, the Talmud teaches that there is an etiquette and propriety in prayer that will make it more efficacious. For example, BT Berakhot 24b teaches, "He who makes his voice heard during his prayer is of those whose faith is small. He who raises his voice during prayer is at one with false prophets." This is under the

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[32] Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer,* 34.

assumption that God would not hear our prayers otherwise.[33] In addition to ruling about the voice level of one praying, the Rabbis also taught that one should pray long and often. BT Berakhot 7b teaches, "Whoever prays much will be answered." However, this theology was challenged by the Rabbis themselves. According to Abraham Cohen, "the general opinion was that the length of a prayer bore no relation to its efficacy."[34] Evidence of this can be found in BT Berakhot 32b which teaches, "'If one prays long, his prayer does not pass unheeded.' Rabbi Hiyya Ben Abba states, 'One who prays long and looks for fulfillment of his prayer, in the end it will have only heart ache.'"[35]

A much discussed topic about prayer is the tension between *kavanah* and *keva.* Due to the extent of the material, we will provide, for purposes of this thesis, only a brief overview and highlight the major arguments as found in our tradition.

Before we delve into the arguments, we must first define the terms *kavanah* and *keva*. Simply put, *kavanah* is the intentionality and spontaneity of our prayer. To pray with *kavanah* is to pray with one's heart aimed toward heaven, with the utmost intention to reach God. *Keva*, on the other hand, is the fixed structure, such as prayer etiquette (i.e. when to bow, stand, sit, etc), the structure and precise wording of the prayer book, and praying at the proper times according to the rulings of the rabbinic texts. With these

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[33] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 27.
[34] Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud,* 84-85.
[35] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 31-32.

definitions in hand, the following section will highlight the arguments as they pertain to the efficacy of prayer.

As we would expect, there are many contradictions and tensions throughout our tradition in regard to the topic at hand. One can especially find this to be the case in the Talmud. We will begin with the discussion of the *kavanah* of prayer in the Talmud.

Mishnah Avot 2:18 teaches, " When you pray, regard not your prayer as a fixed task, but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the All-present."[36] This Mishna is the basis for the subsequent discussions on the matter. The Talmud is rife with theological statements, arguing that prayer without *kavanah* is not true prayer. A. Cohen makes the case that true prayer is more than the utterance of the lips, for it must come from the heart. He exemplifies this by quoting BT Ta'anit 8a which teaches, "'A person's prayer is not heard unless he places his heart in his hands; as it is said, *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens* (Lam 3:41)" [37] At Mishnah Berakhot 4:4 Rabbi Eliezer teaches that, " He whose prayer is fixed, his prayer is not supplication"[38] The talmudic comments on this saying in PT Berakhot 4:4 and BT Berakhot 29b note that Rabbi Eleazar and others used to pray every day a new improvised prayer.[39] Abraham Idelsohn points out in reference to

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[36] Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 85.

[37] Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud,* 88.

[38] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 17.

[39] Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), 29.

this teaching that BT Berakhot 34a suggests that "the first and last three benedictions were definitely fixed, while the intermediary benedictions were only frames into which the people would formulate their own prayers"[40] (this point will be elucidated in Chapter Three).

While the majority of opinions follow those of the above teachings, there are also some arguments that support the *keva* of prayer. With regards to changing the words of the instituted prayers we read the following story in BT Megillah 25a: "A certain person once led the prayers in the presence of Rabbi Hanina thus: 'the great, mighty, awesome, powerful, strong, and brave God.'" R. Haninah explained that we would not dare use the words "great, mighty, and awesome" had they not been written by Moses in the Torah and decreed by the men of the Great Assembly (Megillah 25a).[41] Rabbi Haninah's argument may be in reference to the one who does not believe in one God. By hearing the multiple attributes of God, perhaps one would assume more than one God. Or the Rabbis may have thought, how can one, who does not have the intimate relationship with God like Moses, add to Moses' words? In regards to the wording and intent of petitionary prayer the Rabbis argued in BT Shabbat 12b that, "great care had to be taken with respect to the wording, intent, and timing of prayers... even the language."[42] Finally, the second-century Tanna, Rabbi Yose, taught in Tosefta Berakhot 4:5, "Anyone who deviates from the rabbinically established form of the benediction does not

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[40] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, 29.
[41] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 160-161.
[42] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 18.

fulfill his obligation."[43] One can find validity in both arguments for *kavanah* and *keva*; the fact of the matter is, prayer is dependent on both. Nevertheless, the vast majority of opinions on the importance of one over the other is heavily weighted toward the *kavanah* side. The following is a summation of the many beliefs of various scholars and theologians.

Joseph Heinemann discusses the problem with fixed prayer as conflicting with authentic Jewish prayer in which the dominant elements are, "innovation, spontaneity, variety, and creativity."[44] He then goes on to say that while fixed prayer is an innovative new form of prayer, "there was no intention to push aside that type of personal, spontaneous prayer."[45] In fact, he says, "Set prayer itself left a great deal of room for innovation, variation, and creativity. It is therefore, all the more strange that the principle of free prayer has so completely disappeared from Judaism in recent centuries, particularly in our own time."[46]

Reuven Hammer writes extensively on the importance of *kavanah* in prayer. He emphasizes the fact that the prayer texts are constantly evolving through time. He writes that "every new text is built on the texts of the past, and the more echoes, the richer the new text."[47] Therefore, Hammer

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[43] Langer, *To Worship God Properly,* 28.
[44] Joseph Heinemann in Gabriel H. Cohn and Harold Fisch, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer." *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 45.
[45] Heinemann, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer," 46.
[46] Heinemann, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer," 46-47.
[47] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 12.

proposes, "what is needed...is a synthesis of the old and the new. The old is the received text, the words so many others have said and still say. The new is the personal feelings in the individual meaning, which changes every time we say these words, if we say them with fervor and intention, if they are accompanied by *kavanah*."[48]

According to Hammer as well as many other scholars (as will be shown in Chapter Three) "the material that appears in the siddur was created over a period of thousands of years and has not yet stopped growing."[49] Furthermore, as Hammer says, "If we add to the Siddur or change the prayers, we are not altering the fundamental nature of Jewish prayer but only continuing a process that has been going on for millennia."[50] Hammer's argument gets at the crux of the debate, the fixity and fluidity of prayer. As will be seen in Chapters Three and Four, the idea of fluidity in prayer has led many modern Jewish movements to freely alter the words of the prayer book in order to make the prayer text relevant to their beliefs and theologies. As YT Berakhot 4:3 teaches, "There were many sages who urged that each person say something novel whenever praying. It is reported of Rabbi Eliezer that 'he would recite a new prayer every day' so that 'it should be not be like reading a letter.'" [51] Furthermore, BT Berakhot 29b teaches that "a completely fixed prayer text was unacceptable prayer and in order to avoid

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[48] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 13.
[49] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 75.
[50] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 76
[51] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 87.

that, one should always 'make an innovation.'"[52] Taking these teachings into account, we must believe that there is true grounding for the practice of prayer innovation. Not only is it recommended in one strain of rabbinic thought, but it is commanded.

The efficacy of prayer, as seen above, has been, is, and will be highly debated and written about. While we do not know, nor may ever know, the true efficacy of prayer, there are tangible results that prayer may be able to yield. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "Piety cannot consist of specific acts only, such as prayer or ritual observances, but is bound up with all actions... Man's responsibility to God cannot be discharged by an excursion into spirituality."[53] According to Heschel, it is not enough to simply delve into spirituality via prayer, but we must also do so through our actions. Hammer writes that "If we accept the fact that we have been called to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex 19:6), then worship is part of the duties of this priestly people."[54] As a nation of priests, our piety alone cannot sustain our priestly duties; it must be accompanied by our righteous actions, it must move us from "knowledge of good to the deed which is good." [55] Ernst Simon captures prayer in light of Yom Kippur, the Jewish occasion for repentance and forgiveness: "Every Jewish prayer is a small Yom Kippur. It challenges us to examine our hearts and thoughts. It demands that we question ourselves...

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[52] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 87.
[53] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 4.
[54] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 11.
[55] Weinberg in *Understanding Jewish Prayer,* 136.

In this kind of prayer, we do not ask God to do our will. We accept God's challenge to fulfill his will." [56] Furthermore, Simon writes, "the individual therefore is required to act in his own behalf in conjunction with the recitation of his prayers."[57]

As seen throughout this chapter, prayer plays a central role in Jewish life, ever since the time of the biblical Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Prayer also functions in different ways for different people. To the religious person, who prays on an airplane to land safely, and subsequently lands safely, his prayer has been answered. To the one who prays for something that was not answered the way they had hoped, and received a "no" response, her prayer was answered. To the one who prays for the strength to carry out God's will and is moved to do so by the prayer experience, his prayer is answered. Petuchowski writes, "Even though God does not have to be told about your need, He has given you an opportunity of opening your heart to Him, of sharing your concerns with Him...[Prayer] affords you the relief of verbalizing, in His presence, whatever it is that you are striving for."[58]

The Amidah opens with the physical movement of taking three steps forward and three steps back, symbolizing our entering into the divine realm. The Amidah is designed to give the Jew an opportunity to engage in a conversation with God, allowing one to open their hearts and our out their

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[56] Ernst Simon in Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 109.
[57] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 14.
[58] Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 37.

supplications to God. Depending on our theology, perhaps God does not need our prayers, maybe God already knows. However, we do, and in light of the vast writings about prayer, be it in rabbinic texts or beyond, it functions as one of many declarations of our faith and devotion to God, the Jewish people, and all of God's creations.

Chapter Two

A Systematic Analysis of the Daily Amidah

The Amidah, also referred to as the Tefillah and Shmoneh Esrei, is the petitionary prayer *par excellence.* No other rubric in the prayer book contains the scope and variety of petitions as does in the Amidah. As will be exemplified, the Amidah encompasses every element of Jewish petitionary prayer.

Each of the three names for the Amidah has a specific meaning. Because it is recited "standing up", it is called the Amidah, from the Hebrew root *ayin-mem-dalet,* "to stand"; this name originated in Sefardic (Mediterranean) Jewish communities. Askenazic (European) communities preferred the name Shmoneh Esrei, meaning "eighteen," referring to the original number of benedictions as seen in the Mishnah and Talmud of the Land of Israel (Yerushalmi). *Tefillah,* meaning prayer, is the name of this rubric used by the Rabbis in early rabbinic literature such as the Mishnah and Talmud (the latter also uses the Aramaic equivalent, *tseluta'*).

The Amidah, composed today of nineteen benedictions, has three distinct sections. It opens with three benedictions of praise for God, then moves into the petitionary section composed of thirteen benedictions, and concludes with three benedictions of thanksgiving. Over the centuries, the wording of many of the petitions has changed, be it due to theological difficulties, censorship, or issues of transmission over time. The basic form

and order of the Amidah has remained intact despite the aforementioned changes. The middle section of the Amidah changes throughout the year, during special holidays and Shabbat. For purposes of this chapter, we will on focus on the most common daily structure of the Amidah as we have it today in most traditional prayer books. Traditionally, the Amidah is first recited silently by the individual, then repeated aloud in its entirety (including various insertions), by the prayer leader, known in Hebrew as the *sheliach tzibbur*.

The goal of this chapter is to present the dominant themes of each of the nineteen benedictions. In addition to the general themes, this chapter will present various commentaries by scholars on the origins, historical contexts, and deeper meanings of the benedictions. Following the discussion of the first three benedictions, we will present Leon Liebreich's theory about the logical order of the thirteen petitionary benedictions. A number of the benedictions will be discussed at more length than others. Naturally, some of the benedictions are more thematically and/or theologically challenging than others, which thus generates more discussion and research. In addition to discussing the nineteen benedictions, this chapter will also note the scriptural "bookends" of the Amidah, which are not formal benedictions.

Opening supplication

Prior to the nineteen benedictions that make up the Amidah is a supplication taken from Psalm 51:17, which, in the first person singular, asks

God to open my lips so that my mouth may declare God's glory. Lawrence Hoffman points out that the fuller unit from Psalms 51:17-18 reads, "*Adonai, open my lips that my mouth may declare your praise; for you have no delight in sacrifice. If I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased*"[59] Hoffman writes, "As we see, context is very important to understand the function of the benediction. Not only did the rabbis proclaim the Amidah to be equivalent to the defunct sacrificial cult, but here they go even further by saying that it is even better."[60]

The Amidah begins and concludes with words of scripture. Hoffman offers the homiletical explanation that " as we open the Amidah with the prayer to use speech wisely, so too we end it with such a hope...The rabbis have instructed us to bracket the Amidah with the wish that we use the power of words only for good."[61] Regarding the meaning of the opening supplication, B.S. Jacobson writes, "We are dependent upon the grace of God to enable us to carry our intentions into practice" [62] He also quotes *Sefer Hamanhig,* which notes, "It is a request for permission to commence the recital of the *Tefillah*."[63]

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[59] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries: The Amidah.* Vol. 2 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1997), 56.

[60] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 56.

[61] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 56.

[62] B.S. Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur: An Exposition and Analysis of its Structure, Contents, Language and Ideas* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1978), 214.

[63] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 214.

Benedictions of Praise

1. *Avot* ("Ancestors")

The first benediction of the Amidah opens with the invocation of the *Avot*, the names of our Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (for the discussion on the Reform addition of the Matriarchs, refer to Chapter Four). There are a number of questions and explanations about the meaning and function of the names. First and foremost, they are meant to "call our attention to the long history of our people... When we say the formula... we are immediately reminded that we are part of the people and heritage that reaches back over 4000 years" [64] Reciting the names of our patriarchs touches upon the value of *zechut avot*, the merit of our ancestors.

The value Jews place on *zechut avot* is of great significance. We call upon God, using the names of our ancestors, as a way to tie us to the sacred covenant between God and our ancestors, based on their merit. This "establishes our covenantal claim on God, whom we approach knowing that we are spiritual descendants of the biblical ancestors who established the covenant in the first place."[65] *Zechut avot* is invoked throughout this benediction. In addition to addressing God as powerful creator of all, we recite, "who remembers the loving-kindness of the fathers and brings redemption to their descendants."

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[64] Harvey J. Fields, Elaine Rose Glickman, and Olivia Schanzer, *B'chol L'vavcha* (New York: UAHC, 2001), 104.

[65] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 61.

The final phrase of this sentence reads, "for the sake of his name," which refers to God. But, "Maimonides actually omits the phrase, so as to give more credit to our ancestors."[66] Evelyn Garfiel portrays *zechut avot* as representing "the moral link between the generations, the idea that we are all, in some sense, involved in each other's lives. It insists that the good or ill we do reflects on our parents and on our children."[67] Ultimately, the merit of our ancestors, as the Talmud teaches, "will aid the people of Israel in the reaching of the messianic age (Bereishit Rabbah 70:8)."[68]

Many commentators on the prayer book have asked why we repeat "God of" at the beginning of each name: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob." Simply put, the explanation is a stylistic/rhetorical device and not a theological one. The repetition of the phrase "God of" sounds better and moves off the tongue easier. While this may be the simple explanation, modern commentators offer a more homiletical explanation. As Hoffman points out, "The most common explanation is that each patriarch knew God personally."[69] Additionally, Jacobson explains the repetition as representing the different attributes of the patriarchs: "Abraham was the first to acquire faith through the exercise of his independent, intellectual powers; Isaac was prepared to sacrifice his life and sanctify the name of God; Jacob, inured to

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[66] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 71.

[67] Evelyn Garfiel, *Service of the Heart: a Guide to the Jewish Prayer Book* (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1989), 95.

[68] Fields, Glickman, and Schanzer. *B'chol L'vavcha*, 106.

[69] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 70.

suffering, serves as the example for all his people throughout all the generations; he is 'Ancient Israel.'"[70]

Additionally, one may question the reason for the recitation of seemingly redundant adjectives for God, "great, mighty, and awesome." As is the case throughout the Talmud, the Rabbis draw heavily from the Bible. "Great, mighty, and awesome" is a biblical phrase recited by Moses, describing God's attributes, in the book of Deuteronomy. BT Megillah 25a records a story of a *sheliach tzibbur* who added divine praise to this benediction, by reciting, "the great, mighty, awesome, powerful, strong, and brave God." Rabbi Haninah, the Rabbi who witnessed this, explained that we would not dare use even the words "great, mighty, and awesome" had they not been written by Moses in the Torah and decreed by the men of the Great Assembly."[71] Simply put, the traditional reason for the seemingly superfluous wording of this benediction is solely due to the appearance of this language in Scripture. Harvey Fields offers a more homiletical explanation saying that the reason why we use the formula is because the concept or idea of God has developed and changed over the centuries. Furthermore it reflects the Jew's varying ideas of God.[72]

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[70] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 215-216.

[71] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: a Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New York: Schocken, 1994), 160-161.

[72] Fields, Glickman, and Schanzer. *B'chol L'vavcha*, 104

2. *Gevurot* ("God's Power")

The second blessing of praise is *Gevurot*. This benediction primarily focuses on God's might. As Marc Brettler points out, "the primary theme of this blessing is...an appropriate notion early on in the Amidah, where we recount God's strength before requesting its use on our behalf."[73] This benediction calls our attention to the multiple powers of God. It speaks of God's power to give renewal to the dead, support the fallen, heal the sick, free the captive, and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust (a poetic way of referring to the dead). Additionally, we find the seasonal mishnaic insertion mandated in the Mishnah, that recognizes God's power to cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall, and to bring down the dew. As pointed out by Ismar Elbogen, the content of this insertion is dependent on the time of the year. Specifically, the Mishnah obligates one to recite, "Who makes the wind blow and the rain fall," from the additional service of Shemini Atzeret (the end of Succot) until the morning service of the first day of Passover, i.e., during the rainy season in the land of Israel. No reference to dew and rain is found until the Amoraic period.[74] The Ashkenazic rite does not include an insertion for dew during the summer, but the Sephardic rite does.

Each attribute listed in this benediction is the power to perform a "godly" act. We call upon God to heal the sick, free the captive, and lift up the

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[73] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 72.

[74] Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: a Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 39.

fallen. Focusing on the meaning of "supporting the fallen," Hoffman offers a homiletical explanation that focuses on our ability and responsibility to emulate God in these ways: "When people fall–physically, intellectually, or emotionally–it is necessary, though often difficult, to help them regain their standing... support for the fallen is often a normal and too little noticed part of day-to-day life; as an exercise of both power and goodness, it is nothing short of a godly act."[75] So too, is "freeing the captive" manifest in our actions. Elliot Dorff offers the following metaphorical explanation of "freeing the captive": " Releasing someone from intellectual or psychological bonds... all of these instances of liberating the bound require both power and goodness–two of God's chief characteristics–and therefore, these too are godly acts."[76] The awareness this discussion raises is of our obligation to do "godly" acts, those which we call upon God to do in this benediction. The Berditschever Rebbe, a leader of Chasidism, once explained to his followers that "those who seek God in prayer and in the deeds of their lives will receive in return the strength to serve God further." [77] In recognizing God's power, the Rebbe is telling us that our prayers are answered in the way that they are manifest in our own actions. We recognize God's power in order to find our inner strength to do "godly" acts.

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[75] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 72, 75.
[76] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 75.
[77] Fields, Glickman, and Schanzer. *B'chol L'vavcha*, 114.

Among the many divine powers invoked in the *Gevurot* is God's power to revive the dead. It is traditionally believed that resurrection of the dead is the ultimate godly act, one over which we have no power or control. Resurrection in this benediction is intended to emphasize the power of God and asserts that God is "manifest in many things that transcend [our] understanding and control."[78] As Elliot Dorff points out, there are multiple mentions in our liturgy, and especially in our rabbinic texts, of resurrection of the dead. Dorff further points out that the Rabbis had two different views about the afterlife: "One view is that the whole person dies and then was resurrected at a future point, while the other view is that only the body dies and the soul lives on."[79] Therefore, as he quotes Louis Finkelstein, "the phrasing is deliberately ambiguous in order to accommodate both rabbinic views."[80] Just as the Rabbis of the Talmud held more than one view of the afterlife, so subsequent generations were conflicted about the actual concept of resurrection. As will be shown in Chapter Four, many modern prayer books changed the wording of this prayer to avoid an assertion of bodily resurrection.

The major source of contention is the fact that there is no proof that God resurrects the dead. The common argument used in support of this notion is that while we have no evidence to prove resurrection, we also have

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[78] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.
[79] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.
[80] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.

no evidence to disprove it. David Abudraham, the 14th century Spanish commentator says that, "The whole point of this service is the affirmation of matters of faith like this one: things no one has ever seen...our hope is buttressed by a belief in a Presence in the universe totally beyond ourselves such that even the outlandish may come to pass."[81] The medieval halakhist Eleazar of Worms, called the Rokeach, says that "It is a special merit that we continue to believe in resurrection, the one point of faith to which, by definition, no one can ever attest."[82] These commentaries all point to a matter of faith in a unique power in God, one that no one has seen or can understand. An alternative, more skeptical, commentary offered by Rambam suggests that, "our goal, then, should not be resurrection, though that may occur, but mastery of wisdom, which alone is eternal."[83] This reflects the Aristotelian view that the wise person becomes one with that which he knows, which itself is eternal.

3. *Kedushat Hashem* ("God's Holiness")

The third and final benediction of praise is the *Kedushat Hashem* which recognizes God's holiness. Sacks points out that "the threefold reference to holiness ("You are holy and Your name is holy, and the holy ones praise you daily") mirrors the threefold declaration of the angels in Isaiah's

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[81] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 81.
[82] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 81.
[83] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 81.

vision: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts."[84] This latter threefold declaration is recited in the *Kedushah*, which is traditionally recited in place of the *Kedushat Hashem* benediction in the repetition of the Amidah. Jacobson explains the concept of holiness by citing Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michael Weiser's (Malbim's), commentary on Isaiah 6:3, "The concept 'holy' denotes that God is above, far removed from, man and his world. Hence the Prophet could proclaim (Is. 57:15): *For thus has said the high and holy one, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.*"[85] Dorff writes that in this benediction we invoke three attributes of God: God's holiness, God's weightiness, and God's greatness. "These three qualities combine to make God awesome, and even an object of fear" but the author of this prayer "is convinced that the proper response should be praise," because God is to be trusted as One worthy of praise.[86]

In closing this section, Jonathan Sacks eloquently summarizes the opening benedictions: "The first three paragraphs of the Amidah (excluding the *Kedushah*), form a composite unit. The first speaks of the beginning of covenantal time in the days of the patriarchs. The second is about the end of time: resurrection. The third is about holiness, beyond space and time."[87]

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[84] Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Siddur* (Jerusalem: Koren, 2009), 115
[85] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 221.
[86] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 84, 88.
[87] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 115.

