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THE LITURGY OF LIFE CYCLE OBSERVANCES:

Life Cycle Rites in the Three Wings of American Judaism Historically and Theologically Considered

by

Wayne D. Dosick

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature and Ordination.

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

1973

Referee: Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski, Ph.D.

DEDICATED

to the memory of my grandparents

SAM and ZLATA DOSICK ז"ל

who were an inspiration and an example for us all

and to my parents

HYMAN and ROBERTA DOSICK

who, in love, showed me the way

and especially to

LAUREN

who walks with me hand in hand

DIGEST

The life of every individual has its moments of high and great significance. To make these moments even more special, and to give them spiritual sanctity, religious institutions have created ceremonies and rituals to mark such occasions.

Judaism, throughout its history, has been particularly concerned with giving sacred meaning to the rites of passage--the life cycle events--which man experiences. Ceremony and ritual and liturgy have been created to help man confront occasions such as birth, marriage and death.

This thesis is an investigation of Judaism's liturgical response to life cycle events, and, particularly, the differing responses of the three wings of American Judaism to such ceremonies. Since it is the modern rabbi who is most often the officiant at life cycle ceremonies, the rabbi's manuals--the practical handbooks which contain the prescribed ritual and prayers--are the source for the life cycle liturgy of American Judaism.

Each major life cycle event--circumcision, marriage and funeral--is studied in terms of its historical development, the crystallization of the Orthodox rite in the law literature, and the changes which have been made by American Reform

and Conservative Judaism. The ceremonies in each of the rabbi's manuals--the one Orthodox, the three Reform and the two Conservative--are compared and contrasted for their theological and poetic content. The first chapter traces the creation and the growth of the rabbi's manuals and the fifth chapter synthesizes the material studied and draws implications for the future.

Since much of the time of the modern rabbi is spent as priest-officiant at life cycle events of his congregants, it is vital that the rabbi know and understand the history, the development and the meaning of the ceremonies which he performs. This thesis provides the basis for that understanding.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....iv

Acknowledgments.....vi

Chapter One:
The Rabbi's Manuals of American Judaism.....1

Chapter Two:
The Rite of Circumcision.....25

Chapter Three:
The Rite of Marriage.....66

Chapter Four:
The Funeral Rite.....134

Chapter Five:
The Life Cycle Liturgy in Retrospect:
Implications for the Future.....170

Footnotes.....190

Bibliography.....209

INTRODUCTION

The life of every individual has its moments of high and great significance. To make these moments even more special, and to give them spiritual sanctity, religious institutions have created ceremonies and rituals to mark such occasions.

Judaism, throughout its history, has been particularly concerned with giving sacred meaning to the rites of passage--the life cycle events--which man experiences. Ceremony and ritual and liturgy have been created to help man confront occasions such as birth, marriage and death.

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For clarity and conciseness, the transliterated Hebrew in this work has been standardized. The spelling of certain transliterated words, in their quoted sources, may, therefore, differ from the spelling given here.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RABBI'S MANUALS
of
AMERICAN JUDAISM

The three major branches of American Judaism, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, have produced six Rabbi's Manuals containing the liturgy of life-cycle observances. American Orthodoxy has been content with the one manual, HaMadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide, published in 1939. Conservative Judaism has published two manuals, Rabbinical Assembly Manual and לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual, in 1952 and 1965 respectively. American Reform Judaism has required three manuals to meet its needs, Minister's Handbook, published in 1917, and two editions of Rabbi's Manual, first published in 1928 and revised in 1961. The history of the creation of each of these manuals will be of interest to us as we seek to understand the similarities and differences in the life-cycle liturgy of the three branches of American Judaism.

The publication of the Orthodox manual, HaMadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide, by Hyman E. Goldin, in 1939, served "the need for a practical manual of this sort (which) has long been felt...."[1] Until that time, it may be assumed, those conducting life-cycle events in Orthodox circles in America used the rites and rubrics which had been culled from the traditions and the law codes of Judaism, and which appeared in virtually every Orthodox siddur. With the "Americaniza-

tion" of Orthodox Judaism, a need was felt to have English translations of the prayers and benedictions which had been recited almost exclusively in Hebrew. One of the first attempts at providing a modern English translation to a daily siddur and, thus, to the life-cycle liturgy that was found in that siddur, was made by the Rev. S. Singer who published The Authorized Daily Prayerbook in London in 1891. This prayerbook intended "to furnish a correct text...and a satisfactory translation" and "to render the volume more suitable for general use...(to introduce) a number of prayers for special occasions...(including) Prayers to be said at the Consecrations of a House, (prayers) upon the Sick and Death Bed, the Prayer in the House of Mourning...(and) the Marriage Service."[2] In the Note to the American Edition, the late J.H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire, wrote that, "although some copies (of The Authorized Daily Prayer Book) early found their way into various congregations in the United States, the cost of the imported book was too high and the difficulties of obtaining it too many to satisfy the demands of American Jewry for a correct and well-printed Daily Prayer Book with a literal rendering in idiomatic and devotional English."[3] Hertz indicated, therefore, that when he was approached by the Hebrew Publishing Company for aid in obtaining permission to issue a reprint of the copyrighted

Daily Prayer Book, he was delighted to do so. Since 1914, therefore, when the reprinted Daily Prayer Book was published in America, and probably before, as copies of the British edition filtered to America, Orthodox rabbis and others who could officiate at life-cycle events have had a modern translation of the prayers and benedictions.

