A Tale of Two Liturgies:

Placing Liturgical Development in the Reform and Conservative Movements in Conversation

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INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew terms used to describe Jewish prayerbooks are rarely understood literally. When someone asks for a siddur or a machzor, they are really asking for a book rather than an "arrangement" or a "serial." This point might seem obvious, but the Jewish scholars who first put such books together could just as easily have called their prayerbook "*Sefer T'filah.*" Instead, they chose *Siddur,* and *Machzor,* names that in their very meaning provide a sense of how these books ought to be used. The term "*siddur,*" 'an ordering' or 'an arrangement,' which is given to the book of prayers to be recited daily, reflects the nature of Jewish prayer. It suggests regular prayer and thus the name of the book is simply an 'arrangement' of the liturgy to be used. "*Machzor,*" "a cycle" or "a return," is also an apt name. Much of this liturgy is recited only on the High Holy Days, so the book is named to reflect its usage. When the Jewish year comes back around to Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, we need a liturgical tool that will return us to those themes.

Over the past century and a half, however, especially within liberal Judaism, the Jewish prayerbook has been given many new names—*New Union Prayerbook, Siddur Sim Shalom, Mishkan T'filah*, *Avodah Shebalev*, and *Siddur Lev Shalem* are just a handful. These prayerbooks were created and endorsed not by individual rabbis—like *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* or the liturgy in Maimonides' *Sefer Ahavah*—but rather by the rabbinical bodies of the large denominations of modern liberal Jewry. As A.Z. Idelsohn observes,

> [The prayer-book] is the true companion of the Jew from the years of his early youth to the hour of his death. Next to the Bible, it is the most popular book in Jewish life; to a certain extent it is even closer to him, since it was at no time

> canonized but continued to develop and to reflect the daily occurrences of the Jewish people. For this very reason, the prayer-book shows so many variations.[1]

The liturgy, with all its variations, has been a constant work-in-progress for the Jewish people. Each new setting in which Jewish life has been lived has brought with it new innovations in the liturgical text. The creation every few decades, however, of a new *siddur* that adjusts, adapts, alters, and repackages the liturgy for a specific sect of Jewish users is a new phenomenon in Jewish history.

More than just the process of Jewish prayer itself, however, our prayerbooks reflect much of what it means to be Jewish. Throughout the history of rabbinic Judaism, prayer—its various modes as well as the challenge that "praying well" presents—has been a central project of clergy and laity alike. Idelsohn writes, "After awakening from the stupor caused by the terrible shock which the Jewish people suffered with the destruction of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem by the Romans, the outstanding spirits in Israel sought a way out of the confusion."[2] The watershed development of a culture of daily worship becoming sufficient in a Jewish world without the sacrificial rites of the *Beit HaMiqdash* was a bold step into the future made by the first rabbis, but this journey was embarked upon with little more than a skeletal roadmap. Which prayers should be said and when? What should be the phrasing of each prayer? What important themes should a Jew recall every single day? Even as the beginnings of what could be called a standard *matbei'a t'filah* began to emerge, so too did variations in *minhag* from community to community. It was not until the Geonic period, hundreds of years after the redaction of the Mishnah, that *siddurim*

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[1] Abraham Zebi Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Dover, 1995). p. xii

[2] ibid. p. 26

began to emerge and one could speak of something like a standardized Jewish liturgy. Even then there was no standard prayerbook used by all or even most Jews.

It is somewhat surprising, given that Jewish religious culture is constantly looking backward in time and enshrining the wisdom of prior generations, that the *siddurim* of the great liturgists among the Ge'onim and Rishonim ages never became universally standardized. This was probably due to a variety of factors: Geography, the required time and expense of manuscript production, as well as distinct local *minhagim*. Although prayer times, prayer themes, and even many specific *brachot* were agreed upon by the time of the redaction of the *Talmud Bavli*, the specific language of much of the liturgy has experienced periods both marked by major adjustment and innovation and by codification and standardization. Between the redaction of the Talmud and the completion of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, and certainly in the period after the Enlightenment, Jewish liturgy was often in flux. Even during periods of standardization and solidity within the liturgical corpus, local minhagim preserved their particular adjustments and peculiarities. The lack of standardization of Jewish prayer language paved the way for an astounding variety of modes (*nusachim*) or customs (*minhagim*) across the Jewish spectrum. Some have been evolving since their inception, while others were created within the boundaries of a specific strand of tradition or even a specific rabbi and have remained relatively unchanged for hundreds of years.

These different *nusachim* do not conform to one universal standard. As H. J. Zimmels notes, “The differences between the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi rites as we have them today are of so great a variety and so numerous that it is impossible to give a list of all of them. There is

hardly any prayer in which the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim do not deviate from each other."[3] In the Orthodox liturgical world, differences have emerged largely on account of regional differences; in the world of modern liberal Judaism, differences emerge along denominational lines.

Judaism has long enshrined behavior over belief. Ultimately it is impossible to mandate and enforce what goes on inside the head of any given Jew, but it is relatively easy to tell whether or not that person has been showing up for their community *minyan,* or if they are *shomer/et kashrut* or *Shabbat*. It may be that the very reason that prayers were never universally standardized or canonized is the deeply personal nature of prayer itself. Prayer is, after all, referred to in Jewish tradition as "*avodah shebalev,*" "the service of the heart." *Siddurim* over the centuries have nonetheless gone at least part of the way toward standardizing the prayer of, at the smallest level, individual communities, and at the largest entire national populations of Jews. Most denominationally affiliated synagogues stock their pews with hundreds of copies of the same *siddur*, and the community moves through at a generally unified pace reciting the prayers together and, especially in Reform Judaism, often in unison.

Because the success and efficacy of both individual and communal prayer are at stake, almost every discussion of innovation of the *siddur* from the late-medieval to the contemporary has been fraught with debate, challenges, questioning and even some infighting as the classic and eternal battle between conservation and progress plays out in meeting rooms and on conference

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[3] H. J. Zimmels, Israel Brodie, and Marc D. Angel. *Ashkenazim and Sephardim: Their Relations, Differences, and Problems As Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1997). p. 99.

calls. In his book, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, Lawrence Hoffman shows that such vitriol has been present from even the very earliest debates over the liturgy:

> The responsa of [the first period of the fixing of liturgy in geonic times] are marked linguistically by the harshest of language. One becomes accustomed to finding all these geonim calling their opponents fools, ignoramuses, and the like. The word *min*, "heretic," occurs twice; *ta'ut*, "error," is mentioned four times; and other terms of disrespect (*chilluk lev*, "divisive-minded"; *kesilut*, "foolishness"; *hedyotut*, "simple-mindedness"; *borut*, "ignorance"; *shetut*, "nonsense"; *gena'I*, "unseemliness"; and *shevishta*, "error") are the norm.[4]

Debates over new *siddurim* or prayer language found within responsa literature and in the notes from conventions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis contain accounts of accusations and insults hurled across rooms full of rabbis. This passion and anger, however, belies the deep and enduring meaning bound up in the development of liturgy for the Jewish community and especially for its leaders who dedicate their lives to the study and practice of Judaism. Reuven Hammer reminds us of the nobility of the work of prayer:

> ...ultimately prayer is... intended to have an effect on the individual and his or her actions. It makes us more aware of the world, of nature, of history, of God's role in history, of the nature of God and His [sic] demands upon us... One should emerge not only spiritually enriched from prayer, but also morally purified, more closely identified with the traditions and beliefs of Judaism, and committed to living according to its high standards of ethics and morality.[5]

If indeed the liturgy and Jews' work with it in the context of prayer is intended to have an impact on the kind of lives Jews lead, as well as to articulate and reiterate their central beliefs about God and the world, then the stakes for modern developers of Jewish liturgy are quite high.

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[4] Lawrence A. Hoffman. *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. p. 161

[5] Reuven Hammer. *Entering Jewish Prayer: a Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1994. p. 4

While Orthodoxy uses liturgy that has remained largely unaltered for centuries, the modern liberal movements in Judaism continue to produce entirely new *siddurim* every few decades, and with increasing rapidity. When these movements make small or sweeping alterations to their liturgies within their siddurim, it is because of the careful and painstaking work of the committees of clergy that spend years putting together these new liturgical publications. This work can have incredibly powerful effects on the lived Jewish experience of the hundreds of thousands of Jews across multiple generations that will use these books.

In Reform Judaism, prayerbook reform began in Germany as communities began to shorten their services on ideological, theological and practical grounds. Much Hebrew was eliminated in favor of increased use of the vernacular, and the introduction of the organ to the synagogue (now called, for the first time, a 'Temple') and the sermon in the vernacular conformed the service to contemporary German norms.[6] These trends were perpetuated by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Reform Judaism's rabbinical union, in the *siddur* they published and that their movement used for the first half of the 20th Century. The second-most recent Reform *siddur, Gates of Prayer*, which was published in 1975 and revised in the 1990's, changed direction, expanding the Hebrew liturgy and including many more options for worship: ten Shabbat *ma'ariv* service options and six Shabbat *shacharit* service options. While *Gates of Prayer* was remarkable in its addition of much more Hebrew in the service, it was truly not until the most modern American Reform *siddur, Mishkan T'filah*, that Hebrew liturgy reached its peak presence in the American Reform *matbe'a t'filah*. The newest Reform *machzor*, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, doubled down on this trend, and is probably the Reform prayerbook with the most

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[6] See Israel Jacobson's "corrections" in the prayer-book in Westphalia in the early 19th Century as discussed in Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development.* p. 268

Hebrew liturgy ever to be published, except perhaps Isaac Mayer Wise's *Minhag America*, which was never actually adopted by the movement.

Also worthy of note is that it was not until *Mishkan T'filah* that there were female clergy that participated as members of the *siddur* committee. As will be discussed in later sections of this study, the changing status of women, and especially women in the rabbinate, ultimately led to major liturgical reforms, but these took a very long time to be enacted. It was not until *Gates of Prayer* (1975) that humanity was referred to in anything other than the masculine, and not until *Mishkan T'filah* that language used in reference to God was made gender neutral.

In the Conservative Movement, however, prayerbooks have always been closer in style and content to Orthodox prayerbooks:

> In the early Conservative Movement the "right wing" retained the traditional prayer book unchanged while "left wing" prayer books showed an affinity for the liturgical changes in the Reform movement in the interest of "making traditional Judaism vital and creative in the modern world…" The *Jastrow Prayer-Book*, for instance, edited by Marcus Jastrow and Benjamin Szold, eliminated all references to the restoration of Zion and drastically reduced Pesuke d'Zimrah. But, as Gordis notes, these "left wing" prayer books were largely issued on "individual responsibility." The only "collective enterprise" of the movement was the 1927 *United Synagogue Mahzor of the Pilgrimage Festivals* until the RA and United Synagogue agreed in 1944 to adopt Morris Silverman's manuscript as the basis of a joint prayer book and established a commission to "revise, supplement and edit the material."[7]

The "Silverman *Siddur*," as it is often referred to, was the standard for decades in the Conservative Movement. It was not until 1961 that the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) published another prayerbook, and this one was only for weekdays. The 1961 *Weekday Prayer Book*

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[7] Carol Levithan, "From Silverman to Lev Shalem: The Evolution of the Conservative Siddur," The Rabbinical Assembly, 2014, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/silverman-lev-shalem-evolution-conservative-siddur.

featured changes both within the English, such as replacing the classical English style of “Thou didst…” was replaced with “You did…,” and in the Hebrew, with liturgical additions and alterations were made to reflect new realities like the State of Israel and egalitarian expectations emerging within the movement.[8] *Siddur Sim Shalom*, originally published in 1985, continued these trends, even—in a later revision—going so far as to include an option in the *Amidah* to include the names of the matriarchs. Now, in the newest Conservative prayerbook, *Siddur Lev Shalem*, there is no page that features the *Avot* blessing of the *Amidah* without the *Imahot.*

Acclimating to these prayers can, in the early going, be a jarring experience. Denominational leadership and laity have consistently demonstrated, however, that such changes can and will ultimately be adopted and supported. The changes can feel obvious—sometimes so obvious as to make the perceived lateness of their addition to the liturgy seem shameful. This semblance of obviousness though is an anachronism. In much the same way that a law code or a piece of technology is, upon its release, immediately moving toward obsolescence, denominational *siddurim* at their moment of publication can only respond to social trends and norms that existed prior to publication. Even in just the last thirteen years since the publication of *Mishkan T'filah* there are new social norms that have arisen and become a part of mainstream Reform Jewish discourse that are not reflected in Reform's most recent *siddur*. The same is already true even in the very most recent Conservative *siddur*, which was published only a short four years ago.

This social dynamism epitomizes the central challenge to which *siddur* creation groups must respond: the Jewish liturgy is timeless, but *siddurim* are historically situated. The rabbis

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[8] Carol Levithan, “From Sim Shalom to Lev Shalem,” The Rabbinical Assembly, 2014, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/sim-shalom-lev-shalem.

and, now, the cantors—who were only recently brought onto the creative teams for new denominational prayerbooks in both movements—who do this work must both create a product that will be immediately usable and accessible to current pray-ers in their movements, but also one that will be functional and helpful for several decades. While they cannot predict the future, they must have a deep understanding of the social trends present in their denominations, and an open ear to those who have felt excluded, unheard or invisible in prior prayerbooks. Yet, even as they make adaptations in the text or the way it is presented, these clergy-people strive to maintain the integrity and authenticity of their prayerbooks as new representatives of the liturgy to a modern audience. The classical structures, the classic texts (in Hebrew and the vernacular), and even particular melodies and poetic interpretations that have become sacred for modern prayer communities cannot wholly disappear from the books without precipitating uproar from both laity and other clergy.

The Reform and Conservative movements are beginning to resemble one another more closely in the arena of prayer after just over a century of side-by-side evolution. The Reform movement, which at its outset in America embraced a liturgy which excised much of the traditional bedrock, is embracing more and more Hebrew liturgy in its *siddurim.* The Conservative movement, which has always skewed more toward a gradual, moderated development designed to maintain the chain of tradition, is embracing musical innovations such as the spiritual style of repeated chanting in prayer of the modern prayer collective “Nava Tehila” as well as increased use of musical instruments (even on Shabbat!). The clergy that work on these *siddurim* are a major part of this evolutionary process. With each new publication, they help to guide and shape the customs and practices of their denominations for decades. They respond to these and still other social and ritual factors, engaging their lay communities to ensure

that they are representing their needs in prayer accurately. Indeed, the creation of new *siddurim* and *machzorim* has been some of the most widely impactful rabbinic work that has been done in the last century.

In this study, I will compare the approaches of clergy in the Reform and Conservative Movements to this creative enterprise, seeking to understand the different ways these rabbis and cantors wield the authority given to them by leadership and laity. How do these committees of clergy view their modern-day liturgical works in relation to the "traditional" liturgy? How do these individuals decide when and how to adjust, change, add to or subtract from the liturgy for hundreds of thousands of Jews? What is the relationship between these new publications and those which came before? What are the key drivers of change within these texts? Using a variety of primary and secondary source materials, this thesis will seek to sharpen our understanding of the evolving meaning of the *siddur* in our present-day context. One major goal of this thesis is to highlight both the unique values brought to the discussion of liturgical development by each, as well as the key differences that play out on the pages of their *siddurim*. Beyond simple observation, however, this study will demonstrate what each movement has to gain by listening to its counterpart in progressive Jewish tradition. Both movements, in my opinion, have important critiques for the other, and an aggregation of these critiques and methodologies, as well as the understandings of respected clergy that have been tasked with this work in the past, will provide an academic meeting point where the disparate voices will be heard in concert with one another.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

Much of the research for this study took the form of creating new primary sources. In order to place Reform and Conservative voices together in conversation, I needed a way of gathering them around the same table, so to speak. I therefore conducted extensive interviews with clergy who have worked on siddurim in both movements. I created one list of interview questions that I used in conversation with every person. By asking each interviewee the same questions, I was able to put disparate voices in direct conversation with one another.

While the questions came from my perspective as a Reform scholar, this did not actually pose a major problem in creating an authentic and balanced conversation. When a Conservative interviewee felt as though a question had a fundamentally problematic approach to a given aspect of the work, they were able to describe why their principles differ from those of the question, and offer a totally different approach. Some of these strong reactions were actually the most helpful to my task of distinguishing the differences in values and methods used by the clergy of the two movements.

A NOTE ON SCOPE

This is a study, not a book, and as such it is admittedly limited. A longer treatment in the future might add breadth and depth to the subject by including also Reconstructionist, Renewal, Modern Orthodox and unaffiliated *siddurim*; by conducting more extensive interviews of congregations that worked on *siddurim* which were to be used exclusively in their own *shul*; by exploring the archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College's Cincinnati campus; and by making a pilgrimage to Israel to gain an understanding of how this process looks different in Israeli liberal Judaism.

For my limited, focused study I chose the Reform and Conservative movements because they represent the two largest bodies of liberal Judaism in America. Even within just these two movements, addressing every publication within the realm of liturgy was too broad an endeavor. For the sake of focus, I have conducted my analysis on the major *siddurim* published by the movements over the 20th Century and into the 21st Century, and only the newest *machzor* in each movement (*Mishkan HaNefesh* and *Mahzor Lev Shalem*). I chose to interview only those who worked on the most recent publications because they are the ones currently operative in the movements, opting to give contemporary voices and conversations fullest voice in this work. It is my hope that by culling together these rabbinic and cantorial voices, future groups that will work on publications like these will gain some insight as to what has informed the conversation in the past, and especially in the most recent past.

PART I: THE VOICE OF THE BOOKS THEMSELVES

Before hearing the candid and quite thoughtful approaches of the rabbis and cantors that contributed to the creation of new *siddurim* and *machzorim* for their denominations, it is important to have a sense of what the books themselves have to say. Of course, such statements of the identity and purpose of these books are authored by these same sages, but when edited and printed in a physical book this writing becomes inextricable from the liturgy and commentary that follows. In this chapter, I will use the language of the introductions and commentary contained within the *siddurim* and *machzorim* as well as the particular presentations of the liturgy found therein to show, like the classic Darwinian illustration of the "Evolution of Man," how these books have evolved in tandem with the denominations which commissioned them.

The first place to go looking for a particular liberal prayerbook's essential goal(s) is the Foreword or Introduction of the book. In almost every American liberal Jewish prayerbook (excluding the *Union Prayer Book*) the editors, translators and authors thought it important to characterize and contextualize the book, as well as to offer a guide for its usage by the pray-er. Often this section of the books details the process by which the committee which created the book was formed, its members, and their methodology. In cases where there is no introductory section, there are often other key identifying characteristics of the books themselves which communicate clearly the goals of their creators.

Conservative Prayerbooks

The earliest Conservative *siddur* created by such a committee, the "Silverman *Siddur*," originally published in 1944, is no exception. The "Foreword" of this book opens with what

could easily be characterized as a mission or vision statement for the *siddur*: “This Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book is presented with the hope that it will serve the needs of all who are striving to perpetuate traditional Judaism in the modern spirit.”[9] In a subtle display of historical honesty, the “Foreword” admits the connection between this *siddur* and other liberal *siddurim* no doubt going back all the way to the roots of liberal Judaism in Germany: “The past **century and a half** has witnessed a number of attempts to achieve a living synthesis of the old and the new, of Jewish tradition and the contemporary scene.”[10] This book was published in 1944, which means that Rabbi Robert Gordis, the Chairman of the Joint Prayer Book Commission of the RA and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ, Conservative Judaism's institutional body) and author of this “Foreword,” has invoked history dating back all the way to the turn of the 19th Century. Because denominational lines were quite blurry during that century, and because Conservative Judaism as its own separate denomination from the larger umbrella of Reform/ Liberal Judaisms only emerged in its fullest capacity in the United States, it is likely that the attempts to which Gordis is referring include those made by the early reformers of 19th Century Germany. While American Conservative Judaism often tries to distance itself from the more radical reformers, preferring to link itself ideologically to the “Positive-Historical Judaism” of Zecharias Frankel, this “Foreword” quietly acknowledges that this kind of project emerged from that broader liberal Jewish endeavor. The “Silverman *Siddur*” is presented, in light of this history, as a sort of culmination of Conservative Judaism's emergence within the liberal Jewish fold as its own separate stream with its own particular viewpoint and institutional framework.

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[9] Morris Silverman, ed., *Seder Tefilot Yiśra’el Le-Shabat Ule-Shalosh Regalim = Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook*, 1954 Printing (New York, NY: Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1946). p. iv

[10] ibid.

The methodology of the Joint Prayer Book Commission was in certain ways similar to what would be undertaken by later groups, but quite different in others. Importantly, the Commission began its work already with a manuscript from which to work, penned by Rabbi Morris Silverman, who served as the Editor for the final text. The group met at "frequent intervals for the study and consideration of the Hebrew text and the English version in the light of previous efforts in the field, the best available scholarship and our own approach to the Jewish tradition."[11] In addition to these meetings of the full group, however, a subgroup of just three of the rabbis was created to expedite the book's completion. The "Foreword" also identifies three fundamental principles which guided the preparation of this ***siddur***: continuity with tradition, relevance to the modern age, and intellectual integrity.