Petitionary Benedictions

As mentioned in the introduction, Leon Liebreich posited the order of the Amidah according to the logical flow of time and need and "he insisted that Rabban Gamaliel had put the topics in order by searching for the links that bound each blessing to the other. At the completion of his work, he was able to trace a progression of thought from the first of the intermediary blessings through to the last one." [88] The following is a list of the petitionary benedictions.[89] Liebreich's theory will be summarized throughout the discussions of the benedictions:

4. For wisdom
5. For repentance
6. For forgiveness
7. For redemption
8. For healing
9. For "years" (agricultural fertility of the Land of Israel)
10. For the ingathering of the exiles
11. For justice (restoration of the just judges)
12. For punishment of heretics
13. For reward of the righteous
14. For the rebuilding of Jerusalem
15. For the coming of the messiah
16. For God to hear prayer

Liebreich posits that the first three petitions for knowledge, repentance, and forgiveness ultimately result in the fourth benediction, redemption. Redemption begins with wisdom. The wisdom of all Jews together, who realize the importance of repentance, will lead to forgiveness.

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[88] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 33.
[89] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 24.

Ultimately, as Liebreich believed, "the Amidah is first and foremost about the promise of redemption... Believing that a national tragedy like the defeat at the hands of Rome was a consequence of sin, it followed that if our sins are completely forgiven, redemption from Roman rule would result."[90]

4. *Binah* ("Wisdom")

The first of the petitionary benedictions is for knowledge and understanding. As Jonathan Sacks explains, "This paragraph replicates the structure of the Amidah as a whole. It begins with praise ('You grace humanity with knowledge'), proceeds to request ('Grace us with the knowledge'), and ends in acknowledgement ('Who graciously grants knowledge')."[91] As pointed out by various scholars, this benediction may be compared with Solomon's petition in I Kings 3:7. When Solomon was asked by God to name the thing he most desired, he asked for wisdom.[92]

While the intermediary benedictions are omitted on Shabbat, various rabbis and scholars have expressed their discontent with the omission of this specific benediction. The Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 5:2 records the reaction of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch: " I am astonished that the blessing for knowledge was eliminated from the Sabbath Tefillah ' As Jacobson comments, "Can there be prayer without knowledge? Similarly, can any distinctions be

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[90] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 33.
[91] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur,* 114
[92] S Sacks, *The Koren Siddur,* 114

made if there is no knowledge?"[93] Furthermore, the Mishnah teaches (Avot 3:20): "'Where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding,' Rabbi Menachem Hameiri observes: "The knowledge mentioned here denotes the capacity for knowledge implanted at birth... 'You favor man with knowledge,' to indicate that this knowledge is not required by human effort but is innately endowed by divine grace. Understanding is achieved by human endeavor, by study and reflective thinking, as they put it: 'And teach man understanding.'"[94] Samson Raphael Hirsch writes, "Knowledge is given to man but understanding and the practical application of knowledge can be developed by one's own efforts through studying and being taught" (*The Hirsch Siddur*, English ed., p.134).[95] Jacobson points out that because knowledge is an act of divine grace, "one should not take pride in his intellectual gifts, since all stems from God. It is of overriding importance for teachers not to evaluate a person, child or pupil, by using his intellectual gifts as a criterion, but in accordance with his ethical virtues, since these are entrusted to man's free choice."[96]

5. *Teshuvah* (" Repentance")

Following knowledge are the benedictions for repentance and forgiveness. The benediction for repentance contains three distinct petitions, all requesting God to draw us back to him. As Israel Abrahams comments,

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[93] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 224.
[94] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 226.
[95] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 226.
[96] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 225.

"Over and above the sense of sin and the feeling of contrition, active return from the wrong to the right path is needed in order to make repentance complete. But God holds out his hand to man, and pardons man's efforts."[97] A dominant theme of Judaism, especially pertaining to the High Holiday season, is the concept that the gates of repentance are always open. Abrahams points out that God always holds his hand out to man, and the daily Amidah serves to remind us of that concept. The fact that this benediction and the following, pertaining to forgiveness, are included in the opening petitionary benedictions speaks volumes about their importance.

6. *S'lichah* ("Forgiveness")

As would be expected, the benediction for forgiveness here is thematically identical to much in the High Holiday liturgy. Unlike the other benedictions of the Amidah, this one employs the name "Father" for "God." The Tur (Orach Chayim 115) comments on the usage of "Father": "It was ordained that ' our father' be pronounced in the blessings to ' Cause us to return' and ' Forgive us,' as opposed to the other blessings, for this reason: A father is duty bound to impart instruction to his son... We therefore mention fatherly mercies as it is said (Ps. 103:13): 'Like as a father has compassion on his children, so may he have compassion on us and forgive us.' "[98] Jacobson points out that this benediction terminates in the biblical language of Isaiah

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[97] Israel Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook* (London: 1922; reprint: New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 62.

[98] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 228.

55:7: *Let the wicked forsake his way and the man of iniquity his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have compassion upon him, and to our God for he will forgive abundantly.*[99]

Sacks comments that forgiveness requested in this benediction is exclusively between us and God because repentance involves asking God for forgiveness.[100] In light of Liebreich's theory, the first three petitionary benedictions request knowledge, repentance, and forgiveness because these three, once achieved, will make Israel worthy of redemption (the topic of the fourth benediction).

7. *G'ulah* ("Redemption")

The benediction for redemption is the ultimate result of the first three benedictions. Unlike the corporate redemption from Egyptian slavery as seen in multiple prayers, including *Emet v'yatsiv/Emet v'e'emunah*, the benediction that follows upon the recitation of the three *Sh'ma* paragraphs, some commentators hold that the petition for redemption here is individual in nature and not communal. Sacks writes that "the reference is to release from personal crises: captivity, persecution, misfortune or affliction."[101] Rashi writes "This does not refer to the redemption from exile, but asks that God should rescue us from the troubles that constantly beset us."[102] Contrary

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[99] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 230.
[100] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 117
[101] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 116-117
[102] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 230.

to the aforementioned theories on individual redemption, Liebreich holds that this benediction recognizes a collective redemption.

According to Liebreich, once Israel has been redeemed, the next major step in the process is the preparation for the ingathering of the exiles. In order for the ingathering of exiles, first, human pain and suffering will cease which is paralleled to the restoration of health to the land of Israel. [103] Upon closer inspection of Liebeich's theory here, it seems a bit of a stretch. Nevertheless, it is worth noting.

8. *R'fuah* ("Healing")

The blessing for healing petitions God to save us, heal us and bring complete recovery for all of our ailments. The wording of the benediction for health is based on Jeremiah 17:14, which says, *Heal me O Lord and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved.*[104] While the wording is similar in nature to Jeremiah, the benediction in the Amidah is in the plural voice and not in the singular (as in Jeremiah). This altering of a biblical verse should be deemed problematic and the Tur comments on how the Rabbis could change the biblical wording: "Tur (Orakh Chayim 116): A baraita warns us not to change any verse worded in the plural to singular, and vice versa... The above admonition, however, refers to the translating or reading of the verse itself. A sentence in the liturgy, however, recited not as a scriptural reading but by

[103] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 54.
[104] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 63.

way of prayer and supplication, is similar to the rest of the prayers and may be altered to suit the needs of the hour and the content of that particular supplication and petition."[105]

As seen throughout the Amidah, one can conclude that our healing is entirely in God's hands. However, the *Etz Yosef* points out that there are two separate petitions within this benediction and each one refers to a different type of healing. He writes, "'Heal us...' indicates that the beginning should come from God, and then... we shall complete our recovery. This refers to the healing of the soul. In respect of the healing of the body, which is entirely in God's hands, the *berakhah* requests that 'He grant us a perfect healing,' from beginning to end, and from all our maladies, for here we are utterly incapable of helping ourselves ' without you.' "[106] This theological viewpoint puts forth the idea that all healing is in God's hands and not ours. Additionally, God is the healer of Israel. Not all prayer books endorse this theology, as will be exemplified in Chapter Four.

It should be noted that within the traditional benediction, the Rabbis included a special prayer for the individual to pray specifically on behalf of a sick loved one. While the wording of the prayer is provided, there is a place for one to insert individual names.

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[105] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 231-232.
[106] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 232.

9. *Shanim* ("Blessing for a Year of Prosperity")

Once the health of the people is restored, we then petition God for prosperity, specifically referring to the produce of the land throughout the year. Elbogen notes that the origin of this prayer goes back to the period when Israel dwelt in Palestine, in which agriculture was the main occupation,[107] hence the fact that the prayer for rain is inserted in this benediction. The insertion for rain is specifically geared toward the winter months in Israel. Israel's agriculture depends on rain and even in the diaspora, we pray for successful growth of produce in the land. The insertion referring to the dew and rain is said from December 5th until Passover. The insertion asking for God's blessing on the land, recited during the other seasons, is said from Chol HaMo'ed Passover until December 4th. [108] The opening of this benediction employs the phrase, "for good" which refers to a good crop yield and an abundant harvest, so that there is plenty of food to eat. Jacob Zvi Mecklenberg offers a homiletical explanation of on the usage "for good" in this benediction: "The abundance sought after in this blessing is for our good, since it would afford us the opportunity to free ourselves to study Torah wisdom and to fulfill the *Mitzvot*, whereby we become worthy to inherit the world to come.[109] Mecklenberg's basic underlying theology is that the seemingly superfluous words, "for good" imply that we will be able to devote our lives to good, that being Torah and Mitzvot. Praying for abundant

[107] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 44.
[108] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 118
[109] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 233.

produce will allow one to devote more time to doing good, whereas, working the land harder due to the lack of rain, wind, and dew, will ultimately diminish our time to do "good."

10. *Kibbutz galuyot* ("Ingathering of the Exiles")

The benediction for the ingathering of the exiles "forms the first of a series of petitions for national welfare, directed toward the future."[110] Sacks writes, "They begin with three prayers for political-historical renewal: the return of exiles, the restoration of independence, and an end to factionalism that caused great damage to the Israelites from the biblical era to the end of the Second Temple period."[111] Jacobson quotes Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz, who offers one possible explanation for the inclusion of this benediction: ""Long before the destruction of the Jewish state, long even before the Maccabean times, there was a widespread Jewish dispersion in Mediterranean lands, in Babylonia and in the neighboring countries."... As we have shown before, the Book of Ben Sira, which, according to all opinions, was compiled before the Maccabean epoch, contains the sentence: "O give thanks unto him, who gathers in the dispersed of Israel, for his mercy endures forever." (ed. M.Z. Segal, p.355)"[112] It can thus be concluded that even before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the ideas of this benediction were out there and simply reflected those times. In its present

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[110] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 233.
[111] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 121
[112] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 234.

context, this benediction is post-70 and rabbinic, and therefore any pre-70 version remains purely hypothetical. Nevertheless, this benediction implies that all Jews outside of the land of Israel are in exile and will one day be brought back. The ingathering of the exiles will ultimately lead to a promising Jewish future.

Once that the exiles have returned to Israel, Roman rule would be replaced with a Jewish judiciary system. With a restored Jewish judiciary system, the first act would be to level punishment upon the heretics who caused Israel trouble during Roman times, and to equally reward the righteous people who suffered under Roman rule.[113]

11. *Mishpat* ("Restoration of Judges")

Beginning with the restoration of the judges, Jacobson asks, "What are we praying for? He writes, "One possibility is for the judging of the wicked and the restoration of the kingdom of God, or else the blessing may possibly seek the restoration of an independent Jewish judiciary and jurisprudence."[114] Abrahams notes, "Like the preceding, this benediction is a national prayer, but passes over into an ideal petition for the righteous reign of God, as distinct from the oppressive government of men. It may be that the petition is for the restoration of political autonomy, but it seems more

[113] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 54.
[114] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 235.

probable that the significance is Messianic."[115] Jacobson calls our attention to the biblical language in this benediction, which derives from Isaiah 1:26-27; *And I will restore your judges as at first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.*[116] Furthermore, he quotes Abudraham's comment on the phrase "remove us from sorrow and sighing" as saying, "When the wicked rule, the people sigh." Jacobson continues, "By the restoring of worthy judges to us, that sighing will be transformed into joy and gladness. The passage may also be explained as meaning that by the enforcement of true justice among us, sadness and sighing will cease."[117] Abudraham's interpretation therefore removes the focus on a messianic ideal to a practical one that calls for true justice in our world, governed by honest and just judges.

12. *Minim* ("Punishment of the Heretics")

With the restoration of the judges comes judgment. This benediction calls for the utter destruction of all wickedness, that our enemies be swiftly cut down, and that the arrogant to be humbled. This benediction has been rife with controversy from its beginning and has gone through many changes over the centuries. Elbogen writes, "No benediction has undergone as many textual variations as this one, some through the natural effect of changing times, and others through censorship. It is most doubtful that we will ever be

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[115] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 64.
[116] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 236.
[117] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 236.

in a position to recover its original text."[118] Many of the changes were due to the claim by the Church that this benediction was directed against Jewish converts to Christianity. Therefore, the first word was changed to "slanderers" and the word "Christians" was removed.[119] According to Kaufman Kohler, "This benediction or malediction was composed at about 100 C.E. at the request of Rabbi Gamaliel, against sectarians and heretics among the Jewish people."[120] Later, Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz, a 17th century German Orthodox Rabbi (author of *Ya'arot Devash,* which is referenced several times below), writes, "The worshiper should pray for the eradication of heresy from Israel, and that the belief in the oral and written Torah should be untarnished so that no ' root bearing gall and wormwood' should emerge, challenging the authority of the Jewish sages and the genuinely faithful who give public Torah instruction."[121] Rabbi Jacob Emden presents a more optimistic view saying, "From then till now, these heretical sects have been all but extirpated from the earth, so that there is no such group evident in the world today, unless their counsel be in hiding in their deeds veiled by darkness... At present, all the principal nations believe in divine providence and want to acknowledge the unity of God. Since vestiges

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[118] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 45-46

[119] Abraham Z Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), 103.

[120] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, 102.

[121] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 237.

of evil still remain, however, the petition is necessarily retained, to beseech that these sources do not become ' a root bearing gall and wormwood'"[122]

13. *Tzaddikim* ("Reward for the Righteous")

The benediction for the righteous is the converse of the previous one. Whereas the previous benediction calls for the utter destruction of the wicked, this one calls for the welfare of not only the elders and scholars, but also the proselytes. Jacobson surmises (incorrectly) that the petition for the proselytes was a later insertion during the time "when conversion entailed hardship, the same lot as the persecuted Jewish people suffered."[123] As pointed out, the benediction contains three categories of righteous people. Rabbi Jacob Emden elucidates on the types of people under each category. He writes, "The righteous are those who pursue righteousness and conduct themselves uprightly as the law requires them to. The ' saints' go beyond the requirements of the law in their behavior; the ' elders' are those learned in Torah' [and] the righteous proselytes' are those ' who have endured under the shelter of the divine presence'"[124] Another observation about this benediction pertains to its form. The Tur points out that the benediction contains all the letters of the alphabet which suggests to him that, "' for the

[122] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 238.

[123] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 240.

[124] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 241.

sake of the righteous who occupy themselves with your Torah, [God should] deal mercifully with us.' "[125]

According to Liebreich, "With a land restored to its pristine productivity, ruled by God's just representatives, and populated only by the righteous, Jerusalem would at last be rebuilt and the scion of David restored to his rightful messianic throne. The entire hope is capped by a final plea for it all to come to pass "Oh God, hear our prayer". [126]

14. *Yerushalayim* (" Rebuilding of Jerusalem")

The benediction for rebuilding of Jerusalem calls upon God to not only rebuild it rapidly in our days, but to also dwell in it, as God dwelt there during the Second Temple period. Following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, it was widely believed that God no longer dwells on earth. Abrahams suggests that this benediction and the following one, for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, were originally one benediction (This observation is based on the prayer book fragments from the Cairo Genizah of the rite of the land of Israel, although Abrahams does not mention these). Earliest rabbinic literature refers to the Amidah as containing eighteen benedictions. The Babylonian Talmud (BT Berakhot) is familiar with nineteen benedictions and claims that the nineteenth benediction is the one for the punishment of the wicked. However, based on the Genizah evidence, it

[125] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 240.
[126] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*, 54.

is more probable that the (Babylonian) separation of the aforementioned benediction (for Jerusalem and the House of David) into two, is the reason for nineteen benedictions. Furthermore, Abrahams suggests, on the basis of Ben Sira, the possibility of a pre-Maccabean origin for this benediction. If so, it initially referred not to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but rather to its building. After the destruction of the Second Temple, it was modified to refer to the rebuilding.[127]

15. *David* ("Coming of the Messiah")

The benediction for Jerusalem is immediately followed by the benediction for the return of the messianic kingship of the line of David. As Sacks writes, "David was promised by God that the monarchy would always be the heritage of his children. The Davidic monarchy came to an end with the Babylonian conquest. It will be restored in the messianic age."[128] Jacobson quotes *Ya'arot Devash,* a collection of sermons by Jonathan Eybeshutz (1690-1764), on the importance of the prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty, " If we do not regain Jerusalem and the house of David, what is there to live for?"[129]

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[127] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 65-66.
[128] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 125
[129] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 243.

16. *Shome'a T'fillah* ("Hear Our Prayer")

The concluding petitionary benediction ask God, the one "who hears prayer," to hear our voice. Elbogen references the Talmud, pointing out: "Already in ancient times it was permitted to insert here private petitions during the silent recitation of the Amidah ("A person may ask for his own needs in the benediction, ' Who hears prayer'" [B. Ber. 31a])."[130] Likewise, the worshiper was permitted here to recite petitions for particular days that he had forgotten to recite at the appropriate point (such as Havdallah).[131] Jacobson quotes the *Ya'arot Devash* on the importance of this prayer: "... The main benefit [accruing from this prayer] is the impression engraved on the heart of the worshiper that man, that the Jew, is not the helpless victim of times and circumstances to the extent that he has no need of prayer, that he is dependent upon the fates, on his intellectual application and energy of action..."[132]

Benedictions of "Thanksgiving"

17. *Avodah* ("For the Acceptance of Worship")

With the conclusion of the intermediary petitions, we finally move into the three concluding benedictions deemed by the Talmud to be expressions of thanksgiving (although two are actually petitions). The first

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[130] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 49.
[131] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 49.
[132] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 247-248.

asks God to find favor in our worship, to restore the service to the Temple, and to accept in love the offerings of our prayers. Abrahams points out that this is "one of the oldest paragraphs in the Amidah, and was recited daily by the priests and also by the high priest on the Day of Atonement." Furthermore, the initial intent of this benediction was for the acceptance of the Temple worship; however with the destruction of the Second Temple, it was extended to refer to worship generally and specifically to prayer, the "worship of the heart". [133] It is generally assumed that this benediction therefore underwent verbal changes after 70 C.E. Rashi suggests the following original form of the Avodah benediction: "Accept, O Lord, our God, the service of your people Israel, and receive in favor the fire offerings and prayers of Israel. Blessed are you, O Lord, who accepts the Temple service of his people Israel with favor."[134] The Tur writes, "Even though the Temple service is non-existent at present, we ask for the favorable acceptance by God... of our prayers... since these are a substitute for the sacrifices. [135] So this benediction, while grouped by the Talmud in a rubric of thanksgiving, is clearly seen to be petitionary.

18. *Hoda'ah* ("Grateful Acknowledgement")

The benediction for thanksgiving is truly a thanksgiving benediction. Throughout this benediction we thank God for the miracles and wonders in

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[133] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 66.
[134] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 249.
[135] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 250.

our lives, all due to God's compassion and protection of the Jewish people. During the holidays of Hanukah and Purim, an additional paragraph is inserted in this benediction, marking the miracles that took place on both occasions, ultimately leading to the survival of the Jewish people. Jacobson points out that this benediction also has roots in the Temple service and is laid down in the Talmud.[136]

According to Sacks, Nachmanides explains the meaning of "miracles" in this benediction by discussing the difference between a "'revealed' and a "hidden" miracle. "Revealed miracles stand outside the laws of nature; hidden miracles take place within them. God is present not only in signs and wonders, but also in the very laws that govern the universe. To see the miraculous in the everyday is part of the Judaic vision, beautifully expressed in these lines."[137] Rabbi Jacob Zvi Mecklenberg writes, "*Nes* denotes a miraculous occurrence, but can also be used to signify some natural event as well... there are many wondrous happenings that affect us regularly, every day. Because of their frequency, however, hardly anyone pays any attention to them... We are too familiar with these phenomena; we experience them every day..."[138]

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[136] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 255.
[137] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 128-129
[138] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 256-257.

Jacobson notes that according to Abudraham, "the numerical values of the letters *Modim*, adding up to 100, indicate that we recite 100 blessings daily to give thanks to God."[139]

19. *Shalom* ("Peace")

The final blessing is for peace and well-being. In today's traditional siddur, the Priestly Benediction (Numbers 6:24-26) is recited by the prayer leader directly before this benediction during the repetition of the Amidah. Idelsohn cites the mishnaic origins of this benediction as, in fact, being the Priestly Benediction. He points out that a shorter prayer for peace was later attached to the Priestly Benediction.[140] Elbogen notes that the final prayer for peace was generally a space for allotted expansions, as long as their content was appropriate to that of the benediction.[141] Jacobson quotes *Ya'arot Devash* on the purpose of this blessing: "There should be a prayer for peace, since nothing brings greater blessing than peace. This is the most desirable bond, the complete uniting together, of the people of Israel. Now when one prays for peace, he should pray that there be no dissension in Israel, no jealousy, hatred or rivalry, but that all should love [one another], be banded together and be completely and utterly united in love, brotherhood and friendship..."[142]

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[139] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 256.
[140] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 108.
[141] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 54.
[142] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 261.