In 1929, the Hebrew Publishing Company published the Complete Cantor's and Reverend's Handbook which contained prayers and directions not only in Hebrew and in English, but also in Yiddish. It also contained a section of Speeches for various occasions, weddings, circumcisions, memorial addresses, so that the Yiddish speaking rabbi, officiating at a life-cycle event, could simply read his remarks and not be embarrassed by his lack of skill in the English language. In 1939, the Hebrew Publishing Company expanded the available rites and rubrics in handbook form with the publication of HaMadrikh. It has served American Orthodox Jewry ever since.

The publication, by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (C.C.A.R.), of its three manuals has paralleled the development and growth, in thought and practice, of American Reform Judaism.

In the introduction to his marriage service, published in Volume I of the C.C.A.R. Yearbook, 1890, Moses Mielziner,

Professor of Talmudic Literature at the Hebrew Union College, stated his philosophy of liturgical reform which was to be the basis for the unstated, yet nevertheless dominant, trend in American Reform thinking in the first part of the twentieth century. Mielziner said:

> ...as impressed as I am with the desirableness and the necessity of effecting more uniformity not only in the wedding ceremonial but also in all affairs of religious life, especially in the prayers and ceremonies of our public worship, as the principle of איש הישר בעיניו יעשה (everyone doing as he pleases) has always proven detrimental to the sacred cause of Judaism, still I am of the opinion that we must beware of going to the extreme in this respect by endeavoring to establish even in the minutest detail particulars of religious practice. Let us not seek that uniformity which has no room for individual opinions, no regard for local wants and circumstances, and which excludes all variety and all freedom of action. Such uniformity leads to stagnation. In this period of transition through which American Judaism is evidently passing and in which the views concerning many religious questions are still so widely differing, in this period especially, let our motto be: Uniformity in essentials, freedom and variety in that which is unessential and of less importance.[4]

This tension, articulated by Mielziner, between the desire to have a fixed life-cycle liturgy for American Reform, and the need, felt by many, not to bind the still evolving movement into a stated theology (as would be the case if a rabbi's manual were to be published) would plague the movement for the next two decades.

At the convention of the C.C.A.R. in 1893, the question of life-cycle liturgy was referred to a committee for special

publications of Confirmation, Marriage and Funeral Agendas.[5] In 1894, the ritual committee of the C.C.A.R. asked the permission of the convention to empower its subcommittee, which had been charged with the task of preparing a ritual for private and domestic worship, to "formulate an Agenda for a Minister's Handbook or Manual as a guide for the various functions of the office of Rabbi."[6]

Nothing more was heard from the ritual committee of the C.C.A.R. concerning a rabbi's manual until 1902. The project, therefore, for whatever reason, lay dormant for a period of eight years. In 1902, the ritual committee reported to the convention that "uniformity in the service texts for weddings and funerals and other public functions, as well as rituals for various home services, is, in the opinion of your committee, greatly needed and your committee, therefore, recommends the appointment of a special committee of five who shall be committed to the duty...."[7] Some little action was taken toward the implementation of the committee's work, for the very next year's convention heard the Report of the Committee on Marriage Agenda which had been appointed to submit a marriage service for the prospective handbook. The committee reported that Professor Mielziner had submitted his suggested text for the marriage service which had been published in Volume I of the C.C.A.R. Yearbook, and upon investigation, had found that service satisfactory.

The report noted that a great number of rabbis use Mielziner's service and the committee recommended a republication of Mielziner's wedding service for use in a Minister's handbook.[8]

The first extensive report of The Committee on Jewish Ministers' Handbook was given to the convention of the C.C.A.R. in June, 1904, by the chairman, Joseph Stolz. Rabbi Stolz reported:

> We have arrived at the constructive period of Reform Judaism. As essential as it was, at first, to attack the final validity and authority of the Shulchan Aruch; and necessary, as it was, to defend the right of repealing laws which no longer harmonized with modern thought and sentiment,...the ultimate object of the Reform movement was never destruction, but construction. The primary aim of the Reformers was to reconcile religion and life and to strengthen the Jewish consciousness...and if elimination was at any time considered essential, it was never to be construed to be more than the first step in the process. The real aim of the very pioneers of Reform was to reconstruct new forms...embodied in the old traditions....The period of experimentation is not over....it appears as if the time had arrived...to construct a Ministers' Handbook out of the many different forms used by the various rabbis in their professional functions outside of the temple.[9]