Remarkably, Gordis presents these three principles in the foreword as being somewhat exclusive of one another. Gordis presents the principles as being applied unevenly in a case-by-case basis, and uses the concept of chosenness as his first case study. He suggests that to eliminate the theme of chosenness from the siddur would mean "surrendering to error and incidentally perpetrating an injustice upon the prophets and sages of Israel who understood the concept aright,"[12] obviously here prioritizing the principle of continuity. His next case is the modern understanding of ***avodah***, or service. Strikingly, Gordis suggests that we can reimagine the term to mean all public worship in the modern day, divorcing it from its context in the Temple service, and from the hope for the restoration of the sacrifices. He additionally cites the

[11] ibid. p. v

[12] ibid. p. vii

concepts of *t'chiat hameitim* (revival of the dead) and *mashiach*[13] (messiah) as other examples which can be reimagined in the modern mind. Here it would seem that the second principle, that of modern relevance, is chiefly operative. Lastly, Gordis uses two other examples to highlight the third principle, intellectual integrity. While the creators and users of this *siddur* may not desire a literal return to the sacrifices of the Temple periods, to delete the *Musaf* service entirely because of this discomfort would be to deny the weight of the sacrificial system in the development of Judaism and its echoes in the rabbinic system. The "Preliminary Blessings" of *birchot hashachar,* "*shelo asani goy, eved, ishah,*" are in fact changed, however, to reflect the intellectual position that the Jewish privilege of fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* ought to be referred to in the positive, and not in the negative.[14]

The "Foreword" goes on to enumerate various other changes in the text, finally bringing the reader to a discussion of the role of language in the books. "Hebrew and English differ radically in spirit and structure and a literal translation is often a distortion of the meaning," Gordis suggests. He uses as an example the many synonyms that appear, often in the form of a litany, in the Hebrew text. These lists were put together in this way by Jewish liturgical authors for centuries as a nod to Biblical parallelism and other stylistic elements of more ancient Hebrew writing, and become unwieldy when translated into English. Gordis outlines a rubric for what might now be referred to as "faithful" translation of the Hebrew:

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[13] "…it must not be forgotten that the Prayer Book is couched in poetry and not in prose. It must be approached with warm emotion and not in a mood of cold intellectuality. Thus, the emphasis in the Prayer Book upon the Messiah need not mean for us the belief in a personal redeemer, but it serves superbly as the poetic and infinitely moving symbol of the Messianic age. To have eliminated reference to the Messiah from the Prayer Book would have meant the impoverishment of the jewish spirit, the loss of one of the most picturesque elements of Jewish belief, culture, music and art. The Prayer Book, like all poetry and truth, has things in it too exalted for literalness." —ibid. p. xi.

[14] ibid. p. x

> In general, the reader deserves an idiomatic English version exactly as the worshipper requires an authentic Hebrew text. Hence long phrases may be shortened, the word-order may be varied and the syntax modified when necessary. The changes of person and number that are characteristic of Biblical literature and hence are frequent in the Prayer Book should be brought into harmony with one another in the English. For the requirements of an English version are that it be clear, succinct and true to the meaning and spirit of the original.[15]

In addition to an English translation of the liturgy which was up-to-date and idiomatic for the reader, the committee also worked on updated Biblical translations. At the time, as Gordis notes,[16] the standard translation of the Bible used by liberal rabbis of the day was the 1917 edition published by the Jewish Publication Society. By the mid 1940's, it would seem that some of these translations felt outdated or obsolete. Thus, there are brand new translations of verses from both Torah and Psalms that can be found in the Silverman *Siddur*.

The "Silverman *Siddur*'s" three fundamental principles and its approach to the vernacular are carried forth into the next mainstream Conservative *siddur, Siddur Sim Shalom,* but with many additions to the "Introduction" that allow the reader to relate to the prayerbook in brand new ways. The "Introduction" of *Siddur Sim Shalom* is more than twice as long as the "Foreword" of the "Silverman *Siddur.*" It includes a seven-page text which describes each major liturgical component of the Jewish prayer service in detail, another page and a half which details ritual, choreographic elements of the worship service, four pages on the liturgy of the Conservative Movement, and another seven pages on the goals, textual changes, and guidelines for usage of this particular *siddur*.

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[15] ibid. p. xii

[16] ibid.

By this time in the development of Conservative *siddurim*, participation and functionality seem to have become chief values. In addition to the attempt to get everyone on the same page by enumerating every change made to the Hebrew liturgy as well as many of the major English additions in the book, the "Introduction" also includes a note on special symbols included in the book designed to make it more user-friendly and reflect widespread customs within the movement, such as when the cantor will resume praying aloud after moments of quiet *davening*. Additionally, there is a particular note of encouragement for the novice pray-er—and a reminder for the experienced pray-ers who stand among them—included in the "Introduction" in a section entitled "On Personal Involvement:"

> People with varying degrees of knowledge, and of familiarity with the prayerbook, are usually found at the same service. The service may at first seem strange and unwieldy to those unfamiliar with it. They are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the prayerbook, beginning with the presentation of themes and structure in this introduction and with a careful reading of the prayers. Although Hebrew is clearly the language of Jewish prayer, it should be remembered that Jewish tradition permits one to recite the *Amidah*, the *Sh'ma* and the Blessings after Meals in any language that one understands. For those less familiar with the service, the regular participants may appear to be rushing through their prayers at an impossible pace… If you attend a service which proceeds too quickly for you, do not be discouraged. Do not resort to speed-reading devoid of meaning for you in order to keep pace with others… Those who are most familiar with the service should be conscious of the problems of those who are less familiar with the service but who have nevertheless come in order to participate and should therefore be helped to feel at home in the synagogue.[17]

This is an important addition to the "Introduction" of course not only because of its warm message of encouragement to the reader and of assisting those around them to ensure maximal group participation, but also because of its stance on language. While certain key sections are brought up as reminders of when use of the vernacular is accepted in tradition, this text asserts

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[17] Jules Harlow, ed. *Siddur Sim Shalom: a Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*. New York, NY: Rabbinical Assembly, 1985. p. xxix

that Hebrew is “clearly *the* language of Jewish prayer”—not the holiest language, or the most ancient language, or the traditional language, but *the* language. This is a firm stance to take, and it is reflected in the lack of transliteration in both *Sim Shalom* and its predecessor. It would seem that to this point in the development of Conservative Judaism Hebrew not only dominated the prayers of those Jews, but praying in Hebrew while reading in Hebrew was seen as an important value. I imagine that it would be even more difficult to “not be discouraged” by my difficulty with mastering the Hebrew language in prayer if I did not have any recourse for sounding out the words and matching sounds to symbols. As will be shown momentarily and reenforced by the words of the rabbis and cantors who worked on the *Lev Shalem* series, the newest Conservative publications, this approach to transliteration has not survived the decades.

Both *Mahzor Lev Shalem* and *Siddur Lev Shalem* have much shorter introductions than their predecessors. In *Mahzor Lev Shalem* the reader only gets a short few paragraphs of general background about the prayerbook before the “Introduction” moves onto practical matters. In total, the Mahzor gives the reader only three-and-a-half pages of introduction. The twenty-page “Introduction” that accompanied *Sim Shalom* has been pared down in *Siddur Lev Shalem* to an eight page text. The *Mahzor*'s introduction's character is essentially a shorter version of what would follow in the *Siddur.*

Rather than discussing the construction of this particular prayerbook at length, or endeavoring to place this prayerbook in a position on the evolutionary chain of prayerbooks (these elements are reserved for the “Acknowledgments” sections), the “Introductions” of both *Mahzor Lev Shalem* and especially *Siddur Lev Shalem*, written by senior editor Rabbi Edward Feld, seek instead to enlighten the user of the text on the nature of Jewish prayer. In *Siddur Lev*

Shalem, Rabbi Feld speaks to the reader in the first person. He discusses Jewish prayer and liturgy as a source of connections both immediate and retrojected:

> Opening the prayerbook, I enter into the common life and experience of the Jewish people. The words I come across here constitute the community by tying us to a common past and creating a shared present. These words are the lineaments of the Jewish people, a vocabulary giving voice to the Jewish soul.
>
> So, formal liturgy stretches us. It asks us to pray words that are not of our own making, words that have been honed through Jewish time, words that have taken on deeper meaning and wider ranges of meaning as they pass from generation to generation. The prayers of the siddur are more than words—they are vessels transporting us through centuries past, and they similarly connect us to future generations.[18]

This message on the power of shared vocabulary leads Feld to the content that constitutes the main body of the "Introduction:" the eight major motifs of Jewish liturgy. For the remaining seven pages of the introduction the reader learns about God as Creator, Jewish Ancestry, the Exodus from Egypt, Torah, Chosenness, Exile, Redemption and God as Sovereign. While this is posed as an introduction to Jewish prayer, what Feld is really doing here is laying out a fully developed theology, indeed the theology of *Siddur Lev Shalem,* for its user. The theology is discussed in terms that are easily understood and in language that is readily accessible to the lay reader as opposed to reading as though it could be found in a theological monograph or textbook. The theology of *Lev Shalem* as articulated by Feld speaks to the trend toward accessibility and participation that we have observed in Conservative *siddurim*.

The principles which governed the works of translation in the *Lev Shalem* series are outlined in detail in the introduction to *Mahzor Lev Shalem*. Seven principles are listed as the guides for the translation: 1. Translation ought to reflect the Hebrew original as closely as

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[18] Edward Feld, ed. *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat & Festivals*. 2015 ed. New York, NY: Rabbinical Assembly, 2013. p. viii

possible, allowing the English reader to experience the text "without a filter."[19] 2. Translation should convey the sense of the poetic nature of the Hebrew liturgy in cadence, form and use of language. 3. Translation ought to be prayerful, putting the reader in a prayerful mood. 4. Much like prior Conservative *siddurim*, the translation is adjusted for word order, syntax, and sentence structure to make the English more appropriate. 5. "A contemporary American translation needs to be gender-neutral as far as possible, while conveying the intent and meaning of the original."[20] 6. This principle was more of a note on sources. The committee relied heavily on the translations included in prior Conservative Movement publications, even grafting some translations on in full (e.g. *P'sukei D'zimra* from *Siddur Sim Shalom*). They used the newest JPS translation of the *TaNaKh* and another publication which is a gender-sensitive adaptation of the JPS text for their Biblical translations. 7. Certain key words and phrases which are essential to Jewish vocabulary, such as "*Barukh atah Adonai*," *mitzvah*, and *tzedakah* have no adequate English translation, and so they are retained in transliterated Hebrew when they appear in the English.

This list is singular among all the prayerbooks here under study. A specific, point-by-point description of what key principles guided the work of translation provides the reader with incredible insight into the work of the clergy that created these books. When any American liberal Jewish movement creates a new prayerbook, it will be used by Jews who largely do not possess Hebrew fluency. Because of this gap in understanding, the work of translation is vitally important, as every prayerbook here under examination discusses. Yet, it is only the *Lev Shalem* series which discuss, in specific detail, the theory and values underpinning the work. Rabbi Jan

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[19] Edward Feld, ed. *Maḥzor Lev Shalem: for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*. New York, NY: Rabbinical Assembly, 2010, p. x

[20] ibid.

Urbach, who worked on both *Machzor* and *Siddur Lev Shalem* serving as the Associate Editor of the latter, discussed this translation work with me in an interview:

> [Rabbi Ed Feld] did the first draft of the translation. He then shared it with me, and I responded. He then made adjustments based on my response, and then we would meet on the phone with the whole committee and every single word was read aloud to the entire committee. We did that because: A. We wanted to make sure that it sounded felicitous, and B. We wanted to make sure that there weren't any clunkers that had connotations that you don't notice when you write, and then you read them aloud and you realize, “Oh! Can't say that!” And to get everybody's ears and eyes, making sure that it made sense, that it was pray-able that it was true to the Hebrew.[21]

The only Reform prayerbook that comes close is *Mishkan HaNefesh*, but even that attempt falls short of this list in specificity, which will be demonstrated below.

Also along the lines of accessibility, *Siddur Lev Shalem* includes an entire page dedicated to the discussion of transliteration, which appears in the *Lev Shalem* series of Conservative prayerbooks with more prominence than in any prior prayerbook produced by the Movement. Feld instructs that “The transliteration is intended to guide non-Hebrew readers to a reasonable pronunciation of Hebrew; it does not strive to represent grammatical phenomena (such as *sh'va na*) accurately and consistently.”[22] The amount of transliteration in this prayerbook and its counterpart *machzor* is truly astounding when compared to prior books created by the Conservative movement. On every page of the *siddur* on which there is a line which is widely sung across the congregational landscape there is bound to be at least one line of transliteration found, and on pages which are almost entirely sung communally it is common to find almost

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[21] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach. Personal, December 17, 2019.

[22] Ibid. p. xv

every Hebrew word on the page transliterated. In Part II of this paper, this change will be spoken to through excerpts from my interviews with some of the editors of this *siddur*.

Worthy of note is the ending of Feld's section on Exile, where he cites Rabbi Dr. Eugene Borowitz, calling him “a contemporary theologian.” The invoking of Borowitz, who spent the lion's share of his career at the Reform Movement's Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, shows that Feld sees this text completing an arc of connection between *Lev Shalem* and the “Silverman *Siddur*.” Were one to position these three books along along a spectrum which represents the level to which the books presents themselves as particularly Conservative-Jewish, the “Silverman *Siddur*” would be the middle point of the three. It understood itself as the first, and to-date best, representative of Conservative Jewish liturgy that arose out of a century-and-a-half of liberal Jewish evolution that began with German Reform. *Sim Shalom* is the highest point on the spectrum as clearly the most particularly and proudly Conservative, with its extra-long introduction which includes a special section on Conservative liturgy.

Lev Shalem, then, is the most generally liberal of the three: even as it presents a Conservative Jewish stance on these various motifs and presents a liturgy that is as full (if not more so) as any Conservative *siddur* before it, it is unprecedented in its ability to speak to those who may be less comfortable praying in a Conservative setting. The citation of a Reform rabbi in the “Introduction,” the vastly increased inclusion of transliteration, and the significantly deepened pool of commentaries, interpretive readings and poetry slide this *siddur* slightly to the left along the broader spectrum of liberal Jewish prayerbooks. As will be shown in the second

major section of this study, the *Lev Shalem* books were even seen as the benchmark against which the creators of *Mishkan HaNefesh* measured themselves.

Reform Prayerbooks

The first prayerbook agreed upon by the Reform Movement was used for approximately five decades before a serious revision was published. Its original title was *Seder Tefiloth Yisrael*: *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship,* but it has come to be referred to simply as the *Union Prayer Book* (*UPB*), and it is this shortened title that appears on the revised edition of the *siddur* published in 1940 and the *machzor* published in 1945. Unlike the other prayerbooks discussed thus far, *UPB* has no formal introduction to advise the user as to the particular book's usage or theological/ideological bent. Rather, it is the physical nature and contents of the book itself that indicate these elements.

Unlike every other prayerbook under examination here, *UPB,* both the *siddur and machzor,* open and read from left to right, as any other English book would. This is a reflection of the overwhelming predominance of the English in its text. There are sections within these books in which one can turn several pages without seeing a word printed in Hebrew. As Arnold S. Rosenberg describes in his study of Jewish liturgy, "It was felt that if the purpose of liturgy was to make a theological statement, there was no point to praying in a language not readily understood."[23] These were the first major attempts of American Reform Judaism to assimilate its religious ritual undertakings to contemporary American religious life (which at the time, much

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[23] Arnold S. Rosenberg, *Jewish Liturgy as a Spiritual System: A Prayer-By-Prayer Explanation of the Nature and Meaning of Jewish Worship.* Northvale, NJ, Jason Aronson Inc.,1997. p. 26

like the beginnings of German Reform Judaism, was largely Protestant Christianity). Indeed, in the original versions of these *siddurim* the rabbi is referred to as “Minister.”

Furthermore, not only is there substantially less Hebrew in the book, the Hebrew text's relationship to the vernacular is different from later Reform *siddurim* in a few remarkable ways. First, almost none of the Hebrew is transliterated. Only the Mourners' Kaddish is transliterated for ease of recitation by mourners, and here it is found transliterated in the Ashkenazic style, “Yis-gad-dal v'yis-kad-dash sh'meh rab-bo…”[24] Ashkenazic pronunciation was largely abandoned in Reform publications following the 1940s and the Movement's embrace of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel. This speaks to the particular value placed by the Reform movement at the turn of the 20th Century on praying in a language that one understands. Second, the work of translation was done using an incredibly liberal and artful approach. The English translations in the book use the majestic and classical style similar to the King James Bible: “Trust ye in the Lord for all time, for the Lord is God, an everlasting God. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou, Lord, dost not forsake them that seek thee.”[25] The translations are idiomatic, and adjust the language so that the English is beautiful when read aloud. The Hebrew liturgy's place in the prayerbook is either an equal to the English or lesser in status. The linearity of the UPB envisions a prayer service with extended readings in English punctuated by occasional dips into the Hebrew.

The next major prayerbook publication of the Reform Movement was the sequel to the UPB, called *Shaarei Tefillah, Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook*, published in 1975.

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[24] *Union Prayer Book*. 1961 Revised ed. Vol. 1: Shabbat and Festivals. 2 vols. New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1940. p. 310

[25] Ibid. p. 157

This book was a landmark endeavor on many fronts. It is much longer than any prior Reform prayerbook and includes vastly more Hebrew. New Hebrew is accompanied by new translations, as well as new transliteration (now in the Sephardic style) not limited only to the Mourners' Kaddish.

Unlike UPB, *Gates of Prayer* does include an introduction written by the editor of the *siddur*, in this case Chaim Stern. The very first sentences of this introduction are indicative of a major shift in the Reform Movement's conceptualization of Judaism:

> In the liturgy of the synagogue the Jewish people has written its spiritual autobiography. For a score of centuries, each generation has, in turn, added its own distinctive chapter to this book, which contains memories of time past and promises for the future, praise and lamentation, ethical teaching and mystical vision. A people possessed by its God is the author of this book.
>
> We are that people still.[26]

These sentences exhibit a monumental change when juxtaposed to a statement from the "Pittsburgh Platform," the founding document of the American Reform Movement: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."[27] The Reform Movement, which began with a rejection of certain longstanding aspects of Jewish peoplehood and which was entering its tenth decade of activity in the United States, began its then newest prayerbook with a wholehearted embrace of peoplehood.

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[26] Chaim Stern, ed. *Gates of Prayer: the New Union Prayerbook*. New York, NY: Central Conference Of, 1975. p. xi

[27] "Article Declaration of Principles." Central Conference of American Rabbis. Accessed December 21, 2019. https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-declaration-principles/.

Stern's introduction is short—just over two pages in length—but it does well in introducing this book's innovations. The most significant of these is the inclusion of myriad worship service options for different styles of prayer. The table of contents alone would likely be daunting for the casual worshipper. The sheer number of options and their sometimes subtle and sometimes substantial differences mandate a great deal of reliance upon the worship leader. The services remain linear, but which of these parallel lines the congregation is going to follow is up to the *shaliach tzibur*. Stern also points out that *Gates of Prayer* attempts to respond to the great violence of the middle 20th Century, and specifically the violent dipolar oscillation that the Jewish people experienced in the years following the publication of the revised edition of the UPB: The *Shoah* and the foundation of the State of Israel. Additionally, *Shaarei Tefillah* acknowledges the "changing status of women" at this time in the 20th Century by avoiding the use of exclusively masculine terms when referring to humanity. (God, however, remains entirely masculine in this book).

The introduction also illustrates the relationship of *Gates of Prayer* to the *siddur* which came before it—a topic of major concern in this paper. In no uncertain terms, Stern informs the reader that this book is not simply a new option for Reform Jews to use, but rather is a replacement for the *Union Prayerbook*. Although it is a replacement, it has preserved much of the content of its predecessor. Its model for construction, though, was the British Reform prayerbook, *Service of the Heart* (1967), which was the first Reform prayerbook to be published after World War II. New prayers have been inserted in both English and Hebrew, new meditations composed, and "the result is a new prayerbook profoundly rooted in Jewish tradition, and one that expresses that tradition within the context of Reform Judaism."[28]

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[28] Chaim Stern, ed. *Gates of Prayer: the New Union Prayerbook*. p. xii

While the introduction is short, *Gates of Prayer* was accompanied by a companion volume as well as by much fanfare within the Central Conference of American Rabbis. At the 87th Convention of the CCAR, which took place in San Francisco in 1976, three leading rabbis of the day, two of which were on the creative team which produced *Gates of Prayer*, offered their critique of the new *siddur* which had at that point been in use for less than a year. Rabbi Herbert Bronstein shared a story that was quite telling of the way that the larger community responded to the drama of this monumental innovation in Reform worship:

> It is very much like the reaction, the punchline in that story of the Jew, Harry, who has lived his whole life in a very hardworking, scrupulous, self-abnegating way, his nose to the grindstone, never having much fun in life. He was getting along in years, and was successful, so he decided that before he died, he was going to have some fun in life. So he goes to a spa, and he trims down, and he gets tanned and has a face lift and a hair implant. He goes and gets a new suit of clothes, and finally decides, after putting on a beret and some fancy sunglasses, to buy a sports-car, a Maserati. Ready to live his life as a new person, he drives out of the car agency and immediately is hit by a truck and dies. When he goes up to heaven, he's enraged, and he seeks out God and says, "God how could You do this to me? I've worked so hard, I've been so careful all my life. Just when I'm beginning to have fun, this is what happens to me!?" And God says to him, "Well, Harry, to tell you the truth, you've changed so much I didn't recognize you."[29]

The changes made by this new *siddur* cannot be overstated, and not everyone found these changes appealing. Stern advised against rejecting the book entirely out of frustration with certain parts of it. After all, the many service options were intended so that anyone might find a worship service which is appealing to them. It is the role of the rabbi or cantor of the community to rotate between several of these options so that every community member will be able to pray in a mode which works for them, at least from time to time.[30]

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[29] Herbert Bronstein. "A Critique of *Gates of Prayer*." in Stevens, Elliot L., ed. *Central Conference of American Rabbis 87th Annual Convention*. Vol. LXXXVI. YEARBOOK: Central Conference of American Rabbis. New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1977. p. 116

[30] ibid. pp. 120-123

In 1977, two years after the publication of *Gates of Prayer*, a companion volume was published entitled *Gates of Understanding*. This volume, edited by Lawrence Hoffman, attempted to achieve three major objectives: providing historical context for the origins and development of Reform liturgy, illustrating the contemporary theological and ritual concerns of Liberal Judaism, and provide a user's manual for *Gates of Prayer* which described the essential nature of each of the myriad service options. Hoffman's editorial hand gives the reader of *Gates of Understanding* a real sense of the spectrum of belief and practical application that has long existed in Reform Judaism. The reader hears from the more conservative voices in Liberal Jewish tradition, such as Jakob Petuchowski, as well as the radical reformers like David Einhorn and Kaufmann Kohler; from the more traditionalist, covenantal voice of Eugene Borowitz and from the praxically iconoclastic Alvin Reines. Hoffman culls theses voices together as a strong message to any who would read this volume: All these voices, the liberal and the conservative, the traditionalist and the boundary-breaking, informed *Gates of Prayer*.