Silent Prayer

Following the nineteen benedictions of the Amidah is one final prayer designed to allow the individual to offer their own supplications in their own words.[143] It should be noted that this prayer is recited in the first person singular. While a text with fixed wording appears in the prayer book, Jacobson points out that "such individual prayers composed by various Tannaim and Amoraim recited after the conclusion of their Tefillah are recorded in the Talmud (eleven examples altogether).[144] The text of the silent prayer could be understood as suggestive and not "binding" as is the fixed wording of the nineteen benedictions. The text itself includes the supplications to guard our speech, open our hearts to God and God's commandments, for protection from evil, and for the delivery of God's beloved ones. The benediction closes with a verse from Psalms 19, asking God to accept the words of our lips and meditations of our hearts, followed by the ultimate prayer for peace, asking God, the maker of peace, to make peace for us and for all Israel.

As exemplified throughout this chapter, the Amidah is comprised of various themes and topics. The wide range of benedictions covers the gamut of what Jews collectively pray for. The benefit of praying the Amidah is not just because of the range, but also the opportunity to add one's own thoughts

[143] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 264.
[144] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 264.

and prayers, i.e., at the end of the Amidah. As mentioned in the introduction, the topics and commentaries on each benediction discussed in this chapter are traditional in nature. They do not reflect modern changes to the benedictions or current non-traditional commentary. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the benedictions in a broad sweep, providing a basic understanding of the themes throughout and a general understanding of the deeper meanings. Chapter Four will delve more deeply into the liturgical changes as reflected in Reform prayer books dating from the nineteenth century to today's current prayer book. In so doing, modern commentaries will support the liturgical changes.

Prior to the analysis of Reform liturgical changes, we must examine modern scholarship regarding the origins and history of the Amidah text, as handed down to us from previous generations, in a seemingly "unbroken chain" of tradition. The next chapter will delve into the broad range of schools of thought, which will help us understand the mindset of the Reform leaders who played an integral role in liturgical decisions over the past two centuries.

Chapter Three

The History of the Amidah through the Lens of Scholarship

The Babylonian Talmud offers the following account of the institution of the Amidah: "Simeon ha-Paqoli arranged the Eighteen Benedictions in their proper order in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh."[145] Over the past century, scholars in the field of liturgical studies have been in contention over the authenticity and historicity of this talmudic account. According to a traditional understanding of this text, following the destruction of the second Temple, Rabbis at Yavneh instituted the content, order, and wording of the Amidah. It is popularly believed by some scholars that the Rabbis innovated an entirely new form of worship, in place of the fallen Temple. However, other scholars are less convinced. As Ruth Langer writes, "The Rabbis, in their own literature... portray themselves as immediately taking charge of the Jewish world after the fall of the Temple and establishing laws and customs that everyone obeyed more or less without fuss. But is it reasonable to accept this as history?"[146] If the text was written by the Rabbis, is it reasonable to assume that this account is merely "a later rabbinic romanticization of their actual role in society at this critical juncture?"[147] The scholars who reject the talmudic accounts as historical fact ask the same questions and hold the same suspicions and skepticism.

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[145] BT Berakhot 28b

[146] Ruth Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy: The Recent Contributions of Ezra Fleischer," *Prooftexts* 19 (1999), 190.

[147] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 190.

This chapter will examine the scholarship that has dominated the field from the early 20th century to the present day. As will be shown, there are an array of methodologies employed in seeking to uncover the origins of the Amidah and communal prayer. It must be noted that however compelling or weak each of the various theories may be, the common thread that weaves throughout is the lack of clear evidence that supports one theory over another.

Leopold Zunz was the first scholar to challenge the talmudic account of the origin of the Amidah. He refuted the theory that mandatory daily prayer and a textually formatted Amidah were instituted at one single point in history, namely at Yavneh, after the destruction of the Temple. According to Zunz, the prayers as we have them today, as reflected in our prayer books, came to us through an evolutionary process, taking place over multiple stages of development. Using a philological model, by studying a number of manuscripts, Zunz explained the differences and similarities among various rites and Jewish cultures as "variations on, and additions to a single *Urtext* which was at the base of all of the rites...[Thus] one could reconstruct the 'original,' or *Urtext*, in its pristine form.[148]" As will be shown below, most subsequent scholars agreed that reconstructing a single *Urtext*, especially in its pristine form, is virtually impossible.

With regard to the Amidah, the Eighteen Benedictions, Zunz theorized that the benedictions which were recited daily do not form a "monolithic entity and did

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[148] Richard S. Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Study of Ancient Judaism I* (New York: KTAV, 1981), 110-111.

not all come into being at the same time."[149] Rather, the Eighteen Benedictions, as we have them today, were developed through a process that spanned over five or six separate periods. Zunz employed a sequential, monolinear model in which the prayers developed in a cumulative fashion rather than simultaneously.[150] As Richard Sarason points out, "Such a model presupposes that changes and additions are instituted from above in an orderly fashion at a certain point in time and that textual variations can best be explained sequentially.[151]"

Like Zunz, subsequent scholars in the field also used the philological model in reconstructing the prayers. The philological model employs techniques that aim to establish the authentic, original form and meaning of the prayers from literary texts and written records. The scholars in the field used this method to reconstruct the prayers and date them to the historical event that would have generated such a liturgical response. As Sarason writes, "If the philological approach of Zunz was expanded and refined in the works of Elbogen and Kohler, then it inexorably was drawn to its logical conclusion in the liturgical studies of Louis Finkelstein."[152] Finkelstein sought to not only reconstruct the *Urtext* of the Amidah in a most extreme way, especially in light of the Geniza discoveries, but also to fix the precise date or period of the various prayers in the Amidah.[153] One way in which he dated particular petitions of the Amida was by analyzing the " word count" of

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[149] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 110-111.
[150] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 110-111.
[151] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 111.
[152] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 124.
[153] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 125-126.

the benediction. He noted that the body of four of the petitions consists of seven words only, the "seven-word formula." He theorized that "special significance was attached to the mystic number seven during 'the period of the rise of the pupils of Hillel' ... hence these prayers, varied as they are typologically, must have originated together during that period."[154] Finkelstein took philological reductionism to a logical extreme by suggesting "an extremely brief formula consisting of one benediction as the original, to which all of the specific petitions were added on later occasions."[155] Sarason writes, "Although Finkelstein's erudition is considerable, his articles nonetheless raise grave questions of methodological propriety–questions which in fact, cast doubt on the validity of many of his conclusions."[156] As will be shown, his work impelled subsequent scholars to search for new approaches.

The majority of contention amongst scholars about the dating of organized communal prayer deals with the situation in the Second Temple period. Based only on our Talmudic texts, the common assumption is that communal prayer was fixed by the Rabbis in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple. There are competing theories of what pre-Second Temple and Second Temple period prayer looked like. Some theories argued that a certain type of communal prayer did indeed exist before and during the time of the Second Temple. It is often argued, especially by

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[154] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 126-127.
[155] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 128.
[156] Sarason, "The Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," 124.

Heinemann, that daily communal prayer even co-existed simultaneously alongside the Temple ritual. Thus, the morning prayer service corresponded to the morning Temple sacrifice, etc.

Scholars point to multiple examples that could support the idea of pre-rabbinic, pre-70, communal prayer. One such example, as Stefan Reif points out, is the institution of the *ma'amad*. The *ma'amad* pertained to those who "did not make the journey to Jerusalem [to offer their sacrifice and gathered together]...to recite scriptural passages and, apparently, to pray, albeit not in the formal fashion of later times."[157] Another example of prayer outside of the Temple was the praising or blessing God by common people. These types of benedictions, "were a popular form of religious expression... they were employed as a means of thanking God for his bounty by those who felt that it was an act of ingratitude, or possibly a dangerous provocation, to enjoy the benefits of the creation without acknowledging the role of its creator.[158]"

In reference to the Amidah, Reif writes, "Individuals or groups expressed preference for their own formulation and the context in which the whole custom operated was a wide and popular one. It is from this context that the nineteen benedictions of the 'amidah' subsequently emerged and there are interesting parallels in apocryphal and Qumranic sources to the

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[157] Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 58.
[158] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 60.

concepts expressed in that central prayer of tannaitic and later Judaism."[159] Despite the theories about communal prayer outside of the Second Temple walls, with reference to the institution of the *ma'amad* or occasional praises and blessings in recognition of God's power and grace, there is no evidence that gives us any indication of an Amidah text that predates the destruction of the Temple. [160] For the purposes of this examination, we are once again left hanging in speculation and theory with a lack of concrete evidence. This lack of concrete evidence turns out to be decisive for subsequent scholarship in the field.

Another source of scholarly debate is the function of the synagogue. Lee Levine's research thoroughly examines the function of the synagogue during the time of the Second Temple. He writes that even by the first century C.E. " the synagogue was playing a pivotal institutional role within the Jewish communities of Judea and the diaspora."[161] For purposes of this chapter, we will focus on the synagogues of Judea, the location of the Second Temple. According to Levine, the synagogue functioned in a variety of ways: as a community center, a religious institution where Torah and Haftarah were read, and a place of study and sermons. The pressing issue is whether or not the synagogue functioned as a place for communal prayer. Levine writes, " On the one hand, private prayer was a well-known phenomenon in

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[159] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 60.
[160] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 60.
[161] Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 135.

biblical and second Temple times; on the other, it is universally acknowledged that steps were taken within rabbinic circles at Yavneh soon after the destruction of the Temple to institutionalize communal prayer."[162] As Levine notes, the existence of communal prayer in the synagogue rest solely on the evidence at hand (or lack thereof). Evidence from extant sources such as Philo, Josephus, and the New Testament only speak of scriptural readings and sermons in the synagogue, with no mention of communal prayer. Additionally, archeological evidence shows that "extant buildings, usually identified as synagogues would seem to indicate only a range of plans and styles, but the lack of any discernible or distinctive orientation toward Jerusalem."[163] The physical orientation toward Jerusalem came to be associated with prayer and thus, these synagogues did not resemble (later) places of communal prayer.[164]

Contemporary scholarship, as stated above, does not employ the philological model for uncovering the origins of the Amidah. Most agree on one point, and that is, an *Urtext* cannot be reconstructed based on the data and manuscripts in our possession to date. The most extensive scholarship in the field has been dominated by the late scholars Joseph Heinemann and Ezra Fleischer. The following section will examine their opposing theories and a synthesis of each based on the summary of contemporary scholar and critic Ruth Langer.

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[162] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*,162.
[163] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*,164.
[164] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*,164.

Heinemann theorized that the prayers as we have them today were not composed at any single point in time. Rather, similar to Zunz, there were "separate processes of evolution in various arenas of Jewish life, each arena generating prayers with different formal characteristics...(vocabulary, grammar, style)."[165] Like his predecessors, Heinemann sought to argue against the talmudic claim that the prayers were instituted and composed at Yavneh under rabbinic authority. As will be shown, Heinemann argued that the prayers "composed" at Yavneh reflected the prayers of the common people during the late Second Temple period but outside of the Temple walls.

According to Heinemann, diverse forms of prayer were known to the Tannaim and Amoraim "and only gradually standardized into an official rabbinic prayer text, [this process actually lasting] well into the medieval period."[166] In essence, the prayers as we have today did not develop from uniformity to diversity but rather the opposite, from diversity to uniformity.[167] Thus, given the ever-present diversity of prayers with which the Tannaim and Amoraim were familiar, the more the prayer structures and wording they sought to institute reflected that of the people, not of a learned elite.[168] Furthermore, Heinemann's theory points to the fact that there was never absolute uniformity.[169]

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[165] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[166] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[167] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[168] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[169] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.

Heinemann opens his chapter on statutory prayer in his major work, Prayer in the Talmud with a number of rabbinic traditions on the origins of the Amidah. As Heinemann points out, "Since almost every one of these [talmudic] dicta attributes the institution of fixed prayer to a different generation, public body, or personage, nothing can be deduced from their joint testimony with any degree of surety, save for the great antiquity of the institution itself."[170] Thus, BT Berakhot 28b, as quoted above, does not prove that the wording of the prayer texts was a rabbinic innovation. To Heinemann, the statutory prayers evolved over hundreds of years before the destruction of the Second Temple. Not necessarily at Yavneh, the prayers were edited and consolidated following the Temple's destruction.[171] At that time, as Heinemann points out, "the details of the principal obligatory prayers and the laws which govern them were fixed and became halachically binding. The basic structures and content of the prayers determined at that time have never since been altered; and to this very day constitute the essential components of the Jewish liturgy."[172] Thus, as will be later exemplified, despite variations in the wording of certain prayers, such as the Amidah, the structural integrity has not changed, even among the various rites and movements within Judaism.

Heinemann states clearly that communal fixed prayer was analogous to the Temple sacrificial cult, both after the destruction of the Temple as well as during the Temple period, "the only difference being that, in the temple period, prayer did not

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[170] Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 13.

[171] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 13.

[172] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 13.

take the place of the sacrifices, but rather paralleled and complemented them.[173]" Once statutory prayer was understood by the masses outside of the Temple leadership as an alternative means of statutory Temple worship, it became "an integral part of organized communal religious life, and was stamped with its own unique fixed forms and patterns, formulae and idioms" [174] Heinemann notes that no evidence exists of a fixed form of early prayer. All of the information we have relates only to the end of the Second Temple period.[175] Nevertheless, without this data, Heinemann, similar to his predecessors, suggests that communal prayer did indeed exist during the Second Temple period.

After this brief overview of Heinemann's theory of statutory prayer, we will now delve into his theory of the Eighteen Benedictions. As will be shown, his theory about the Eighteen benedictions is coordinated with his general theory of statutory prayer.

In regard to BT Berakhot 28b, Heinemann believes that the institution of the Eighteen Benedictions only taking place at the time of Rabban Gamaliel is not tenable. He writes, "Of course, it is quite probable that not the same eighteen benedictions were recited in every place, nor necessarily in the same order, but certainly the custom of the daily recitation of Eighteen Benedictions is earlier than the destruction of the Temple." [176] The point of contention regarding this and the subsequent theories is lack of concrete evidence. While various scholars have gone

[173] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 15.
[174] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 14.
[175] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 21.
[176] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 22.

so far as to determine the exact dating of the Amidah text and its subsequent revisions, Heinemann writes that no data exists that allows us to determine the precise timing.[177] Furthermore, he writes, "Only rarely does the text of a prayer, as it has reached us, testify to the occasion of its composition."[178] As Langer writes, "Looking at Talmudic texts and second temple period literature, he concluded that the liturgical situation of the first-centuries C.E. cannot be reconstructed precisely because no one authoritative text then existed."[179]

Unlike previous scholars who sought to determine the exact dating of the Amidah as well as the historical events that generated the composition of the individual benedictions in the Amidah, Heinemann seeks to prove that the statutory prayers, including the Amidah, were reflections of the communal prayers of the people. He thus argues against the traditional belief in the historicity of the rabbinic texts that attribute to the generation of Rabban Gamaliel at Yavneh the authorship and innovation of a new form to worship God, prayer. According to Heinemann, the "assembly at Yavneh at which Shim'on Hapaquli organized the Amidah followed patterns of prayer already familiar to the people."[180] The rabbinic academy at Yavneh "created an organized list of eighteen themes or combinations of themes from among those common to first century C.E. culture but did not compose specific texts."[181]

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[177] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 23.
[178] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 23.
[179] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[180] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[181] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.

There are two points of contention between Heinemann and his younger contemporary Ezra Fleischer: the question of the existence of public prayer during the Second Temple period and the question of whether or not full and precise prayer texts were instituted at Yavneh. Fleischer criticizes Heinemann's understanding of the rabbinic texts by stating that his "fundamental errors lies in assuming that the Yavnean rabbi [Rabban Gamaliel] merely promulgated directives about prayer but not actual prayer texts." [182] Fleischer reads texts such as BT Berakhot 28b as historical fact which conveys the events that actually took place. Thus, for Fleischer, the Amidah and other prayer texts were indeed composed at one single point in time, at Yavneh. Furthermore, he believes that Rabban Gamaliel's decree for prayer was a "revolutionary move motivated by the need to compensate for the loss of the Temple...Such a revolution required a concomitant precise composition and teaching of an authoritative text of this prayer."[183] As we may deduce, Heinemann did not view the talmudic account as determinative and theorized that prayer did in fact exist at the same time as the Temple. For Heinemann, the Rabbis did indeed fix the institution of thrice-daily public prayer as a substitute for Temple worship, but they did not create the prayers or the custom out of nothing.

In regard to variant texts of specific prayers, such as the Amidah, Fleischer formulates a radical idea. Most scholars agree that the variant prayer texts throughout the manuscripts, and even those found in the Genizah fragments,

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[182] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 181.
[183] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 181.

represent a lack of uniformity among the rites. Variant texts only prove that no one text was composed at a single point in time as it was constantly evolving and changing through the generations. Fleischer's radical idea stems from the fact that "Variety is a result of the lack of consensus that arose once the original, usually Yavnean, prayer text had to be discarded....He notes not the diversity but rather the uniformity which points to a single origin...*His answer to the Geniza fragments – variety does not reflect a situation of complete freedom – rather, fixed texts are the earlier materials*[184]" Therefore, the fact that the various manuscripts resemble each other in form and content only proves the original uniformity of the prayers.

As seen above, one major debate among scholars is the question of fixed prayer outside of the Temple, before its destruction. Much of the scholarship hypothesizes the existence of such an institution outside of the Temple walls. Fleischer challenges this hypothesis by pointing out the lack of evidence of a fixed practice among Jews during the second Temple period. Furthermore, "prayer where mentioned in extra-rabbinic sources, clearly refers to private, incidental prayer.[185]"

Fleischer's problem with the standard theory of early prayer lies in the fact that "standard scholarship assumes that they [the Rabbis in Yavneh] did not fix the text of this compulsory prayer... Implied in this argument is the assumption that long before the Yavnean period, necessarily during the period of the second Temple, people were already accustomed to reciting prayers that resembled in character the ' Amidah' that the Yavneh sages sought to institutionalize...[But] this assumption is

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[184] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 180.
[185] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 182.

mistaken."[186] In regard to the Amidah, Fleischer writes that it was "not meant to be a prayer in the common meaning of the term" and "does not resemble the kinds of prayers uttered by the individuals before the destruction."[187] To Fleischer, "all formal characteristics of its structure and contents were the result of deliberate *ab initio* decisions made by the Academy." [188] Therefore, the Rabbis were deliberate in the structuring, language, and tone of the Eighteen Benedictions."[189]

To Fleischer, the Amidah resembles the priestly sacrificial worship and the worship conceived at Yavneh as a "way to offer the nation, in the absence of the sacrifices, an alternative form of worshiping God...The Shmoneh Esrei was an utter innovation on all levels."[190] He concludes that there is no way to imagine that the Rabbis of Yavneh allowed the nations's new way of worshipping God, in place of the Temple, to be shaped "by the free will and inspiration of the common people." [191]

In her critical response to Fleischer's extensive work, Ruth Langer writes, "Where Fleischer does not accept Heinemann's form-critical assumptions, Heinemann's followers and probably he himself, are equally adamantly critical of Fleischer's very traditional authoritarian reading of the Talmudic accounts of Yavneh and subsequent liturgical history."[192] As

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[186] Ezra Fleischer, "On the Origins of the Amidah: Response to Ruth Langer," *Prooftexts* 20.3 (2000), 381.
[187] Fleischer, "On the Origins of the Amidah," 382.
[188] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 184.
[189] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 184.
[190] Fleischer, "On the Origins of the Amidah," 382.
[191] Fleischer, "On the Origins of the Amidah," 383.
[192] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 183

mentioned previously, all of the scholarship in the field of liturgical origins and dating is speculative at best. There is no concrete evidence that conclusively supports any one theory proposed in this chapter. As Langer notes, "All rely on essentially the same very limited pool of information from which they derive different conclusions because of different prior assumptions and methodologies. Each has to decide which rabbinic and extra rabbinic accounts of the synagogue and prayer to grant historical credibility, and upon which extant prayer texts to rely as reflective of the early rabbinic world."[193]

In reference to Fleischer's theory that the Amidah was a one-time imposition at Yavneh of a radical new structure of prayer, Langer notes that these assertions "are based on literary characteristics of the recorded texts of the Amidah, all of which date from later periods."[194] Additionally, Langer points out that Fleischer chooses to ignore the evidence that contradicts his theory. One such example is the fixing of the blessing formulas. She notes that this innovation is recorded in the names of third-century Rabbis, in both Talmuds, both of which make no reference to any received authoritative prayer texts.[195]

Fleischer points out that the theology of the Amidah is peculiarly that of the sages at Yavneh. He theorizes that "they used these fixed prayers not only as a

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[193] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 189.
[194] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 184.
[195] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 184.

means of expressing their own religious views, but more important, as a means of impressing these views upon the people as a whole... By placing redemption in a non-apocalyptic future, the sages encouraged the people to concentrate on rebuilding their lives in the present... The sages also avoided mystical ideas in the presentation of God and maintain the biblical image of a benevolent God whose punishment of Israel for her sins is motivated only by a constant concern for her well-being."[196] Langer criticizes this theory in that we know very little about the prayers of the first century and furthermore, the theology employed in the Amidah represents a later, more mature reaction to tragedy (perhaps as late as the time of the Bar Kochba revolt in 132-135 C.E.).[197] As Langer notes in regard to the language of the Amidah, "It would seem unlikely that late first century Jews were ready for such a detached, unemotional response."[198]

As exemplified throughout this chapter, for all the weaknesses and strengths of the arguments, no one theory is demonstrably more right or wrong that the other. The theories are all based on speculation. The only hard evidence presented in this chapter is that of Levine's research in the function of the synagogue; even that research is refuted by some scholars. Nevertheless, the early research and theories of Zunz and Finkelstein and the more recent research of Heinemann and Fleischer is significant because it presents multiple perspectives on the history of prayer and the Amidah. One may take the side of our tradition and say that the prayer instituted by the Rabbis at Yavneh functioned as an alternative method of worshipping God in

[196] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 186.
[197] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 186.
[198] Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 186.

light of the destruction of the Second Temple. On the other hand, people may choose to see communal prayer as an innovation of the people and not the Rabbis. Therefore, the Rabbis at Yavneh merely institutionalized communal prayer rather than innovating a new form of worship, they simply instituted what was already well known and commonly practiced outside of the Temple walls.