Once again, therefore, the position of the American Reform rabbinate, and its need for a manual to add some uniformity to its functioning was stated. The chairman of the committee went on to suggest the objects of the handbook:

1. To promote unity in our religious practices, with loyal reverence to the old standards of worship and yet with all due respect for the liberty of the individual....
2. To add more dignity to religious functions by obviating an unreadiness of mind and heart on the part of the officiating minister and by preventing him in the discharge of important duties from deviating from good traditional forms, purely out of ignorance or foolish caprice.
3. To give to all the benefit of the best forms thus far devised by men of experience.
4. To bring these forms into more perfect shape through more frequent and widespread usage.
5. To suggest...such modern sources of ritualistic information as will promote religious edification, and enhance the appropriateness of every religious service.[10]

Thus, with the motivation and the goals laid out for a Minister's Handbook, Stolz suggested a possible Table of Contents for the proposed handbook. Included would be services for confirmation, the marriage ceremony, funeral services, services for the acceptance of proselytes, services for the laying of corner-stones and the dedication of temples, special prayers for initiation into the Abrahamitic covenant, prayers for the sickroom, confession of sin at deathbed, prayers for tombstone setting and dedication of a new home and a new cemetery. Also to be included would be a selection of readings for services in the house of mourning, suggestions of appropriate Jewish music for special occasions and a bibliography of source material for

all the above-mentioned occasions.[11]

Stolz concluded his report by indicating that the committee would like to be empowered to do its work so that a manuscript could be presented to the next convention. The power to act was given, but the manuscript and the final product were not to be seen for more than a decade.

The terse report of the committee to the convention in 1905 indicated that the handbook was not completed, and that the committee was still in the process of working on it.[12] Again, in 1906, the committee reported that its work was not completed; however, a fuller report was presented to the convention. The committee reported that material had been collected and given to an editorial committee for revision. It was also reported that K. Kohler and G. Deutsch had been added to the committee "to formulate Halachot or laws which should serve as a guidance for Reform Rabbis."[13] In the ensuing discussion, an objection was raised as to the formulating of Halachot as part of the Handbook out of fear of dictating new rules, new laws, a new Shulchan Aruch. While some of the delegates wanted the newly formulated Halachot included in the Handbook as a guide to younger rabbis, as a help where the old Shulchan Aruch was no longer applicable, to help answer some of the questions that frequently came up, it was decided, by vote of the convention body, not to include such a new formulation in the Handbook.[14]

The report of the committee at the 1907 convention was a request to the members of the C.C.A.R. to send to the committee comments on the proofs which had been circulated to the membership so that revisions, based on members' suggestions could be incorporated into the final edition.[15] That original set of proofs does not exist in any library or archive collection, so its contents will never be known.

At the 1908 convention, the Handbook seemed one step closer to completion. The committee report noted that the gallies had been sent to the C.C.A.R. membership with the emendations and corrections that had been culled from the initial circulation of the proofs. The committee called for further corrections and suggestions, with a plea for haste, so that the Handbook could be published.[16]

The convention body, in 1910, engaged in a lengthy discussion of the Handbook which had been proposed for publication by the committee. At this convention, the committee itself proposed changes to the originally distributed Handbook manuscript based on the suggestions and changes which had been solicited from the membership of the C.C.A.R. Only the proposed changes exist in the records of the C.C.A.R., not the original manuscript to which they referred. Some of the wording, suggested in the proposed changes, would find its way into the Minister's Handbook, finally published in 1917. Other suggested changes would fall by the wayside.

The reasons for either incorporation into or rejection from the final, published edition are not recorded. The convention body dealt with two major issues concerning the Handbook. First, it was decided to refer to the Responsa Committee questions concerning mourning practices, which seemed to be a natural outgrowth of the funeral services. This decision, seemingly, ended the question of whether or not to include "halachot" in the Handbook, as had been suggested at an earlier convention.

The second issue discussed was the question of the Confirmation service, the "vows" to be made, and the kind of service to be held. It was the consensus of the delegates that the kind of service held was up to each individual rabbi, but prayers, such as opening and closing, and the floral offering could be incorporated into the Handbook.[17]

The 1911 convention was strangely silent on the subject of the Minister's Handbook. It is indicated that a report of the committee was read to the convention by the secretary, but the contents of that report are not recorded. The report was referred to the Executive Committee of the C.C.A.R.[18]