It was another three decades before the successor to *Gates of Prayer* was released. *Mishkan T'filah* marked a watershed development in Reform liturgy. First and foremost, *Mishkan T'filah* offered its user something theretofore unseen in Jewish prayerbooks: a non-linear service. Rather than a service wherein one turned page after page on which the liturgy to be prayed was on the right side and the translation on the left, *Mishkan T'filah* offered a new pathway:

> *Mishkan T'filah* offers many opportunities for diverse usage and worship styles. Most of the prayers in this *siddur* are set as a two-page spread, with the *keva* (primary, traditional) liturgy on the right-hand page and alternative prayer choices on the lefthand side. The right-hand Hebrew text is accompanied by a faithful translation, and transliteration; the left-hand page contains poetry, prayers and

> *kavanot* (meditations) thematically tied to the *keva* text but reflecting diverse theological points of view.[31]

Thus, it becomes the work of the prayer-leader to decide what text from across the two-page spread would be the chosen text for that moment in the service. Thus, theoretically, one could choose to use only the right-hand side Hebrew text throughout the service and pray what would amount to the most 'traditional' liturgy available in the *siddur;* one could also choose to almost exclusively use texts from the left-hand page, which would result in a liturgy full of poetry and interpretations on the themes of the traditional liturgy, with very little use of the Hebrew text at all.

As *Mishkan T'filah* notes in its "Introduction," this turn away from linearity makes the work of the *shaliach tzibur* all the more important. Because of the myriad pathways through the *siddur* and permutations of *matbeia t'filah* now available, the congregation using this book will rely much more heavily on the prayer leader to shepherd them through the service:

> Lawrence Hoffman teaches, "The book is less text than pre-text for the staging of an experience. We are returning to the age of orality, where performance of prayer matters more than the fixed words. The question of worship leadership has expanded now, to include the theology and artistry of being a sh'liach tzibur — how to orchestrate seating, fill empty space, provide the right acoustics, and honor individualism within the group experience." Using Mishkan T'filah, the actual selection of prayer can wait for the moment. The sh'liach tzibur must offer a recipe that works comfortably for the community, and be able to adapt each week to the particular needs of the community, and to individuals within that community.[32]

The abandonment of linearity and reliance on the *shaliach tzibur*, it would seem, are the answers that the creators of the *Mishkan* series of prayerbooks in 21st Century Reform Judaism gave in

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[31] Elyse D. Frishman, ed. *Mishkan T'filah: a Reform Siddur: Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals, and Other Occasions of Public Worship.* New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007. p. xvii

[32] ibid. p. x

response to many of the critiques and questions which arose in the intervening years after the publication of *Gates of Prayer.*

In the same presentation at the 1976 CCAR Convention in which Bronstein and Stern relayed their pride and hope as *Gates of Prayer* continued taking its initial steps into hearts of Reform Jews, William Sharlin offered a third critique, which included a warning. Looking back at the era of widespread liturgical experimentation which was supposed to have been solved by the release of *Gates of Prayer*[33], he offered the following:

> Today, with the growing weakening and breakdown of stability and entity of worship, the individual now finds himself alone without the support of an entity, indeed, having to create an entity himself which now becomes more dependent on his own resources so that his own distinctive personality comes to the fore and is called upon to direct the course taken by worship. The particular direction of exploration and experimentation when this does take place will, to a great extent, be influenced by the nature of each personality, what is right and natural for him or her.
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> This condition is, of course, clearly demonstrated by the vast diversity of manners and style of worship today. This condition can produce a potential confusion among us as we search out for new ways and grope for answers that will help revitalize our services. This is particularly so when we are eager to revitalize our services, to receive new formulas offered up by the innovator. The danger here lies in our ignoring the possibility that this or that ***siddur*** may have been shaped out of the unique personality makeup of a particular individual and/ or his congregation, and to assume that it can be universally applied can be a troublesome oversimplification. What is right and natural for an innovator may be totally awkward and unworkable for another.[34]

In 2002, Peter Knobel, who was a driving force behind the creation of *Mishkan T'filah* and who spent years orchestrating studies of the laity's relationship to Reform prayer, wrote a journal

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[33] Peter Knobel. “The Challenge of a Single Prayer Book for the Reform Movement.” Essay. In *Platforms and Prayer Books: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism*, edited by Dana Evan Kaplan, 155–67. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002, p. 158

[34] William Sharlin. “A Critique of *Gates of Prayer*.” in Stevens, Elliot L., ed. *Central Conference of American Rabbis 87th Annual Convention*. Vol. LXXXVI. YEARBOOK: Central Conference of American Rabbis. New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1977. p. 126

article in which he meditated on the advances in technology since the release of *Gates of Prayer.* In it, he raises concerns and questions somewhat similar to Sharlin's: “One of the important and most debated questions is whether the current period of experimentation will be followed by a period of standardization. Has the new technology fundamentally changed the concept of a book and its role in worship?” [35] These concerns seem to have been answered in *Mishkan T'filah*. Rather than a book which represents the specific vision (or visions, in the case of the myriad options in *Gates of Prayer*) of the liturgy of a number of rabbis and cantors, the *Mishkan* series books offer a non-linear worship service where the book represents not a scripted service but rather a bank of potential options for use. The “innovator” then is not the creator of the prayerbook but rather the *shaliach tzibur* who carefully chooses which specific texts they wish to utilize from the treasure trove contained within the book.

If *Mishkan T'filah* opened the door for non-linear Jewish prayer, *Mishkan HaNefesh* strode through it boldly and proudly:

> *Mishkan T'filah* has provided the paradigm and framework for this machzor. Its right-side/ left-side format encourages diversity, choice, and the inclusion of many “voices.” We have sought to create a dialogue — or confrontation — between the texts on facing pages; to enliven, question, challenge, and engage passionately with the tradition bequeathed to us by our ancestors.[36]

Not only does this *machzor* preserve the right side-left side paradigm of Mishkan T'filah, which allows for all the freedoms described above, it further diversifies the user's journey through the prayerbook:

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[35] Peter Knobel, “The Challenge of a Single Prayer Book for the Reform Movement.” ibid.

[36] Edwin C., Janet Ross Marder, Sheldon Joseph Marder, and Leon Morris, eds. *Mishkan HaNefesh: Machzor for the Days of Awe*. Vol. 1: Rosh HaShanah. 2 Vols. New York, NY: CCAR Press, 2015, p. xii

> *Mishkan HaNefesh* features three kinds of pages: white pages with three basic elements: a traditional Hebrew prayer, a faithful translation, and a transliteration; gray-tinted pages for alternative translations, poems, counter-texts, and creative readings; and bordered, blue-tinted pages for study texts or silent meditations. All three have commentary of a spiritual, historical, or literary nature at the bottom of the page, as well as source citations.[37]

While the introduction suggests that this diversity in options and styles will encourage learning, I would add that it also substantially deepens the well of options available to prayer leaders as they chart their congregation's course through the High Holy Days.

Much like *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, *Mishkan HaNefesh* includes an introductory note on translation. As has been noted in many of the liberal *siddurim* studied here, *Mishkan HaNefesh* reminds the reader that literal translation is unhelpful to the pray-er because of the vast differences between English and Hebrew both prose and poetry. The status of the English text, however, is quite different from any of the Conservative *siddurim*. Whereas in *Lev Shalem* the English text is a "reflection" of the Hebrew text, and is designed to be a prayerful tool for learning the Hebrew, in *Mishkan HaNefesh* the English is presented as the equal of the Hebrew text: "We have approached the work of translation as a sacred challenge: namely, to create a prayerful, meaningful experience in English that is equivalent to the experience of praying in Hebrew. Not identical, but equivalent."[38] The Conservative prayerbooks discussed in this thesis discuss the work of translation as an endeavor to be true to the Hebrew, but this translation has a somewhat different relationship to that Hebrew text:

> The English versions of the prayers, Torah readings, and haftarah readings in Mishkan HaNefesh are original, faithful translations. This means that we render texts "idea for idea" or "feeling for feeling" instead of "word for word." And it

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[37] ibid. p. xiv

[38] ibid. p. xv

> means that we may use an English idiom that differs from the original idiom. Our goal is to convey the intention of the Hebrew prayer and its impact, though a given English word may not match a dictionary gloss of the corresponding Hebrew word. Fidelity in the translation of a prayer book requires faithfulness also to the overall experience of Jewish worship.[39]

The notion of a translation that is faithful more to the "idea" or "feeling" of a text is somewhat amorphous, and is best understood in application. For instance, see the translation of the concluding blessing of *p'sukei d'zimrah* in *Mishkan HaNefesh*: "*Baruch atah Adonai, eil melekh gadol batishbachot, eil hahoda'ot, adon hanifla'ot, habocheir b'shirei zimrah, melekh, eil, chei ha'olamim*." Translated literally word-for-word, this text could read: 'Blessed are you *Adonai*, Sovereign God great in worship, God of thanksgiving, Lord of wonders, who chooses in the singing of songs, Sovereign, God, Life of the universe.' In *Mishkan HaNefesh*, however, one finds the following: "Blessed are You, Adonai, Sovereign of praise, Source of the impulse to give thanks, Crown of wonders — who desires a world filled with song and a universe of life.[40] The Hebrew equivalent of the words "source (*m'kor*)," "impulse, (*dachaf*)" "crown (*keter*)," and, debatably, "desire, (*ratzon*)" are all absent from the original Hebrew. One could make the case that this translation is a total mishandling of the Hebrew original, but one could just as easily argue the translation successfully captures the essence of the original text.

Conclusions

When juxtaposed to one another, the Reform and Conservative movements' prayerbooks in each generation appear vastly different from one another. The Conservative publications contain an abundance of Hebrew liturgy from myriad sources in the tradition and English

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[39] ibid.

[40] ibid. p. 140.

translations which seek to elucidate their meaning for the worshipper. The worshipper's prime directive is to acclimate themselves to that Hebrew text in order to see themselves represented within it. Its liturgy and commentaries have thus been tailored over the decades to help the prayer accomplish this goal, with increasing transliteration, and new commentaries and translations that, in every era, attempt to meet the current reader of the text where they, and their social context, are. Whereas the Reform publications began with an abundance of the vernacular—modern English prose and poetry that once stood as the equal (or in the case of the UPB even perhaps the superior) to the Hebrew, and has not lost this equivalent status even by the publication of *Mishkan HaNefesh*. Rather than providing English which seeks to serve the Hebrew, the newest Reform publications have provided an abundance of commentary, idiomatic translations and even "counter-texts"[41] designed to enable those who would struggle mightily to assimilate the ideas of the Hebrew text to see their struggle or even disbelief represented in the prayerbook. Thus the English of present-day Reform prayerbooks can be seen, at times, as openly undermining the power of the traditional Hebrew liturgy. Much of the Hebrew that has been incorporated in Conservative prayerbooks, and there have been new texts added to the corpus with each ensuing publication, is totally absent from the Reform Hebrew text; many of the English texts found in Reform prayerbooks may even be seen in the 'eyes' of the Conservative siddur as counterproductive to the endeavor of Jewish prayer. Conservative prayerbooks have retained the linear construction common to all traditional Jewish prayer, while Reform prayerbooks have abandoned the linear model for a more creative and adaptable *matbeia t'filah*.

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[41] ibid. p. xiv

While these are all sensible conclusions, I would argue that the most important conclusion one could draw from this type of comparison is that the opposite trend is the dominant one: Reform and Conservative prayerbooks have never been more similar to one another. *Mishkan HaNefesh* contains quantitatively more Hebrew liturgy than any prior Reform publication. Its creators have reintroduced Hebrew liturgy that was long absent from Reform prayers in part because of its station in the traditional *Musaf* service. References to the *Beit HaMiqdash* in the liturgy that were long eschewed by Reform prayerbooks seem to have re-entered the fold in the form of an *Avodah* service designed to mimic the ancient priests' ascent into holiness on the Yom Kippur. This trend can be observed in the Conservative prayerbooks as well. Reform thought is valued within the introduction of *Siddur Lev Shalem*. Egalitarianism has become enshrined within the newest Conservative prayerbooks not only in reference to humanity but indeed in reference to God.

The work of translation across the movements has become more similar over the generations. The translation of the closing blessing of *p'sukei d'zimrah* is again a perfect example: In the Conservative *machzor* published in 1972, edited by Jules Harlow, that text is translated much more literally: “Praised are You, exalted God, Lord of wonders delighting in song and psalm, eternal King of the universe.”[42] Now, in the *Lev Shalem* series, its translation reads: “*Barukh atah ADONAI*, Sovereign God, to whom we offer thanks and ascribe wonders, who delights in the chorus of song—the sovereign God, giving life to al worlds.”[43] Compared

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[42] Jules Harlow, ed. *Maḥzor For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: a Prayer Book for the Days of Awe*. New York, NY: Rabbinical Assembly, 1972, p. 107

[43] Edward Feld, ed. *Siddur Lev Shalem*, p. 148

with the translation found in Mishkan HaNefesh quoted above, there is no question that the translators are responding to similar forces as they represent the Hebrew text.

Even on the subject of linearity there is cause for comparison, not contrast. While the Conservative prayerbooks have certainly not abandoned linearity within the halakhically established units of prayer with higher status such as *Sh'ma uvirchoteha* and the *Amidah*, the inclusion of such a vast quantity of texts (*piyyutim*, psalms, other Biblical excerpts) which represent so many strains and eras within Jewish liturgical tradition mandate that the *shaliach tzibur* choose wisely what texts to include in their Shabbat morning *matbeia t'filah*. In addition to the increasing abundance of Hebrew sources, the newest Conservative prayerbooks contain more English interpretive, poetic and commentative sources than ever before. The more texts within the treasure trove, to reuse the earlier operative metaphor, the more reliant the congregation is upon their prayer-leader.

It is possible that even from the beginning that these movements' books were destined become quite similar to one another. The three guiding principles of the "Silverman *Siddur*," continuity with tradition, relevance to the modern age, and intellectual integrity, are uncannily similar to the principles of informed choice laid out by the eminent Reform liturgist Jakob Petuchowski. In an article entitled "Some Criteria for Modern Jewish Observance,"[44] Petuchowski suggests that these four principles should guide the choices made by any Reform Jew: First—what has been the main thrust of the tradition? Second—how can I best realize the traditional teaching in my life and in the situation in which I find myself? Third—What is the

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[44] Petuchowski, Jakob. "Some Criteria for Modern Jewish Observance." Essay. In *Contemporary Jewish Theology: a Reader,* edited by Elliot N. Dorff and Louis E. Newman, 292–98. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

voice of my own conscience? and fourth—how must I acknowledge my responsibility to my covenant community? The first principles of both texts line up nicely, as do the second. If one combines the third and fourth of Petuchowski's criteria, they essentially amount to the pursuit of intellectual integrity: trying to discern the balance between the voice of one's own conscience and belief system and their responsibility to the wider Jewish community will lead to integrated decision making. Petuchowski presents these principles specifically in a Reform context and directed toward a Reform audience, and yet they seem to echo of the principles that guided the creation of the first American Conservative *siddur* 25 years earlier.

The lack of comparative studies like this one suggest that the conventional wisdom of the last century has been that the priorities of the two movements with regard to both the aesthetics/ style of prayer and the prayer language itself are so vastly different that they ought only to be compared within the movements, from one book to the next. Yet when examined side-by-side there are striking trends that suggest that further studies like this one are of vital importance as we approach the quarter mark of the 21st Century. The closer the two largest liberal Jewish movements come to one another in the ways and words in which they pray, the more common ground they will have on which to address other, broader issues facing the Jewish people. The prayerbooks change in response to the needs of the pray-ers, and it would seem that those needs are more similar in these two movements than they ever have been before. We have heard the voices speaking to us from the text of the prayerbooks themselves. In the section which follows, we will hear the voices of some of the clergy responsible for the creation of these books, and learn how their priorities, methods, and aspirations were different and, perhaps more so, how they were similar.

PART II: THE VOICES OF THE BOOKS' CREATORS

I am fascinated by the development of American Judaism at the end of the 19th Century. The founding of the CCAR, with all of its tumult and eventual schisms and offshoots, marked the dawning of a new age in American Jewish life. While it is true that every aspect of what it meant to be Jewish in America was being debated and experimented upon, the very first mandate Isaac Mayer Wise gave to the CCAR after its founding was to create a set of prayerbooks that he hoped would unify this burgeoning movement of American liberal Jewry. Prior to the CCAR's decision there were three main liturgies in circulation in American liberal settings[45]: On the most liberal end of the spectrum was the vernacular-heavy *siddur* entitled *Olath Tamid* which was created by David Einhorn, a radical reformer and follower of Samuel Holdheim. Occupying the center of the spectrum was the *siddur* created by Wise himself entitled *Minhag America,* which stayed true to the traditional style and *matbeia* but with certain Reform edits and additions such as the adjustment of language in the *Amidah* such that users would pray not for a human redeemer (*goel*) but for redemption itself (*ge'ulah*). The most traditional liturgy in use by American liberal Jews was *Abodat Yisrael.* This *siddur* was created by Benjamin Szold, a liberal rabbi who was the product of the earlier German Jewish Theological Seminary, which at the time of the creation of *Abodat Yisrael* was presided over by Zecharias Frankel, the intellectual progenitor of American Conservative Judaism.

It was these three versions of the liturgy whose merits were debated by the founding rabbis of the CCAR as they endeavored to unite their new movement around a common liturgical

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[45] Kerry M. Olitzky, Lance Jonathan Sussman, and Malcolm H. Stern, eds. *Reform Judaism in America: a Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993 found online at: https://www.ccarnet.org/about-us/ccar-history/

script. Imagining those discussions is an intriguing thought experiment. What would have been their chief considerations? What did these rabbis understand to be the greatest needs of their *daveners*? Who would have argued for a strict, word-for-word translation of the liturgical text, and who for a pray-able English which rivaled the Hebrew in beauty and usability? Who would have argued for the inclusion of a *musaf* service on Shabbat and who for its extrication from the liturgy? If these debates were at all like those of the great rabbinic minds of the early Geonic period as the first manuscripts of *siddurim* were being written and shared, then they would likely have been fraught with anger, accusations, harshness and conceit.

It is impossible to overstate the historical weight of the decision made by the CCAR to adopt the English translation of Einhorn's *siddur*. The removal of the bulk of the Hebrew liturgy from regular synagogue practice in much of American Reform Judaism had a cascading effect on what liturgy would be taught to generations of Reform Jewish youth. The jump from the original *Union Prayer Book* to *Gates of Prayer* with regard to the prevalence of Hebrew is massive, and it took almost eight decades of evolution in the American Reform movement to make such a prayerbook appropriate. If one juxtaposes *UPB* and *Mishkan HaNefesh*, the sheer difference in language, aesthetic and quantity of Hebrew make it almost difficult to imagine them being published by the same institution.

Yet, these first liturgical books were largely the work of individuals. It was not the frontier of the end of the 19th Century but the surging denominationalism of the 20th Century in American liberal Judaism that led to the prominence of committee-driven siddurim. These committees were always chaired by a leading rabbi in the movement, and they were assembled largely at that chairperson's discretion. The undertaking that such projects represented were no

small feats of liturgical creativity and presentation. The great accomplishment of these committees is of course reflected in the final products they created, but the self-contained and cohesive nature of these books belies the lengthy nature of the process that allowed for their creation. Richard Sarason discussed this with me:

> There are interesting things happening all along the way. It's also worth remembering that the process that led up to the final book was in each case actually was somewhat longer and more contorted than the final product would suggest. The *Union Prayer Book* was revised twice—in 1918-'22 and then in 1940-'45—and the so-called *Newly Revised Union Prayer Book* from 1940-'45, which is what everybody thinks of today when they think of the *Union Prayer Book*, actually includes more traditional materials than its two predecessors, which also reflects the changes in the demography of the community between 1918 and 1940. And each of them has responded to the cultural situation in this country in which it was being produced as well as the Jewish cultural situation. There had been new calls for a revision of the *Union Prayer Book* already in the mid-late 1950s, and certainly more and more in the 1960s. And they started working on it already in the mid 1960s and were having trouble coming up with something on their own…What has gone on in the Conservative Movement since the Silverman prayer books, I mean, which were themselves updated a little bit in the 1960s where again, you've had Media Judaica and Prayer Book Press in Hartford and then the Rabbinical Assembly, and these two things sort of competing with each other for a while—*Likrat Shabbat* and *Siddur* and *Machzor Hadash* and then *Sim Shalom* and the "Harlow Machzor" in 1972. So you have these different sources and these different publications of Conservative liturgies really between the '70s and the '90s and it wasn't until *Lev Shalem*, the latest books that they all sort of got together.[46]

Both the Reform and Conservative movements have clearly undergone considerable change in how they present liturgy, and for all their substantial differences it would seem that the movements have something foundational in common: competing opinions about when a new prayerbook is needed and what the character of that new book should be.

In order to get a sense of what has driven that conversation in both movements in recent decades, I interviewed several rabbis and cantors from each movement who have been on the

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[46] Noah A.L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Richard Sarason. Personal, November 5, 2019.

creative committees for the most recent prayerbooks. These clergy span generations, geographic regions, areas of expertise and styles of religious observance. I created one list of questions that I asked both the Reform and the Conservative interviewees, which allowed for me to convene these voices, indirectly, around one table of discussion. These questions, as was pointed out by both Rabbi Ed Feld and Rabbi Jan Urbach were definitely crafted from a Reform perspective. However, the Conservative clergy who spoke with me critiqued them masterfully, and in their critiques they provided helpful insight into the differences between the Reform and Conservative approaches to this work, which ultimately rendered this bias less problematic.

The questions that I asked could be grouped into five key overarching categories, each of which will be discussed at length so as to convey the fullness and richness of this kind of discussion across both movements: ***a)*** **The clergy's and individual clergyperson's role and use of authority;** ***b)*** **The nature and purpose of an official denominational *siddur*;** ***c)*** **the evolving liturgical language itself (Hebrew vs. vernacular, role of transliteration, presentation, etc.);** ***d)*** **the degree to which each member of these creative teams saw themselves as innovators or as preservers of the liturgy** and ***e)*** **the creators' understanding of the relationship of these new books to the community that will use them.** In this section of the paper, I will discuss these major categories of questions I asked the clergy, and share key excerpts from our discussions which illustrate the differences and similarities in the way that these leaders understand their role as figures of Jewish authority, shapers of liturgy, and creators of new tools for contemporary Jewish worship.