Chapter Four

The Evolution of the Amidah in Reform Prayer Books

The presentation in Chapter Three has laid the groundwork for this final chapter on Reform innovation of the prayer book. This is a major element of Reform Judaism that set it apart from traditional Jewish prayer practice (and thus traditional Jews), dating back to the early 1800s. Jakob Petuchowski highlights the major characteristics of Reform liturgy as the following:[199] Abbreviation of the traditional service, use of the vernacular, omission of angelology, toning down of particularism, omission of prayers for the "ingathering of exiles" and "the return to Zion," omission of the prayers "for the restoration of the sacrificial cult," substitution of the "Messianic age and "redemption" for a personal Messiah, substitution of spiritual immortality for physical resurrection, provision of variety, and addition of new prayers which voice contemporary concerns. Throughout the Amidah, one can find elements (some more than others) of every one of these liturgical innovations. Thus, the Amidah is the quintessential rubric that reflects Reform prayer innovation in its entirety.

This chapter will trace the Reform changes beginning with the early Reform prayer books of Europe all the way to the most recent North American Reform prayer book, *Mishkan T'filah*. While there have been dozens of European and North American Reform prayer books, this chapter will only focus on the most influential

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[199] Jakob Petuchoski, *Guide to the Prayerbook* (Cincinnati: HUC-JIR, 1968), 58-59.

ones. Specifically, we will draw our examples from the following prayer books (with notable information):

European Reform Prayer Books

1841 –Hamburg Tempelverein, 2nd edition – the first edition in 1819 did not include the daily liturgy.

1841 –West London Synagogue – This is the first British Reform prayer book. The liturgical formations are based on the Sephardic rite due to the mixed population in the congregational membership of both Sephardi and Ashkenazi.

1854 – Abraham Geiger – This prayer book was designed for use throughout the Breslau community. This was a moderate Reform prayer book, designed to be used throughout the spectrum. The Hebrew text is relatively full and traditional. The German is more radical in theology and often paraphrastic.

1870 – Geiger, revised edition – Geiger left Breslau and published this prayer book in Berlin, where he allowed himself to be more reformist.

1929 –*Prayers of the Entire Year*, known also as the *Einheitsgebetbuch*, the German "*Union Prayer Book*," this prayer book was unique in that it was not written for a specific community, but rather, it was intended to be used throughout all German communities. The name (and concept) "*Union Prayer Book*" was borrowed and adapted from the North American Reform movement.

North American Prayer Books

1855 – Dr. Leo Merzbacher's *Seder T'fillot* – This prayer book was written for Temple Emanuel in New York. This was the first published Reform prayer book in North America to follow the German immigration. It was published in English and not in German.

1860 – Samuel Adler's revision of Merzbacher – Samuel Adler was a prominent Reform rabbi and was more radical in his reform (as reflected throughout his prayer book).

1857 – Isaac M. Wise's *Minhag America* – This edition was printed in both Hebrew/German and Hebrew/English formats.

1872 – Revised edition of *Minhag America* – More Reform than his 1857 edition.

1858 – David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* – This is the first American prayer book with a single unified text with Hebrew and German interspersed throughout. It was published in German and Hebrew.

1872 – *Olat Tamid* – This is the English translation (by Bernhard Felsenthal, with David Einhorn's participation) of the original 1858 version.

1896 – Emil G. Hirsh's revision of *Olat Tamid* - This was not just a translation but also a revision.

1892/1895, 1918, 1940 – *Union Prayer Book* (*UPB*)- This prayer book was designed to be the single unified prayer book for the entire American Reform movement.

1975, 1994 – *Gates of Prayer* – As with the *UPB*, *Gates of Prayer* was also designed to be the unified prayer book of the North American Reform movement. The 1994 *Gates of Prayer* was the revised "gender sensitive" version.

2007 – *Mishkan T'filah* – The most recent prayer book of the North American Reform movement

This examination will clearly exemplify the various ideologies and theologies on the Reform spectrum within their several historical contexts, as reflected in the various prayer books, and show how the Reformers of the time altered the liturgical text to fit their particular ideologies and theologies. While the usage of the vernacular is predominant in most of the prayer books examined, not only can one find textual changes in the English (or German) translations, but so, too, in the Hebrew texts. Throughout this chapter, we will present specific examples of the Hebrew text that reflect the most radical innovations of Reform prayer. The majority of the texts provided are from the early European prayer books (which are the first instances of the radical departure from traditional Judaism).

We shall see throughout this chapter that each generation had their own unique innovations and issues with the Amidah. While some prayer books make radical departures from the traditional text, others preserve it in its entirety. For example, the only major changes and innovations of the early European Reform prayer books (such as those of the Hamburg Tempel, 1841, and Abraham Geiger, 1854) can be found in the following benedictions: Benedictions 10 (the ingathering of the exiles), 11 (prayer for the restoration of a Jewish judiciary), 12 (a malediction

against slanderers and the wicked), 14 (for the rebuilding of Jerusalem), 15 (for the messianic scion of the Davidic dynasty), and 17 (for the restoration of the sacrificial service).[200] There were minor changes to some of the other benedictions in early Reform prayer books, but not enough to devote an entire discussion to them. The traditional Ashkenazi texts are provided in each subsection for the aforementioned benedictions.

This chapter will analyze the Reform innovations in each benediction in the order in which they appear in a traditional text. All of the benedictions, as found in various Reform prayer books, are compared and contrasted to their traditional Ashkenazi forms. There are many seasonal insertions throughout the Amidah, and the various changes throughout also reflect Reform innovation. However, for purposes of brevity and relevance to common daily prayer, these insertions will not be examined in this chapter.

Opening Verse (From Psalms 51:17)

The inclusion of this verse was scattered throughout the early European Reform prayer books. For example, we can find the verse in the Hamburg 1841 prayer book and in the West London prayer book. However, it was omitted in Geiger's prayer book. This verse has been omitted from every North American Reform prayer book prior to *Gates of Prayer* (1975). It has been preserved in *Mishkan T'filah*. The reason for this omission according to Ellenson is that "some

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[200] Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe; the Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), 215.

consider it extraneous [while] others...reject the reference to a personal God who hears supplicatory prayer."[201]

1) *Avot* ("Ancestors")

Every early European Reform ritual preserved the original Hebrew form of this benediction. However, in regards to the translation of *goel,* meaning "redeemer," the overwhelming majority of the early European Reform rituals prefer to translate it as "redemption" (in German). By replacing "redeemer" with "redemption," the early Reformers are rejecting the traditional prayer for a supernatural messiah and replacing it with a prayer for a universal messianic era (this change influenced most North American Reform prayer books).

Just like the early European prayer books, the early North American prayer books also retain *go'el* (redeemer), while translating the Hebrew to mean "redemption." Merzbacher (1851) and Adler's first revision (1860) do in fact translate it as "redeemer" (Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* (1858 and the 1872 literal translation of the German) does not provide a translation for the first three benedictions) but all subsequent prayer books, including Adler's second revision (1863) translate the text as "redemption." Wise's 1857 *Minhag America*, changes the Hebrew to *ge'ulah,* the first North American prayer book to do so (followed by Adler's second revision, 1863); all of the *Union Prayer Book* versions and subsequent prayer books (*Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah*) alter the Hebrew as well.

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[201] David Ellenson commentary, in Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries: The Amidah.* Vol. 2 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1997). 52 & 54.

An innovation over a century later, in the wake of late 20th-century feminism, was the inclusion of the Matriarchs along with the Patriarchs. The *Gates of Prayer* 1994 revision radically altered both the Hebrew and English in the opening and closing of the benediction by including the Matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel), alongside the traditional text with the names of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Even though the early North American prayer books retained the traditional Hebrew word "*Avot,*" meaning "fathers," every translation beginning with *Minhag America* (1857) read "ancestors." While the Hebrew of *Gates of Prayer* (1975) only mentions the names of the *Avot,* there is an element of Reform egalitarian ideology found in two of the morning services (but only in English translation). For example, one service translates the text as, "God of this day, as you were with our fathers and mothers..."[202] Another service translates the text in a manner unlike anything we have seen thus far. The first paragraph mentions only the names of the forefathers, including various prophets. Immediately following is a paragraph that not only names the matriarchs, but also includes the names of various female "prophets" such as Deborah, Hannah, and Ruth.[203] *Mishkan T'filah* includes all the names of both the *Avot* and *Imahot* and provides a literal translation for the benediction, which names the "Fathers" and "Mothers."

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[202] Chaim Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook. Weekdays, Sabbaths, and Festivals, Services and Prayers for Synagogue and Home* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), 88.

[203] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 97.

2) *G'vurot* ("God's Power")

As discussed in Chapter Two, the theme of resurrection of the dead has been and still is a major point of contention in this benediction (see Chapter Two for the full discussion). While North American prayer books find serious issue with this concept, "not a single one of the [early European Reform prayer books] found it necessary to change the Hebrew text, although many of them (but not all!) substituted the concept of immortality in their vernacular translation or paraphrase."[204] Thus, the following discussion is exclusively focused on North American prayer books.

While the Merzbacher 1855 prayer book retains the original Hebrew together with a literal translation, Adler's 1860 revision translates the original Hebrew text as "who vivifiest all things"[205] This translation softens the traditional ideology of God reviving the dead. Additionally, Adler revises the opening sentence to remove the mention of reviving the dead, as follows:

אַתָּה גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ

The same formulation appears in Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* (1858).

Wise's 1857 *Minhag America* translates the opening of the benediction as "O God, who grantest perpetual life to the death [sic!], to spend the fullness of thy

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[204] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 215.

[205] Dr. Leo Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service.* 2nd ed. Dr. Samuel Adler, ed. (New York: Thalmessinger, Cahn & Benedicks,1860), 65.

salvation."[206] Yet, in the 1857 Hebrew version, he retains the traditional text. While Wise softened the vernacular language in 1857, his revision in 1872 (which reflected a much more radical departure, translating the closing of the benediction as, "Who can compare to Thee, King, who killest, revivest, and spendest salvation?"[207] The Hebrew text reflected that of Adler's revision.

The *chatimah* in The *Union Prayer Book* of 1895, which follows that of Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* (1858) (which is derived from the blessing after the reading of the Torah), reads, "implanting within us immortal life"[208] (Emil G. Hirsch's 1896 adaptation of *Olat Tamid* translates the Hebrew as "dispenser of life eternal"[209]). The opening line of the text omits any reference to God's power to revive or implant life. The 1918 revised *UPB* retains the original revisions. While the 1940 newly revised *UPB* gives the Hebrew text more consistently throughout its various services, the itself is the same as that of 1895 and 1914. *Gates of Prayer* returns to the early Reform text of Adler (1860) and reinserts "*machayei hakol*" (translated literally as, "gives life to all") in both the opening and closing of the benediction. However, the English throughout does not reflect a literal translation. The various translations found throughout the services include, "all life is your gift...Blessed is the Lord, the

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[206] Isaac M. Wise, ed. *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1* (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co, 1857), 20.

[207] Isaac M.Wise, ed. *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Revised* (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co, 1872), 41.

[208] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship. Volume I* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1895), 272.

[209] Emil G. Hirsch, ed., Dr. David Einhorn's *Olath Tamid*: *Book of Prayers for Jewish Congregations* (Chicago: n.p., 1896) 133.

source of life"[210] and "You are the source of life and blessing."[211] There are some services that include the Hebrew text but omit the reference to "giving life" in the English translation. Reflecting the late 20th-century Reform appropriation of tradition, *Mishkan T'filah* not only retains the Hebrew text found in *Gates of Prayer*, but also even provides the traditional Hebrew text "*mechayei hameitim*" (literally translated as "revives the dead") in parentheses. The English is literally translated for both choices.

This benediction contains the seasonal inserts "You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall" during the winter months and "You bring down the dew" during the summer months. The seasonal inserts refer exclusively to the climate of the Land of Israel. In the spirit of an early Reform rejection of the return to Zion and Zionistic sentiments, this insertion was omitted beginning with Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* (1858) and has only recently been restored in *Mishkan T'filah*. This recent restoration reflects not only a reappropriation of tradition but also a restored focus on the land of Israel as essential to the Jewish people. Even though Einhorn was the first to reject this insertion, Wise's *Minhag America* (1857) makes both insertions (one following the other) a permanent part of the benediction, which thus "could affirm God's responsibility for nature everywhere, not just in Israel."[212]

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[210] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer*, 38.
[211] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer*, 89.
[212] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book*, 78.

3) *K'dushat Hashem* ("God's Holiness")

While a major Reform liturgical change involves removing angelology, for purposes of this thesis, with a focus on daily individual prayer, the *K'dushat Hashem* benediction has undergone no changes to the Hebrew or English (both European and North American prayer books). Suffice it to say, the full *K'dushah*, traditionally recited in the repetition of the Amidah, has undergone many changes throughout most North American prayer books and has since returned to its weekday traditional form in *Mishkan T'filah* (but not on Shabbat).

4) *Binah* ("Wisdom"), 5) *T'shuvah* ("Repentance"), and 6) *S'lichah* ("Forgiveness")

With the exception of homiletical differences in the translations throughout the prayer books and the omission of the word "*avinu*" (our father) in the opening line of the forgiveness Benediction in the gender-sensitive *Mishkan T'filah*, these three Benedictions have remained constant in their traditional forms and content.

7) *G'ulah* ("Redemption")

Beginning with the Merzbacher 1855 prayer book, this benediction has undergone significant changes throughout North American Reform prayer books. Merzbacher radically altered the Hebrew, which shifted the focus from a God who "saves us and fights our fight" to a more general plea for God to remove "sorrow and sighing, and redeem us from all evil."[213] The English translation of the altered

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[213] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*, 103.

Hebrew text is a literal translation. Adler preserves these changes. Ellenson writes, "The conditions of Jewish oppression that had motivated this prayer were, in the opinion of Isaac Mayer Wise, no longer extant in America, so that its sentiments seemed inappropriate for Jews living here."[214] Therefore, in recognition of the Jewish strife elsewhere in the world, the 1857 *Minhag America* literally translates his altered Hebrew text as, "O behold the oppression of our brethren and redeem them speedily."[215] Wise preserved these changes in the 1872 revision. Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* (1858) reflected an even more universalist sentiment focusing on any and all "suffering" and closing the benediction praising God, the "Redeemer of the distressed"[216] (Hirsch's 1896 adaptation of *Olat Tamid* slightly alters the translation, but stays true to Einhorn's universalistic sentiment). While every edition of the *UPB* completely omits this benediction (due to its particularistic message), *Gates of Prayer* not only brings it back, but does so in its traditional Hebrew form. Even the translation is true to its literal meaning. As in many cases, *Mishkan T'filah* retains the traditional text of *Gates of Prayer*.

8) *R'fu'ah* ("Healing")

The Merzbacher 1855 prayer book makes some minor innovative changes to this benediction, both in Hebrew and English. Unlike what we have seen thus far, Merzbacher adapted an element from the Sephardi rite to alter the Ashkenazic text: "Bring complete healing to all our (*makot*) afflictions," is changed to "Grant a perfect

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[214] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 112.
[215] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857),* 21.
[216] Einhorn *Olath Tamid* (1872 translation), 348

remedy to all our infirmities, and all our pains"[217] (the Sephardic text adapted here has remained constant throughout the subsequent prayer books, including *Mishkan T'filah*). This liturgical alteration was made possibly to avoid viewing illness as a divine blow/affliction (illness as a divine punishment). Additionally, in the spirit of toning down particularism, Merzbacher changes the traditional *chatimah, "rofei cholei amo Yisrael"* (meaning "Who heals the sick among his people Israel") to *"rofei cholim"* (meaning "who heals the sick").[218] Adler preserves these changes. However, the newly revised *UPB* returned to the traditional *chatimah,* which refers to God as "the healer of his people Israel." It was later revised back to the universalistic language in *Gates of Prayer* and remained so in *Mishkan T'filah.* The penultimate line, "For you are our sovereign, steadfast, merciful healing God," has been omitted in both the Hebrew and English in both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah.*

9) *Shanim* ("Blessing for a Year of Prosperity")

As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter will not deal with some of the seasonal insertions in the Amidah. However, in the case of this benediction, these are worth briefly noting.

Beginning with the 1855 Merzbacher prayer book, the seasonal insertion (traditionally from December 4 to Passover) which says, "Grant dew and rain for a blessing upon the face of the ground"[219] was made permanent. From Passover to December 4, the insertion, "and grant blessing" is traditionally recited. In reference

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[217] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service,* 103.
[218] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service,* 102 & 103.
[219] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service,* 103.

to this decision, Ellenson wrote, "Liberal Jews of the nineteenth century objected to tying God's mastery of nature to the specific seasonal cycle of Israel and Babylonia."[220] This change was reflected in Wise's *Minhag America* but the benediction itself was completely omitted from all the versions of *UPB. Gates of Prayer* brought this benediction back and established the other insertion ("and grant blessing") as the permanent one (with no option for the former insertion). While the benediction was returned to *Gates of Prayer,* the English translation is no longer particularistic to the Land of Israel but rather refers here generally to the "earth." *Mishkan T'filah* preserved these changes.

10) *Kibbutz Galuyot* ("Ingathering of the Exiles")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 10 reads:

תְּקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵרוּתֵנוּ, וְשָׂא נֵס לְקַבֵּץ גָּלֻיּוֹתֵינוּ, וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד
מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל

As pointed out by Petuchowski, the Hamburg (1841) prayer book only paraphrases all of the intermediate benedictions in German. The paraphrased section of this benediction in the Hamburg prayer book tones down the particularism of the traditional text. While the traditional text focuses on "our" exiles, meaning the Jews, Hamburg is more universalistic by saying, "for all who groan in slavery."[221] There is no mention of the ingathering from the "four corners of the earth." The 1841 West London Synagogue prayer book adopts the traditional Sephardi text in both the

[220] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 120.
[221] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 217.

Hebrew and English.[222] The Geiger 1854 prayer book, in both the Hebrew and German translation, departs from the traditional text of this benediction altogether. The following is a snippet from the Geiger text where it departs from the traditional text:

והושע יי את עמך את שארית ישראל בארבע כנפות הארץ

This text, from the opening line of the benediction, is translated as, "and save, O Lord, Thy people, the remnant of Israel, in the four corners of the earth."[223] Unlike the Hamburg translation, which universalizes the call to freedom, this version does not mention the words "exile" or "slave" and primarily focuses on God as the "saver" and not "gatherer." It is worth noting that the prefix before the phrase "four corners of the earth" has been changed to "in" as opposed to "from," thus making this a more descriptive statement rather than referring to the traditional negative connotation of exile. As also seen below in the *chatima*, the Hebrew word for "gather" is replaced with "save" and "dispersed" is replaced with "remnant."

ברוך... מושיע שארית עמו ישראל

The 1870 Geiger edition omits "in the four corners of the earth" from the Hebrew and German.[224] The *Einheitsgebetbuch* (1929) removes the word for "exiles" in both the Hebrew and German. As introduced by Geiger in 1854,

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[222] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 217.
[223] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 217.
[224] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 218.

Einheitsgebetbuch retains the prefix "in" with reference to the "four corners of the earth."[225]

As will be seen throughout the North American Reform prayer books, the early European Reformers' text alterations and theological difficulties paved the way and set a precedent. The early North American prayer books of Merzbacher (1855), Adler's revision of Merzbacher in 1860, Einhorn's *Olath Tamid* and Wise's *Minhag America* all contain certain elements of creative and innovative textual changes (however unlike what we saw in Europe). Consistent with the European prayer books, the theme of universalistic freedom remains a constant throughout all North American Reform prayer books. For example, Merzbacher's literal translation of his altered Hebrew text reads, "O sound the great cornet for the freedom of nations, and lift up the banner to collect those in exile...Blessed art Thou, O Lord! who gatherist the banished."[226] Wise's *Minhag America* says, "Let resound the great trumpet for the liberty of all nations...Blessed art Thou, God, who bringest nigh the abandoned."[227] Wise revised the *chatimah* in 1872 to read, "Blessed be Thou who lovest the community of nations."[228] As noted previously, the early *Union Prayer Book* of 1895 paraphrases the intermediate benedictions in English (no Hebrew). It reads, "Grant, O Lord, that the sound of freedom be heard throughout all the lands, and all nations enjoy the blessings of true liberty."[229] All three services in the newly revised *UPB* of 1940 omit this benediction altogether. This benediction finds its way

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[225] This alteration is based on the Sephardic text of the *Ahavah Rabbah* benediction.
[226] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*, 103.
[227] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857)*, 22.
[228] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Revised (1872)*, 45.
[229] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship,*(1895), 275.

back into *Gates of Prayer*, however with a rendering in both Hebrew and English that is unlike what we have seen thus far (although thematically similar). The English, which is faithfully translated from the revised Hebrew, reads, "Sound the great horn to proclaim freedom, inspire us to strive for the liberation of the oppressed, and let the song of liberty be heard in the four corners of the earth. *Blessed is the Lord, redeemer of the oppressed.*"[230] With only a minor change, *Mishkan T'filah* preserves the universal focus and text of the Benediction, as seen in *Gates of Prayer*.

11) *Mishpat* ("Justice")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 11 reads:

הָשִׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ כְּבָרִאשׁוֹנָה וְיוֹעֲצֵינוּ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה, וְהָסֵר מִמֶּנּוּ יָגוֹן וַאֲנָחָה,
וּמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אַתָּה, יְיָ, לְבַדְּךָ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים, וְצַדְּקֵנוּ בַּמִּשְׁפָּט. בָּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יְיָ, מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

In the spirit of toning down the particular, the early Reform prayer books of Europe found this benediction, which seemingly refers to the removal of "non-Jewish" rule, to be problematic and made changes that reflect a universalistic hope for an honest and just government. The Hamburg 1841 prayer book reads, "Grant us a righteous government and a wise administration of law."[231] The 1841 West London Synagogue prayer book retains the traditional Sefardi version (which

[230] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 64.
[231] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 220.

deviates from the Ashkenazi rite) in both the Hebrew and the English.[232] The 1854 Geiger prayer book alters the wording of this benediction as follows:

השיבה לנו ששון ורוח נדיבה תסמכנו והסר ממנו

This verse translates as, "Restore to us the joy of Thy salvation, and may a noble spirit sustain us; and remove from us..."[233] In the later 1870 edition of the Geiger prayer book the Hebrew was further altered, reflecting the theology that God is the ultimate judge, thus removing the concept of the control of human judges over other people. The *Einheitsgebetbuch* 1929 retains the changes as found in the 1870 Geiger prayer book.