At the 1912 convention, the report of the committee was the proposed manuscript for the Minister's Handbook. Again, this manuscript has not survived. All that is known about it are the references to particular sections made at the 1912 convention. It was noted that the Kohler marriage ser-

vice, "which he is teaching to his Homiletics classes at HUC,"[19] was substituted for the Mielziner wedding service, and the committee reported that "we believe that the wording of the ceremony at Brit Milah will avoid all controversial difficulties and satisfy conservatives and liberals alike."[20] Even with the objection, by one member, that the question of publishing the Handbook had been dragging on for more than ten years, the whole manuscript was referred to the Executive Committee to determine the best way to bring it before the next convention.[21]

Obviously, difficult political considerations played a great part in the decision of whether or not to publish the proposed Minister's Handbook. With terseness, and no further explanation, the Recording Secretary of the C.C.A.R., Julian Morgenstern, reported to the 1913 convention: "The Executive Committee to whom was referred the question of the publication of the manuscript of the Minister's Handbook presented at the Baltimore Convention, reports that it deems it inadvisable to publish this manuscript."[22] That was not to be the end of the C.C.A.R.'s quest for a uniform life-cycle liturgy, for at the same convention it was moved, "Resolved that the President appoint a Special Committee to present for consideration at the next Conference suggestions for a ritual for funeral services."[23] A member raised a question to the motion, asking if this service were not in

the proposed Minister's Handbook. The answer given was a reiteration of Morgenstern's report; that the Executive Committee had deemed it inadvisable to publish the manuscript. Nevertheless, the motion carried, and the C.C.A.R. seemed on its way again to publishing some kind of uniform ritual for life-cycle events.

At the 1914 convention, all the tensions and problems concerning the publication of a Minister's Handbook, which had been seething under the surface and had gone unrecorded in the minutes of the conventions, erupted, and it finally became clear why the project had dragged on for so long and why the Executive Committee had decided, without any explanation, not to publish the proposed manuscript. At the 1914 convention, the committee appointed the previous year to write funeral and wedding services (it will be recalled that there was no mention of a mandate to create a wedding service at the previous convention) reported that it had expanded (itself?) to become a new committee on the Minister's Handbook. The chairman of the committee was Rabbi Dr. William Rosenau. On behalf of the committee, Rosenau presented an entire manuscript which, he said, "adheres as closely as possible to tradition,"[24] including twenty-five services, each one having been assigned in committee to a different rabbi to prepare. The rabbis did their work between December, 1913, and April, 1914, and after various sub-

committee meetings to edit the works, the manuscript being presented to the convention was prepared. Rosenau noted that two members of the committee did not sign the report because the services they had written were edited in sub-committee contrary to their liking.[25]

It is to be noted that the original typescript of this proposed Minister's Handbook, typed by Rosenau himself, as has been determined by the paper used for the manuscript (it is the back of stationery containing Rosenau's letter-head), is in the possession of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. This typescript will be referred to when a discussion of specific life-cycle liturgies is undertaken in order to compare this 1914 typescript to the final 1917 publication.

The discussion that ensued made clear the widely differing views of the members of the C.C.A.R. and explained the difficulty in publishing a Minister's Handbook. Kaufmann Kohler said that "with it, I miss a certain element of spirituality" and, "to adopt this manuscript of the Minister's Handbook based so largely upon supposedly conservative principles would split the Conference in two."[26] Chairman Rosenau responded, "the great mass of the Jewish people in this country are not radical, but conservative...But just because they are conservative, they are Jewish in character and appeal to the Jewish heart."[27]

Further objections to the Rosenau manuscript were raised. One member suggested that the Rosenau committee had done a hasty job, and that the manuscript was not yet in proper shape to be adopted. Another call for a non-conservative approach was made by Rabbi Mayer:

> I must differ diametrically from Dr. Rosenau in his statement that the majority of our adherents are conservative. This so-called seashore Orthodoxy is by no means the prevailing interpretation of Judaism in this Conference. Our Union Prayer Book and the new Hymnal voice the true spirit of liberalism and progress that really dominate this Conference. The Minister's Handbook should equally breathe this same spirit if it is to go farther as authorized by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. If we would retrace our steps and be conservative, then let us first discard the Union Prayer Book. But until then, we are not ready to adopt this Minister's Handbook.[28]

David Phillipson tried to bridge the gap between the two positions by suggesting that many Jews may be conservative, but that the Conference must maintain its liberal stance. Julian Morgenstern suggested that the Conference desired a uniformity in service, so that the Handbook sould be reflective of the current position of the members of the Conference, and, therefore, should reflect liberal principles. It was after Morgenstern's suggestion that each service be considered separately, and the remarks of the past chairman of the committee, Joseph Stoltz, that "it is just twenty years since...I suggested to the Conference the necessity of such a Minister's Handbook...(and even though) our Con-

ference works slowly and deliberately, (and) it may take another twenty years, eventually we will have the Handbook," that the decision of the convention body was made to send the manuscript back to the committee for further editing.[29]

Thus, the lines were clearly drawn, and the difficulties in publication were clear. The members of the Conference were split as to whether their Minister's Handbook should reflect a conservative or liberal approach. It was this controversy that, undoubtedly, served to delay, for so many years, the publication of a Handbook.