The Role of the Clergyperson and Clergy Committee

The clergy that create these *siddurim* and *machzorim* engage in this kind of work for a variety of reasons and bring with them expertise in multiple spheres of Jewish knowledge. More often than not, the clergy that are chosen to engage in the work are offered the opportunity by the rabbi (and until today the leader of all of these prayerbook projects has come from the rabbinate and not the cantorate) who has been chosen as the chairperson. The credited list of the members of the creative teams published in most of the prayerbooks studied here were smaller, consisting of less than 10 members. The *Mishkan* series is the notable exception. In both *Mishkan T'filah* and *Mishkan HaNefesh* there were multiple groups assembled at various stages of the process which each contributed to the construction of these books.

All told, the process of the creation of *Mishkan T'filah* was twenty years long, beginning with what was called the "*Siddur* Discussion Group," which later morphed and shrank to become the "Editorial Committee." That "Discussion Group" consisted of 32 members, almost all rabbis (there were two laypeople), and according to one of the members of that group whom I interviewed for this thesis, William Cutter, it was a failure:

> The "*Siddur* Discussion Committee" was not called the "*Siddur* Discussion Committee" when it was formed. It was called the "*Siddur* Committee." The reason they demoted it was because it would have looked embarrassing to have a committee for 22 years. Much too long for a committee! What happened was that we couldn't reach any conclusions in the first group, and so they demoted it and made it look like it was prep-work…[47]

Cutter told me this as he was describing the process by which the committee was assembled. According to Cutter the group failed for a number of key reasons, some of which had to do with

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[47] Noah A.L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. William Cutter. Personal, October 30, 2019.

the outlook of the original leadership and some of which had to do with the somewhat haphazard process of putting the team together:

> There were a few reasons why [the first committee did not succeed]. One: Women. In the original committee there was only one woman on the committee… The executive head of the committee said that, between meetings: 'Well I'll drive around the East and get women's input.' And we had to point out to him that that's not going to be adequate. I'm certainly not prophetic and I'm certainly not a radical but just imagine saying to somebody, "I want to hear what the black community says; I have a black friend I get coffee with once a month, so now I have the black point of view." That didn't work. Then you had this emerging *davening* that was going on, and the *davening* changes the nature of the *matbeia*. It may not change the text, but it certainly changes the way the text is used. And then you have the emergence of the Jewish Catalog which made for a lot of independent *chavurah* kind of praying. And then you had pop-up groups and the influence of Debbie Friedman. You also had a slowly emerging breakdown of the hegemony of the Reform-Conservative-Orthodox division of Jewish life. Then the Hebraists chimed up and said they didn't want any transliteration because it would discourage people from learning Hebrew. Those of us who were pragmatic about Hebrew—whatever my ideals are about Hebrew—[said that] irrespective of the liturgy itself, if you want people to pray in the sound of the Hebrew language, you better transliterate. So I can only tell you that it's a little more hit-or-miss than you might think.[48]

This anecdote is very telling of the potential pitfalls that can derail such a group of Reform clergy at this point in the evolution of the prayerbook creation process. The group must represent the multiplicity of voices and diversity of the larger Movement; they must have a sound understanding of active trends in the prayer-life of the Movement; they must be willing to compromise on certain key issues that face any group attempting to build a Jewish prayerbook like translation and transliteration.

The choice of where to edit the text to make it better fit the needs of the community that will use it—whether by adding to it, adjusting it, or subtracting from it—was a challenge for the Reform clergy that created the Mishkan series books. One example of such a choice was

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[48] ibid.

described to me by Cantor Evan Kent, who was the only Cantor to serve on the chief editorial committee of *Mishkan HaNefesh*. In discussing the degree to which he saw himself as an innovator as opposed to as a preservationist, he detailed his frustration at the inclusion of a particular piece of liturgy:

> I mean, the very traditional *haftarah* blessings are in there. And I said, I've never chanted them in my life because as a Reform Jew, I don't believe them. I don't believe, you know, David and Messiah. But other people felt that they were important. Yet at the same time we'd said that the Torah and *Haftarah* readings were options to *break* with tradition. And I think that's what means what it means to be a Reform Jew in the 21st century.[49]

Kent told me that his struggle with the reinstatement of this liturgy was a major sticking point for him. When I asked him what one issue, should he be granted access to time travel, he would go back and re-litigate from the creation of *Mishkan HaNefesh*, he told me:

> I would go back and really fight against the *Haftarah* blessings. I think they are just antithetical to the roots of Reform Judaism, as much as I acknowledge their place in our liturgical history. And I think in *havdallah* [in *Mishkan HaNefesh*] it says "*Miriam han'viah*" and there I've become a minority voice. Miriam is definitely referred to as "*han'viah*" in Tanakh, but the power of Elijah as the prophet of the days to come does not—they're not equal, they're not on the same place. And I was outvoted very sternly. For some reason my mind can allow "*Mashiach ben David*" to be metaphor. Perhaps it's because I can sort of see at that moment at the end of Shabbat that the world to come is not necessarily a world to come guided by the personal Messiah, but that perhaps that it's like a Rosenzweig-ian sort of world to come, that we are part of this world to come. As opposed to the sort of the hammering away in the *Haftarah* blessings of these theological points over and over again. I think there was also a time factor, and I think that it's something that we don't do on Shabbat so *davka* why are we doing it on the High Holidays?[50]

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[49] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent. Personal, November 20, 2019.

[50] ibid.

As time has passed, the Reform liturgy has brought more of the traditional texts back into the fold, and yet when the lone cantor on the committee tried to use some authority to insist that these blessings be left out, he was “sternly outvoted.”

One of the rabbis on the committee who voted for the inclusion of these blessings was Leon Morris. Morris was inarguably the most traditionalist voice in the room, and his thumbprints can be found in almost every location where more traditional liturgy was reinstated. At the start of our conversation, before I even got a chance to ask him a question, he addressed exactly the debate that Kent lamented:

> We've mostly reached the stage where I think the classic criteria of liturgical reform has ended. We were the inheritors of this notion that was expressed by Jakob Petuchowski in his book about prayerbook reform in Europe in which he said that the test of everything for early Reform Jews was: Is it true? Is it factually verifiable? And if it wasn't then, you know, we're only going to say words that we know and believe. And I tried to argue in [my essay in ***Divrei Mishkan HaNefesh***] that we've mostly abandoned those criteria. I think we need to abandon it entirely. I think the whole prayer book is poetry and metaphor and it calls on us to have a robust interpretation. Like all of these ***siddurim*** that you're mentioning have either in the margins or below the line—some kind of commentary that's meant to unlock those words.
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> So what I argued was that ***Mishkan HaNefesh*** showed that we're mostly there, but not all the way there. A lot of the issues of debate among the committee members showed me that we're still not fully there. People were still troubled by parts of the classic liturgy. And there was a sense of like, well we're Reform Jews and we can't really say this. But we took a lot of things that previous generations of Reform Jews said they couldn't say, and we reclaimed them and just put a commentary. We said, 'Here's a way to understand a messianic reference,' or 'Here's a way to understand chosenness,' or 'Here's a way to understand this particular Torah reading that had been substituted out for a long time.'[51]

In Morris' expression of his disappointment with the committee's reluctance, he exposes a kind of irony that is present in the Reform Movement's current approach to new prayerbooks. Morris, the most traditionalist voice in the room, was the most willing to innovate and add in new texts that Reform Jews had never seen before in their prayerbooks, and offer them the opportunity to

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[51] Noah A.L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Leon Morris. Personal, December 15, 2019.

approach and explore them with new commentary. Yet the voices like Kent's in the room which hearkened back to the classical values of Reform Judaism in America were the most rigid in blocking such additions. Strangely, returning to tradition seems to have become a kind of innovation.

This kind of debate is illustrative of how competing approaches within these groups of clergy affect the final product they create: Should they try their best to represent what they feel today's congregants most desire practically? Should they try to represent the thrust of their denomination's ideology? Should they seek to educate and expose congregants to new texts, or perhaps old texts to which the clergy feel they should have some relationship? Similar challenges arose in the team of Conservative clergy which created *Siddur Lev Shalem.* Here, the challenge arose between those on the committee who represented a more halakhically stringent (though egalitarian) wing of the movement, and those who were more willing to make edits within the liturgy. Amy Wallk Katz described one key example of this to me:

> So I was not the halakhist in the room, but Robert Scheinberg would be the one that would talk about the halakhic necessity of what to add, and I would just be quiet and listen to him because he's really smart and whatnot. For me, the question is always "How is the Jew in the pew going to read it?" Like, I thought about my mother. My mother was your typical Conservative Jew: She didn't read Hebrew, she came to *shul*, she really cared. My mother was a really bright woman, but she didn't know her liturgy. And I thought about my father who was a doctor—came to *shul* 7, 8, 9 times a year, no more; he didn't really like it. But he was a smart man and he could read and be engaged. I say that because to me, the question is, and the thing we have to think about is "What's going to engage them? What's going to bring meaning to those folks?"[52] They don't really care whether the siddur says "*V'lo n'tato Adonai…*" Like my parents wouldn't have known whether we had taken it out, which is why I said "We can't put it in there, because if they happen to read it it's going to be offensive! Some people would make the argument that we have to have a fidelity to the tradition, and in the

[52] Noah A.L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz. Personal, January 20, 2019.

> Conservative movement there is a fidelity to the tradition. One that you guys[53]—one that others don't have. So that's why I actually like this page (163) and think that it even came out better than had this text just been cut. Because if it had just been cut then there's no room for conversation and you don't see the thinking.

The page of the siddur Katz was referring to is from the *Amidah* on Shabbat morning, and the specific text she mentioned is a fascinating case study in the evolution of Conservative prayerbooks and liturgy, and the way that this particular committee approached the liturgy.

The paragraph in question comes from the traditional *Kedushat HaYom* for Shabbat morning, and directly follows the "*V'shamru*" paragraph. The traditional text from *Nusach Ashkenaz* opens: "וְלא נְתַתּו ה' אֱלהֵינו לְגויֵי הָאֲרָצות. וְלא הִנְחַלְתּו מַלְכֵּנו לְעובְדֵי פְסִילִים. וְגַם בְּמְנוּחָתו לא יִשְׁכְּנו עֲרֵלִים." The text is translated literally, word-for-word, in *Siddur Lev Shalem*: "But, ADONAI our God, You have not given it to the nations of the world, nor, our Sovereign, have You bestowed it on idol worshipers, nor do the uncircumcised find rest on this day."[54] As Katz put it: "That's the text that says," and this she sort of half-sang as if she were a child taunting another on the playground, "*We get Shabbat, you don't! Na na, na-na-na!*"[55] As was discussed earlier, literal translation was not the goal of the committee when approaching the *Lev Shalem* series. In this case, however, literal translation was warranted, as it clearly has been a point of contention over the evolution of the Conservative Movement's liturgy. In the "Silverman *Siddur*," the Hebrew text was adjusted to remove the reference to the uncircumcised, replacing the Hebrew word '*areilim*' with the word '*r'sha'im*,' which literally means 'evildoers' but was

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[53] Read: Reform Jews

[54] Ed Feld, ed. *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals*, p. 163

[55] Diamondstein Noah A.L. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz.

translated in that *siddur* as “the unrighteous.”[56] In *Siddur Sim Shalom*, the traditional Hebrew was reinstated, but the translation which accompanies it is not literal, offering “those outside the covenant”[57] as a translation of '*areilim*,' as opposed to the more literal “uncircumcised.”

This text posed a problem for the committee. They could have chosen to revise the translation to interpret the Hebrew text less literally, as was done in *Sim Shalom*. This though would have been somewhat dishonest with respect to the plain meaning of the text which clearly references circumcision.[58] They also could have chosen to edit that word, or even the whole sentence, out of the Hebrew text, but Rabbi Katz detailed why they could not: “We wanted to take it out, because in the 21st Century is that a nice thing to say? No. So the Law Committee was like, “No, you can't take it out.” But I was like, “But we can't leave it in!? Like, no!”[59] This is an interesting revelation, which makes me wonder how changing the word '*areilim*' was found to be acceptable for the 1944 “Silverman *Siddur*.” Perhaps they did not ask for permission at all?

Ultimately the committee decided to find a middle ground. They called attention to the fact that the message of this text is problematic in light of contemporary liberal Jewish attitudes toward non-Jews by shrinking the font of the sentence and including above it, in English, the phrase “*Some omit:*”[60] Rabbi Katz here compared the Reform and Conservative approaches, and offered quite an interesting prediction as to the future of this liturgy: “You know if it were a

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[56] Morris Silverman, ed., *Seder Tefilot Yiśra’el Le-Shabat Ule-Shalosh Regalim = Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook*, p. 98

[57] Jules Harlow, ed. *Siddur Sim Shalom: a Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*. p. 358, 359

[58] See ערל in: Francis Brown, S. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Translated by Edward Robinson. London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 790

[59] Diamondstein Noah A.L. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz.

[60] Ed Feld, ed. *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals*, p. 163

Reform *siddur* out it would be. You can see the line from Silverman, to *Sim Shalom* to here, and I'll bet that in the next *siddur* the Movement has it'll just be gone."[61] In response to this debate, her prediction, and her stories about the way that her parents would relate to such liturgy, I asked Katz how that trend could overcome the voices of the halakhists in the room who will refuse to accept its deletion, and her response was poignant: "If you do that too many times, they're going to walk to the right. And frankly that's something that we struggle with. We struggle with that a lot, because we don't want the egalitarian halakhists in the room to walk away."[62]

Such an approach is illustrative of a key challenge before any group of clergy who create a new movement prayerbook. Much of the text has largely remained the same for centuries, and yet the communities using the texts are all situated in their particular moment in history. Reform and Conservative clergy thus have to make important value judgements about when and where to wield their authority as clergy to edit or revise the text. I would suggest that these debates are evidence that the Reform and Conservative Movement's approaches are becoming more and more similar to one another. The progressive or innovative edge of the Reform Movement is to add more and more sources from tradition to the prayerbook, while the cutting edge in the Conservative Movement is to contend with revising or even deleting certain problematic elements from the traditional liturgy; or, alternatively, one Movement is experiencing a rapprochement with the 'right' end of their religious spectrum, while the other is edging, inch by inch, toward the 'left.'

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[61] Diamondstein Noah A.L. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz.

[62] ibid.

The Nature and Purpose of an Official Denominational S*iddur*

As will be discussed in the Conclusion of this thesis, it is certainly possible for a learned local rabbi, in partnership with community members, to arrange and present the liturgy for their own community, taking care to represent that community's local minhagim in ways that denominational *siddurim* simply can not. It is also theoretically possible that any learned individual *davener* could choose the liturgy of any of the many liturgists in Jewish history as their own, either choosing a particular *siddur* or, with the aid of modern technology and the ever-increasing availability of these texts, constructing their own personal liturgy by adapting the language of multiple sources as fits their needs. Yet it is the case that in the 21st Century both of these major denominations have published a both a new *siddur* and a new *machzor*. Consequently, the first of the two major questions I asked in this category was **what they considered to be the purpose of having one book to unite the Movement.**

Their answers, while they all had elements in common, were surprisingly varied. The most common theme across all those I interviewed was unity. Having one book for the denomination is seen by most of the clergy I interviewed as a helpful tool in expressing the identity and vision of the Movement. Danny Freelander, who helped produce *Mishkan T'filah*, articulated this idea from the Reform perspective in his response:

> It's one of the few things that holds the movement together. You know, you've got a pension board and a *siddur* and a college Institute and a Religious Action Center and a camping system. Beyond that, everything is *hefkerut*. And most rabbis' egos, left to their own devices, would blow off the Movement if they didn't need the camps, or the Religious Action Center or the *siddur*. So [certain congregations] "don't need the *siddur*"[63] and you see a lot of big synagogues

[63] The quotation marks are not mine but Rabbi Freelander's, who gesticulated air-quotes as he sarcastically referenced such communities.

> develop their own *siddurim*. The challenge with that is that one of the goals of religious education and communal prayer is to educate the next generation of Jews, and we can't predict where people are going to live. They're going to live in a different community than where they grew up. So there's something very comforting about being able to walk into someplace, and some of the melodies may be familiar, but at least that the text is the same text you had at your *bar mitzvah*. And you know how to live with it and you don't feel like a stranger in a strange religion. So it's a key unifying factor for the movement.[64]

That sense of *klal Yisrael* and the ability to feel comfortable in prayer in any location was echoed by Evan Kent:

> A lot of my own doctoral work was in the concept of communal memory, and I think there's a sense when you know that something is being used around the country, or possibly around the world depending on the congregation, that we are all in this together. That you know that in Pittsburgh, Boston, Washington, DC that when Rosh HaShanah evening begins or whatever, we are all opening the same book and we are all just sort of this North American cohort of Reform Jews. It's the same sense we have I think when we open the Torah on *Parshat Vayiqra*, or whatever. I mean, I tell this to my *b'nei mitzvah* kids even here in Israel is that some place I tell them, cause we're at the egalitarian *Kotel*. I'll say you're going to hear other kids chanting the same portion, but imagine that around the world people are chanting the same portion. I mean, I think it's just an extension of that… I think that the CCAR has done a great job of making us feel like we're part of something greater than our individual synagogue.[65]

In this way a unified Movement prayerbook can connect across generational divides, across local or regional divides, and even can function as a bridge across oceans.

A similar feeling of unity was observed by the Conservative prayerbook creators. Jan Urbach pointed this out in comparison to what she referred to as 'idiosyncratic' communities who create their own prayerbooks:

> I don't think it's so great that individual communities use their own prayerbooks. Part of what keeps us together as a people is that we have a shared book. And it's not just obviously the Torah, yes, but the *siddur* is the shared expression of our yearnings and our longings, and our vision. When we pray out of a *siddur* we are

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[64] Noah A.L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Daniel Freelander. Personal, November 19, 2019.

[65] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

> publicly affirming to each other: "This is a vision that we are committed to." So if we don't have the same vision, what makes us a people? I'm not a big fan of synagogues, that are so idiosyncratic that people who have been going to that synagogue for 30 years can't go to another synagogue and find their way. Something's wrong with that. Or you're a member of a synagogue that's idiosyncratic for 30 years and then you go to a mainstream synagogue, and say, "Oh, they do this wrong." but like that's problematic, when in fact it's your synagogue that's out of step with the rest of the Jewish world. And it doesn't mean that it's wrong, it's just that I think Jews should know what normative Jewish liturgy looks like. I also think that liturgy shapes consciousness. We have an ethical responsibility for the liturgy, and so I think having a book for a movement helps shape the consciousness, the theology, the ethics of that movement. It's what helps *define* a movement. If we don't have that, then I think we're doing a disservice to our community.[66]

I am not sure exactly what communities the Rabbi was referring to when she discussed communities that are idiosyncratic to that extent, but her critique stands. Even more salient, though is her point about consciousness, theology and ethics. A text that is recited with enough regularity by any group of people will shape the thinking and, depending on the text, identity of that group.

Hazzan Joanna Dulkin, the only cantor to serve on the *Siddur Lev Shalem* committee, spoke to this notion of common language as being a binding factor, as well. More than just common words, however, Dulkin understands the words of the prayerbook as creating a common conversation across a movement:

> The idea of having a common language, together of prayer is really important. And that doesn't mean that it has to be identical, it means that there has to be a common language. For instance, how or when we talk about our Matriarchs and Patriarchs--it's a part of a conversation that's been happening for 30 years. So there needs to be this language that reflects that conversation in our prayer life. That's just one of many examples. We have so many things that define us as a movement. I think in many cases people don't even know what the Conservative Movement stands for, and that's a whole other problem. We're really good at saying what we're not and what we don't believe in or how we're not this, and we're not that. Yet we have this book that reflects this common language of prayer,

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[66] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

> and prayer, like it or not, is kind of an essential part of Jewish living. And this is what I love about our book, particularly: this book was designed to be not just used by the pray-er in *shul*, but this book was designed to be on the shelf of anyone's Judaica Library, so that they can use it as, almost like that like a point of connection to the conversation at any point in their life. And so, as a movement, there are things we stand for that we can express theologically, that we can express liturgically, that we can express poetically, that contribute to this ongoing conversation.[67]

That conversation metaphor not only rings true in terms of the *siddur* encapsulating the current (or most recent) iteration of that conversation, but it also rings true across the generations, as was shown in the first part of this study. Amy Katz also suggested that not only the content of the prayerbook but the form as well was a display of its Conservative identity. Not only the main body of the Hebrew liturgy and its English translation, but also the four-column system of the *Lev Shalem* series books are an embodiment of Conservative Judaism: The first column on the right-hand side representing what Katz called the "classic JTS *wissenschaft*" and the last column on the left-hand side representing the *kavanah*.

Cutter answered this question in a much more theoretical way that, while clearly from a Reform perspective, could be applied to either movement:

> I think it symbolizes a kind of unification—a sociological *matbeia*. It's a way of hedging against the inevitable anarchy of the totally open-choice society which we have become. We are a much more consumer oriented society. Dalia Marx would say that we actually create a statement about what we believe when we make a new *siddur*. In hermeneutic theory exclusion implies inclusion. It doesn't guarantee a certain inclusion, but the two play a lot: If you're not a member of my group, then the people who are a member of my group have some collective identification which you don't share. That's an interesting paradox: a huge number of the synagogues I know well, in which most of the congregants don't regularly attend *t'filah*, spend an awful lot of time thinking about *t'filah*. Because I think that

[67] Noah. A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanne Dulkin.