The early North American prayer books were creative and innovative in the alterations of the Hebrew text. As seen thus far regarding this benediction, many of the early changes reflect a common universalistic theology of God's restoration of just and righteous judges and counselors for all. Even more so, the early European changes reflect the aspirations of political liberalism for a just and tolerant government. The types of changes found in the early European Reform prayer books remain constant throughout the North American Reform prayer books.

David Ellenson notes a minor grammatical alteration in *Wise's Minhag America*, writing that Wise "subtly altered the first verb from *hashivah* (an imperative form of the Hebrew word, *shuv* meaning "Return our judges") to *hoshevah* (an imperative from the root *yashav,* meaning "Seat our judges"). He

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[232] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 220.
[233] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 221.

thereby avoided casting aspersion on America's courts and legal system."[234] The 1895 *UPB* edition references "true liberty" for all. While the first two services in the 1940 newly revised *UPB* omit this benediction, the third service alludes to it by saying, "May the nations realize that the triumphs of war turn to ashes and that justice and righteousness are better than conquest and dominion."[235] *Gates of Prayer* restored the Hebrew text with new textual innovations (heavily deviating from the traditional text) that removed all particularistic elements (i.e. "Pour Your spirit upon the rulers of all lands"[236]). *Mishkan T'filah* preserved the text as seen in *Gates of Prayer.*

12) *Minim* ("Punishment of Heretics")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 12 reads:

וְלַמַּלְשִׁינִים אַל תְּהִי תִקְוָה, וְכָל הָרִשְׁעָה כְּרֶגַע תֹּאבֵד, וְכָל אוֹיְבֶיךָ
מְהֵרָה יִכָּרֵתוּ, וְהַזֵּדִים מְהֵרָה תְעַקֵּר וּתְשַׁבֵּר וּתְמַגֵּר וְתַכְנִיעַ בִּמְהֵרָה
בְיָמֵינוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, שׁוֹבֵר אוֹיְבִים וּמַכְנִיעַ זֵדִים

As pointed out in Chapter Two, this benediction has been fraught with controversy and the early Reformers radically changed the wording or simply omitted it from the prayer book altogether. Among the various early European prayer books that omitted this benediction were the Hamburg 1841 and West

[234] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 128.
[235] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship. Volume I.* Newly revised edition (Cincinnati: Central Conference of Amerian Rabbis, 1940), 350.
[236] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 64.

London Synagogue prayer books.[237] The Geiger 1854 and 1870 prayer books retained the benediction but altered the Hebrew text to read:

ולמלשינות אל תהי תקוה, וכל הרשעה כרגע תאבד והזדון תכניע במהרה בימינו
ברוך אתה יי, שובר הרשעה ומכניע הזדון

This text may be translated as follows: "And for slander let there be no hope, and may all wickedness perish as in a moment; and do Thou humble arrogance speedily in our days. Praised art Thou, O Lord, who breakest wickedness and humblest arrogance."[238] As can be clearly seen in both the Hebrew and translation, Geiger shifted the focus from slanderers and wicked people, which was construed as a direct attack on Christians or Jewish heretics, to the abstract concepts of slander and wickedness. Geiger also removed the vindictive aspect of the benediction, i.e. God cutting down the wicked and our enemies, and replaced it with a more optimistic and less violent approach. The revised Geiger prayer book of 1870 reflects a further change in the Hebrew. It reads:

והתועים אליך ישובו וכל הרשעה מהרה תאבד והזדון תכניע

This rendition returns to the original concept of evildoers but in softer language, "And may the erring ones."[239] Additionally, instead of a God who cuts down and destroys the evildoers, the Hebrew now reflects the concept of *teshuvah* translated as, "May they return unto Thee."[240] As with the case of Benediction 11,

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[237] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 223.
[238] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 223.
[239] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 224.
[240] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 224.

the *Einheitsgebetbuch* 1929 prayer book reflects the Hebrew of the Geiger 1870 prayer book.

The early North American prayer books took more issue with this benediction than did their European predecessors. The Merzbacher 1855 prayer book and Adler's revision of it, Einhorn's 1858 *Olath Tamid*, and both of Wise's *Minhag America* prayer books omit this benediction. The first remnant of this benediction appears in the 1895 *UPB*, which says, "Let the reign of wickedness vanish like smoke and all dwellers on earth recognize Thee alone as their King."[241] The subsequent versions of *UPB* are much more subtle, only mentioning the desire for people to turn away from evil. *Gates of Prayer* (1975) omits this benediction completely, but restores it in a revised form in the 1994 gender-sensitive revision which is followed by *Mishkan T'filah*. The texts of both *Gates of Prayer* (1994) and *Mishkan T'filah* reflect that of Geiger's universal message and hope for all evil (not evildoers) to vanish from the earth.

13) *Tzadikim* ("Reward of the Righteous")

This benediction has undergone quite a few alterations throughout the North American prayer books. The Merzbacher 1855 prayer book replaces the opening Hebrew phrase, which asks God to have mercy on specific categories of righteous people- "upon the remnants of their sages, upon righteous converts, and upon us" with a less particularistic Hebrew text, translated as "upon their teachers and

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[241] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship,*1895, 275.

scholars, and upon all the righteous and benevolent."[242] Einhorn's *Olath Tamid* reflected similar changes asking God to "Turn...in love to all the just and virtuous."[243] While Adler's later revision preserved these previous changes, Wise returned to the traditional Hebrew text but omitted the phrase referring to the converts in both Hebrew and English. Wise's 1857 revision reflected an even more radical departure from the particular to the universalistic, in the opening lines (Hebrew and English) which say, "God, our Lord, let Thy mercy be revealed over the just and over all of us who are doing Thy will, over those who are furthering the good and are seeking for righteousness."[244] The 1895 *UPB* alludes to the theme of this benediction in its composite paraphrase of the intermediate benedictions: "Remember, O God, in love the just and virtuous of all nations and strengthen all who sincerely trust in Thee."[245] While the 1940 newly revised *UPB* omits the Hebrew text of this benediction, the theme of righteousness can be found in the various English versions, such as, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who lovest righteousness and justice."[246] *Gates of Prayer* adds its own innovative changes. While the Hebrew text returned to that of Wise, it omitted all particularistic elements in the opening phrase, even those that Wise sought to universalize. Additionally, *Gates of Prayer* omitted in both the Hebrew and English the phrase that means, "that we may not be shamed, for we put our trust in you." This remains constant throughout the various services in *Gates of Prayer. Mishkan T'filah*

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[242] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*, 105.
[243] Einhorn *Olath Tamid* (1872 translation of 1858)
[244] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857)*, 45.
[245] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship,*1895, 275.
[246] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship. Volume I.* Newly revised edition, 322.

preserves much of the traditional text, including the phrase that recognizes converts. However, it omits the particular reference to "remnants of their sages." Additionally, *Mishkan T'filah* preserves the *Gates of Prayer* omission referring to our not being "shamed."

14) *Y'rushalayim* ("Rebuilding of Jerusalem")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 14 reads:

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירְךָ בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב, וְתִשְׁכּוֹן בְּתוֹכָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ, וּבְנֵה אוֹתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב בְּיָמֵינוּ בִּנְיַן עוֹלָם, וְכִסֵּא דָוִד מְהֵרָה לְתוֹכָהּ תָּכִין. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלָיִם.

In the Hamburg 1841 prayer book, the intermediate benedictions are paraphrased in the German and while Jerusalem is mentioned, the messianic allusion to David is not. The traditional text refers to God as rebuilding Jerusalem (as a metonym for the rebuilding of the Temple in its midst) whereas the Hamburg prayer book refers to God as the one who "establishes" Jerusalem. The West London prayer book retains the traditional Sefardi version, in both the Hebrew and English. Geiger once again alters the Hebrew in 1854 and then revises the Hebrew text again in 1870. The 1854 Hebrew text remained quite similar to the traditional text with two exceptions: a section of the middle of the benediction, which dealt with the rebuilding of Jerusalem was omitted (unlike Hamburg, Geiger includes David) and one Hebrew word in the *chatimah* was altered from God as "builder" to God as

"dweller."[247] The Geiger revision in 1870 was unlike anything that we have previously seen. It reads:

ולירושלים ברחמים תזכור וצמח ישועה מהרה תצמיח כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום. ברוך אתה יי מצמיח קרן ישועה

Petuchowski translates it as, "And mayest Thou remember Jerusalem in mercy, and speedily cause salvation to sprout forth, because we wait for Thy salvation all the day. Praised art Thou, O Lord, who causest the horn of salvation to flourish."[248] As can be seen throughout this text, Geiger shifts the focus entirely from "rebuilding Jerusalem" to God's "salvation." Unlike the previous Geiger text, this one does not mention David. The 1929 *Einheitsgebetbuch* is nearly identical to the traditional text with the exception of a couple of minor grammatical alterations.

David Ellenson writes, "The love for Zion and call for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy were anathema to nineteenth-century Reform editors, and the faith in a personal messiah remains problematic today."[249] This observation will be clearly seen in the way the Reform prayer books have handled this text. As seen in previous North American prayer books, the Hebrew and English texts of this benediction throughout have been altered to fit a more universalistic message of hope and inclusion. Merzbacher preserves the opening line of this benediction and then replaces the middle section, which deals with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty, with a verse from Zachariah 8:3, which reads, *And Jerusalem*

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[247] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 226.
[248] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 226.
[249] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 140.

shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain.[250] The *chatimah* replaces God as the "builder of Jerusalem" to the "restorer of Jerusalem." Both Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* and Adler's revision of Merzbacher completely omit this benediction. Wise's 1857 *Minhag America* retains the reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem but the reference to David is replaced by a verse from Isaiah 2:3 which reads, *For divine instruction shall go forth from Zion, and the word of God from Jerusalem.* Ellenson points out that Wise's 1872 revision was "not content with such a minor change and completely transformed the prayer by asking God to cause the spirit of holiness to dwell among the people Israel so that Israel could serve as 'a light unto the nations.'"[251] All versions of the *UPB* omit this benediction. As seen with previous benedictions, this one finds its way back into *Gates of Prayer* and subsequently into *Mishkan T'filah.* The text of the benediction, both in Hebrew and English, reflects a return to hope for the peace of Jerusalem with no mention of rebuilding or the establishment of David's throne.

15) *David* ("Coming of the Messiah")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 15 reads:

אֶת צֶמַח דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ מְהֵרָה תַצְמִיחַ, וְקַרְנוֹ תָּרוּם בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ, כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ
קִוִּינוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן יְשׁוּעָה.

While multiple prayer books in Europe made some alterations to this benediction, generally, the prayer books we have been reviewing stay considerably

[250] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*, 105.
[251] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book*, 141.

close to the traditional text. The *Einheitsgebetbuch* of 1929 omits the name David from the text.

While many later North American prayer books omit this benediction, some of the earlier North American prayer books do retain it to some extent. The Merzbacher (1855) retains the benediction it but significantly alters the text with a central focus on salvation. By focusing on salvation, Merzbacher (and Adler's later revision) removes the ideas of both a personal messiah as well as a messianic age (which will be seen in later prayer books). Ellenson points out that *Minhag America* "retained something of the prayer's particularity by substituting 'your servants' for 'David, your servant,' thereby stressing the messianic potential of the Jewish People as a whole, consistent with Wise's belief in the mission of Israel as a light to the nations."[252] Einhorn's 1858 *Olath Tamid* (and Hirsch's adaptation of it) along with all versions of *UPB* omit this benediction. With its return in both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah*, the focus is exclusively on deliverance and salvation, where we pray for the time when "truth and justice will spring up from the earth."

16) *Shome'a T'fillah* ("Hear our Prayer")

While the bulk of this benediction has remained intact in the North American Reform prayer books, there have been some minor alterations. Merzbacher removed the phrase, "for you hear the prayer of your people Israel in mercy." In the spirit of toning down the particularistic aspect in both the Hebrew and English, Wise changed the reference to a God who hears the prayer of Israel to a God who "hears

[252] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 143.

the prayer of every heart."[253] Wise's 1872 revision omits both the aforementioned traditional text as well as the text with which he replaced it. Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* omits this benediction. The 1895 *UPB* retains the less particularistic element of this benediction, however, returns to the traditional Hebrew text. While the Newly Revised *UPB* returns to the traditional Hebrew text, *Gates of Prayer* omitted the entire phrase, "Do not turn us away from You, our ruler, empty-handed, for You hear the prayer of your people Israel in mercy." Thus, *Gates of Prayer* not only removes the particularistic element, but also its negativity. *Mishkan T'filah* preserves the changes from *Gates of Prayer*.

17) *Avodah* ("For the Acceptance of Worship")

The traditional Ashkenazi Hebrew text of Benediction 17 reads:

רְצֵה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִתְפִלָּתָם, וְהָשֵׁב אֶת הָעֲבוֹדָה לִדְבִיר בֵּיתֶךָ, וְאִשֵּׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּתְפִלָּתָם בְּאַהֲבָה תְקַבֵּל בְּרָצוֹן, וּתְהִי לְרָצוֹן תָּמִיד עֲבוֹדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמֶּךָ.

As with Benediction 15, the earlier European prayer books did not make major alterations to this benediction. In general, they also stuck to the traditional text. However, the minor alterations that were made in the early European Reform prayer books remained constant throughout. Petuchowski points to the alterations in Hamburg 1841 that made an impact on many subsequent prayer books. The concluding eulogy in the 1841 Hamburg prayer book reads, "Praised art Thou O

[253] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857)*, 23.

Lord, whom alone we serve in reverence."[254] As can be seen, this version departs from the idea of God returning to Zion. Furthermore, as Petuchowski writes, "This wording is actually found in the traditional liturgy (Ashkenazic), where it is recited during the *musaph* service when the *kohanim* recite the Priestly Benediction. It goes back to the version of this prayer recited by the priests in the Jerusalem Temple, during their daily morning service."[255] Therefore, the Hamburg 1841 prayer book simply and innovatively re-arranges texts in a logical order. Petuchowski also notes that certain portions of this benediction, pertaining to Temple sacrifice, were printed in small letters placed in parentheses[256] (the 1819 version omits them; the 1841 version restores them as an option for those who prefer to say them). The Geiger text in 1854 omits all references to restoration of the sacrificial service.[257] The texts of the Geiger 1870 prayer book and the 1929 *Einheitsgebetbuch* retain the same characteristic as their predecessors.

Ellenson points out that "pleas to restore the sacrificial cult have been altered or deleted in virtually every non-Orthodox prayer book of the past two centuries."[258] As Ellenson notes, all of the prayer books retained the actual benediction, but removed the sacrificial cult reference throughout.

A most significant innovation to the benediction is first introduced in *Gates of Prayer* and preserved in *Mishkan T'filah*. The opening lines of the benediction are

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[254] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 231.
[255] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 231.
[256] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 231.
[257] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 232.
[258] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 154.

identical to the Hebrew text of the newly revised *UPB* (which removed the verse referring to the return of the sacrificial cult and a return to Zion). However, where *UPB* significantly abbreviates the benediction by moving directly to the *chatimah, Gates of Prayer* inserts an entirely new liturgical text, which does not exist anywhere in a traditional prayer book. Chiam Stern, the editor of *Gates of Prayer* and author of the insertion, explains that the phrase substitutes for the traditional reference to the sacrificial worship the universal theme of "God's nearness to all who seek Him with sincerity."[259] The inserted text is based on Psalms 145:18 and 25:16.[260] This insertion clearly universalizes the benediction, thus creating a more inclusive message of hope. The Newly Revised *UPB* omits the penultimate phrase referring to our return to Zion and also altered the *chatimah* (as mentioned above). Both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah* not only reinsert the verse referring to Zion but also restore the traditional *chatimah* which refers to the return of God's presence to Zion.

18) *Hoda'ah* ("Grateful Acknowledgement")

This benediction has gone through a number of minor changes beginning in the 1895 *UPB* (it remained intact up to this point) and has continued to change up through *Mishkan T'filah*. Both the 1895 and 1918 *UPB* omit this benediction. It resurfaces in the Newly Revised 1940 *UPB*, however, it omits the entire last paragraph and *chatimah* (which follow the holiday inserts). This benediction is preserved in its traditional form in *Gates of Prayer* in Hebrew; however the English

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[259] Chiam Stern and A Stanley Dreyfus, *Gates of Understanding: A Companion Volume to Shaarei Tefillah: Gates of Prayer* (New York: CCAR and UAHC Press, 1977), 192.

[260] Stern, *Gates of Understanding*, 192

translation softens the language of miracles and wonders, to "signs of your presence" and "wondrous gifts."[261] Additionally, the Hebrew for "our fathers" has been translated as "God of our people."[262] *Mishkan T'filah* preserves the benediction in its entirely, however, it adds "our mothers" in the Hebrew text. However, the English translation reads, "God of our ancestors."[263] The English translation for miracles and wondrous deeds is more faithful in *Mishkan T'filah*.

A major issue with this benediction, which does not pertain to this thesis, is the content of the insertions recited during the holidays Chanukah and Purim. Ellenson discusses the history of these insertions at length in his commentary in *My People's Prayer Book.*[264]

19) *Shalom* ("Peace")

Both the Merzbacher 1855 prayer book and Adler's revision in 1860 retain the traditional text of this benediction (including the Priestly Blessing). However, Adler removes the traditional *chatimah* and replaces it with the one used in Einhorn's *Olath Tamid,* "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who maketh peace."[265] Adler also omitts the entire closing meditation, which follows the blessing for peace. This revision was most likely a way to abbreviate a seemingly redundant prayer. While Wise retains the Priestly Benediction and its introduction in 1857, there are some textual changes to both the Hebrew and English. Wise replaces the phrase, "and

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[261] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 44.
[262] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 44.
[263] Elyse D. Frishman ed. *Mishkan Tefillah,* 94.
[264] See Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 164-171.
[265] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah.* 2nd ed. Adler, ed., 78-79.

mercy to us and to all of Israel, your people," with "with us, and all who venerate thy name."[266] In the spirit of universalizing this prayer, Wise "borrowed the Sefardi wording, *b'rov oz v'shalom*, 'with abundant peace and strength,' which he added after 'all peoples.'"[267] Wise's 1872 revision completely removes his original revision of the aforementioned text. without replacing it with the traditional text. Additionally, he omits his innovative usage of the Sefardi text and immediately concludes with the same *chatimah* as used by Adler.

The Newly Revised *UPB*, and all subsequent prayer books omit the Priestly Benediction and its introduction (although *Mishkan T'filah* offers the Priestly Benediction as an alternative "left-side-page" reading). The reason why the Priestly Benediction and its introduction have been removed is, according to Ellenson, because: 1) "contrary to the claims of liberal Jewish theology, it asserts Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch"[268] and 2) "it affirms the prerogatives of the priesthood, which Reform Judaism replaced with the notion of the virtual priesthood of all Jews."[269]

The *chatimah* remains the same as Adler's change throughout the editions of *UPB* but the *UPB* employs Wise's innovation of adopting the Sephardi phrase, *b'rov oz v'shalom.* The concept of universal peace runs throughout the various services in *UPB.* Both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah* return to the traditional Ashkenazic text of this benediction while omitting the Priestly Benediction (as discussed above).

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[266] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857)*, 25.
[267] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 179.
[268] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 176.
[269] Ellenson, *My People's Prayer Book,* 176.

Closing Meditation

The early prayer books of Merzbacher, Einhorn and Adler omitted the meditation completely (as mentioned above). Wise includes the full traditional text, while omitting the last paragraph which deals with the rebuilding of the Temple "speedily in our days." This omission has remained constant in all subsequent North American Reform prayer books. Wise's 1872 revision abbreviates the text, with some minor changes. The *UPB* (all versions) removes the Hebrew text of the meditation while offering variations of it in English (some closer to the traditional text than others). The full traditional text (less the last paragraph on the rebuilding of the Temple) finds its way back into both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah.*

This examination of the liturgical changes to the Amidah in both early European and North American Reform prayer books clearly exemplifies the innovative ways the Reformers were able to depart from traditional ideologies and theologies. In reference to the early European Reform prayer books, Petuchowski notes the "remarkable attempt made by the majority of the liturgists to depart as little as possible from the traditional wording even in cases where the dogma underlying the traditional formulation has been amended or given up."[270] It is certainly clear that the few innovations found in early European Reform prayer books had an impact and influence on subsequent European prayer books.

While the early European Reformers did what they could to stay close to the traditional text, that was not always the case with North American Reform prayer

[270] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 235.

books. As seen throughout this examination, it was often the case that the North American prayer books took issue with significantly more liturgical elements than their European predecessors. It can also clearly be seen, as reflected throughout the prayer books, how Reform ideologies and theologies changed throughout the generations. The North American prayer books took liberty to alter any element to the liturgy that was problematic to the time. For example, the return to Zion in *Mishkan T'filah* is radically different from the universalist hope of an assimilating group of early Reform Jews. So too, much of the universalistic liturgy found in early North American prayer books was especially revised in a post-Holocaust world which reflects the return to a more particularistic liturgy. As seen throughout, the current Reform movement is considerably more tied to the traditional liturgy than was the case with many early North American Reformers.

Finally, as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Reform liturgy has many characteristics. While most of these characteristics can be found throughout the prayer book, almost all of them become abundantly clear throughout the Amidah liturgy. The Amidah itself is a true testimony to the evolution of the Reform movement over the past two centuries.