To the convention of 1915, the committee reported that the manuscript was prepared for the approval of the C.C.A.R. membership, and noted that the translations of Biblical quotations were based on the manuscript of the Jewish Publication Society Bible translation. The decision of the convention body concerning the manuscript was to send it to all members of the C.C.A.R., await suggested revisions and changes, and incorporate those suggestions into the manuscript. The manuscript, in proposed final edition, would then be sent to all C.C.A.R. members before the next convention.[30]

At the convention in 1916, the committee reported that it had carried out the instructions given it at the last convention, and the manuscript, now in final form, was in the hands of each of the members of the C.C.A.R. It was

recommended that the manuscript, in its final form, be adopted and published as the Minister's Handbook. This motion was carried, and almost two decades after it was first mentioned, and after almost fifteen years of serious work, and numerous proposals, the Central Conference of American Rabbis had its first rabbi's manual, the Minister's Handbook. The published edition, in 1917, differed significantly from the Rosenau, 1914, typescript in that it eliminated services for Bar Mitzvah, Confirmation and Public Thanksgiving. It did include, however, a service for tombstone dedication which was not a part of the Rosenau proposal. The 1917 Minister's Handbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis was a compromise document, attempting to bridge the gap between the conservative and the liberal members of the Conference, and attempting to put forth a set of services that as many American Reform rabbis as possible could find acceptable, and implement as part of their functioning at life-cycle events.

For the next nine years, the minutes of the conventions of the C.C.A.R. are silent on the subject of the Minister's Handbook. In 1926, the Report of the Committee on Publications noted that the Minister's Handbook had been completely sold out and raised the question of reprinting it. The report stated: "Many complaints have been received about the book and your committee feels that before we reprint,

the Conference should decide whether the book should be revised or reprinted in present form."[31] It was moved and adopted at that convention that "a committee be appointed to prepare a manuscript for a new Minister's Handbook to be submitted to the members when ready for suggestions and criticism, and presented to the next convention after the replies of the members have been considered by the committee."[32]

At the 1927 convention, it was noted in the report of the recording Secretary that an Executive Committee action had been taken to charge "a committee with Rabbi (Samuel) Cohon as chairman...to rewrite the Minister's Handbook and present the manuscript when ready to the members."[33] Later at that convention, Rabbi Samuel Cohon reported that the committee had prepared a tentative draft of the new handbook, which would include two sections. The first section would contain the services for life-cycle events. The second section would be concerned with services for congregational and communal events. Cohon noted that the second section would be in the nature of an appendix, "presenting historical and explanatory notes on marriage and funeral agenda, culled largely from resolutions adopted by Reform Jewish bodies of Europe and America and from Responsa submitted to the Central Conference of American Rabbis. These aim to satisfy requests that have been made by several rabbis at a number of sessions for a compilation of Conference Responsa in a brief and handy form.

They are further designed for laymen in various communites, who are called upon to officiate in place of rabbis, and who are in no position to go to the sources for determining what constitutes accepted Reform Jewish practice."[34] Cohon also noted that since the new handbook will be used by lay leaders, full directions would be added. Rabbis, he noted, would be able to adopt the services and the directions included in the handbook to their own needs. As to the contents of the handbook, Cohon stated, "A considerable portion of the old Handbook has been retained. And in the preparation of the new material, much of the traditional liturgy and some devotional productions of the pioneers of the Reform movement have been utilized."[35] Cohon asked the convention's authorization to circulate the manuscript, elicit suggestions and publish the finished product. He also suggested changing the name of the publication from Minister's Handbook to Rabbi's Manual. The report of Cohon's committee was accepted by the convention.[36]

At the 1928 convention, Cohon's committee reported that it had proceeded with the revisions that had been suggested by members of the C.C.A.R.[37] In 1928, the second rabbi's manual, Rabbi's Manual, was published. The original suggested revisions to the Minister's Handbook authored by Samuel Cohon are in the possession of the library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. They will be referred to when

evaluating the evolution from the first to the second manual.

For almost two decades, nothing was heard from any committee concerned with the Rabbi's Manual. In 1946, "The President (of the C.C.A.R.) was authorized to appoint a committee to go over the Rabbi's Manual and see if it should be revised before a new printing is authorized."[38] At the 1946 convention, a new edition of the Rabbi's Manual was authorized.[39] The inquiry to the convention as to whether or not the manual should be revised before being reprinted must have met with a negative response, for in 1946 the 1928 Rabbi's Manual was simply reprinted as it stood.