> we think, and maybe correctly, that somehow, when all is said and done, those who put together these ***siddurim*** are unifiers.[68]

This further clarifies both the role of the clergy who create such prayerbooks and the role of the books themselves. The ***siddur*** or ***machzor*** a given community uses sends a message to any non-community-member who would join them in prayer: if this book feels uncomfortable or unwieldy to you, then you are likely an 'outsider.' If, however one comes to pray with a community other than their home community and finds the same book they use in their own synagogue waiting for them in the pews, then they are instantly made to feel, at least in part, at home. In all these ways the clergy who create these prayerbooks as well as the books themselves can help to bind together and strengthen the identity of a Jewish denomination. More than just defining denominational identity, however, these books can point toward the course of the denomination's evolution up to their publication, and help one intuit in which directions the movement is moving. As Elyse Frishman pointed out as she began her answer to this question: "The answer may be different now than it would have been ten years ago, fifty years ago, a hundred years ago. I think the concept of what denominational Judaism is has changed a great deal."[69]

Leon Morris' answer to this question was perhaps the most telling of this evolution, and in his response he showed how the goals of the creators of ***Mishkan HaNefesh*** were qualitatively different than the creators of any other of the publications discussed in this thesis. First, he discussed the ways in which the editors of the book actually struggled with seeing it as a 'movement book:'

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[68] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. William Cutter.

[69] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman. Personal, December 6, 2019.

> I think initially there was the sense of [the prayerbook is] what defines a movement, right? The *Union Prayer Book* meant that you were a part of this union, part of this movement. I think there's still an element of that…But I think many of us saw our project as kind of one more machzor in the marketplace. When we had just started our work *Machzor Lev Shalem* came out, and I felt like it sort of raised the bar for us. And that was good. You know, good competition between *sofrim*. But we were sort of lobbying that unlike--I think *Mishkan T'filah* says "A Reform *Siddur*" and we felt like, no, this should not say "a Reform *Machzor*" because these books are meant to last *decades*. And we would want communities that don't necessarily call themselves that to say, well, we really like this *machzor*. And to not see it as sort of a movement driven thing. Of course the publisher is the CCAR and in many ways it is. So I think we were kind of struggling with this.[70]

It seems then that the chief relationship being considered by the creators of the newest Reform *machzor* was not between this new book and *Gates of Repentance* which came before it. Rather, *Mishkan HaNefesh* was being held up against *Machzor Lev Shalem* by its creators. This did not have to be the case. It was highly unlikely that any Conservative congregation would consider *Mishkan HaNefesh* as their *machzor* after the major success of their own movement's new book and, similarly, few Reform congregations would have adopted *Lev Shalem* knowing that a new Reform High Holy Day prayerbook was in the pipeline. So while *Mishkan HaNefesh* may have served the unifying purposes outlined by the other clergy, its shapers may have had other ideas for its use and legacy.

The next story Morris told, though, showed how having one 'movement *machzor*' does not always lead to unity:

> I'll give you another example of what it means to be a 'movement *siddur*.' We wanted to include some commentary below the line by Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Britain. And we were aware that our liberal colleagues and Reform colleagues in Britain are not really fans. There was a whole affair where Rabbi Sacks didn't go to the funeral of Hugo Gryn, who was the most renowned Reform rabbi in England. That was 20 some years ago. There are very strong feelings about it and progressive and liberal and Reform Jews in England of a certain generation will still refer to the "Hugo Gryn Affair" with a lot of bad feelings. So

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[70] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Leon Morris.

> we turned to them and we said like, how would you feel about us including Rabbi Sacks? And the response of the person that I checked with was, 'You know, it's your *machzor* and you should include whoever you'd like to, but we wouldn't ever include Jonathan Sacks in ours.' And ultimately we decided to include him. He's just emerged as such a significant, eloquent thought leader in the English language for Judaism that it was hard not to. And we knew that most of the people using this book wouldn't have the kind of baggage that an English congregation would have. But we did feel like it was a movement book in the sense like we felt we had to check with our colleagues there. You want it to be bigger than the movement.[71]

In this case, certain choices made by the creative leaders of the American Reform movement served to somewhat alienate their counterparts "across the pond." This anecdote raises an important question about in what ways communities of the same denomination in different parts of the world are, or are not, united with one another. In a fuller version of this study I would examine the differences between the version of *Mishkan T'filah* that was published in America and the one that was published for distribution around the world by the World Union for Progressive Judaism, as well as discrepancies between American, British and Israeli Reform and Conservative prayerbooks. What does it really mean for a denominationally funded and published prayerbook to be "bigger than the movement?"

The other key question I asked in this category was about **the newest prayerbook of a denomination's relationship to the ones which came before.** I asked the rabbis about this using the language of showing some kind of *kavod* to the prior books, but they did not always understand that to be the nature of the relationship. Urbach pointed this out most clearly:

> I think the relationship is more complicated than *kavod*. I think, certainly, in the congregational setting itself when you're moving from one *siddur* to another, there's pastoral work to be done in that ritual by making sure that the past is honored and that's part of who we are. But in the deeper level, every *siddur* stands on the shoulders of what came before. You're not starting from scratch. And at the same time, every *siddur* speaks to a particular moment. So what the

[71] ibid.

> moment demands now doesn't mean that the *siddurim* that came before were inadequate--it means they came out of their time, and this is what we need in this time. For right now, given the ways that Jews relate to liturgy I don't we can publish a *siddur* that doesn't have commentary. I just don't think they work anymore. A *siddur* needs transliteration given the…lack of literacy in our communities, we need to take a stand on egalitarianism and inclusion in ways that previous *siddurim* didn't... But there are deeper issues than that. For example, the Harlow *machzor* which preceded our *machzor* came out in the early '70s. It was an incredible advance over what we had before, it was so powerful and important, and it was also the first liberal *machzor* to be published after the Holocaust. And it was very responsive to the extent to which the Holocaust was weighing very, very heavily on Jewish consciousness especially around the High Holidays...
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> By the time we, 30 years later, started looking at creating a new *machzor* for our time, the place of the Holocaust in contemporary consciousness is different. We needed to deal with those issues very differently and honor them, but I think in our *machzor* it's not quite as prominent. And translation is different. The ethos of translation. Harlow's purpose in translating was to create a pray-able English liturgy, a poetic pray-able English. Which meant that he wasn't that interested in literal translation. We understood by now that, what's going on now in communities is that people want to be able to match the English to the Hebrew. They want to, as they sit in synagogue, be learning to use the Hebrew. And because we have the technology of commentary, we can do a more literal translation and put notes for things that are problematic. So, you know, do we did we give *kavod*? Of course, we gave *kavod... and* we charted a new path.[72]

Urbach's analysis of that relationship has a direct connection to Morris' point from the Reform perspective about the old criteria of prayerbook reform essentially having been outmoded. From Urbach's perspective, the relationship seems to be one of shared endeavor: earlier prayerbooks responded to the needs of their time, and so too should a new prayerbook respond to the needs of its time. Certain groundwork has been laid—translations, curation of the Hebrew liturgy, etc.—but the new project demands “a new path.”

Joanna Dulkin's conversation metaphor was extended and nuanced in her response to this question. Dulkin compared the ongoing conversation that is playing out on the pages of

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[72] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

Conservative liturgy to the centuries-long conversation embodied by the Talmud, suggesting that each new generation offers new insights in response to the contributions of prior generations:

> There are elements of this *siddur* I think that are *tikkunim* of past *siddurim*. I think that is an important part of the conversation. How do we, for example, make visible in the liturgy those of us, in our communities who have felt invisible? How do we signal through our *siddur*, "We see you?" Or not 'we—you,' forget that. "*You are seen*." And this can be reflected in all sorts of different permutations of wedding blessings for different genders. It can be reflected in... We have a *mi shebeirach* for first-time grandparents coming to the Torah for the first time since becoming grandparents. It's not a traditional life transition, but it is a transition that more and more people are wanting to ritualize. So in many ways, this continuation of a conversation--some of it is a *tikkun* where we realize that 'X' language may have been really appropriate at one time, and then 22 years later, we're going to revise this thinking because really it's not a welcoming piece of liturgy or it's not something that we want to be known for, right?[73]

In much the same way that *Amoraim* were reading the Mishnah in a different historical situation than the *Tannaim* that preceded them, so to do these new creators of liturgy address new problems in their prayerbooks that seemed irrelevant in prior generations. Dulkin's comment though, points to two separate conversations: One is from prayerbook to prayerbook as the liturgy is considered, and the other is from prayerbook to congregation as the creators of the new books try to anticipate the ways that worshipers have struggled to connect to the prayerbooks of the past and what they will need to feel most comfortable using a new one. This will be explored in more depth in category ***e)***.

Leon Morris also addressed both of those conversations in his response to this question. He was constantly struggling to convince the committee of the need for a greater degree of inclusion of traditional texts. A particularly interesting case study of this kind of debate among the committee was the way they dealt with "*Avinu Malkeinu*":

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[73] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

> I think that inevitably it's impossible not to be very conscious of the choices that were made with *Gates of Repentance* and with the *Union Prayer Book*. I'll give a few examples. We went back to the original set of verses of "*Avinu Malkeinu"* and there's a lot of them. And we chose different ones and we had a goal of like exposing people to different verses. And initially we didn't stick with this, but initially we were going to take like all of them and then divide them over all the services in which they were cited. We didn't do that. We did provide a wider range than was in *Gates of Repentance*. But at the same time, every single recitation of "*Avinu Malkeinu"* had the Janowski version on the opposite page because we knew there are synagogues that, that do that, and that want to be able to do that each time. Janowski, made famous by Barbara Streisand, that version was from the *Union Prayer Book*. That's why Janowski set it to music.
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> So not only were we kind of inevitably kind of bowing to what *Gates of Repentance* had done, we really bowed to what the *Union Prayer Book* had done. But I would say that even as I kind of say this, I think that it wasn't saying as frequently, "what did *Gates of Repentance* do?" It was "what do our congregations do and what would they experience as too unfamiliar?" or putting it positively, "what would we put there so that people that are really wedded to a particular form of the liturgy would feel at home?" So that's kind of a through the back door way of saying, what was *Gates of Repentance* and what was the *Union Prayer Book*? Because it is because of those books that people became really wedded—the Janowski "*Avinu Malkeinu*" is a good example.[74]

Here too, there was a dual conversation: not only were these clergy contending with what congregations most love to sing, but also with the text as it had (and had not) been presented in prior prayerbooks. Past prayerbooks presented not only texts that had become *keva*, but also precipitated the creation of musical settings which had become inextricable from the congregational experience of sections of the liturgy. From the beginning, the *Union Prayer Book* fueled the creation of musical settings, which then informed the creation of *Gates of Prayer* and *Gates of Repentance*, which fueled still other new musical settings and was responsible for the prevailing practices with which the creators of *Mishkan T'filah* and *Mishkan HaNefesh* had to contend.

These conversations were not always smooth. Morris' traditional voice occasionally advocated for an addition which seemed to already be in-step with trends within the movement,

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[74] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Leon Morris.

but in other cases his voice was not initially met with positivity. He outlined an example of each in his answer. The first was his strong argument for the inclusion of the second Hebrew paragraph of the *Sh'ma*. This paragraph had been ruled out of Reform liturgy for a long time due to theological discomfort with the text, but Morris was not the first Reform clergyperson to advocate for its reintroduction, as Richard Sarason described:

> There were people who came back and said, or rabbis that said, "If you do *this*, we're not going to buy the book." For example, at that time, the two-page spread was very radical and there were people who were thrown off by it when they first read. So what they decided to do is we'll do both, right? We'll put in a linear service for people who need it, and as Elyse Frishman said at the time[75], it's a waste of pages because down the pike when people get used to it, they won't use it, right? Whatever. And interestingly enough, the other two things that had to go to the board of the CCAR for final discernment were okay: "*M'chayei meitim*," Or "*m'chayei hakol*," right? How we parse that and the second paragraph of the *Sh'ma*. Do we include it or do we not include it? Okay? And that ironically is where some of Richard [Levy]'s work got in. On the left side of the page, his poetic piece on ecology in the second paragraph is there.

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[75] She also shared this sentiment with me in our interview: "Mishkan T'filah has a linear service, right? It's the service that has the little frame around it. Now that wasn't to give *kavod*, let's say, at all to to *Gates of Prayer*. It was to say that there were people who were terrified that they wouldn't be able to do a nonlinear service. And it's true, there are many, many congregations that can't use *Mishkan T'filah* properly. That has more to do with the training of the rabbis and the rabbis willingness to understand how the *siddur* could be a tool. An illustration: In the process of piloting the book—and this goes back to, you know, we deliberately piloted it with 300 congregations because we knew lay people were going to love it. And this way we acclimated lay people to this new design and in essence kind of forced the hand of rabbis who didn't want to do it. So the rule of thumb is very simple and it used to take me about 20 seconds to say this at the start of the service: "Open your book to pages 10a/10b, look at the bottom of the page. You'll see the page distinction. It's there for a reason. When we get to each page, we're going to do a piece on either the right hand side or the left hand side. It will be either in Hebrew or English. When we finished that one piece, which we're going to do together, we automatically turn the page. So one piece on the right or left hand side, turn the page." People would say to me, well, people with learning disabilities can't get that. I'm like, you're right. They might not, but no one could follow *Gates of Prayer* because there was no transliteration and people would sometimes do the translation after the Hebrew, so trust me, many, many, many, many more people will do it and people who have any kind of a a learning challenge, they're going to figure it out. Someone's sitting right next to them will help them because we're going to teach people to do that… Rabbis and cantors would say to us, people don't want to do everything together. They don't want to sing everything together. They don't want to read everything together. And I'm like: Wake up! They're smart enough and self aware enough that if they don't want to do it they're not going to do it. They have agency here.

Sarason wrote about this particular situation in *Divrei Mishkan T'filah*, a volume of commentary he edited that was released after *Mishkan T'filah*, not dissimilar to Lawrence Hoffman's *Gates of Understanding*'s relationship to *Gates of Prayer*. He points out that the Reconstructionist movement had reclaimed that paragraph of the *Sh'ma* by arguing that it could be reinterpreted on ecological grounds. That same rationale was given for this paragraph's inclusion in the first draft of *Mishkan T'filah* in 2002, but it was not convincing enough for the leaders of the movement. Both the *Siddur* Editorial Board and the CCAR Executive Committee voted to maintain the deletion of this paragraph in the Hebrew text. As a compromise, they added Richard Levy's poetic translation of this paragraph as an interpretive reading.[76]

A decade after the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*, it seems that this hesitance had waned, and the committee felt confident in adding the text back in:

> This is the first American Reform prayerbook of any kind to have all three paragraphs somewhere accessible in some services. It's really there and there are directions that say 'Some congregations turn ahead to page whatever' to go right to the "*L'maan tizk'ru…*" or to the whole third paragraph. I think in doing it there was an awareness that we were making a decision that ran counter to both Gates of Repentance and the Union Prayer Book. But it didn't really hold us back.[77]

While the committee was not held back by the past with regard to the *Sh'ma*, this was not the case in their reception of Morris' suggestion of adding a *mincha* service to the *machzor*. Evan Kent was particularly resistant to this suggestion:

> So on the committee there were some voices that were very strongly saying we need to have a Rosh HaShanah *mincha* service, which exists, it's in the book. So think of it, you do Rosh HaShanah evening. You do Rosh HaShanah morning twice in a lot of congregations, you then probably left to do *Tashlich* and then would come back and do a *mincha-ma'ariv. Again*. And I thought, *I'm going to kill*

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[76] Richard S. Sarason, ed. *Divrei Mishkan T'filah: Delving into the Siddur*. New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2018, p. 42

[77] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Leon Morris.

> *myself*. I don't even want to *suggest* that to my colleagues, but it's in the book. It's there.[78]

Morris described the exact same story, but in his telling the negative response was a bit more muted.

> I argued strongly that there had to be a *mincha* service for Rosh Hashanah because maybe there would be a synagogue that would do *mincha.* And [other members of the committee] were like, "Come on, I don't know, a single Reform synagogue that does *mincha*!" but then we talked it through and I said, well, you know, it's feasible that before or after *Tashlich*, a synagogue would want to have a service. And I just, I didn't want to have a prayerbook—I didn't want to have a *machzor* that just didn't have *mincha* in there. But again, that was a break from *Union Prayer Book* and from *Gates of Repentance*.[79]

Here it seems that the way to win over the members of the committee who were less in favor of this particular traditional re-integration was not to argue the merits of the text, but rather to stress the practical need for its presence in the prayerbook. It is unclear whether or not the other committee members agreed ultimately that there was a practical need, yet it is still present in the *machzor.*

Another key driver of change from *siddur* to *siddur* is the dialectic that Petuchowski articulated: that one generation's *kavanah* becomes the *keva* of the next. Dulkin addressed this plainly, describing how it plays out in both movements. She is somewhat uniquely able to do so, as she was raised in the Reform Movement and found Conservative Judaism only later in her life. She showed how earlier liturgical innovations have become cemented in the minds of congregants, and how these settings both musical and print have become inextricable from the liturgy itself:

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[78] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

[79] ibid.

> That's what people tend to focus on—what's different? what are the revolutionary things in the *siddur*? But I also think that we tend to overlook the continuation of the conversation and all of the threads that are kinda pulled through out. So you have, in some cases, you have these core liturgical innovations from 1982 that are sort of now, as 21st century Jews, they're sort of... Yeah, it's like in the Reform Movement, how people call it "*THE Mi Shebeirach*," right? Like there are lots of *mi shebeirach*s. *Mi shebeirach* is just a type of beginning to a prayer, right? But everyone knows that when you say it you're talking about the prayer for healing, and that most people are talking about Debbie Friedman although there've been lots of different melodies. So even in the ways that we even speak about the prayers themselves, there has to be some recognizable thread that's taken through the generations... And it also is a reflection of the different changes that are being accepted and how change is accepted and assimilated into our practice based on who uses what *siddur*. You sometimes see: "Oh, well, my shul still does the Silverman *machzor* for High Holidays," and then we're like, 'Okay, that tells me a lot about your community,' right? And it could be that you don't have any money to buy the new one, but it *could* be that "*There's no money to buy the new one...wink wink, nudge nudge*."[80]

Ultimately, all of this analysis both points toward the acuity of Dulkin's conversation metaphor, and to the changing nature of that conversation. Whether it is the reintroduction of the full, three-paragraph *Sh'ma* and a *mincha* service in Reform liturgy, or the debated deletions of problematic texts from the Shabbat *Amidah* in Conservative liturgy, both movements seem to be at a point in this conversation where they are saying to the books of the past (and to the congregations of the future): Thanks for all the help, but certain ways of thinking that used to work are not going to work for us anymore. You can hold fast to your traditions, old and new, but our books are going to move us forward. As Morris said, the old criteria are out, and a new paradigm is being embraced.

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[80] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

Evolving Liturgical Language

This category of my questioning mostly focused on two linguistic elements of the prayerbooks created by these clergy: the different statutes of Hebrew and English as they perceived them, and their philosophies of transliteration. The questions about language and transliteration were fairly straightforward, yet revealed striking insights into how the two movements relate to the languages of American Jewish prayer. Inspired by the bold statement in the introduction to *Siddur Sim Shalom* that "Hebrew is clearly the language of Jewish prayer," I asked the respondents whether **they understand Hebrew to be the only language of Jewish prayer**. I also asked them **what they hope the place of Hebrew will be over the course of the tenure of the prayerbook they helped create**. Their answers had many similarities. Not one of them maintained that Jewish prayer must be in Hebrew, yet all of them spoke about the primacy and status of Hebrew as essential for ideal Jewish prayer to be realized.

Edwin Goldberg encapsulated this in a single sentence: "Hebrew is not the only language of Jewish prayer, but it is the best for the Hebrew traditional prayers."[81] In other words, the traditional liturgy is best realized in Hebrew, but Jews can certainly pray beautifully in more than one language. Other interviewees added more nuance to their responses. Elyse Frishman and Danny Freelander spoke the power of Hebrew to both form the Jewish identity of the individual and to bind that individual together with the rest of the Jewish people. Frishman specifically commented on the multiple levels at which Hebrew serves the Jewish worshipper: "I think it's essential. I think Hebrew really is beyond essential in the identity formation of the Jew and I also think that it's…a holy language. I would say that it's also a mathematical language that has deep

[81] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Edwin Goldberg. Personal, October 29, 2019.

spiritual, mystical potential. And so its role in our prayer is beyond essential."[82] Freelander echoed a similar sentiment, and also addressed the place of Hebrew in Classical Reform culture and how Reform Judaism has evolved in its relationship to Hebrew:

> I'm a Hebrew speaker and I think Hebrew's one of the few things that binds together Jews regardless of where they live in the world and what language they speak. So yeah, there has to be some retention of Hebrew, not just symbolic. *T'filah* has to be a place for people to sort of expose themselves or experiment with greater engagement with Hebrew. But I don't think it's the only language and I grew up Classical Reform hating those pages of English readings, and I loved the places where there was music provided. So here is the way I'd frame it: I grew up in a system where we paid non-Jews to sing the Hebrew for us and the Jews read in English. I resented that terribly.[83]

Hebrew, in the minds of the clergy that have been charged by the Reform movement with creating new prayerbooks, even those raised in the Classical Reform Judaism embodied by the Union Prayer Book, has reclaimed its senior status. It is celebrated not only for its linguistic beauty and potential to affect the worshipper in multiple ways, but also for its place as the linguistic glue that holds together the Jewish people on an ethnic level.

Beyond just ethnicity or peoplehood, William Cutter, himself a scholar of Modern Hebrew and the great poets of Israel's history, spoke to the power of Hebrew to connect the Diaspora to the modern State of Israel in a national sense: "I do think Hebrew is a unifying force in its sound, and in its connection to Israel which remains the largest Jewish community in the world. I want people to feel connected even if only through the sound of the language."[84] Evan Kent used perhaps the most interesting metaphor of any of the Reform clergy I interviewed, calling it the "gateway drug" to Jewish prayer. He understands it as a sort of entry point into

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[82] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman.

[83] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Daniel Freelander.

[84] Noah. A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. William Cutter.

understanding what it means to pray as a Jew. Whether an entry point or the age-old standby, Hebrew is understood by all these clergy as indispensable.