Chapter Five

A Guide to Prayer and the Daily Amidah

Chapter Five presents the contents of the guide to the daily Amidah (the appendix provides a formatted example of how the guide will appear as a finished product). For purposes of this project, this guide contains thirty days of what will eventually be a more extensive product. Each page of the guide contains multiple features (described below). Every feature of the page, from the content to the placement of everything, is designed with the intention to inform and inspire the adult learner/pray-er (the content of each feature is also designed with the intention to stand on its own). As will be seen in the formatted examples in the appendix, the traditional text of the prayer is found at the center of every page. The function of the guide is two-fold: to be both an educational and a prayer tool. Practically, the liturgical text on each page gives one the ability to "stay on the page" while learning/praying. (Because of the nature of the guide, some of the "days" require multiple pages and therefore contain the liturgical text.) Study and prayer are not mutually exclusive and the intention of the guide is to seamlessly bridge the two. The following is an overview of the various features found on each page of the guide:

- The first piece is the bolded name of each benediction along with an interpretive title of the benediction

- The second piece is the actual text of the benediction, in both the Hebrew and in an English translation. The text provided is the liturgy as we find it in a traditional prayer book.
- The third piece offers a traditional/scholarly explanation of the benediction. It contains the teachings of various scholars, rabbis, and commentators.
- The fourth piece is my personal reflections on the benedictions and the questions I have found myself asking throughout my prayer experiences.
- The fifth piece is called "Musings on Prayer" and offers various quotes on prayer.
- The sixth and final piece is a glossary of useful terms. The glossary helps provide a basic understanding and context of the terms used throughout the guide. The words in bold are referred to in the endnotes section of the guide.

Throughout the guide are additional pages that focus on specific themes as they pertain to prayer. There are also pages that focus on the Reform liturgical treatment of specific benedictions as it has evolved from the 19th-century European Reform prayer books to what we have today in our most recent modern prayer book.

As stated briefly in the introduction, all of the materials of the thesis have been used to inform the guide. While there are many instances in which the guide clearly

contains the contents of the thesis, all of the research of the thesis has guided the learning and preparation necessary to help guide the learning and spiritual growth of the adult learner/pray-er.

Day 1 – An Introduction to the guide

I remember how intimidated I was when I first embarked on daily prayer. Simply put, I was overwhelmed. Things moved pretty fast and there was a lot of content (it's a pretty heavy liturgy, both in physical weight and spiritual depth). Often I felt there was no time for me to process everything coming in at once. At the Amidah, where I was given the opportunity to pray the words of the prayer book silently, I felt more at ease and closer to what brought me to pray in the first place; to speak to God. Nevertheless, once I got started, before I knew it, in the middle of my conversation with God, the music for *Oseh Shalom* (the ending prayer of the Amidah) began and I was forced to cut things short.

I would imagine that many of us have felt that same way before. Perhaps for many of us, the prayer book is so overwhelming that we just don't know where to begin. For me, it is an all or nothing thing. Therefore, this guide to the daily Amidah is just as much for me as it is for you. This is a guide to help us get started somewhere. This preliminary version of the guide is broken up into 30 pages, one for each day of the month. The Amidah gives us a lot to think about and it should be taken slowly and thought through carefully. Each day gives us an opportunity to delve into daily prayer slowly and carefully with intention and spiritual connections.

Throughout most of this guide, you will find six separate (yet connected) aspects on each page:

- The first piece is the bolded name of each benediction along with an interpretive title of the benediction (designed to already get us thinking).

- The second piece is the actual text of the benediction, in both the Hebrew and in an English translation. The text provided is the liturgy as we find in a traditional prayer book. While this is a guide designed for Reform Jews, it is important to know where our Reform liturgy comes from and how we got to where we are today.

- The third piece offers a traditional/scholarly explanation of the benediction. It contains the teachings of various scholars, rabbis, and commentators. It is designed to help us put the benediction in context and better understand its contents.

- The fourth piece is my reflections on the benedictions and the questions I have found myself asking throughout my prayer experiences. They are not designed as the be-all and end-all, but rather as a good place to start with your own questions.

- The fifth piece is called "Musings on Prayer" and offers various quotes on prayer (also designed to get us to think and reflect). The source for each quote can be found in the "Notes for the Days" section in the back of the guide.

- The sixth and final piece is a glossary of useful terms. Let's face it, there are a lot of names, dates, places, and terms that are used in the Jewish world and they are assumed knowledge. This will help provide a basic understanding and context of the terms. The words in **bold** are referred to in the glossary of useful terms which can be found in the "Notes for the Day" in the back of the guide.

Throughout the guide, you will find additional pages that focus on specific themes, as they pertain to prayer. There are also pages that focus on the Reform liturgical treatment of specific benedictions as it has evolved from the 19th-century European Reform prayer books to what we have today in our most recent modern prayer book.

It is my hope and prayer that this guide will help us along our intellectual and spiritual paths through daily prayer and to reflect throughout our lives as Jews and humans created in God's image.

Day 2 – An introduction to the daily Amidah

The Amidah, also referred to as the Tefillah and the *Shmoneh Esrei* is the petitionary prayer *par excellence*. No other rubric in the prayer book contains the scope and variety of petitions as does the Amidah. As will be exemplified, the Amidah encompasses every element of Jewish petitionary prayer.

Each of the three names for the Amidah has a specific meaning. Because it is recited "standing up", it is called the Amidah from the Hebrew root *ayin-mem-dalet*, "to stand;" this name originated in Sefardic (Mediterranean) Jewish communities. Askenazic (European) communities preferred the name *shmoneh esrei*, meaning eighteen, referring to the original number of benedictions as seen in the Mishnah and Talmud of the Land of Israel (Yerulshami). *Tefillah*, meaning prayer, is the name of this rubric used by the Rabbis in early rabbinic literature such as the Mishna and Talmud.

The Amidah, composed today of nineteen benedictions, has three distinct sections. It opens with three benedictions of praise for God, then moves into the petitionary section composed of thirteen benedictions, and concludes with three benedictions of thanksgiving. Over the centuries, the wording of many of the petitions has changed, be it due to theological difficulties, censorship, or issues of transmission over time. The basic form and order of the Amidah has remained intact despite the aforementioned changes.

The Amidah changes throughout the year, during special holidays and Shabbat. For purposes of this guide, we will only focus on the most common daily structure of the Amidah. Traditionally, the Amidah is first recited silently by the individual, then repeated aloud in its entirety (including various insertions), by the prayer leader, known in Hebrew as the *shaliach tzibor*.

Day 3 – Adonai S'fatai – Entering into the presence of God

Tradition/ Scholarship

The Amidah is framed with words of scripture. We enter into the Amidah chanting the verse from **Psalms 51**, asking that God will open our lips so that we may declare God's praise. Its full biblical context reads, *Adonai, open my lips that my mouth may declare your praise; for you have no delight in sacrifice. If I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased* (Psalms 51:17-18). In context, we glean the core essence of prayer to **the Rabbis**. Historically speaking, structured communal prayer was "officially" ordained in the periods following the **destruction of the second Temple**. But, the context of the verse in Psalms 51 suggests that prayer is so central to our faith that it is even more pleasing to God than the burnt offerings at the Temple.

Reflections/Questions

The structure of the Amidah has three sections. The opening of the Amidah is traditionally likened to one who enters into the presence of a king. Just as when we would ask an authority figure for something, there is a structure that will make the "ask" more "efficacious." First, we praise them (you are the best dad ever, my what a nice dress you are wearing today, mom). Then we ask them for what we want (an X-Box, some money, a new car). Finally, we thank them (in advance).

When we enter into the sacred space of prayer, how are we like the one who enters into the presence of a King or a parent?

How do we see our relationship with God?

What is the efficacy of our prayers according to our own beliefs/experiences?

What are we going to say to God once we are there?

If not to God, with whom are we praying/speaking?

Musings on prayer

"Prayer is the product of man's yearning for the most intimate of all human communication, for the opportunity to open his heart and his mind in adoration in supplication to the divine presence."[1]

Glossary of useful terms:

Psalms –Psalms, the title of this book in the Greek version of the Bible, the Septuagint, means "songs, hymns accompanied by string instruments." In Hebrew, Psalms are called *tehillim.* The book of Psalms, which is the first book in the third division of the Bible, Writings or *ketuvim,* is composed of one hundred and fifty hymns. Traditionally, the book of Psalms is ascribed to King David. The seven types of poetic expression in the book of Psalms are, hymns, thanksgivings, elegies, pilgrim songs, meditations, historical poems, and poems about nature.[2]

The Rabbis – The "Rabbis" is a term commonly used to refer to the authoritative voice of the vast body of Jewish texts that define Jewish law and tradition. They are also referred to as the Sages. The authority of the Rabbis begins in the Mishnaic period (220 CE) and culminates with the sealing of the Babylonian Talmud (500 CE). The Jewish authoritative texts of the Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, and Midrash, are ascribed to the Rabbis.

Destruction of the second Temple – The central form of Jewish worship was through offering sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple. The first Jerusalem Temple, which was built in the fourth year of King Solomon's reign, was destroyed over four hundred years later by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia, in 586 BCE. Roughly 70 years later, the second Temple of was built on the same site as the first. In the year 70 CE, the Romans destroyed the Temple. The Western Wall, commonly referred to in Hebrew as the *Kotel,* is part of the wall enclosing the Second Temple, other parts of which remain as well. The Temple itself was completely destroyed.[3]

Day 4 - *Keva* and *Kavanah* in the Talmud and Rabbinic texts

There are two core elements to the prayer experience that help guide us on our prayer journey: *kavanah* and *kevah.* Simply put, *kavanah* is the intentionality and spontaneity of our prayer. To pray with *kavanah* is to pray with one's heart aimed toward heaven, with the utmost intention to reach God. *Keva*, on the other hand. is the fixed element, such as prayer etiquette (i.e. when to bow, stand, sit, etc), the structure and precise wording of the prayer book, and praying at the proper times according to the rulings of the rabbinic texts. As we would expect, there are many contradictions and tensions throughout our tradition in regard to *kavanah* and *keva*. One can especially find this to be the case in the rabbinic texts.

The Mishna (Avot 2:18) teaches, " When you pray, regard not your prayer as a fixed task, but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the All-present."[4] The Talmud (BT Taanit 8a) teaches, "'A person's prayer is not heard unless he places his heart in his hands; as it is said, *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens* (Lam 3:41)" [5]Rabbi Eliezer teaches us in (Mishna Berakhot 4:4), " He whose prayer is fixed, his prayer is not supplication"[6] Clearly, according to the texts above, the efficacy of our prayers are predominantly dependent on what we personally bring to our prayer experience. If we do not pour out our souls in prayer and pray with the intention for our prayers to reach heaven, then it seems our prayers are deemed empty and meaningless.

There are numerous rabbinic statements that support the *keva* of prayer. In regards to the wording and intent of petitionary prayer the Rabbis argued that, "great care had to be taken with respect to the wording, intent, and timing of prayers... even the language."[7] The second century Tanna, Rabbi Yose, taught in Tosefta Berakhot 4:5, "Anyone who deviates from the rabbinically established form of the benediction does not fulfill his obligation."[8] While we can find validity in both arguments for *kavanah* and *keva*; the fact of the matter is, that prayer is dependent on both. It is up to us to find the balance.

Day 5 – Avot – The merit of our ancestors as our way in

Tradition/ Scholarship

The first benediction of the Amidah opens with the invocation of the *Avot*, the names of our Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The liturgical addition of the invocation of the Matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, first made its way into the revised gender-sensitive version of *Gates of Prayer* (1994), a Reform prayer book. Reciting the names of our ancestors touches upon the value of ***zechut avot***, the merit of our ancestors. The value Jews place on *zechut avot* is of great significance. We call upon God, using the names of our ancestors, as a way to tie us to the sacred covenant between God and our ancestors, based on their merit, not necessarily our own. *Zechut Avot* "establishes our covenantal claim on God, whom we approach knowing that we are spiritual descendents of the biblical ancestors who established the covenant in the first place."[9]

Reflections/Questions

The **Midrash** teaches that the merit of our ancestors "will aid the people of Israel in the reaching of the messianic age" (**Bereishit Rabbah** 70:8)."[10] When we invoke the names of our ancestors upon beginning the first benediction of the Amidah, we are "getting" God's attention. We are not simply name-dropping. It's all about who you are related to, right? We are worthy of God's blessing (or even God's listening to us) based on the fact that our ancestors were meritorious with God. So, what does that say about us?

Is zechut Avot enough to give us an "in" with God or should we be held more responsible for this honor?

Is it always about to whom we are related?

Why not recite our own names when invoking God?

As we enter into this benediction, let us take a moment to reflect on the merit we have earned through our own actions and behavior. What does it feel like to insert your own name and what responsibility do we place on ourselves by doing so?

Musings on Prayer

"Even though God does not have to be told about your need, He has given you an opportunity of opening your heart to Him, of sharing your concerns with Him...[Prayer] affords you the relief of verbalizing, in His presence, whatever it is that you are striving for."[11]

Glossary of useful terms:

Zechut avot – This is a theological concept according to which we gain merit through the good deeds of our ancestors, and not simply based on our own good deeds. This is a highly controversial and often highly debated concept. The ancestors to whom *zechut avot* are referring, are the *Avot* (the biblical forefathers): Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As seen in the gender-sensitive Reform prayer books, *zechut avot* include the *Imahot* (the biblical foremothers) Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. The merit of our ancestors is seemingly an endless source from which we are constantly benefitting.

Midrash - The Midrash is a vast body of Jewish literature that seeks to explain the biblical text. We often find "gaps," issues, or contradictions in the biblical text, and the Midrash seeks to fill in those gaps and fix the issues. There are two main bodies or types of Midrash. Midrash Haggadah is primarily composed of stories, folk tales, and teachings that seek to "admonish and edify."[12] Midrash Halakha is mainly concerned with the "derivation of laws from scriptural texts."[13] Bereishit Rabbah, the text that is cited above, is a Haggadic Midrash that carefully (verse by verse) follows the text of Genesis (Bereishit). The midrashic literature is not limited to the the five books of Moses. For example, there is midrashic literature on the five megillot (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) as well as other smaller collections that are not limited to a specific book of Scripture.

Day 6 –Avot (cont.)- How we relate to God

Tradition/ Scholarship

Throughout the prayer book, we find an endless variety of attributes for God. Specifically in the *Avot* benediction, we recite "God is great, mighty, and awesome." The Talmud (BT Megillah 25a) records a story of a *sheliach tzibbur* who added to this benediction by reciting, "the great, mighty, awesome, powerful, strong, and brave God." Rabbi Haninah, who witnessed this, explained that we would not dare use even the words "great, mighty, and awesome" had they not been written by Moses in the Torah and decreed by the men of the Great Assembly."[14] It is strictly forbidden by the Rabbis to make any liturgical changes to the Amidah (historically speaking there may never have been a set wording of the Amidah at one point in time). The Talmud teaches that the Rabbis were concerned that adding to the attributes of God, over and above what Moses used in the Bible, could lead or mis-lead someone to believe that we are praying to multiple Gods and not one who is great, mighty, and awesome. Additionally, one might think we are attempting to flatter God or that we are attempting to invoke all of God's attributes- which is beyond the ability of humans.

Reflections/Questions

The benediction opens with God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, etc. Why not just say God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Perhaps, the repetition represents the different attributes of our ancestors, but even more so, how each related to God in their own personal way.

How do you relate to God, and at different points in your life?

Do you see God as great, mighty, and or awesome? Or do you sometimes see God, as the sheliach tzibbur did, as powerful, strong, and or brave?

What are the attributes of God you would insert in this benediction and how does this affect the way you pray and connect to God, to others, to the world, to yourself?

Musings on Prayer

Prayer allows us not only to turn to God in moments of need and crisis, and to offer thanksgiving for the blessings in our lives, but also simply to recognize that God exists in our lives and to acknowledge the daily miracles that take place around us. Prayer thus reflects our need, and means, to connect to God that may help us put our lives into perspective.

Day 7 – Gevurot – God's strength in our actions

Tradition/ Scholarship

The second blessing of praise is *Gevurot,* "God's power." This benediction primarily focuses on God's might and calls our attention to the multiple powers of God. While the previous benediction spoke of God's relationship to our ancestors, this one specifically focuses on God's power that is perceived in God's actions, to give renewed life to the dead, support the fallen, heal the sick, free the captive, and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust. Additionally, the seasonal inserts in this benediction further affirm God's power to control nature (rain and dew). In essence, this benediction reaffirms the theology of God's ultimate power and control in our lives and the world around us.

Reflections/Questions

The Berditschever Rebbe, a leader of Chasidism, once explained to his followers that "those who seek God in prayer and in the deeds of their lives will receive in return the strength to serve God further."[15] In recognizing God's power, the Rebbe is telling us that our prayers are answered in the way that they are manifest in our own actions. We recognize God's power in order to find our inner strength to do "godly" acts.

What are we really praying for when we ask God to give renewal to the dead, support the fallen, heal the sick, free the captive, and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust?

How are the words of this prayer manifest in our daily lives as Jews and as human beings created in the divine image?

Musings on Prayer

"We are dependent upon the grace of God to enable us to carry our intentions into practice" [16]

Day 8 – Gevurot – How we pay honor to the dead

Tradition/ Scholarship

Among the many divine powers invoked in the *Gevurot* (as previously mentioned in Day 5), we invoke God's power to revive the dead. It is traditionally believed that resurrection of the dead is the ultimate godly act, one over which we have no power or control. Resurrection in this benediction is intended to emphasize the power of God and asserts that God is "manifest in many things that transcend [our] understanding and control."[17] There are multiple mentions of resurrection of the dead throughout our liturgy and especially in our rabbinic texts. However, we may also note that the rabbis had two different views of the afterlife; one in which "the whole person dies and then was resurrected at a future point, while the other view is that only the body dies and the soul lives on." [18]Therefore, "the phrasing is deliberately ambiguous in order to accommodate both rabbinic views."[19] Just as the Rabbis of the Talmud held more than one view about the afterlife, so, too, were subsequent generations conflicted about the actual concept of resurrection and thus have wrestled with it for centuries (as seen throughout literature and variations in prayer books).

Reflections/Questions

What does giving life to the dead mean?

To some, it does signify the ultimate power of God. Bringing the dead back to life is a "godly" power we do not possess. Or do we?

Aside from visiting the gravesite and placing a rock on a tombstone, how do we pay honor to the dead?

What are the ways we can allow the memory of the past generations to continue to live?

How can we allow the life-long dreams and aspirations of the previous generations to inspire us to work towards making those hopes a reality?

What can we learn from their lives that will help us make our dreams and aspirations come true?

What can we do today to make the memory of our lives inspire the work of the future generations?

Musings on Prayer

"Prayer is...the bridge between earth and heaven, between man's despair and his eternal hope, between his depression of the soul and his spiritual elation."[20]

Day 9 – *Kedushat Hashem*

Tradition/ Scholarship

The third and final benediction of praise is the *Kedushat Hashem,* which recognizes God's holiness. The threefold benediction ("You are holy and Your name is holy, and the holy ones praise you daily") mirrors the threefold declaration of the angels in Isaiah's vision: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.*[21] Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michael Weiser's (Malbim's) commentary on Isaiah 6:3 notes, "The concept 'holy' denotes that God is above, far removed from, man and his world. Hence the Prophet could proclaim (Is. 57:15): *For thus has said the high and holy one, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.*"[22] Dorff writes that in this benediction we invoke three attributes of God: God's holiness, God's heaviness, and God's greatness. "These three qualities combine to make God awesome, and even an object of fear" but the author of this prayer is convinced that the proper response should be praise, because God is to be trusted as One worthy of praise.[23]

Reflections/Questions

The Holiness Code of Leviticus 19 gives us a true sense of our responsibility as a holy people. The *kedusha* benediction serves as a daily reminder of God's holiness and God's commandment for us to be a holy people.

What does it mean to be holy?

Perhaps it means to live our lives according to Torah. But, before we jump to conclusions or to black and white answers, we need to ask ourselves/explore/reflect upon how we define Torah or (t)orah?

As we move through the spiritual journey of the Amidah, let us reflect on the holiness of our lives and what inspires us to to be holy people according to our definition.

As we enter into each prayer moment, let us be open to a transformative experience, one in which may alter our world views and previous notions thoughts, and or beliefs.

Musings on Prayer

"Every Jewish prayer is a small Yom Kippur. It challenges us to examine our hearts and thoughts. It demands that we question ourselves... in this kind of prayer, we do not ask God to do our will. We accept God's challenge to fulfill his will." [24]

Day 10 – Knowledge as the key to understanding the world

Tradition/ Scholarship

The Mishna teaches, (Avot 3:20): "'Where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding." The first of the petitionary benedictions is for knowledge and understanding. The actual structure of this benediction mirrors the structure of the Amidah as a whole. The benediction "begins with praise ('You grace humanity with knowledge'), proceeds to request ('Grace us with the knowledge'), and ends in acknowledgement ('Who graciously grants knowledge')."[25] Rabbi Menachem Hameiri observes: "The knowledge mentioned here denotes the capacity for knowledge implanted at birth...You favor man with knowledge,' to indicate that this knowledge is not required by human effort but is innately endowed by divine grace. Understanding is achieved by human endeavor, by study and reflective thinking." [26]

Reflections/Questions

When the world is in such chaos and turmoil, wouldn't it behoove us to pray for peace first, and not towards the end?

Why did the Rabbis begin with the benediction for knowledge and understanding?

What is the function of knowledge in our lives and how do we apply our understanding of our knowledge to the world in a meaningful way?

Does knowledge and understanding lead to everything else?

Musings on Prayer

"Prayers of petition have been relegated by some to the lowest rung of the ladder of worship" when in fact, "supplication is the heart of all prayer, and those who would remove supplications from the prayer book would only succeed in stripping it of its religious vitality and emptying it of all personal relevance."[27]

Day 11 - Repentance - Preparing our hearts all year long

Tradition/ Scholarship

Following the benediction for knowledge are the benedictions for repentance and forgiveness. The benediction for repentance contains three distinct petitions, all requesting God to draw us back to him. As Abrahams comments, "Over and above the sense of sin and the feeling of contrition, active return from the wrong to the right path is needed in order to make repentance complete. But God holds out his hand to man, and pardons man's efforts."[28] A dominant theme of Judaism, especially pertaining to the High Holiday season, is the concept that the gates of repentance are always open. Abrahams points out that God always holds his hand out to man, and the daily Amidah serves to remind us of that concept. The fact that this benediction and the following, pertaining to forgiveness, are included in the opening petitionary benedictions speaks volumes about their importance.

Reflections/Questions

Repentance and forgiveness are the core themes of the High Holyday season. Just 30 days prior to Rosh Hashanah, the month of Elul gives us the opportunity to prepare our hearts for the High Holydays. First, we turn inward to reflect on the year and then we turn outward to seek forgiveness for any of our wrong doings. The month of Elul can be overwhelming. It calls us to reflect and take responsibility for our actions. Even with an entire month to get ready, it does not seem to be enough time to take it all in. The daily Amidah is a reminder that the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness is not only a once a year occurrence, but also a daily occurrence.