Twelve years later, in 1958, the Report of the Committee on Liturgy indicated that the committee was concerned with revising the Rabbi's Manual. The committee presented to the convention body the work it had completed toward a revised manual, and then moved "to postpone publication until the material could be presented in toto by the committee."[40] In 1959, the Committee on Liturgy reported that all the material for the new manual had been compiled and sent to the members of the C.C.A.R. for comments, revisions and suggestions. After the suggestions had been received and evaluated, the committee would be ready to prepare the final draft.[41]

Without any further discussion by the Conference, the new Rabbi's Manual became a reality. In the President's Report to the Conference, in 1961, Bernard J. Bamberger

noted, "The revised Rabbi's Manual came out recently. I trust that it will be of value to all of us...."[42]

Again, the library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, has in its possession the "Revised Rabbi's Manual" of 1958 which was circulated to the members of the C.C.A.R. for comments and criticisms. This mimeographed proposal will be referred to as the 1961 Rabbi's Manual is studied.

This, then, is the fascinating history of the creation of the three rabbi's manuals of American Reform Judaism. It is to be noted that each of the final editions was a document of compromise. The 1917 Minister's Handbook went through nearly twenty years of proposals, revisions and counter-proposals until a manuscript acceptable to the majority of the members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis could be written. The struggle and the tensions involved in settling on a compromise document reflected the struggle between the conservatives and the liberals in the evolving American Reform movement. The two editions of the Rabbi's Manual can also be understood to be compromise documents, although the struggles of the opposing sides are not reflected in the minutes of the conventions of the C.C.A.R. The trend back to "tradition" is evidenced in the 1928 Rabbi's Manual as compared to the 1917 Minister's Handbook. Just how much "tradition" is incorporated into the Reform rabbi's manuals

will be seen as individual life-cycle liturgies are studied.

The first mention of a rabbi's manual in the Conservative movement of American Judaism is made at the 1946 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America (R.A.) and recorded in the R.A. Proceedings. It is reported that "the prayerbook Commission also met, in its guise as a permanent agency, with Rabbi Isador Signer, in order to plan the rabbi's manual, the first draft of which should be in your hands by the Fall. Your cooperation in submitting prayers and other materials for this volume is earnestly solicited."[43] The slowness of organizations and committees to act, rather than ideological controversy, delayed the publication of the Conservative rabbi's manual. In 1948, it was reported, "we have definite assurance from Rabbi Isador Signer that the Rabbi's Manual will be ready to go to press not later than September 1, 1948."[44]

This was not to be. In 1949, it was reported, "The Rabbi's Manual which has been prepared by Rabbi Signer will be put in final form during the summer months and will go to press in the Fall of 1949."[45] Again delays beset the publication. In 1950, Max Artz, chairman of the prayerbook committee, reported to the convention:

> Let me speak first about the volume which will give us less trouble (as opposed to the proposed R.A. prayerbook) and that is the Rabbi's Manual. We owe you, all of you, a million apologies for the fact that the manual has not yet appeared. I have various extenuating cir-

> cumstances, some of them relating to me, the chairman, who has been lax in his duties, and some relating to the person on whom we depended, namely the person who was chosen before I became chairman, Rabbi Signer. Rabbi Signer is eminently fitted to do this, but he has just not been able to get around to it. He is a very busy rabbi; in this last year he was getting his D.H.L. Now that is done and he assures me that during the summer he will have the text ready for us. Rabbi C. David Matt has been unusually helpful in going through these prayers. Since he has a poetic mind, he has helped fashion the style, and these prayers will be as eloquent as they possibly can be in terms of the limitations of our own language and knowledge and ability to write such prayers.[46]

In publishing their first rabbi's manual, the Rabbinical Assembly went through none of the struggles that beset the Central Conference of American Rabbis in its first attempt at publication. Seemingly, only rabbis who did not meet their obligations and deadlines delayed publication beyond the expected time. In 1952, the Rabbinical Assembly Manual, compiled and edited by Rabbi Isador Signer, was published. Without any discussion or dissent, in 1965, the Rabbinical Assembly updated its rabbi's manual with the publication of לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual, edited by Rabbi Jules Harlow.

No written information in the public records of the Rabbinical Assembly exists to indicate why the R.A. chose to publish a rabbi's manual at the time it did, or, perhaps more significantly, why it did not publish a manual until 1952. No records exist to indicate how the R.A. decided on the theological stance that would be manifested in its rabbi's manuals. Isador Signer, the editor of the first manual, is

dead. Jules Harlow, the editor of the second manual, chooses to maintain silence on the matter.[47] Rabbi Ralph Simon, immediate past president of the Rabbinical Assembly, indicated that many of the members of the R.A. "used to use the C.C.A.R. manual before we had our own." He further indicated that Isador Signer was chosen to be editor of the first manual because "he always had a flair for creating interesting ceremonials." The Harlow manual, Simon suggested, was simply a "modernization of language, a re-casting of the translations." Simon seemed to imply that the creation of the Conservative rabbi's manuals were not a major step in the history of the Rabbinical Assembly, but, rather, a matter of convenience, undertaken to complete the entire scope of the publications of the Conservative movement.[48] Thus, it may be assumed that the Rabbinical Assembly created its rabbi's manual out of political or organizational motivations, rather than theological motivations.