The Conservative clergy felt similarly, and further nuanced the discussion. Urbach went furthest in interrogating the presupposition that Hebrew is clearly the language of Jewish prayer: “I would never say that Hebrew was the only true language of Jewish prayer. I don't even know that words are the only true language of Jewish prayer.”[85] With that openness established, Urbach more fully characterized Hebrew's role giving the worshipper access to a certain depth of Jewish prayer, and how this affected the way that the creators of the *Lev Shalem* series approached translation:

> I think that prayer in any translation can be very, very meaningful, but it always involves loss as with any translation. I mean, Hebrew is the language of Torah; Hebrew is the language of much of our commentary. There are references in the liturgy that get lost in translation—that you don't hear the echo of the Torah the same way. Very often there are words that carry multiple meanings in Hebrew that in English you would have to choose a translation. There are certain things that we did not translate in *Lev Shalem*. "*Ut'shuvah, ut'filah, utzedakah...*" There is no adequate translation of that. *T'shuvah* is so much more than repentance. You need like six words to cover what *t'shuvah* means.And truthfully the same thing for *t'filah*. And *tzedakah*—are you talking about giving? are you talking about doing? are you talking about justice? a collective? There's no way... So we kept it in the Hebrew and in the English side we have transliteration of it. And then we have a note about what those words mean.We kept "*Baruch Atah Adonai...*" I don't know how you would translate "*Baruch*" accurately right? It's such a rich term, and it's all over the place. Like in English you can't hold the connection between the *shalom* and *shalem*... In Hebrew you can.[86]

This approach to translation has its counterpart in the Reform prayerbooks as well, as Evan Kent explained:

> I don't think it has to be word for word, if you want word for word by an interlinear *machzor*, which is what I have my students buy because I think it's important to know what each word means. I think that we can't translate—You

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[85] Noah. A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

[86] ibid.

> can't translate—you know, Rosh HaShanah cannot be translated. Is that the "head of the year?" It makes no sense. We can only translate it as Rosh HaShanah because when we say Rosh HaShanah there's a reaction to that. "*Kol Nidrei*"--to most Jews, if you say, let's see, "How was the cantor's rendition of the 'All Vows' chant?" It's like, what are you talking about!? So some things cannot be translated.[87]

Translating in this way has both merits and drawbacks. On one hand, it preserves the multi-resonant nature of the Hebrew word, but on the other it also leaves the meaning of certain words ambiguous; while a well-versed Hebrew reader can understand what makes translating such words difficult, a less fluent reader may be left grasping for meaning. Almost every single Hebrew root contains multitudes of meaning, and so one could critique this approach to translation as somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, this approach does highlight the special nature of Hebrew language and its depth and richness.

Amy Katz agrees with Urbach, and as the self-professed voice of "*Amcha*," that is, the general voice of the laity, in the room, she commented on the way Hebrew is heard in the ears of the general milieu of Jewish worshipers:

> Do I think Hebrew is *the* true language of Jewish prayer? No. I think Hebrew connects us to our people, I think it connects us to our tradition. When I *daven* in Hebrew it's a totally different experience. It's an experience for my soul and for my roots. Whereas when I take the time to read "Let America be America…"[88] that's an intellectual experience. I think those two things are really different, because… Look-it: A prayer in English really speaks to your head, whereas singing "*Aleinu*," or "*Ein K'Eloheinu*," or "*Adon Olam*," I don't think people are really paying attention to the words—they're just with community. Those are two different things, and they speak to different parts of the prayer experience. Often, when I ask people to tell me about their prayerful experiences, most of them aren't sitting in synagogue with the *siddur*! They're in nature, they're with their grandchildren, they're in all sorts of places. It's never "Rabbi, last Yom Kippur

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[87] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

[88] Katz is quoting the opening of the poem "Let America be America," by Langston Hughes, which she commented earlier in the interview was a text she has offered as a substitute for the English "Prayer for Our Country," found in *Siddur Lev Shalem* on page 177.

> right after your sermon when you finished speaking I just felt *so* moved." That's not to say that those experiences are bad, they're just not what I'd call 'prayerful.'[89]

In Katz's understanding, Hebrew is most important not because of some ethnic connection or poetic or mystical power, but because of what it does to the worshipper. It is about the way the language makes the pray-er feel, and the way it connects them to those around them. English speaks to their mind, but Hebrew speaks to their heart and soul.

Joanna Dulkin most overtly declared Hebrew's primacy:

> I love Hebrew, I'm a Hebrew fanatic. So I feel like very emotional when I think about Hebrew language, I just think it's so amazing. But within a prayer context, I think because I feel this way about Hebrew, I feel passionately that Hebrew needs to be the language of prayer and I know it to be true in my own experience, and from others that have spoken to me about this, that there is something about Hebrew that is on a sort of energy level, transformative and... In other words, you did not need to understand it word-by-word, to be able to have it affect you.[90]

The reason she feels this way about Hebrew language is as she said, related to the particular 'energetic' quality of the language:

> This is a super-weird side bar, but I just started studying to be a yoga instructor and one of my yoga-instructor-teachers who also happens to be Jewish, said that there are three ancient languages that have been proven through science to have reverberations that actually changed the energy in the room… And the three languages are, as you can imagine, Latin, Sanskrit, and Hebrew. That these three languages energetically change the room… I have to think a lot more about that, but I do think that there's something powerful about the language. I don't fetishize it, I'm not saying I'm not going to be like a Kabbalist… What's the word? The drug-store Kabbalah about "Just say these words and you'll become a new person." That's not what I'm talking about, but I think there is power in the words, themselves as declaimed in Hebrew.[91]

It is also, for Dulkin, related to its rise, or resurrection, as the *lingua franca* of Jews the world over:

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[89] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz

[90] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

[91] ibid.

> This is speaking as someone who has worked really hard to acquire Hebrew as a fluent second language, so I also think that Hebrew has now replaced Yiddish as the *lingua franca* of Jews all over the world. So I agree that it's *lashon kodesh* and that there shouldn't be any other language… I'm not going to be praying in English all the time from my *bimah* either, just Aramaic every so often. But I think there is a power to Hebrew as chanted, and read as our language of prayer, and it's so much more than just that. And that's why I feel passionately about Hebrew as a Jewish person, I think that and I've had so many experiences when I've been traveling in random places, is not just internationally, but Hebrew is the Jewish *lingua franca*, and I love the way that Israelis have now taken this *lashon kodesh* that was dead to become a modern language.[92]

She did concede that not everyone feels that way, and that English and translation in general are very important for Jewish worshipers, so Hebrew is not the only language of Jewish prayer. However, it is noteworthy that she did speak about Hebrew in a way somewhat similar to the language of *Sim Shalom*.

It is especially noteworthy in this discussion, as Dulkin began her Jewish journey in the Reform world and came to the Conservative world as she grew older. It is conceivable then, that one of the main qualities that drew her to Conservative Judaism was the way the Movement related to the Hebrew language. The clergy from both movements, though, in responding to this question about the place of Hebrew in Jewish prayer, established it as essential and superior for relating to the liturgy.

The **status of the vernacular** however was understood in more varied ways by these clergy, although all of them established English as an important tool for comprehension of the Hebrew text. Remarkably, while the text of *Mishkan HaNefesh*'s "Introduction" suggests that the English provided in the book was designed to deliver an experience equivalent to that of praying in Hebrew, none of the interviewed clergy suggested that the vernacular could truly be equivalent to the Hebrew. Rabbi Sheldon Marder, who was chiefly responsible for the work of translation in

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[92] ibid.

Mishkan HaNefesh, offered principles of translation that are different in character from those presented in the "Introduction" in his article in *Divrei Mishkan HaNefesh* entitled "Translating Faith:"

> 1. to reveal a prayer's essential ideas and qualities; 2. to make clear a prayer's core purpose, in relation to the real concerns of worshipers; 3. to make visible and audible in English the pervasive spiritual and poetic rhythm of the prayers—and to do so in theological and cultural terms that might overcome some of the obstacles to prayer (for example, diverse beliefs about God and the purpose of worship; and diverse backgrounds and sensibilities among Reform Jews in North America); 4. to offer to English-speaking worshipers prayers that strive for the directness, the energy, and the aesthetics of Hebrew prayer.[93]

Thus, the role of the English in modern Reform prayerbooks is to enable access to the Hebrew, not to be a replacement for it as it was in many cases in *UPB*. Not only was it not meant to be a replacement, but in Marder's explanation of what it meant to translate the Hebrew "idea for idea," he completely rejected the notion that word-for-word translation is even possible:

> A faithful translation presents idea for idea, feeling for feeling, and value for value—not word for word; and it resists the false premise of direct correspondence, asserting that we communicate the original text most accurately when its translation offers an ***equivalent*** way of saying the same thing—instead of purporting to offer an identical way. A faithful translation mirrors; it does not parrot. The living bridge of faithful translation is assembled not from the nuts and bolts of lexicons and dictionaries alone. Rather, it is a complex span of "beams and struts": history, theology, literature and poetry—even art, music, the social sciences, and the "hard" sciences; all of these enrich the context and result in a more dynamic translation.[94]

It is difficult to understand exactly what Marder means here; i.e. what is the difference between something being identical and something being equivalent? How is mirroring different from parroting? Regardless, it is clear that the work of creating brand new, original translations for this

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[93] Sheldon Marder. "Translating Faith." Essay. In *Divrei Mishkan HaNefesh: a Guide to the CCAR Machzor*, edited by Edwin C. Goldberg, 126–33. New York, NY: CCAR Press, 2016, p. 126

[94] ibid.

machzor was in service of a deeper appreciation for the Hebrew, rather than an attempt to supplant it.

The other clergy that worked on the *machzor* felt similarly, and spoke to the functional character of the vernacular. Morris first spoke about the issue of balance between Hebrew and English in the prayerbook:

> I think for your average American synagogue, it does have to be a balance. And I think there's far more Hebrew now than there was in previous generations. This prayer book makes it possible to do the service entirely in Hebrew, or entirely in English, or kind of a division [of both] that will differ from synagogue to synagogue. I think Hebrew is, you know, it's, it's, it's indispensable as a connection to the full range of what these words mean. But I also understand that, you know, American American Jews, our knowledge of Hebrew is not so strong. And I think more than kind of driving a language agenda, we want people to connect with literature and I think English can be very effective.[95]

The lack of Hebrew literacy in American Jewry is clearly something that was on the minds of the editors of *Mishkan HaNefesh*. Morris also commented on how their response to this perceived lack of literacy was very different than the Catholic Church's response to lack of understanding of the Latin Mass:

> I think [Janet and Sheldon Marder's approach to translation] is very effective. It's probably not helpful for somebody who knows a lot of Hebrew, but not too much and wants to kind of match up the Hebrew with the English—I think there it's harder, and that's a legitimate complaint that we heard. But I think this approach to translation enabled the English to be really beautiful liturgy. And it's beautiful liturgy *of its time*, so in 30 years it probably will feel very "early 21st century…" But there were these debates, you know, right at the beginning of our work, there were all these articles about how the Catholic Mass had been retranslated and there was like an official missive that was distributed to the Church in America to now use this new translation. And the approach was a very literal translation including like English words that were entirely unfamiliar to your average church-goer. You can find some of these articles in the New York times. And we thought it was fascinating because we were sort of having the same discussions and we were saying like, *no*, we *don't* want it to be literal translation. We want to do a

[95] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Leon Morris.

> translation that is powerful and meaningful. It packs a punch and conveys the feeling of the Hebrew.[96]

Morris' traditionalism, while it led to his advocacy for more traditional Hebrew sources and services being added to the book, did not mandate a philosophy which sought to convey that Hebrew in a literal sense. Rather, he wanted the users of this *machzor* to come away with a certain kind of feeling, which he suggested would be missing without certain sources present in the book. This understanding of the role of translation is a major difference of opinion with respect to those Conservative clergy that understand translation as a tool for learning the Hebrew.

Rabbis Edwin Goldberg and Danny Freelander felt similarly about worshipers coming away with a certain feeling. Goldberg quipped succinctly, "It is important that we help people experience the holy, and not a seminar about the holy."[97] Freelander expands, giving credit to the creators of *Mishkan HaNefesh*:

> The role of English is to spiritually uplift us when the Hebrew text is obscure or written for a different time and place where the metaphors don't necessarily work for us to take, take the "*Ma'ariv Aravim*," or "*Ahavat Olam*," or "*Ahavah Rabbah*," —the text doesn't literally work for us because we're not nature people. But the ideas do. That's why the left side of the page was important to me. And why I love how they really blew it out in, in *Mishkan HaNefesh* when we didn't have the balls to do it in *Mishkan T'filah* or whatever. Not the balls—We didn't have the political ability to move our colleagues to accept more more English-language, spiritual stuff… At least in *Mishkan T'filah*, if I don't like what the rabbi's chosen to read, I can read something else on the page. Even more so in *Mishkan HaNefesh*. I like the word faithful—they are not translations. We're trying to put in 21st century English the concept that the prayer author was trying to transmit. Look at Torah translations and all the different philosophies that underlie them. I don't need it to be word-for-word accurate. I'm not an academic when I'm praying. I'm trying to be a spiritual being who's after ideas.[98]

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[96] ibid.

[97] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Edwin Goldberg.

[98] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Daniel Freelander.

The candor with which Freelander spoke about this issue actually conveys important data about the evolving relationship to Hebrew and English-language prayer in the Reform Movement. The degree of interpretive license that was afforded to the creators of *Mishkan HaNefesh* was politically inaccessible to the creators of *Mishkan T'filah* just a decade prior.

On the Conservative side Dulkin, the Hebrew fanatic, understood the role of the vernacular, quite similarly to Urbach, as a means of more deeply accessing the Hebrew text. After her comment about the absolute primacy and essentiality of Hebrew, she addressed the fact that not everyone feels the same way she does:

> I believe that the prayer experience needs to be accessible to everyone, and so I love the idea of [English] super-titles or subtitles. I wish sometimes we could have a projected *siddur* in that way, so that as I'm *davening* in Hebrew, then the English can be kind of illuminated. I want everyone to see the Hebrew the way I see it. I acknowledge that when I'm *davening* in the Hebrew I'm *davening* with comprehension, so it's different for me and I want to be able to just convey that, but sometimes it's not easy. So I think the vernacular comes in when people are digesting prayer as led by others. And the other piece is that I want to train everyone to know that like: This prayer in the *siddur*, written in Hebrew, is from this dude, and many dudes and non-dudes have been chanting it forever—but if you want to *create* a prayer, it doesn't have to be in Hebrew. Right? If you want to innovate a prayer and you want to say something from your heart, and the language of your heart is not Hebrew, you are just as empowered to offer those words of prayer in the language that you speak in your heart.[99]

For Dulkin, English cannot be a substitute for Hebrew, but if it is effectively illuminated it can amplify the power of Hebrew prayer. Comprehension is what makes Hebrew powerful for Dulkin, but for those who cannot pray with comprehension English becomes the means by which they can "digest" what is going on in the service. The place where English ought to substitute Hebrew is when one wants to convey a particular message from their heart that is not present in the Hebrew text or that one cannot convey accurately in Hebrew. Personal prayer should be conducted in the language one knows best. This understanding is certainly not without precedent

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[99] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

in Jewish tradition, as Talmudic and Chassidic sources both articulate that being able to address God in the language one speaks daily is of high importance.

Translation then, becomes really important for making these texts speak to the current-day user of the prayerbooks. Dulkin commented on the challenge of reading the liturgical Hebrew for Israelis and how it differs from the difficulties American Jews face when reading these texts:

> This is where I think our Harlow siddur went a little off the reservation in terms of prioritizing the poetic language of the Hebrew over everything else. 'I want things to rhyme in English 'cause they rhyme in Hebrew,' for example. So I'm not going to worry so much about what it means so much is how it sounds when I say it, which is as an aesthetic choice that I think was made. I think that the language of prayer in Hebrew to Israelis sounds agent and stilted. And it's true like just when I've spoken to with Israelis about that, it's really a struggle reading Torah because the language is like, 'this is my language,' but it's like if I were trying to chant a Chaucer poem: like each individual word I get, but I don't really *get it*.[100]

Evan Kent, who teaches at the Jerusalem campus of HUC-JIR, faces similar issues when teaching pre-modern Hebrew texts to his Israeli students:

> I actually asked this to my class last week, I said when Israelis sing prayers in Hebrew, what do they hear? And they said, 'You know, I've never really thought about that. We just sort of are saying prayers.' I said, 'But do you actually hear the words?' They said, 'Well, on some level, but on some level, it's like when we sing songs: we sing the song, we don't necessarily parse each sentence apart.' So I mean, I think, you know, Hebrew, for [Israelis], it's sort of an aesthetic way of interpreting prayer. But I think for most congregants, if you say "*Magein Avraham v'Ezrat Sarah*," I don't think most people can translate it. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't sing it.[101]

For American Jews, the challenge is not trying to idiomatically understand the Hebrew, but to understand the Hebrew at all. Thus idiomatic language becomes incredibly important when the

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[100] ibid.

[101] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

language is translated to English. This, in Dulkin's estimation, is where some of the most important strides have been made:

> The ways that we've translated the same Hebrew over the years say a lot about how we're speaking and how we prioritize speech and vernacular, from the "Thee's" and "Thou's" as to the "Hims" of God, and now the "You" of God or the evolution into all of the beautiful "They" pronouns, with God, which is like, "Oh my God. Why didn't we think of this before…" It can be a way into understanding how people are talking and how people are thinking.[102]

The impact of these small changes in style and language is massive, especially as they relate to the degree to which all who use these prayerbooks feel welcome and included. This will be discussed in more depth in category ***e)***.

Urbach commented on the possibility of English as a substitute for the Hebrew in one's prayer, and here conveyed the issue of the halakhic status of certain units of prayer compared to others:

> You need good English. And we spent a ton of time on creating English, that would both accurately reflect, as much as possible, the meaning of the Hebrew, be pray-able in itself, and also including not just translation, but poetry and alternative readings that could be used as supplements or depending on where we are in the liturgy substitutes. Not everything has the same halakhic status. The Psalms of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, beautiful as they are, I don't feel about them the way I feel about the *brachot* around the *Sh'ma*, they don't have the same halakhic status. So somebody wants to pray an excerpt from the Song of Songs, or English poetry, that's an appropriate thing to do, and the vernacular can be very helpful there, to both Hebrew speakers and non-Hebrew-Speakers, in connecting with the different ways of accessing liturgy... One of the things I most love about our translation is that it's actually prayerful, and that sometimes it can even be sung. I think you need translation—people need access, people need to understand what they're reading. Some people will only use translation as all of their praying—I think that's great, but I think ideally, the commentary helps people feel that learning Hebrew is worth it.[103]

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[102] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

[103] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

The point of the vernacular is still to enable more full access to the Hebrew, as depicted by Urbach's closing sentence. Yet here there is a particular difference being described between the Reform and Conservative approaches to English. From a Conservative point of view it seems that substituting sections of the Hebrew for an English offering is alright, but only in units of the *matbeia t'filah* that are of lesser halakhic status such as *Kabbalat Shabbat* or, I imagine, *P'sukei D'Zimrah*. Evan Kent addressed this discrepancy from a Reform perspective in our conversation:

> We took an approach based on… zero-based budgeting. We called it zero-based *machzor* building which was, instead of just building layer, upon layer, upon layer —which comes across like the archeology of a *machzor*—let's go from nothing, what are we going to build from here? Which is really how zero base budgeting works. We don't base the budget on last year's, we go back to what do we actually need. And that's how we built: We said what are the realities and what do we actually need? And they were always in discussion with each other. And we made major breaks with tradition! I think the difference between Reform Jews and Conservative Jews is that, we didn't have to be apologists [for the tradition] at this point in our development. We could say "We're going to make a *major* break," such as we did with the shofar service.[104]

The role of halakha in Conservative Judaism makes this approach impossible. Starting from zero and not assuming any particular aspect of the tradition is absolutely sacrosanct and immovable allows for maximum creativity and innovation. However, if one is looking at the liturgy through the lens of halakha then there are certain changes and substitutions that one simply cannot make.

The question of **transliteration** becomes very significant as a precipitate of the relationship between worshipers whose first language is English and the liturgy whose prime language is Hebrew. Both movements suggested that the role of the vernacular was chiefly as a means of deepening connections to the Hebrew language, although not necessarily in a literal sense. Hebrew though, holds a higher status than English whether one is Reform or

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[104] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

Conservative. Amy Katz, who described Hebrew as the way to create community, understood transliteration then as a means to that end:

> Since Hebrew is the vehicle for creating community, the role of transliteration is to give people an entry point to that. That was a big piece of the *siddur*, I think that everything you can sing is transliterated. I mean, we probably missed a few things, but by and large that was the gist of it. There's more transliteration in the *Lev Shalem* books than in any other Conservative *siddur* by *far*, because that was about giving in and saying: they're not going to read Hebrew, but we're not going to stop *davening* in Hebrew.[105]

Just as *Siddur Sim Shalom*'s note on participation articulated, Hebrew is going to be the language of Conservative prayer, and what is important is that one regularly practice the Hebrew text so that they can develop comfort in that language. The massive expansion of transliteration in the *Lev Shalem* series goes a long way toward helping Conservative worshipers realize that goal. All the sections of the liturgy where they would be exhorted to pray aloud in Hebrew have now been transliterated, and so they can more readily feel a part of the community in the way Katz describes.

The greater use of transliteration has been accused in the past of becoming a 'Get Out of Jail Free Card' for those who do not wish to put in the effort to learn the Hebrew. In answering a question about whether there were common denominators of literacy that the committee considered in creating *Mishkan T'filah*, Elyse Frishman critiqued this point of view strongly:

> There was an argument—it was Larry Kushner who would say if you put transliteration in the book, people aren't going to learn Hebrew. I *really* disagree with that. I think that people who want to learn Hebrew are going to learn Hebrew. There are a lot of people who can't learn Hebrew. And the older you get, the harder it is to learn a new language. And there are lots of people coming into the congregation who are empty nesters, don't know Hebrew, who never were engaged, who suddenly find themselves seeking something. So in every way it's not about what's the LCD, which I think is a little bit of a, I think that's a little condescending, you know? I think rather it's who's there, who's here. When I look

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[105] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz.