If repentance and forgiveness become a part of our daily lives, are we running the risk of the High Holydays not being so "high?"

Is that not such a bad thing?

Musings on Prayer

Self-expression before God in prayer has thus a double effect: It strengthens faith in God's love and kindness, as well as His all-wise and all-bountiful presence. But it also chastens the desires and feelings of man, teaching him to banish from his heart all thoughts of self-seeking sin, and to raise himself toward the purity and the freedom of the divine will and demand.[29]

Day 12 – Forgiveness – Our relationship to God as reflected in our relationship to each other

Tradition/ Scholarship

As would be expected, the benediction for forgiveness here is thematically identical to much in the High Holiday liturgy. Unlike the other benedictions of the Amidah, this one employs the name "Father" for "God." The Tur (Orach Chayim 115) comments on the usage of "Father": "It was ordained that ' our father' be pronounced in the blessings to ' Cause us to return' and ' Forgive us,' as opposed to the other blessings, for this reason: A father is duty bound to impart instruction to his son... We therefore mentioned fatherly mercies as it is said (Ps. 103:13): 'Like as a father has compassion on his children, so may he have compassion on us and forgive us.' "[30]

Reflections/Questions

Sacks comments that the forgiveness requested in this benediction is exclusively between us and God because repentance involves asking God for forgiveness.[31]

How does that resonate with you? If we wrong another human being, do we owe it to God to seek forgiveness or do we owe it to the person we have hurt?

If Sacks is right, how can we apply his teaching to our daily lives?

How may our relationship with God inspire our relationships with one another?

Musings on Prayer

The task in prayer is not to get God to change. God doesn't change. The task is for us to become better and more developed through our encounter with God.[32]

Day 13 – Redemption – God as *my* redeemer?

Tradition/ Scholarship

Unlike the corporate redemption from Egyptian slavery as seen in multiple prayers, including *Emet v'yatsiv/Emet v'e'emunah*, the benediction that follows upon the recitation of the three *Sh'ma* paragraphs, some commentators hold that the petition for redemption here is individual in nature and not communal. Sacks writes that "the reference is to release from personal crises: captivity, persecution, misfortune or affliction."[33] Rashi writes "This does not refer to the redemption from exile, but asks that God should rescue us from the troubles that constantly beset us."[34]

Reflections/Questions

The Chatimah (closing formula) of this benediction praises God, the redeemer of Israel. If this benediction is communal in nature, why does the blessing address God as the redeemer of Israel, instead of God as my redeemer?

Even during the moments when we are standing in God's presence and pouring out our souls to God in the most personal way, we are reminded that we are a part of something much bigger than ourselves. Perhaps this benediction is personal in nature, but the *chatimah* brings us back to the reality that we are not separate from the community.

But, why just Israel? Why not bless God as the redeemer of all people?

Musings on Prayer

As Leo Baeck writes, "Ultimately prayer is a way of experiencing the reality of God in the world and of relating to that reality. In Revelation God reaches out to us, but in prayer we reach out to him." [35]

Day 14 – Healing – Following in the footsteps of our ancestors

Tradition/ Scholarship

The blessing for healing petitions God to save us, heal us, and bring complete recovery for all of our ailments. The wording of the benediction for health is based on Jeremiah 17:14, which says, *Heal me O Lord and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved.*[36] While the wording is similar in nature to Jeremiah, the benediction in the Amidah is in the plural voice and not in the singular (as in Jeremiah). This altering of a biblical verse should be deemed problematic and the Tur comments on how the Rabbis could change the biblical wording: "Tur (Orach Chayim 116): A baraita warns us not to change any verse worded in the plural to singular, and vice versa... The above admonition, however, refers to the translating or reading of the verse itself. A sentence in the liturgy, however, recited not as a scriptural reading but by way of prayer and supplication, is similar to the rest of the prayers and may be altered to suit the needs of the hour and the content of that particular supplication and petition."[37]

Reflections/Questions

How do we make the Torah relevant to our lives?

As Reform Jews we are doing it everyday and, in this respect, we are doing nothing different or innovative from what the previous generations did. When we read the Talmud or Midrash, we are witnessing how the Rabbis made Torah relevant to their lives. They took the words of Torah and applied it in a way that made it meaningful to their world, at the time they lived in it. The Tur tells us that we may alter not only scriptural words to meet the needs of our prayers, but, so, too the words of the prayers. Sometimes the words printed in the prayer book may not be enough or may not even reflect our feelings at the moment. A famous Jewish teaching says, *ein chadash mitachat hashemesh*, there is nothing new under the sun. Making Torah and prayer relevant to our lives has always been done. Feel free to follow in the footsteps of our ancestors.

Musings on Prayer

Rabbi Elazar said: Prayer is greater than good deeds. No one had more good deeds than Moses, but still he was only answered when he prayed.[38]

Day 15– Healing –Our role in the healing process

Tradition/ Scholarship

As seen throughout the Amidah, one can conclude that our healing is entirely in God's hands. However, the Etz Yosef points out that there are two separate petitions within this benediction and each one refers to a different type of healing. He writes, "'Heal us...' indicates that the beginning should come from God, and then... we shall complete our recovery. This refers to the healing of the soul. In respect of the healing of the body, which is entirely in God's hands, the *beracha* requests that 'He grant us a perfect healing,' from beginning to end, and from all our maladies, for here we are utterly incapable of helping ourselves ' without you.'"[39] Thus all physical healing is in God's hands and not ours.

Reflections/Questions

Etz Yosef suggests that while healing begins with God, we complete it. We complete the healing when we love and support one another. We complete the healing when we show our loved ones that we are incomplete without them. The prayer for healing is our own call to action. When we take care of one another, we are bringing God into the healing process. Perhaps for some, our healing is in God's hands. While for others, the doctors and nurses have a lot to do with it. Nevertheless, we are the missing piece to complete our healing.

When a congregation recites the communal prayer for healing, *mishebeirach*, we have the opportunity to recite the name of a loved one out loud (or in their hearts) for all to hear.

What is the purpose of sharing the names out loud in public?

What is our responsibility when we listen of the names of our loved ones and community members?

How can we complete the healing process?

Musings on Prayer

Prayer must not be dissonant with the rest of living...The divorce of liturgy and living, of prayer and practice, is more than a scandal; it is a disaster. A word uttered in prayer is a promise, an earnest, a commitment. If the promise is not kept, we are guilty of violating a promise.[40]

Day 16 – Blessing for a year of prosperity – Making time for the miracles and blessings in our lives

Tradition/ Scholarship

Elbogen notes that the origin of this prayer goes back to the period when Israel dwelt in Palestine, in which agriculture was the main occupation.[41] Hence the fact that the prayer for rain is inserted in this benediction.[42] The opening of this benediction employs the phrase, "for good" which refers to a good crop yield and an abundant harvest; so that there is plenty of food to eat. Jacob Zvi Mecklenberg offers a homiletical explanation on the usage of "for good" in this benediction: "The abundance sought after in this blessing is for our good, since it would afford us the opportunity to free ourselves to study Torah wisdom and to fulfill the *Mitzvot*, whereby we become worthy to inherit the world to come.[43] Mecklenberg's basic underlying theology is that the seemingly superfluous words, "for good" imply that we will be able to devote our lives to good, that being Torah and Mitzvot. Praying for abundant produce will allow one to devote more time to doing good, whereas working the land harder due to the lack of rain, wind, and dew, will ultimately diminish our time to do "good."

Reflections/Questions

In theory, we should have at least double the time to "do good" in the world in which we are living today. Think about all the time-saving devices! We no longer need to plow through phone books to look for a phone number or an encyclopedia for our research papers. It is all at the click of a button on our tablets and smart phones. Yet, with these time-saving devices, we are just working harder to get ahead. This benediction reminds us to slow down. We are surrounded by blessings and a lot of good in world. When we take the time to look around, we will find our place in the world and how we can not only be thankful for the blessings and good surrounding us, but add to them in the extra time we have!

What are some ways we can use the time saving devices to really save time?

What are we going to do with that time?

Musings on Prayer

"To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments."[44]

Day 17 – Ingathering of exiles – Defining "home"

Tradition/ Scholarship

The benediction for the ingathering of the exiles, "forms the first of a series of petitions for national welfare, directed toward the future." [45]Sacks writes, "They begin with three prayers for political-historical renewal: the return of exiles, the restoration of independence, and an end to factionalism that caused great damage to the Israelites from the biblical era to the end of the Second Temple period."[46] Jacobson quotes Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz who offers one possible explanation for the inclusion of this benediction: ""Long before the destruction of the Jewish state, long even before the Maccabean times, there was a widespread Jewish dispersion in Mediterranean lands, in Babylonia and in the neighboring countries."... As we have shown before, the Book of Ben Sira, which, according to all opinions, was compiled before the Maccabean epoch, contains the sentence: "O give thanks unto him, who gathers in the dispersed of Israel, for his mercy endures forever." (ed. M.Z. Segal, p.355)"[47] It can thus be concluded that the ideas in this prayer precede the destruction of the second Temple. This benediction implies that all Jews outside of the land of Israel are in exile and will one day be brought back. The ingathering of the exiles will ultimately lead to a promising Jewish future.

Reflections/Questions

For 2000 years, the Jewish people were in exile. Until 1948, when Israel once again become a Jewish State, Jews had no place to call "home." Home provides us with comfort and safety. We are free to be who we are in our homes. We are free to love and take care of our home and everything in it. At home, we are loved and taken care of. Being in exile means we are without a home. No longer are we without a home. No longer are we in exile.

How do we define home? Is home the place where we hang our hat or where we hang our heart?

Have we really been without a home for 2000 years?

What does a promising Jewish future look like and how will we contribute to it?

Musings on Prayer

When we enter the synagogue and open our prayer books, we find words printed on paper. They can mean little or nothing, if so we are disposed. But the imaginative mind and sensitive spirit and the intelligent heart may find tremendous power in these words...through them he will link himself to all the generations of his fathers in a golden chain of piety...he will join his fellows of the house of Israel everywhere, and time and space will be no hindrance as he pours out his soul together with his fathers and his brothers toward heaven. He will find words soothing and peaceful-and words rousing and challenging to the conscience.

But above all, these words, laden with tears and joys of centuries, have the power to bring us into the presence of God.[48]

Day 18 – Reform prayer book treatment of Exile – A universal freedom

The traditional rendering of this benediction calls upon God to gather our fellow Jewish exiles from the four corners of the earth. The early European Reformers' opposition to the particularistic ideology of a Jewish exile is reflected in the various prayer books of the 19th century.

The first significant departure from the traditional version appears in the Hamburg 1841 prayer book. The Hamburg prayer book tones down the particularism by altering the focus from "our" exiles, to the universalistic focus on "all who groan in slavery."[49] Unlike the Hamburg prayer book, Geiger's 1854 prayer book does focus on Israel but radically alters the text pertaining to exile and slavery by removing it altogether. Rather, Geiger shifts the focus to God as the "gatherer" and "saver." The liturgical changes in the early European Reform prayer books, such as those of Hamburg and Geiger, paved the way for subsequent European Reform prayer books as well as most North American Reform prayer books.

The theme of universalistic freedom rings throughout North American Reform prayer books. For example, Merzbacher's 1855 prayer book reads, "O sound the great cornet for the freedom of nations, and lift up the banner to collect those in exile...Blessed art Thou, O Lord! who gatherest the banished."[50] Wise's *Minhag America* says, "Let resound the great trumpet for the liberty of all nations...Blessed art Thou, God, who bringest nigh the abandoned."[51] The early *Union Prayer Book* of 1895 reads, "Grant, O Lord, that the sound of freedom be heard throughout all the lands, and all nations enjoy the blessings of true liberty."[52] All three daily services in the newly revised UPB of 1945 omit this benediction altogether. This benediction finds its way back into *Gates of Prayer*, however with a rendering in both Hebrew and English that is similar with the idea and tone to the version discussed above. The English, which is faithfully translated from the revised Hebrew, reads, "Sound the great horn to proclaim freedom, inspire us to strive for the liberation of the oppressed, and let the song of liberty be heard in the four corners of the earth. *Blessed is the Lord, redeemer of the oppressed.*"[53] With only a minor change, *Mishkan T'filah* preserves the universal focus and text of the Benediction, as seen in *Gates of Prayer*.

Day 19 - Restoration of judges – It begins and ends with us

Tradition/ Scholarship

Beginning with the restoration of the Judges, Jacobson asks, "What are we praying for? He writes, "One possibility is for the judging of the wicked and the restoration of the kingdom of God, or else the blessing may possibly seek the restoration of an independent Jewish judiciary and jurisprudence."[54] Abrahams notes, "Like the preceding, this benediction is a national prayer, but passes over into an ideal petition for the righteous reign of God, as distinct from the oppressive government of men. It may be that the petition is for the restoration of political autonomy, but it seems more probable that the significance is Messianic."[55] Jacobson quotes Abudraham's comment on the phrase of "remove us from sorrow and sighing" as saying, "When the wicked rule, the people sigh." Jacobson continues, "By the restoring of worthy judges to us, that sighing will be transformed into joy and gladness. The passage may also be explained as meaning that by the enforcement of true justice among us, sadness and sighing will cease."[56] Abudraham's interpretation therefore removes the focus on a messianic ideal to a practical one that calls for true justice in our world, governed by honest and just judges.

Reflections/Questions

The *chatima* of this benediction reads, "Blessed are You, Adonai, our King who loves righteousness and justice." What is striking about this is that love is a passive action. God is not actively healing the sick or freeing the captive here, God is simply loving what we are doing. Bringing justice and righteousness to the world is entirely our human right and responsibility. Unlike our prayer for healing which begins with God and our ability to complete it, justice and righteousness begins and ends with us.

What are the ways we are actively doing our part to making this world a more livable and just place?

The world is a big place, and saving it sounds overwhelming and impossible. How can we make this a more realistic and manageable task?

Where do we begin?

Musings on Prayer

Prayer is aspiration. The self-satisfied disregard it. They who reach for higher things find it a necessity. Prayer is a discipline. They who seek meaning and purpose in life discover it a wise teacher. Prayer is an art. We perfect it through practice. Gradually, the interval between prayer and deed diminishes-until, at last, all life becomes a sanctuary.[57]

Day 20 – Punishment for heretics - Evil is not the sum of the man, it is only the sum of his broken pieces.

Tradition/ Scholarship

With the restoration of the judges comes judgment. This benediction calls for the utter destruction of all wickedness, that our enemies be swiftly cut down, and that the arrogant to be humbled. This benediction has been rife with controversy from its beginning and has gone through many changes over the centuries. Elbogen writes, "No benediction has undergone as many textual variations as this one, some through the natural effect of changing times, and others through censorship. It is most doubtful that we will ever be in a position to recover its original text." [58]Many of the changes were due to the claim by the Church that this benediction was directed against Jewish converts to Christianity. According to Kaufman Kohler, "This benediction or malediction was composed at about 100 CE at the request of Rabbi Gamaliel, against sectarians and heretics among the Jewish people." [59]Despite the changes due to the seeming attack against the Christians, Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz writes, "The worshiper should pray for the eradication of heresy from Israel, and that the belief in the oral and written Torah should be untarnished so that no ' root bearing gall and wormwood' should emerge, challenging the authority of the Jewish sages and the genuinely faithful who give public Torah instruction."[60] Rabbi Jacob Emden presents a more optimistic view saying, "From then till now, these heretical sects have been all but extirpated from the earth, so that there is no such group evident in the world today, unless their counsel be in hiding in their deeds veiled by darkness... At present, all the principal nations believe in divine providence and want to acknowledge the unity of God. Since vestiges of evil still remain, however, the petition is necessarily retained, to beseech that these sources do not become ' a root bearing gall and wormwood'"[61]

Reflections/Questions

The Talmud (BT Berakhot 10a) records a story about Rabbi Meir and his wife Beruria. One day, Rabbi Meir prayed for the death of certain men who caused him considerable distress. When Beruria heard his prayer she asked her husband how he could pray for such a thing? He told her that his prayer emulated that of King David, who also prayed for the death of sinners. Beruria taught Rabbi Meir that he should not pray for the death of the sinner, but rather pray that these men should repent of their wickedness. Therefore, the sinner will not cease, but that which causes the sin will cease to exist.

Musings on Prayer

Even God prays. What is his prayer? "May it be My will that My love of compassion overwhelm My demand for strict justice."[62]

Day 21 – Reform prayer book treatment of the Punishment for Heretics benediction - A Universal message of hope

This benediction has been fraught with controversy and the early Reformers radically changed the wording or simply omitted it from the prayer book altogether. Among the various early European prayer books that omitted this benediction were the Hamburg 1841 and West London Synagogue prayer books.[63] The Geiger 1854 and 1870 prayer books retained the benediction but altered the Hebrew text which may be translated as: "And for slander let there be no hope, and may all wickedness perish as in a moment; and do Thou humble arrogance speedily in our days. Praised art Thou, O Lord, who breakest wickedness and humblest arrogance."[64] As can be clearly seen in this translation, Geiger shifted the focus from slanderers and wicked people, which was construed as a direct attack on Christians or Jewish heretics, to the abstract concepts of slander and wickedness. Geiger also removed the vindictive aspect of the benediction, i.e. God cutting down the wicked and our enemies, and replaced it with a more optimistic and less violent approach.

Even though there were significant liturgical changes to this benediction in early European Reform prayer books, North American prayer books reflected even more opposition to this benediction. The Merzbacher 1855 prayer book and Adler's revision of it, Einhorn's 1858 *Olath Tamid*, and both of Wise's *Minhag America* prayer books omit this benediction. The first remnant of this benediction appears in the 1895 UPB, which says, "Let the reign of wickedness vanish like smoke and all dwellers on earth recognize Thee alone as their King."[65] The subsequent versions of UPB are much more subtle, only mentioning the desire for people to turn away from evil. *Gates of Prayer* (1975) omits this benediction completely, but restores it in a revised form in the 1994 gender-sensitive revision which is followed by *Mishkan T'filah*. The texts of both *Gates of Prayer* (1994) and *Mishkan T'filah* reflect that of Geiger's universal hope and message that all evil (not evildoers) will vanish from the earth.

Day 22 – Reward for the righteous – Our reward

Tradition/ Scholarship

The benediction for the righteous is the converse of the previous one. Whereas the previous benediction calls for the utter destruction of the wicked, this one calls for the welfare of not only the elders and scholars, but also the proselytes. The benediction contains three categories of righteous people. Rabbi Jacob Emden elucidates on the types of people under each category. He writes, "The righteous are those who pursue righteousness and conduct themselves uprightly as the law requires them to. The 'saints' go beyond the requirements of the law in their behavior; the 'elders' are those learned in Torah [and] the 'righteous proselytes' are those ' who have endured under the shelter of the divine presence.'"[66] Another observation about this benediction pertains to its form. The Tur points out that the benediction contains all the letters of the alphabet which suggests to him that, "' for the sake of the righteous who occupy themselves with your Torah, [God should] deal mercifully with us.'"[67]

Reflections/Questions

What motivates us to do good in the world?

For some of us, it just feels good. It makes others feel good and it makes us personally feel good. For some of us, it is purely altruistic and is what we do out of our obligation to humanity. For some of us, doing good in the world is out of an obligation to God and to one's faith (perhaps out of love for and or fear of God).

Is there a reward for our behavior? And if so, what is it and where do we receive it?

Do we need a reward?

What makes us righteous?

Musings on Prayer

In BT Yevamot 64a it is written, "Why is the prayer of the righteous likened to a shovel? In the same way that a shovel removes produce from one place to another, so the prayer of the righteous turns God's attribute of anger to one of compassion."[68]

Day 23 – Rebuilding of Jerusalem – Defining JeruSaLeM

Tradition/ Scholarship

The benediction for rebuilding of Jerusalem calls upon God to not only rebuild it rapidly in our days, but to also dwell in it, as God dwelt there during the Second Temple period. Following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, it was widely believed that God no longer dwells on earth. Abrahams suggests that this benediction and the following one, for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, were originally one benediction (This observation is based on the prayer book fragments from the Cairo Genizah of the rite of the land of Israel). The name for the Amidah, as pointed out in the introduction, is the *Shmoneh Esrei*, meaning eighteen benedictions. It popularly believed that the nineteenth benediction is the one for the punishment of the wicked, however, it is more probable that the (Babylonain) separation of the aforementioned benediction into two is the reason for nineteen benedictions. Furthermore, Abrahams suggests the possibility of a pre-Maccabean origin for this benediction. If so, it initially referred not to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but rather to its building. After the destruction of the Second Temple, it was modified to refer to the rebuilding. [69]

Reflections/Questions

The predominant form of worship during the Second Temple period (in Jerusalem) was through burnt sacrifices and offerings. Shortly following the destruction of the Temple, the Rabbis of Yavneh sought to institutionalize formal prayer that would then "replace" Temple worship. Psalm 51, as we read on Day 2, teaches us that God prefers the offerings of our hearts over burnt sacrifices.

If our tradition teaches us about the importance of the supplications of our hearts then why should we pray for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple cult?

The root of the word Jerusalem is *shin, lamed, mem*, which forms the word, *Shalom*, meaning, peace, or *shalem*, meaning "whole."

How can we make the prayer for Jerusalem relevant to our lives as Jews?

How do we define Jerusalem?

What function does Jerusalem play in our lives as Jews?

How can praying for the restoration of Jerusalem inspire our responsibility to God, the Jewish people, and to humanity?

Musings on Prayer

in BT Brachot 32b Rabbi Eleazar said, 'The gates of prayer have been closed since the day the Temple was destroyed. Though the gates of prayer are closed, the gates of weeping are not closed, as it says *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give an ear unto my cry: keep no silence at my tears* (Ps 39:13)."[70]

Day 24 – Messiah – The messianic moments in our lives

Tradition/ Scholarship

The benediction for Jerusalem is immediately followed by the benediction for the return of the messianic kingship of the line of David. As Sacks writes, "David was promised by God that the monarchy would always be the heritage of his children. The Davidic monarchy came to an end with the Babylonian conquest. It will be restored in the messianic age."[71] Jacobson quotes *Ya'arot Devash* on the importance of the prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty, "If we do not regain Jerusalem and the house of David, what is there to live for?"[72]

Reflections/Questions

What are we working towards?