With this knowledge of how the six rabbi's manuals of the three major branches of American Judaism came to be, we can go on to compare and contrast the liturgies found in them for three of the most significant life-cycle events.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION

> Such shall be the covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your offspring to follow: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh fo your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. At the age of eight days, every male among you shall be circumcised,...Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh. An uncircumcised male who does not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin--such a person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant. (Genesis 17: 9-14)[1]

Thus was Abraham, considered to be the originator of Judaism because of the declaration of his belief in the One God, enjoined to give an outward sign of his intellectual and emotional commitment to his God. He, and through him every succeeding generation of Jews, was given a way of physically manifesting loyalty to God and showing membership in God's People. The physical sign of the covenant, as commanded in Genesis, was to be circumcision.

This one custom has been with the Jew longer than any other. "Unbounded has been the devotion with which it has been kept. Jewish men and women have, in all ages, been ready to lay down their lives in its observance. The Macabean martyrs died for it. The officers of King Antiochus... put to death the mothers who initiated their children into the Covenant...We find the same readiness for self-immolation

in its defense when the Roman Emperor Hadrian aimed, by prohibiting it, at the destruction of Judaism; when in the dread days of the Inquisition obedience to this command meant certain death;...whenever and wherever tyrants undertook to uproot the Jewish Faith."[2] From the time of Abraham until today, "on the eighth day after birth, every male child born of Jewish parents is expected to undergo the rite of circumcision. Otherwise, he cannot be regarded as a Jew...his soul is cut off from his people."[3] And from the time of Abraham until today this rite has been observed and has meant a continual renewal of the covenant between God and the People Israel.

However, for all its association with and meaning for Judaism and the Jewish people, circumcision, it seems, was not original with the Jews. "Actually, it is yet another example of the Jewish genius for infusing new, spiritual meaning into general popular usages. For the fact is that circumcision was and still is an extremely widespread practice from one end of the world to the other, and even the Biblical account in no way implies that it was 'invented' by the Hebrews. The account is concerned only with the how and why of its adoption in Israel, not with its ultimate origins."[4]

The theories suggesting the reason for the rite of circumcision are many. There is no one definitive view that

is universally accepted by modern scholarship. It is clear, however, that circumcision was a widespread practice among the ancient Semites, and that Israel's adoption of the rite may be linked to one or more of the suggested reasons for the rite's existence and practice amongst the ancients.

The many theories of circumcision fall into two general categories. The first category revolves around the rite of circumcision as the removal of some kind of taboo thought to rest upon every newborn child during at least the first seven days after birth. The rite of circumcision, according to these theories, serves as an act of redemption. The second main category of theories of circumcision revolves around circumcision as a puberty rite and/or a rite of initiation into the tribe or the family. These theories are sexual in nature, suggesting circumcision as a prerequisite to manhood and to marriage.[5] It will be of use to examine the arguments behind each of these two major categories of theories concerning circumcision, for it is quite possible that elements from both categories found their way into the ultimate rite of circumcision adopted by the Hebrews as a religious ceremony.

"Practically all primitive peoples, not only in ancient times but also today, regard the period immediately following birth as critical for both mother and child; especially for

the latter. They believe that evil spirits threaten the frail little body from all sides and that even the diety who gave the child life may, in a changed and contrary mood, seek to recall his gift."[6] The power of the evil spirits "was usally thought to endure for the seven days following birth and to culminate upon the last day, particularly during the night thereof, when, accordingly, the danger to both mother and child was greatest....From it (the danger) both mother and child had to be freed by the performance of various prescribed apotropiac, rites and ceremonies, the most important and effective of which were performed quite naturally either upon the seventh or eighth day."[7] We, therefore, have in Semitic practice a ceremony of some kind to ward off evil spirits from the newborn child on the seventh or eighth day of his life.

The child, still thought to belong to the spirit which created him, was considered taboo--not yet able to function normally in everyday life. The taboo had to be removed. Julian Morgenstern, in his book, Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites, explains:

> The concept underlying taboo is that all things created by or emenating from a supernatural being are his, or at least in his power. This power, or right of possession, he defends jealously. He relinquishes it only when he receives a sacrifice as a substitute for the tabooed object corresponding to it as nearly as

> possible in appearance, shape and members, or it may be a part, especially vital, yet easily dispensable, of the object itself, a part substituting for the whole. Such a substitute part, if it is a human being which is taboo, may be, for example, the hair, the parings of the nails, a joint of the finger or toe or both. Only after redemption by such a sacrifice may a tabooed person regume his normal function in everyday life.[8]

Thus, a baby, still thought to belong to the spirit which gave it life--and, thus, a taboo object--could be redeemed by sacrificing a part of the child to molify the god. The suggestion is that <u>any</u> easily dispensable part of the body would be acceptable for sacrifice. Given man's natural curiosity about and interest in sexual matters, it is easy to understand how the foreskin of the penis, rather than a finger or a toe, was often chosen to be the sacrificed part which would redeem the child.