> out, who do I see, how can I help them feel embraced? They shouldn't have to struggle to pray. I mean, really!?[106]

For Frishman, transliteration is an incredibly important tool indeed for learning the Hebrew, especially in an era of American Jewish life where Hebrew liturgical literacy has been devalued educationally:

> I think there's way too much disengagement, and Jewish education has really gone the route of greater and greater lack of knowledge. You know, it's all about the experience. Which look, I'm all for experiential education, camp did that for me, but there's no substitute for real knowledge. And so at the very least, being able to [participate], even if you don't read Hebrew—and I deeply believe in transliteration for every reason you can imagine…[107]

Jan Urbach agrees with this take on transliteration as a Hebrew teaching tool:

> You cannot publish a ***siddur*** or a ***machzor*** without transliteration. We needed it. We wanted people to be able to participate and sing. And also the transliteration, is a tool for learning Hebrew. When you're learning to read, if you are sounding out every word, it's going to take you forever until you can read fast enough to keep up with the congregation. But if you have the words in your mouth because you've been singing them in transliteration, then as you move to the outside and you learn to read the words are there, you can pretty quickly get to the point where you can sing along because you already know what it's supposed to sound like... And so there was no question. We're going to do transliteration.[108]

The trends in the prayerbooks of both denominations suggest that there is major consensus to be found on the subject of transliteration: that in today's American Judaism, the more transliteration you can provide, the better.

Jan Urbach described the conversation that the creators of the *Lev Shalem* series had about transliteration in great depth. She stated her own agreement with that sentiment, but

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[106] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman.

[107] ibid.

[108] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

showed how and why realizing her ideals for transliteration is impossible in a Conservative prayerbook.

> In a certain sense it would be great if you could transliterate everything. It's not possible. We couldn't do that and I don't know that everyone on the committee felt the same way about this. I would love to see everything transliterated because you never know what a congregations could do aloud and what they're not. That's not practical. The book can only be so big. People need to hold it, and the page has to be pray-able to the Hebrew *davener*, which means if there's too little text on the Hebrew page, and you're turning pages every line or two, you stop being able to use it…[109]

Urbach discussed many other realities of book-building that made this impossible. Not only does adding a great deal of transliteration greatly increase the length of the book, but it also affects what other English content can be put on the page: the more transliteration, the less room for commentary. Additionally, when you transliterate entire paragraphs of Hebrew, it can force the editors to create page-breaks which would disrupt units of prayer, and force single *brachot* to spread across multiple pages.

In meeting this challenge, the *Siddur Lev Shalem* committee made certain quite creative compromises that would allow them to maximize transliteration, especially for important units of prayer, while not compromising on commentary:

> There were trade-offs. For example, we wanted to include transliteration of the first three *brachot* of the *Amidah* through the *Kedushah*. That's a *lot* of real estate in the book. And if we had to do it every time the *Amidah* appears that's a lot of extra pages, and it breaks up the *Amidah* impossible way. It mean, you can't even get a whole *brachah* on the page, right? So what we did was we compromised by putting the transliteration of the first three *brachot* of the *Amidah* on the very, very last page of the book, So that somebody who's *davening* and wants it doesn't have to flip through and look. You go to the back, you open the cover and you're right there. Now, people have to know it's there, a lot of people don't. That's the compromise. Once people know it's there, it's very usable. And it saved us, I don't

[109] ibid.

> know, probably ten to thirteen pages—all that prime real estate—for the commentary. So that was a compromise.[110]

Yet for all their desire to compromise or to find creative work-arounds, it was not always possible, and this was due to the Conservative Movement's commitment to halakha. Dulkin explained that there were certain liturgical adjustments, changes and innovations that the Committee pushed for, but that the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards denied on the basis of what halakhically had to be in the liturgy. She even went further, in her discussion of transliteration, to give voice to the longstanding commitment of the Conservative Movement to Hebrew language as the language of prayer:

> So this is another Conservative Movement specific piece--not that the Reform Movement doesn't have standards about what liturgy should be, because I get it, there's a certain halakhic, or I don't know if I'd call it halakhic but maybe it is now in the Reform Movement... But it is still central that in the Conservative Movement, there is actually a Committee on Jewish Law and Standards that is taken very seriously. So we were in conversation. So in other words, there's only so much that we can push in terms of an agenda of accessibility. And transliteration, for many years I think across Jewish movements, has been a scapegoat for people who call it a shortcut and say like, "Well this is just the dumbing down of Judaism. They won't ever learn the Hebrew…" So it was a specific decision that was made, that whatever was transliterated in our *siddur* was either a congregational melody like a piece of a Psalm that was sung aloud, or it was a congregational response. So "*Kadosh kadosh kadosh Adonai tz'vaot*…" Right, that's a congregational response. Not always a song, but it's a response. Or, "*Y'hei sh'mei rabah*…" Okay, so those were the halakhic reasons and then stylistic reasons were more like we didn't want the book to be super long, right? And I think that's part of it, is the halakhic stance which is: the Conservative Movement stands for 'prayer occurs in Hebrew' and Hebrew means Hebrew with Hebrew letters and Hebrew vowels. And that's the way we do it. And whether or not you like it, that's what it is.[111]

This quote might make Dulkin appear to be a hard-liner with respect to transliteration. While she clearly is in the camp of Conservative clergy that deeply prefers Hebrew language and considers

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[110] ibid.

[111] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

it to be unquestionably supreme when it comes to Jewish prayer, she did go on to offer a very compassionate position on why transliteration is important. That position will be discussed in the next section of the paper, as it applies to accessibility and inclusion of all members of the congregation.

In *Mishkan T'filah* all of the Hebrew is transliterated, and additional texts for study were only included in English. In *Mishkan HaNefesh*, however, there were many study texts included with the original Hebrew. The compromise was made that the Hebrew of the traditional liturgy would be transliterated, as would any Hebrew that sits on the left-hand page, but the Hebrew on the study pages would be vocalized, but not transliterated. In this way, the *Mishkan* series books are similar to the *Lev Shalem* series books. In their non-linear set up, there is a potential that any Hebrew on either the right-hand or the left-hand page could be read or sung aloud by the congregation in prayer, and so it must be transliterated. The study texts did not need to be, however, since they were not designed for congregational worship.

Innovation vs. Preservation

While the questions about the language of the liturgy were somewhat straightforward, the questions I asked about **the degree to which the clergy saw themselves as innovators or preservationists of and in the liturgy** and **their priorities as they approached the greater corpus of Jewish liturgical texts** were the ones that were met with some discomfort by the interviewees. The Conservative interviewees especially struggled with this question because of

the Reform perspective from which it was asked. Their deep commitment to the halakhic framework meant that their approach to innovation was intrinsically different than the Reform clergy's approach. Furthermore, they did not see this commitment as a block to their trying to innovate as modern liturgists, but rather as a framework in which to do this work.

Both Joanna Dulkin's and Jan Urbach's critiques of the questions were hugely insightful. When it came to my question of what the committee's priorities should be her response was that she did not think that "priority" was even the correct framework:

> I'm not sure it's a question of priorities. It's a question I can't really answer. I don't think of it that way. There's always been variation in certain details of the *nusach* of the core *matbeia*. And there's been evolution in the less core pieces, right? And some of the choices of *piyyutim*, there's always been some variation in that, but the integrity of the fundamental units of Jewish prayer is very ancient and I think we owe a responsibility to that. You wouldn't take out a *bracha* around the *Sh'ma*, you wouldn't take out any of the *brachot* of the *Amidah*, you wouldn't mess with that core structure, right? I know the reform movement took out *Musaf*--I think that's a mistake…I think we had an obligation to be exceedingly humble in approaching the traditional liturgy for all kinds of reasons. and I think that there are certainly places in which there is an overriding need to change something or to add or occasionally to delete. That's one of the reasons why there needs to be a committee because I think that shouldn't be one person's judgement.[112]

Dulkin was similarly hesitant to answer the question in those terms, but offered a quite candid answer about priorities that had to do less with how they dealt with the specific language of the liturgy, and instead with how they presented it:

> I'm guessing this might have been one of those questions that [Rabbi Ed Feld] was like: "This is a very Reform question," because the classical [Conservative] answer to this question is: "Well, *matbeia shel t'filah* has not changed," Bullsh*t. "*Matbeia shel t'filah* has not changed, and therefore that structure should be our priority." Okay, in other words we have to have *Musaf*. We have to have full *P'sukei D'zimrah*, for example. I think our approach to this in reality has been okay we have to create basically what's the core of our... *matbeia*… That core is not really going to shift drastically… What we're going for is that if you look at any given spread…the Hebrew should not feel drastically different. Okay, the font might be a little different, there might be some bracketed language that may feel

[112] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

> new to you, but if you're just looking at the Hebrew text—so you open up to, I don't know, *Musaf* for Festivals, which I'm putting here as an example for a reason, there should be very recognizable language here that feels to you like liturgy that you know. And then you can also look on the facing page and you can look at the English that explains the Hebrew and... And I think one of our core values was to be very true to the Hebrew in a way that actually sounded like you would actually speak. So you can look at that and there may be some surprises, but not too many surprises or it shouldn't feel it should feel fresh and interesting, but probably not earth-shattering. And then around the sides, you have interpretive language, explanatory language, and that's where we want to push you to think about, 'Well, what should we be thinking about when we look at that?'[113]

The priorities, Dulkin explained, were always about ensuring that no one who opened the prayerbook would feel lost or feel like their prayer-world had been destroyed or altered beyond what is reasonable. The four-column system of the *Lev Shalem* books accomplishes this masterfully, as the text in the two central columns is largely familiar, and the text on the outer columns is designed to offer new insights on and interpretations of the liturgy to expand the horizons of the user of the *siddur* or *machzor.*

Her choice, though, to remark upon the *Musaf* for Festivals that is found in *Siddur Lev Shalem* was a particularly apt one, as this is one of the places that the committee made noteworthy innovations *within* the text, but in what Dulkin would call a classically Conservative way. When one reaches that point in the *siddur,* one can choose to use the first option for *Musaf,* which is the traditional text with no adjustments. This text is very problematic for many Jews, though, because of the liturgy's overt message of the Temple having been destroyed because of the sins of the Jewish people. One could, however, choose the second version that is in the *siddur,* which retains the three opening *brachot* and the three closing *brachot,* but offers an altered *Kedushat HaYom* blessing, and replaces the texts in the middle with various poetic offerings from which to choose based on what holiday one is celebrating.

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[113] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

> *Musaf* is great because it's extra so you can kind of play with it, we're not saying we're not going to have *Musaf*, we're saying: "If we're going to have *Musaf*, let's really have a *Musaf* option, right?" So that's kind of a nice example where we can innovate and create opportunity for accessibility around the established liturgy, but there is opportunity for us to actually go deep into our *piyyut*ic tradition or go into a Sephardi tradition or Chassidic tradition and sort of, in a good way, dredge up some really good gems and present them in a way that makes sense within the context of what people think they know.[114]

This kind of innovation is characteristic of the Conservative movement, as Dulkin described. Rather than deleting the established traditional *Musaf* for Festivals, the committee created a new option and offered both in the *siddur*.

The Reform Movement's relationship to the *Musaf* service was actually, indirectly, the impetus for this entire study. In my first year of rabbinical school, our class got to spend an evening with Rabbis Elyse Frishman and Danny Freelander discussing *Mishkan HaNefesh*, which at the time was in its beta-testing phase. Frishman did the bulk of the presenting, educating us on the major goals and style of the new *machzor* so that we would be somewhat informed when we returned to the United States and had to lead congregations over the High Holy Days. Having looked at the *machzor* I was stunned to see how much traditional liturgy had been reincorporated. I was particularly interested in the Shofar Service, the three traditional sections of which had been added back into the *machzor*. These sections, in traditional *machzorim*, are found in the repetition of the *Amidah* in *Musaf* on Rosh HaShanah. I began to ask Frishman about the choices that the committee made in their handling of the *Musaf* liturgy, but Rabbi Frishman stopped me mid-sentence, saying and I quote: “Over my dead body will there be a *Musaf* service in a Reform *machzor*.” The passion and seriousness of her response piqued my interest in how the different movements relate to the same units of liturgy.

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[114] ibid.

I asked Frishman, as I did every Reform interviewee, about how she believes the Reform Movement ought to approach *Musaf* and other units of liturgy that have been absent from the Reform *matbeia t'filah* for well over a century, such as *tachanun*. I was curious to hear whether these clergy, and Frishman especially, viewed them as as potential repositories of liturgy that could be mined for future Reform prayerbooks, or whether they were simply beyond the pale for Reform Jews. *Musaf* is, after all, not totally foreign in Reform worship, as that unit of liturgy is still in the British Reform *siddur*. In my asking about these units I reminded her of that evening she and our class spent together, and her answer was incisive and helpful, albeit a bit, to use her word, nasty:

> Well, facetiously, I'm still alive. Right? My answer is that potentially when you go back into those sections and look for some particular piece or verse or something that might be interesting, but as conceptual whole, adding it to our worship, it makes *zero* sense in Reform worship. We don't have the time. You know, why do that when you could teach more Torah? The notion of supplication is not a notion that our people resonate with. So I don't get it. And, I apologize for this bit of maybe nastiness, but I always love when Conservative Jews complain, "Oh, these Reform Jews…" but what are they doing during services? They're talking to each other, they're going out in the hall, they're not engaged in worship. They're just doing [those sections] because they think it's the right thing to do. Well, not all Conservative places are like that of course. But, you know, in the most general sense, frankly, most Reform worship is dreadful, too. But in terms of the possibilities: if our people were willing to commit more time to worship, and I think it's possible to create a meaningful experience out of a *musaf* or *tachanun*, then I would love to explore them. But currently there's absolutely no reason to, it just doesn't make sense. Or people are stuck for understanding Judaism and Torah in the key of "Let's spend more time." Let's spend more time on *Sh'ma uvirchoteha*, exploring what the role of the S*h'ma* is in our worship right now. And, you know, let's use our time in a way that's going to elevate the experience. That's, so that's how I feel about it, which isn't to just say I would dismiss it forever, but *definitely* not now.[115]

[115] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman.

This answer is a theoretical “yes” but a practical “no.” There might be room to mine these sources for new material to incorporate into future Reform worship, but now is not the time to add them back in wholesale.

In trying to discern the relationship between **innovation and preservation**, I asked the clergy where they fall on the following spectrum on a scale of 1-10: (1) Preserving and including as much as possible of the “traditional” liturgy and avoiding needless additions <—> (10) Actively seeking adaptations or innovations that could make the liturgy better reflect the current needs of worshipers as you (or they) perceive them. My hypothesis in creating this question was that I would receive answers that were higher numbers from the Reform clergy and answers that were lower from the Conservative clergy. I could not have been more wrong.

The responses were quite varied across the board. Evan Kent was one of the clergy, but not the only one, who suggested that his personal stance on this spectrum was different than how it actually played out on the committee: “I would say personally I'm at a seven or eight. But on the committee, because I realized I also have to represent the voices of some of my colleagues, I would say I was a five.”[116] Frishman similarly was different in practice than she understood herself to be personally, and she contextualized her response by discussing the nature of what *Mishkan T'filah* was intended to be:

> So we had the freedom to not include [every possible Psalm or *piyyut*] because we knew that, look, the stuff is out there. If a rabbi wants access to it or a cantor wants access to it, it's there. They can bring it in. It's not a big deal. But in the larger model of this *siddur* and what we wanted to accomplish, recognizing it's got a limited lifeline, right? Things were changing so rapidly. *Gates of Prayer* was published in '75 and this got published in the 2000's. The next one is going to happen even sooner if it's affordable. It *should*. So our responsibility was to, *our* community. It wasn't to the Jewish *people*… So in that sense I would be closer to a ten. But if you ask me in the broadest sense, I'd be a five. Philosophically I might be a five, but in practice I'm closer to an eight. And I feel that way in the

[116] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

> way that I utilize the ***siddur*** in worship every week. Who's here right now? What's going to resonate for them? What's going to draw them to want to turn the page? And that's my responsibility. It's not to the halakha, it's to the, it's to the corpus of the material, the system, philosophy, to good theology—but the possibilities of all of it are for us. It's not for anybody else. It's not for God. It's for ***us***.[117]

Freelander echoed the philosophical position that Frishman placed herself into:

> Me personally, I'm at a five, I'm right in the middle. I've got to go both directions. I don't want to reject anything in tradition, just for the heck of it, but I don't feel a strong obligation to include things that I can't figure out how to make work for the community. And change for its own sake doesn't motivate me. It's not that I want it to be different. I want it to be effective. I want it to be powerful.[118]

As did Richard Sarason, but for more practical reasons:

> I'm probably a five. Maybe a four, because I recognize again, too often the prayer book has been written and has been edited by rabbis for rabbis. That is to say, we say we're doing this for ***Amcha***, but we're really not… But there's a recognition that this stuff has to play in Peoria. Okay? As they say, a camel is a horse put together by a committee. Right, so a prayer book, a movement prayer book is a prayer book that is put together by a committee. And what that means is that it's got to be somewhat ***pareve***.[119]

The answers from the Reform clergy that I interviewed essentially averaged out to around a five out of ten, which in retrospect is not terribly surprising. Everything I heard from the Reform clergy was about balancing a serious attempt to bring new texts, interpretations and modes of prayer while maintaining the values that have underpinned Reform worship for decades. This sounds quintessentially Reform Jewish to me.

The Conservative clergy shocked me to an even greater extent, as they largely critiqued the question itself, rather than place themselves squarely at one point on the spectrum. I will share the responses of Dulkin and Urbach because they answered the question most fully, but all

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[117] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman.

[118] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Daniel Freelander.

[119] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Dr. Richard Sarason.

of the Conservative clergy both whom I spoke with in formal interviews and with whom I had conversations about this project all felt somewhat similarly about this question. Urbach was frustrated with the question because she did not see the two poles that I had set up as sitting on the same spectrum at all. They were not opposites in her mind:

> I can't answer that because those... Because you've got too many variables in one question. Preserving and including has nothing to do with avoiding needless additions. Those are two different questions. and actively seeking adaptations or innovations. I can do that while preserving and including--those are at an opposition for me. I can't give you a number on that. Preserving and including as much of the traditional liturgy as possible, I would put that as a ten. Actively seeking adaptations or innovations that make the liturgy--I don't like "the current needs" of Jews.
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> I think that's not the way I think about it. Okay, but that make the liturgy ethically responsible, inclusive, and meaningful? I would put that as a ten. And avoiding additions, well it depends on what you mean. I don't want to have my own needless additions in and I don't want to just add things that don't mean anything. Obviously, they would put that as a ten that I want to avoid doing that, but do I want to take out things that I feel were needlessly added years ago? Sometimes yes sometimes no it depends. It depends on whether there's a reason to remove them or include them. And that's one of the reasons why I think it goes right back to why it should be a movement project and not an individual congregational ***siddur*** because what feels like a needless addition, to me in my congregation now, the world changes and five years later I need that liturgy. Or if I take it out in my community, I may not realize that there are lots of Jews for whom that's really important, right? And I need to know and experience what matters to them, because we're one people. So, what makes something needless...
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> I don't think it's about balance. I think the mission is to make the traditional liturgy speak to the present moment and that requires both. It's not about making Jewish prayer speak to people even in the face of this traditional liturgy--the traditional liturgy does speak to the present moment. Our job is to help it do that and to be sensitive to things that are missing or or things that have changed. So what I would say about ***Lev Shalem*** both the ***machzor*** and the ***siddur***, the books are both more traditional than previous Conservative Movement books and more innovative.[120]

I may have tainted Dulkin's answer by telling her what Urbach had said. Yet, in hearing that Urbach had placed herself as a 'ten' in both categories and yet somehow not on the spectrum at all, Dulkin similarly struggled to place herself on the spectrum I had designed:

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[120] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

> Yeah, it's funny, she said a ten and a ten, and that's why I love the *siddur* and I feel like I can say... And I will answer your question because I think I agree with her, but I can say with absolute truth that I feel like our *siddur* succeeded in being extremely traditional and extremely innovative, all at once. And sometimes the innovation people didn't know it this way, like for example, the addition of Miriam in our *Mi Chamocha*: so people were really curious about that, right? "*Moshe, uMiryam, uv'nei Yisrael l'cha anu shira v'amru chulam...*" Well, Miriam as always been there, she's been there. If you look at the Torah, she was kind of there and she even has her own song. Part of this is the connection of the dots of things that have always been there and we're just lifting it up in this way, that like it's super authentic within... Once you explain that Miriam's there in the Torah, it's like, "Oh yeah, that totally makes sense, I get it." So that's a perfect example of us preserving as much as we can of this, and we're actually coloring in a part of with an invisible ink. We're coloring in a part that was always there. And it's not necessarily an innovation so much as an illumination.
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> Now there are specific times where we innovated precisely because this goes back to what I said before, there are people in our tradition who have not been seen in our traditional prayer. And this whole... I won't get into the whole thing, but this idea of "*V'lo n'tato…*" So you did not give Shabbat to the *goyim* and you only gave it to us. Here we are in our contemporary American *shuls*, and there are plenty of people who are not Jewish sitting in our *shuls* having Shabbat, looking at the *siddur,* praying with the *siddur*, and then they're like "Wait, what!? I didn't get Shabbat!? But I'm here!" So there, we said, Okay well, "*V'lo n'tato…*" we just shrunk it in littler font. And so, if you want to start at "*Ki Yisrael* etc. etc." you can just not even say that part. So in other words, we minimized it literally. So we're not going to take that out per se, but we do want to highlight it as something that you can minimize, and that's okay. So I think that I would also say I'm maybe not quite a ten, on the first one. I'm a little more of an *apikorus* on that. I would say, I think in terms of a *siddur* product, yes, I think we need to include as much as possible and be as maximalist as possible and so I'd say maybe an eight for me but actively seeking adaptations, I would say ten.[121]

Dulkin's final comment made me think that this spectrum may have been all wrong from the beginning. I probably should not have posed preservation and innovation as opposites, as in truth, even in Reform Judaism, they do not function in that way. Maximalism and minimalism may have been a more savvy approach to the question of innovation: is it that anything is changeable, or that nothing is? Or, perhaps, a spectrum is not the right tool at all for assessing the degree to which a prayerbook-designing clergyperson is striving to be an innovator.

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[121] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Hazzan Joanna Dulkin.