What are our goals and desires?

How do we envision the future for ourselves, our families and loved ones, our community members, and ultimately all of humanity?

What can we do to bring about a messianic era?

Does a messianic era need to be at one point in time (traditionally thought of as when the world would be at complete peace and tranquility) or can there be messianic moments throughout our lives?

What are some of the moments when we experience(d) times of complete peace and tranquility?

Musings on Prayer

The purpose of prayer is to allow us to be alone with God and apart from other men, to give us seclusion in the midst of the world. We are to seek loneliness also in the house of God even when it is crowded with men, to be alone there also with ourselves and our God. If life is to be filled with devoutness, we must from time to time abandon the ways of the world so that we may enjoy the peace of God.[73]

Day 25 - The argument for *Kavanah* in modern thought and theology

Joseph Heineman discusses the problem with fixed for authentic Jewish prayer in which the dominant elements are, "innovation, spontaneity, variety, and creativity."[74] Heinemann says that while fixed prayer is an innovative new form of prayer, "there was no intention to push aside that type of personal, spontaneous prayer."[75] In fact, he says, "set prayer itself left a great deal of room for innovation, variation, and creativity. It is therefore, all the more strange that the principle of free prayer has so completely disappeared from Judaism in recent centuries, particularly in our own time."[76]

Reuven Hammer writes extensively on the importance of *kavanah* in prayer. He emphasizes the fact that the prayer texts are constantly evolving through time. He writes that "every new text is built on the texts of the past, and the more echoes, the richer the new text."[77] Therefore, Hammer proposes, "what is needed...is a synthesis of the old and the new. The old is the received text, the words so many others have said and still say. The new is the personal feelings in the individual meaning, which changes every time we say these words, if we say them with fervor and intention, if they are accompanied by *kavanah*."[78] Furthermore, as Hammer says, "if we add to the Siddur or change the prayers, we are not altering the fundamental nature of Jewish prayer but only continuing a process that has been going on for millennia."[79] Hammer refers to a discussion of YT Berachot 4:3, "There were many sages who urged that each person say something novel whenever praying. It is reported of Rabbi Eliezer that 'he would recite a new prayer every day' so that 'it should be not be like reading a letter.'" [80]Furthermore, BT Berachot 29b teaches that "a completely fixed prayer text was unacceptable prayer and in order to avoid that, one should always 'make an innovation.'"[81]

Day 26 - Hear our voice - Listening to each other

Tradition/ Scholarship

The concluding petitionary benediction asks God, the one "who hears prayer," to hear our voice. Elbogen references the Talmud, pointing out: "Already in ancient times it was permitted to insert here private petitions during the silent recitation of the Amidah (A person may ask for his own needs in the benediction, 'Who hears prayer'" [B. Ber. 31a])."[82] Likewise, the worshiper was permitted here to recite petitions for particular days that he had forgotten to recite at the appropriate point (such as Havdalah).[83] Jacobson quotes the *Yaarot Devash* on the importance of this prayer: "... The main benefit [accruing from this prayer] is the impression engraved on the heart of the worshiper that man, that the Jew, is not the helpless victim of times and circumstances to the extent that he has no need of prayer, that he is dependent upon the fates, on his intellectual application and energy of action..."[84]

Reflections/Questions

Up to this point in the petitionary section of the Amidah, we have prayed for what we are also capable of doing ourselves (however in the traditional sense, God is needed for all this). Our human actions can bring health to people, help give people freedom and human rights, and ultimately our actions can lead to peace. In this last petition, we are asking God to hear our prayers. When we ask God to hear our prayers, we are reminded that we also need to listen to each other. As a community, when we gather together to pray, we are strengthened by one another. When we listen to each other we are able to better understand each other and realize the blessing we are to our loved ones, fellow community members, and ultimately to humanity.

How do we ask God to hear our prayers in a way that allows us to hear one another?

Musings on Prayer

There is a story of a little girl who prayed repeatedly for a bicycle without success: "You see," taunted her unbelieving friend, "God does not answer prayer." "Oh yes, he does," answered the girl, "His answer was no!"[85]

Day 27 - Avodah - The sacrifices of our hearts

Tradition/ Scholarship

With the conclusion of the intermediary petitions, we finally move into the three concluding benedictions deemed by the Talmud to be expressions of thanksgiving (although two are actually petitions). The first asks God to find favor in our worship, to restore the service to the Temple, and to accept in love the offerings of our prayers. Abrahams points out that this is "one of the oldest paragraphs in the Amidah, and was recited daily by the priests and also by the high priest on the Day of Atonement." Furthermore, the initial intent of this benediction was for the acceptance of the Temple worship; however with the destruction of the Second Temple, it was extended to refer to worship generally and specifically to prayer, the "worship of the heart". [86]It is generally assumed that this benediction therefore underwent verbal changes after 70 C.E. Rashi suggests the following original form of the Avodah benediction: "Accept, O Lord, our God, the service of your people Israel, and receive in favor the fire offerings and prayers of Israel. Blessed are you, O Lord, who accepts the Temple service of his people Israel with favor."[87] The Tur writes, "Even though the Temple service is non-existent at present, we ask for the favorable acceptance by God... of our prayers... since these are a substitute for the sacrifices. "[88]So this benediction, while grouped by the Talmud in a rubric of thanksgiving, is clearly seen to be petitionary.

Reflections/Questions

What makes the words of our mouths equivalent to, or even more desirable to God than sacrifices?

When we come to pray, be it individually in the privacy of our own sacred space or with a community, our goal is to be transformed. We can view every prayer opportunity for opportunities of growth; emotionally, intellectually, and or spiritually. But we must ask ourselves the question that has weaved throughout this guide:

What is our responsibility in prayer?

How do we make our prayers more meaningful to us in a way that has real impact on this world?

How are the words of our lips the sacrifices of our hearts?

Musings on Prayer

Prayer reminds us of our "longing to be worthy of God's love, to come to deserve it through the doing of his will."[89]

Day 28 – Hoda'ah – Finding the *shehechianu* moments of our lives

Tradition/ Scholarship

The benediction for thanksgiving is truly a thanksgiving benediction. Throughout this benediction we thank God for the miracles and wonders in our lives, all due to God's compassion and protection of the Jewish people. During the holidays of Hanukah and Purim, an additional paragraph is inserted in this benediction, marking the miracles that took place on both occasions, ultimately leading to the survival of the Jewish people. According to Sacks, Nachmanides explains the meaning of "miracles" in this benediction by discussing the difference between a "'revealed' and a "hidden" miracle. "Revealed miracles stand outside the laws of nature; hidden miracles take place within them. God is present not only in signs and wonders, but also in the very laws that govern the universe. To see the miraculous in the everyday is part of the Judaic vision, beautifully expressed in these lines."[90] Rabbi Jacob Zvi Mecklenberg writes, "*Nes* denotes a miraculous occurrence, but can also be used to signify some natural event as well... there are many wondrous happenings that affect us regularly, every day. Because of their frequency, however, hardly anyone pays any attention to them... We are too familiar with these phenomena; we experience them every day..."[91]

Reflections/Questions

The *Shehechianu* is a blessing that thanks God for bringing us to special moments in our lives. We say it at life-cycle events such as weddings and baby namings. We say it at moments that demarcate special milestones such as anniversaries and major accomplishments. And we say it at the onset of Jewish holidays that occur once a year.

Do we say Shehechianu enough?

Are there other times in our lives when we can be thankful for the special moments?

What are those special moments in our lives that can inspire us to thank God?

How can we begin to see the miracles in our lives as shehechianu moments?

Musings on Prayer

We do not step out of the world when we pray; we merely see the world in a different setting.[92]

Day 29 - Peace - The blessings we bring in our lives

Tradition/ Scholarship

The final blessing is for peace and well being. In today's traditional siddur, the Priestly Benediction (Numbers 6:24-26) is recited by the prayer leader directly before this benediction during the repetition of the Amidah. Idelsohn cites the mishnaic origins of this benediction as, in fact, being the Priestly Benediction. He points out that a shorter prayer for peace was later attached to the Priestly benediction. [93]Elbogen notes that the final prayer for peace was generally a space for allotted expansions, as long as their content was appropriate to that of the benediction.[94] Jacobson quotes *Ya'arot Devash* on the purpose of this blessing: "There should be a prayer for peace, since nothing brings greater blessing than peace. This is the most desirable bond, the complete uniting together, of the people of Israel. Now when one prays for peace, he should pray that there be no dissension in Israel, no jealousy, hatred or rivalry, but that all should love [one another], be banded together and be completely and utterly united in love, brotherhood and friendship..."[95]

Reflections/Questions

The prayer for peace is the final call to action. As we progress through the Amidah, we are ever reminded of our responsibility to God by taking care of one another (including ourselves). The blessings we petition God for are the very blessings we all bring to one another. This prayer for peace is the culmination of all the blessings. Ultimately, the blessings we bring to other's lives will result in peace. The blessings we bring to the world will not solve all the problems, but they will certainly bring more peace. The world would be lacking without us and the blessings of our lives. That is worth praying for.

What is our contribution to bringing more peace to this world?

Musings on Prayer

"Prayer is awareness--awareness not only of God but of oneself as well. God is what he is and we are what we are whether we recognize and welcome it or not. Prayer is a joyous recognition and deliberate thankful acceptance of what we are."[96]

Day 30 – Silent Prayer – How we fill the silence in our lives

Tradition/ Scholarship

Following the nineteen benedictions of the Amidah is one final prayer designed to allow the individual to offer their own supplications in their own words.[97]It should be noted that this prayer is recited in the first person singular. While a text with fixed wording appears in the prayer book, Jacobson points out that "such individual prayers composed by various Tannaim and Amoraim recited after the conclusion of their Tefillah are recorded in the Talmud (eleven examples altogether).[98] The text of the silent prayer could be understood as suggestive and not "binding" as is the fixed wording of the nineteen benedictions. The text itself includes the supplications to guard our speech, open our hearts to God and God's commandments, for protection from evil, and for the delivery of God's beloved ones. The benediction closes with a verse from Psalms 19, asking God to accept the words of our lips and meditations of our hearts, followed by the ultimate prayer for peace, asking God, the maker of peace, to make peace for us and for all Israel.

Reflections/Questions

Sometimes we are moved by the words and supplications of our hearts. Sometimes we are moved by the silence that surrounds us. Sometimes we are not moved at all. If we stop and think about it, our lives are filled with moments of silence and opportunities to reflect and pray.

How do we fill the silence in our lives?

Do we need to fill the silent moments in our lives?

Musings on Prayer

The amount of time we take to pray is not as important as the feelings of our hearts, which we bring to prayer.[99]

Notes for the Days

[1] Abraham Ezra Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), 9.
[2] Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts* (New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., 1964), 623-624.
[3] Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts,* 79
[4] A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud,* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1949), 85.
[5] Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud,* 88.
[6] Lindsey Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer" (Rabbinic Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1996), 17.
[7] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 18, referring to BT Shabbat 12b.
[8] Ruth Langer, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1998), 28.
[9] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries: The Amidah.* Vol. 2 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1997), 61.
[10] Harvey J. Fields, Elaine Rose Glickman, and Olivia Schanzer, *B'chol L'vavcha* (New York: UAHC, 2001), 106.
[11] Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1972), 37.
[12] Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1964), 335.
[13] Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts,* 335.
[14] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New York: Schocken, 1994), 160-161.
[15] Fields, Glickman, and Schanzer, *B'chol L'vavcha,* 114.
[16] B.S. Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur: An Exposition and Analysis of its Structure, Contents, Language and Ideas* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1978), 214.
[17] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.
[18] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.
[19] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 76.
[20] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 10.
[21] Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Siddur* (Jerusalem: Koren, 2009), 115.
[22] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur,* 221.
[23] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book,* 84, 88.
[24] Ernst Simon in Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer,* 109.
[25] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur,* 114.
[26] B.S. Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur: An Exposition and Analysis of its Structure, Contents, Language and Ideas* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1978), 226.
[27] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 12.
[28] Israel Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook* (London: 1922; reprint: New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 62.

[29] Kaufman Kohler quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1989), 29.
[30] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 228.
[31] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 117.
[32] Yitzchok Kirzner, *The Art of Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1991), 8.
[33] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 116-117.
[34] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 230.
[35] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 7.
[36] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 63.
[37] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 231-232.
[38] BT Berakhot 32b quoted in quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1989), 149.
[39] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 232.
[40] Abraham Joshua Heschel quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer,* 149.
[41] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 44.
[42] The insertion for rain is specifically geared toward the winter months in Israel. Israel's agriculture depends on rain and even in the diaspora, we pray for successful growth of produce in the land. The insertion referring to the dew and rain is said from December 5th until Passover. The insertion asking for God's blessing on the land, recited during the other seasons, is said from Hol Ha'Mo'ed Passover until December 4th (Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 233).
[43] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 233.
[44] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*, cited in Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 41.
[45] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 233.
[46] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 121.
[47] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 234.
[48] Chaim Stern quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1989), 175.
[49] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 217.
[50] Merzbacher, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*, 103.
[51] Wise, *Minhag America: The Daily Prayers: Part 1 (1857)*, 22.
[52] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship. Volume I* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1895), 275.
[53] Stern,, ed. *Gates of Prayer,* 64.
[54] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 235.
[55] Israel Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook* (London: 1922; reprint: New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 64.
[56] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 236.
[57] Alvin I. Fine quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer,* 141.
[58] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 45-46

[59] Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), 102.
[60] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 237.
[61] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 238.
[62] BT Berakhot 7a quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer,* 227.
[63] Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe; the Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), 223.
[64] Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe,* 223.
[65] *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship. Volume I,* 275.
[66] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 241.
[67] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 240.
[68] Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 81.
[69] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 65-66.
[70] Bat Joseph, "Jewish Views on the Efficacy of Petitionary Prayer," 29.
[71] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 125.
[72] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 243.
[73] Leo Baeck, quoted in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer,* 41.
[74] Joseph Heinemann in Gabriel H. Cohn and Harold Fisch, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer." *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 45.
[75] Heinemann, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer," 46.
[76] Heinemann, "The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer," 46-47.
[77] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 12.
[78] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 13.
[79] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 76.
[80] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 87.
[81] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 87.
[82] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 49.
[83] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 49.
[84] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 247-248.
[85] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Petitionary Prayer: a Theological Exploration* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1989), 70.
[86] Abrahams, *A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook,* 66.
[87] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 249.
[88] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 250.
[89] Dudley Weinberg, in Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 132.
[90] Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, 128-129.
[91] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 256-257.
[92] Abraham Joshua Heschel cited in Sidney Greenberg ed., *A Treasury of Thoughts on Jewish Prayer,* 10.
[93] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, 108.
[94] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 54.

[95] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 261.
[96] Dudley Weinberg, in Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 124.
[97] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 264.
[98] Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, 264.
[99] Kirzner, *The Art of Jewish Prayer,* 10.

Appendix

Day 3 – Adonai S'fatai – Entering into the presence of God

Tradition/Scholarship

The Amidah is framed with words of scripture. We enter into the Amidah chanting the verse from **Psalms 51**[1], asking that God will open our lips so that we may declare God's praise. Its full biblical context reads, *Adonai, open my lips that my mouth may declare your praise; for you have no delight in sacrifice. If I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased* (Psalms 51:17-18). In context, we glean the core essence of prayer to **the Rabbis**[2]. Historically speaking, structured communal prayer was "officially" ordained in the periods following the **destruction of the second Temple**[3]. But, the context of the verse in Psalms 51 suggests that prayer is so central to our faith that it is even more pleasing to God than the burnt offerings at the Temple.

Musings on prayer

"Prayer is the product of man's yearning for the most intimate of all human communication, for the opportunity to open his heart and his mind in adoration in supplication to the divine presence."

אֲדֹנָי שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ׃

Adonai, open my lips that my mouth my mouth may declare your praise.

Reflections/Questions

The structure of the Amidah has three sections. The opening of the Amidah is traditionally likened to one who enters into the presence of a king. Just as when we would ask an authority figure for something, there is a structure that will make the "ask" more "efficacious." First, we praise them (you are the best dad ever, my what a nice dress you are wearing today, mom). Then we ask them for what we want (an X-Box, some money, a new car). Finally, we thank them (in advance).

When we enter into the sacred space of prayer, how are we like the one who enters into the presence of a King or a parent?

How do we see our relationship with God?

What is the efficacy of our prayers according to our own beliefs/experiences?

What are we going to say to God once we are there?

If not to God, with whom are we praying/speaking?

Day 5 – Avot – The merit of our ancestors as our way in

Tradition/ Scholarship

The first benediction of the Amidah opens with the invocation of the *Avot*, the names of our Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The liturgical addition of the invocation of the Matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, first made its way into the revised gender-sensitive version of *Gates of Prayer* (1994), a Reform prayer book. Reciting the names of our ancestors touches upon the value of ***zechut avot***[3], the merit of our ancestors. The value Jews place on *zechut avot* is of great significance. We call upon God, using the names of our ancestors, as a way to tie us to the sacred covenant between God and our ancestors, based on their merit, not necessarily our own. *Zechut Avot* "establishes our covenantal claim on God, whom we approach knowing that we are spiritual descendants of the biblical ancestors who established the covenant in the first place."[5]

Musings on Prayer

"Even though God does not have to be told about your need, He has given you an opportunity of opening your heart to Him, of sharing your concerns with Him...[Prayer] affords you the relief of verbalizing, in His presence, what ever it is that you are striving for."[1]

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת, וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה: מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמָגֵן: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם:

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, and our ancestors' God: God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. The great, the mighty, and awesome God, who acts most piously, who is master of everything, who remembers the piety of our ancestors, and who brings a redeemer to their descendants for the sake of his name in love. Blessed are You, Adonai, Abraham's protector.

Day 5 – Avot – The merit of our ancestors as our way in (Continued)

Reflections/Questions

The **Midrash**[6] teaches that the merit of our ancestors "will aid the people of Israel in the reaching of the messianic age" **(Bereishit Rabbah** 70:8)."[7] When we invoke the names of our ancestors upon beginning the first benediction of the Amidah, we are "getting" God's attention. We are not simply name-dropping. It's all about who you are related to, right? We are worthy of God's blessing (or even God's listening to us) based on the fact that our ancestors were meritorious with God. So, what does that say about us?

Is zechut Avot enough to give us an "in" with God or should we be held more responsible for this honor?

Is it always about to whom we are related?

Why not recite our own names when invoking God?

As we enter into this benediction, let us take a moment to reflect on the merit we have earned through our own actions and behavior. What does it feel like to insert your own name and what responsibility do we place on ourselves by doing so?

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וֵאלֹהֵי
יַעֲקֹב. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל,
וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת, וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה: מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר
וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמָגֵן: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם:

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, and our ancestors' God: God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. The great, the mighty, and awesome God, who acts most piously, who is master of everything, who remembers the piety of our ancestors, and who brings a redeemer to their descendants for the sake of his name in love. Blessed are You, Adonai, Abraham's protector.

Notes for Day 3

Musings on Prayer: Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, 9

[1] **Psalms** –Psalms, the title of this book in the Greek version of the Bible, the Septuagint, means "songs, hymns accompanied by string instruments." In Hebrew, Psalms are called *tehillim*. The book of Psalms, which is the first book in the third division of the Bible, Writings or *ketuvim*, is composed of one hundred and fifty hymns. Traditionally, the book of Psalms is ascribed to King David. The seven types of poetic expression in the book of Psalms are, hymns, thanksgivings, elegies, pilgrim songs, meditations, historical poems, and poems about nature. (A)

(A) Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, (New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., 1964), 623-624.

[2] **The Rabbis** – The "Rabbis" is a term commonly used to refer to the authoritative voice of the vast body of Jewish texts that define Jewish law and tradition. They are also referred to as the Sages. The authority of the Rabbis begins in the Mishnaic period (220 CE) and culminates with the sealing of the Babylonian Talmud (500 CE). The Jewish authoritative texts of the Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, and Midrash, are ascribed to the Rabbis.

[3] **Destruction of the second Temple** – The central form of Jewish worship was through offering sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple. The first Jerusalem Temple, which was built in the fourth year of King Solomon's reign, was destroyed over four hundred years later by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia, in 586 BCE. Roughly 70 years later, the second Temple of was built on the same site as the first. In the year 70 CE, the Romans destroyed the Temple. The Western Wall, commonly referred to in Hebrew as the *Kotel*, is part of the wall enclosing the Second Temple, other parts of which remain as well. The Temple itself was completely destroyed. (B)

(B) Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, 79

Notes for Day 5

Musings on Prayer: Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, 37.

[4] ***Zechut avot*** – This is a theological concept according to which we gain merit through the good deeds of our ancestors, and not simply based on our own good deeds. This is a highly controversial and often highly debated concept. The ancestors to whom *zechut avot* are referring, are the *Avot* (the biblical forefathers): Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As seen in the gender-

sensitive Reform prayer books, *zechut avot* include the *Imahot* (the biblical foremothers) Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. The merit of our ancestors is seemingly an "inexhaustible reservoir of merit" (C) from which we are constantly benefitting.

(C) http://www.ou.org/about/judasim/yz.htm

[5] Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*, 61.

[6] **Midrash** - The Midrash is a vast body of Jewish literature that seeks to explain the biblical text. We often find "gaps," issues, or contradictions in the biblical text, and the Midrash seeks to fill in those gaps and fix the issues. There are two main bodies or types of Midrash. Midrash Haggadah is primarily composed of stories, folk tales, and teachings that seek to "admonish and edify." (D) Midrash Halakha is mainly concerned with the "derivation of laws from scriptural texts." (E) Bereishit Rabbah, the text that is cited above, is a Haggadic Midrash that carefully (verse by verse) follows the text of Genesis (Bereishit). The midrashic literature is not limited to the the five books of Moses. For example, there is midrashic literature on the five megillot (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) as well as other smaller collections that are not limited to a specific book of scripture.

(D) Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, 335

(E) Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, 335

[7] Fields, Glickman, and Schanzer. *B'chol L'vavcha*, 106.

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