In any case, the detailed answers provided by all the clergy point toward far more similarities than differences. The movements use different rubrics, to be sure. The Conservative Movement will be much more hesitant to make a major change in the liturgy, and especially so when it comes to uprooting or deleting something, due to the halakha of liturgy as it has been passed down to the current generation. The Reform Movement will add in new and more traditional texts to the main body of the Hebrew liturgy, but only if there seems to be a justifiable, practical need to do so. Yet both movements do not seek to add for the sake of addition, or delete frivolously. Both engage deeply in a process of evaluation, and a great deal of listening both to their congregations and their rabbinical unions, before changing the shape of the liturgy for their worshipers.

The Relationship Between Prayerbook and Congregation

There was only one question I asked the clergy that explicitly fell into this category, but there were many ways that the relationship between these books and those who use them was elucidated in the answers of many of the questions in the interviews. That question had to do with **whether or not there were certain commonalities, or even common denominators** (although, as Frishman commented, this is a condescending way to put it)**, that were considered by the committee in order to ensure that the prayerbook was usable by, and spoke to, everyone**. Both movements accomplished this in multiple ways and in response to multiple motivations.

One key way that the movements tried accomplish this goal was by varying the expertise that was present on the committees. For instance, before Evan Kent became a part of the *Mishkan HaNefesh* project, there was no cantor on the committee at all:

> There was no cantor on the committee. And I realized this and I approached both Susan Carol, I believe, who was the president at the time of the ACC and Steve Fox, who was the executive director and chief executive of the CCAR. Steve was a member of my congregation in LA and Susan and I know each other for a thousand years. And I said, "I see that there's no cantor. I would like to know if that would be something that I could do." And I was told there would be no funding, cause you know, the ACC is a smaller organization. I said I'd be willing to do it cause I think it's, I think it's important.[122]

Kent's choice to participate even without pay was a critical one, and over the course of our conversation it became overtly clear that having someone who could give voice to which texts were commonly sung and in what ways they were sung was critical for the committees approach to the liturgy. There were rabbis who were much more liberal on the committee, and rabbis who were much more traditional, like Morris, for example. Similarly, the committee that was assembled for *Mishkan T'filah* from the very beginning, which ultimately was downgraded to be just a "*Siddur* Discussion Group," was designed to be variegated, as Cutter explained:

> On the committee that was there… there were specifically pulpit rabbis, and those people were often chosen for two reasons, and they fulfilled those functions nicely. One was that they knew something—they weren't shooting in the dark about the technical stuff. But two was they were able to talk about the reception, the Germans call it "*Rezeption*,"—that means what does the community respond to and what does the community need… We had two laypeople on the committee that could often serve as a check or a balance. One time a layman said "I don't care what you say your congregants want—I'm a congregant and I'll tell you what I want!" …I think that, as in every system, the selection of who's in charge influences decisions that are made. So you have a liturgy committee, and in our case the chairs were Peter Knobel and Elaine Zecher, so they chose people, I suspect, who they felt had discernment. And I suspect that when they put somebody like [Richard] Levy on the committee, and you could hardly form a committee of liturgy without him on it, they wanted people who were counterweights. So they had Rabbi Joel Kahn, who's a very, very bright guy. And

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[122] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Cantor Evan Kent.

> he is openly gay and has a strong sense of inclusiveness and also is a little rebellious. They put me on… And I think having decided all that, I think they count on a mixture that would take care of itself and come out with a sound conclusion.[123]

Similar processes occurred in the construction of the committee on the Conservative side. As Amy Katz described above, she was on the committee because she was an educator and pulpit rabbi who could give voice to "*Amcha*," while Robert Scheinberg was on the committee for his high degree of halakhic expertise. The *Lev Shalem* committees for both the *siddur* and the *machzor* made sure also to have a cantor as a member of the team (two cantors in the case of *Machzor Lev Shalem*). Were all these different schools of expertise not enough, both movements' committees had to be in regular conversation with committees of their rabbinical unions: The Committee on Liturgy in the CCAR, and the Committee of Jewish Law and Standards in the RA. These committees, as has been shown, have had a direct effect on what does and does not end up in the final publication, which in turn has a direct effect on the laity's experience of the prayerbooks.

Not satisfied with the mere inclusion of clergy who could voice the needs of the laity in various ways, the Reform Movement hugely involved the laity in the years leading up to the creation of *Mishkan T'filah*, as Lawrence Hoffman described in an interview shortly after the release of the new *siddur*:

> Creating the Reform Movement's newest prayer book, *Mishkan T'filah* (2006), was a far more thorough, lengthy, and democratic process than ever before. We began with an extensive survey of our congregations, funded by an Eli Lilly grant and organized by Rabbi Peter Knobel and Dan Schechter…Then an editorial committee consisting of lay leaders, rabbis, cantors, and liturgists discussed every issue in detail, while field-testing each siddur draft at Union for Reform Judaism biennials and CCAR conventions and in nearly 300 congregations throughout North America. We also received hundreds of additional comments from lay people, rabbis, and cantors—and we listened to every suggestion…Talk about

[123] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. William Cutter.

> inclusivity! Each stage of the process factored in issues of gender, age, theology, generation, academic expertise, and style--the intangible issue of *how* people like to pray. This is truly a prayer book by and for the people.[124]

This degree of involvement of the laity speaks profoundly to just how big of a step the Reform Movement understood *Mishkan T'filah* to be. The new direction that this prayerbook took Reform prayer with its non-linear design and inclusion of so many more options both traditional and modern, Hebrew and English, had to be embarked upon with extreme care. As any clergyperson will explain, if one changes too much, too fast, without proper scaffolding, one risks collapsing the whole enterprise.

In the newest prayerbooks, the substantially increased emphasis placed on inclusivity, just as Hoffman made sure to emphasize even in *Mishkan T'filah*'s earliest days, is perhaps the most important insight I gained in interviewing the clergy around this topic. More and more, it has become apparent that, as Dulkin said, people who have long been invisible in the liturgy need to be seen. One of the groups of people who had not been seen, like Miriam in the story of the Jewish people crossing the Sea of Reeds, were women. While both the Reform and Conservative movements had adjusted their language to be gender inclusive when discussing humanity, and eventually God as well, before the newest generations of prayerbooks in both movements were published there was not a single woman who sat on the editorial committee for a new *siddur* or *machzor*.

Elyse Frishman being named as the editor of *Mishkan T'filah* ameliorated this problem in the Reform Movement, but it did not wash away the latent sexism against woman rabbis and the general influence of feminism on the liturgy. Frishman described some of the abuse she took from colleagues in our interview. I asked her what she would have gone back and tried to re-

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[124] Aron Hirt-Manheimer. “The Prayer Book of the People.” CCAR Press. CCAR Press, 2006. https://www.ccarpress.org/content.asp?tid=467.

litigate if given the chance, and after a short commentary about lining up pagination between editions of the *siddur*, she told me the following:

> The other thing is I think that the other major issue is what poetry we were allowed to include. And the truth is that there was extraordinary bias at the time that we were putting the book together against women and against non-Jewish poetry. Colleagues were like… very vocal. True story: in fact, two stories that are related. One is I was on the Jerusalem campus and a colleague who was about fifteen years older than me, twenty years older than me almost accosted me. I mean it was a verbal *accost* and he basically said to me that I was destroying Judaism because of all of these non authentic voices. And I said to him, well what exactly do you mean by non authentic? He said, the *women*, *those* voices, *they're* not [authentic]. And then I had a colleague that was essentially a classmate a year or so apart from me, who said to me "With all due respect, in your feminizing of the *siddur*, you are losing the voices of the men." And I looked at him and I said, "You already have the entire right hand page. Whatever happens on the left just evens it up a bit." But it is the reason why we removed the names of the authors and put them in the back of the book. By *Mishkan HaNefesh* we'd already evolved enough as a movement where the names went back on the page. There was a lot of protesting of our taking the names off the page… And the people who didn't get it were essentially not going to buy the book because there were too many women's voices. There were women poets who were rejected, and I was certain it was because they were women. Their style was something that was just not acceptable to what I would call an older generation. Now it's funny, there's material that showed up in *Mishkan HaNefesh* that was banned from *Mishkan T'filah*. There was a lot of that that took place.[125]

Since the time of Frishman's harassment and subjection to the patriarchal entitlement of her male colleagues, the Reform Movement has taken huge strides to deal with such sentiments in its ranks. Many sessions were held at this year's biennial to address the lack of visibility of Jews of color, the inclusion of those who identify as being of non-binary gender and those of non-heteronormative sexual orientation, and to tell the stories of the countless women in the Jewish community including those in the clergy and in positions of lay leadership who have been subject to sexist and sexual abuses. Frishman's resilience and success, despite such malicious attacks on the character of her landmark work, is admirable.

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[125] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Elyse Frishman.

While there have been great strides made in the last two decades, much more still needs to be done on this front. The creators of prayerbooks in both movements are seeking to make their movements more inclusive through their liturgical work. Frishman was a pioneer in this way. In her discussion of the 'common denominators' question, the ending of which is quoted above, she pointed out how important it was to her to have some of the most difficult conversations about inclusion from the outset of her work on *Mishkan T'filah*:

> All of us recognized [that we had an inclusion problem]. Again, these conversations sound so simple because t's kind of like any conversation about LBGTQ—today it's 'duh,' right? But in the 1980s, when people were dying of AIDS and no one was talking about it, there was nothing [obvious] about it. And even in the first part of this decade of this century, and it sounds so crazy to say this, I mean there were faculty who would not ordain someone if they came out as lesbian or gay. I mean, now the issue is intermarriage, right? And Thalia [Halpert-Rodis]'s senior sermon actually was on rabbis being able to marry someone who was not Jewish. One of my colleagues, Lynne Landsberg, *aleha hashalom*, had fallen in love with the son of a minister. Now he converted, but we had lots of conversations about that and that was in the late seventies.

While not everyone was as willing to have those difficult conversations then, they are becoming more common now. New Conservative prayerbooks strove mightily to account for the lack of visibility of certain cross-sections of their communities. In her answer as to what one thing she would want to go back and re-litigate or want to see changed in the books she worked on, Urbach explained that a very important conversation about inclusion was had, and perhaps even too soon to be helpful:

> The one thing that I think we were not able to accomplish and that was less a matter of re-litigating it, and more a matter of the timing wasn't ready. We were too soon. We do not have non-binary language. We don't have non-gender binary language to call someone to the Torah. And we were as inclusive as we could be about different family configurations, in *mi shebeirach*s around adoption or baby-namings, or whatever it is. We didn't include non-binary language. And the reason that we didn't is that we felt that there wasn't yet a consensus on what that language should be and we didn't feel that it was the place of a prayer book committee to make a decision about what that language should be and put it in print before the community kind of agreed. And we realized that we could easily

> do something that two years hence would either seem really outdated or even offensive. And we just didn't feel it was for us to make that call. I feel really bad about that. I wish we had been able to do it. It's not something I would re-litigate because at the time, I think it was the right call not to do it. But looking back, I wish it was a book that had that. Like now, people will be called [to the Torah] as "*Mimishpachah*..." instead of "*ben*" or "*bat*." But things move fast and when this book was going to press in it wasn't getting common enough usage that we felt like, yes, we can put it in the book. That language is still in flux for sure, and maybe there'll be a supplement at some point for that.[126]

The fact that this conversation was even happening in the years leading up to the publication of *Siddur Lev Shalem* is remarkable. It is only in the last few years that language around non-binary gender has become truly normalized in American social discourse, and even still today the language comes up against major backlash in some communities. In Hebrew it can be even more challenging, as gender binaries are built into the structure and function of the language. There are many interesting linguistic experiments going on to address these gaps, but, as Urbach said, none have become truly authoritative or universally accepted. It is quite interesting to imagine a supplement to a *siddur* being released to address social conventions like these. Especially in the Reform Movement, which due to the lack of a halakhic barrier to using screens on Shabbat has invested mightily in projected liturgy, and which also does not yet have a prayerbook which contains non-binary gender language options, such a supplement, even in digital form, could serve to make the worship experience just that much more inclusive.

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[126] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. Jan Urbach.

CONCLUSION

Denominational *siddurim* and *machzorim* affect Jewish life on a massive scale. They create and shape the identity of entire movements of Jews, and equally importantly help to shape the Jewish identity of the individuals that make up those movements. Each new evolution of the liturgy within a movement is meant to capture and embody a conversation that has been active for decades within their movement, but I would extrapolate Dulkin's conversation metaphor a bit further. She compared the *siddur* conversation within the movement to the conversation through time that takes place on the pages of the Talmud. I think though, that the prayerbook conversation is not only similar to the dialogue of the Talmud, but that it is also itself in dialogue with the more ancient sources of our tradition. The conversation about what liturgical themes and language should be present in *Mishkan HaNefesh* and *Mahzor Lev Shalem* did not begin in the 2000s, it began in the 200s. The power of the chain of Jewish tradition, of which all these clergy have become an integral and indelible part, is that it is unbroken. Ed Feld and Elyse Frishman are not only in an imagined dialogue with *Masechet Brachot*, but indeed a real and serious dialogue.

So too can any Jew who engages with the texts of our tradition be a part of this conversation. There are those communities of Jews, though, who do not feel that a committee bound to a denomination can create a tool for worship that will snugly fit their communal *minhag*. Communities like Romemu in New York City, Sha'ar Zahav in San Fransisco, and Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills in Los Angeles have taken it upon themselves to put in the serious effort required to create a prayerbook specifically tailored to the needs of their community.

In my desire to understand what would drive a community to take on such a project, I interviewed Rabbi Laura Geller, rabbi emerita of Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, who

oversaw the creation of a prayerbook for her community, called *The New Emanuel Prayerbook.* Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills is a Reform community, but the *siddur* that their committee created is quite different in character from any of the Reform Movement prayerbooks. The Temple Emanuel community, at the time that their *siddur* project was initiated, was itself somewhat more traditional than its Reform counterparts around Los Angeles, as Geller explained:

> The thing that Temple Emanuel had that distinguished us from most other Reform synagogues was that we had a *Shabbos* morning *minyan* that was not a *bar mitzvah minyan*. We were before any of these other places except I think Stephen S. Wise early on had a once-a-month thing that Mordechai Finley used to lead and then Dennis Prager used to lead. But we were among the first to have a regular, no matter what, Shabbat morning service. And that's why people came, I mean, they weren't all members but people wanted to show up for services.[127]

The basic difference between their *siddur* and its contemporary in the Reform Movement, is that it is much more traditional. While it does maintain certain Reform movement decisions which shorten the service, like the removal of the *Musaf* service, it does include a great deal more of the traditional liturgy than *Mishkan T'filah.*

At the outset, however, *Gates of Prayer* was the prayerbook to which this community was reacting:

> Meanwhile, the reason that there had to be a new Emanuel prayerbook is that "*Gates of Grey*,"[128] which is what we were using at the time, *sucks.* It's boring, there's no real anything in it. The *Gates of*… the blue one that came out in 1975… That book came out in 1975, and I was ordained in 1976. When that book came out it was a radical prayerbook, and it was radical because it says in the introduction: We're completely egalitarian, and that's why we say "God of our ancestors." No attention paid at all to the possibility that God transcends gender—that that was radical in 1975 is almost laughable now. Except, since I lived

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[127] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Laura Geller. Personal, December 16, 2019.

[128] "*Gates of Grey*" is a common nickname for the edition of *Gates of Prayer* that was released with a grey cover.

> through it, it isn't so laughable. But in any event, those prayerbooks were just boring.[129]

Their reaction to this prayerbook was to enhance their Saturday morning prayer service with a prayerbook of their own making, which could incorporate any and all of the liturgy they desired. The project was originally helmed not only by Geller but also by Janet and Sheldon Marder, who were members of the community. Long before they contributed mightily to *Mishkan HaNefesh*, these rabbis helped construct a *siddur* for the Emanuel community.

The two of them contributed translations and poetry to the book, while Geller steered the overall vision of the project. Geller had a particular mission in creating this *siddur*, and it was substantially different than the Reform clergy that had built prior *siddurim*. Rather than trying to embody a particular version of what Reform worship should look like in conversation with prior prayerbooks in the movement, Geller sought to create a prayerbook that was more directly in dialogue with the traditional liturgy. Her reasons for doing so were based in a desire for greater liturgical education in her community:

> The reason that these additional liturgical pieces were there is that I felt, and the committee agreed, that the prayerbook is also a teaching tool. If these pieces aren't in the prayerbook then you're never going to learn. The reason why I think it's important that *meitim* be there in parentheses is: how do you ever have that conversation about whether it should be there or not and what it means to say that if it's not there? So there was also a pedagogical intent…And all those different choices offered in *Gates of Prayer*—I get why that's important, but it's not that usable because you're not confronting—I mean, if *meitim* is there in parentheses you're confronting it. If we're praying from one service and it's not there—the services didn't really talk to each other pedagogically.[130]

This approach is a kind of hybrid between Leon Morris' voice in *Mishkan HaNefesh* and Dulkin's explanation of how the Conservative Movement approaches troubling texts. In *The New*

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[129] ibid.

[130] ibid.

Emanuel Prayerbook, Geller strove to include as much of the traditional Hebrew as possible, just as Morris did with his insistence on including *mincha*, for example. However her reasoning was not some feeling of fidelity to the classical forms and structures of Jewish prayer, but one that was about engaging people in a conversation about prayer. Just as *Siddur Lev Shalem*'s committee chose to leave in "*V'lo n'tato…*" in a minimized way to acknowledge that these texts are part of Jewish tradition, so, too, did Geller want her community to confront theological statements that they found troubling.

> The Emanuel siddur does not do so without doing at least a little bit of editing, however:
>
> > The difference [between our *siddur* and *Mishkan T'filah*] is that our Hebrew is the traditional Hebrew, with the addition of the *Imahot*, because the interpretation comes on the other page. So it doesn't say "our Father our King," but it does say "*Avinu malkeinu*." And the difference I guess between that and *Mishkan*, is that they chose to change the Hebrew as well, and we didn't. It says "our Parent our Sovereign," in this version. It's not very eloquent, but it's a faithful translation, sort of, yet the Hebrew stays the same. And again since part of this is so you can learn how to pray, we keep the Hebrew the same. That was probably part of the intention.[131]

The "*Avinu malkeinu*" being referred to here is the instance in "*Ahavah rabbah*" before the *Sh'ma* in which that phrase traditionally appears. I was surprised by the inclusion not only of the most traditional version of texts like this as well as their methods of dealing with issues of gender and chosenness, but also by the sheer number of traditional texts that are included. I commented to her, saying: "There are texts in this prayerbook that are not prioritized in any of the Reform Movement *siddurim*! Just looking at the page I happened to be open to right here, I mean, "*Titbarach tzureinu…*" I mean "*Eil Adon*" is in here!" And her response was quite telling:

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[131] ibid.

"We've never done it in all these years," she said, "but if you want to use this as a teaching tool, you need to have it."[132]

Both the *The New Emanuel Prayerbook* and *Mishkan HaNefesh* show that it is possible to create a prayerbook that is wholly, self-consciously a Reform text, and that includes a great deal more of the traditional liturgy than has been in such books in prior generations. I do not think that the coincidental timing of the release of the *Lev Shalem* series books is the main reason that the creators of *Mishkan HaNefesh* saw them as their main competitor. The prayerbooks of the Reform Movement have more traditional material with each passing generation, and thus the two movements have begun to more closely resemble one another. Similarly, I learned in my discussions with the Conservative clergy that there are more and more texts within their very full, very traditional liturgy that their communities are struggling to keep within the fold. Their heightened desire to represent as many different sub-communities within their prayerbooks and to make their liturgical language as inclusive as possible is quite similar indeed to much of the discussion in the Reform world. Furthermore, the vastly increased corpus of English texts included in their prayerbooks and their heightened use of transliteration point toward a movement that is trying to address certain trends away from utter dependence on, as Dulkin put it, "praying in Hebrew," which "means in Hebrew letters, with Hebrew vowels." I found Jan Urbach's statement about the language of Jewish prayer to be quite powerful—that not only is Hebrew not *the* true language of Jewish prayer, but further that *words* may not even be the only true language of Jewish prayer.

If there is one thing that I am sure of after engaging with these books and the thoughtful and inspiring clergy that created them, it is that more engagement of this type is desperately

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[132] ibid.

needed. I was able to indirectly convene these clergy in a conversation from across oceans and state lines and place their voices across from one another. I can only imagine the potential that exists, were they to be had in person, for these conversations to have real and lasting impact on the prayer life of both movements.

These two movements have so much to learn from one another. The Conservative Movement's commitment to the halakhic system and its strictures has prevented them from losing almost any of the traditional liturgy from their prayerbook. They have a mountain of texts from which to mine meaning, and they have not gotten stuck, as Frishman put it, "in the key of 'Let's spend more time.'" The Reform Movement has brought in interpretations from myriad sources, made sweeping changes to the way classical units of liturgy are utilized, and even broken away from the linear service. Their boldness as they relate to tradition speaks to the challenges that many Conservative Jews feel when confronting texts in their liturgy that place them on the outside looking in. I do not believe that one of these movements has it right, and the other has it wrong. Both have created books in recent years which many admire and enjoy praying out of greatly. Yet as the post-modern era blurs the lines between the denominations, opening up space for Judaism that lives and breathes in between them, it would be a real shame if the two did not discuss their choices with one another more openly, approaching one another with a desire to learn. I think, perhaps, Bill Cutter said it best:

> I think we are inevitably a community, if not a civilization in the Kaplanian terms. As a civilization, we do best when we have at the very least echoes of norms, and at most norms with which we can do battle—but we keep the norms. In the arts this is a constant struggle. If you talk to Hollywood music people from the 50s or 60s they might say "Ah, these young composers. They have some talent, but they don't truly know the canon." The modern Hebrew translation for the word canon comes from Bialik: "*Aron HaSfarim*." So what is in the *Aron has'farim*, or in this case the *Aron haMilim* or the *Aron HaT'filot*. [The Reform Movement] are the leading indicators, to use an economics term. We are the leading indicator and the [Conservative Movement] is holding back. They're

critical of us because we're breaking down all the patterns, boundaries and laws, and we're laughing at them because they're so rigid… Maybe that tension should be acknowledged—or maybe it shouldn't and we should continue the pretense, so to speak. One could say that this tension is necessary because it holds up the outer walls while we redecorate inside.[133]

[133] Noah A. L. Diamondstein. Interview with Rabbi Dr. William Cutter.

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