The fact that the evil spirit was thought to remain for seven days could be based on the fact that "there is some reason for believing that among the ancient Semites...seven was regarded as an unlucky number."[9] But, "it is clear that there is actually no distinction between the seventh and the eighth days, and the former merely marks the closing moment of a peculiar state of being of both mother and child while the latter is the first day of a new state for both."[10]

Thus, in this first major category of theories concerning the reason for circumcision, are elements which found

their way into the Jewish rite of circumcision. First, circumcision amongst the ancient Semites and circumcision amongst the Jews are both ceremonies which serve to establish the relationship between the newborn child and the power which created him. The ancient Semites were warding off the evil spirits which might wish to harm the child by sacrificing part of him. The Jewish circumcision emphasized the relationship between the newborn child and the God of Israel who created him. Second, the seventh or eighth day after birth was the day for circumcision for the Semites. The eighth day after birth was enjoined as the day for circumcision for the Jews. The timing of the Semite rite could very well have influenced the choice of the eighth day after birth for the Jewish rite which seems to be an arbitrary mandate from the Bible.

Some scholars suggest that the reason for circumcision was to heighten sexual pleasure or to facilitate reproduction. Westermarck suggests that the removal of the foreskin was a means of attracting the opposite sex. Toy claims that it was out of a desire to increase sexual enjoyment. Barton suggests that it was a sacrifice to the goddess of fertility, while Matthes went further to say that the rite, borrowed from the Egyptians, was an effort to increase fruitfulness.[11] Gaster spells out this theory more clearly. "Circumcision," he claims, "was designed to prevent or correct any untoward

condition of the sexual organs that might threaten to interfere with the propagation of the species."[12]

However, the major thrust of the theories which see circumcision as a rite with sexual overtones understand circumcision to be a puberty rite. The suggestion is that circumcision was not performed while the child was an infant, but, rather, performed as he was about to enter manhood and become eligible for marriage. The circumcision, therefore, became the prerequisite to initiation into manhood with its accompanying duty and privilege of marriage. "It was also an initiation into the tribe with its consequence of kinship with every member of the tribe and with the tribal deity. The kinship or bond of union was established primarily by virtue of the blood shed during the act, whereby an enduring covenant was established between the circumcised youth and the deity and his fellow tribesmen."[13]

Thus, two major theories of the reason for circumcision differ widely as to the time in the child's life when the rite is to be performed. Morgenstern attempts to reconcile the two differing opinions. "The age of puberty or possibly the period immediately preceding marriage was the <u>latest</u> possible moment at which circumcision might be performed.... A man had to be circumcised before he might marry. But it does not follow at all from this that circumcision might not

have been regularly performed much earlier. Nor does it imply that there is any direct or essential connection between circumcision and marriage."[14] In essence, a young man had to be circumcised to be eligible to marry, but the circumcision, according to Morgenstern, did not have to immediately precede the marriage; it could be done at a very early stage of life.

If Morgenstern's attempt at reconciliation is accepted, then circumcision becomes a puberty rite much before puberty. This attempt to reconcile the reason given by one group of theorists--that is, circumcision as a puberty/initiation rite--with the timing--that is, the eighth day--given by another group of theorists, does not work. What must be said, therefore, is that what eventually became the Jewish rite of circumcision took its elements from many prevailing rites. Jewish circumcision is surely an initiatory rite; one becomes a member of the People Israel by being circumcised. There is little, however, in the Jewish rite that would suggest that it is a rite of puberty. Instead, the Jewish ceremony takes its element of timing from another theory of circumcision, the theory that the young child had to be redeemed from evil spirits within the first week after his birth.

It is clear that no one reason exists for the rite of circumcision being performed on young men. It is equally

clear, however, that the injunction to Abraham to circumcise himself and all succeeding generations was not original to the newly-born Jewish religion. The Jews adopted many of the forms and practices of the surrounding Semitic peoples and synthesized them into one ceremony which took on religious overtones.

Circumcision, as a Jewish rite, took on its own very special characteristics. Thus, "it is not so much the origin of (the) rite or custom that concerns us as the significance which it attained and the role that it played in (Jewish) life long after its origins had been forgotten."[15] While it must be assumed that the Jews were aware of the many reasons why the rite of circumcision was performed by the ancient Semites, it is clear that those reasons, and even arguments on hygienic grounds, no longer made any difference to the Jews who would circumcise their sons. For, "the fact that even where no prepuce exists, as sometimes happens, the (Jewish) circumciser, nevertheless, goes on with the rite, being satisfied with drawing a few drops of blood from the skin near the glans, stamps the operation essentially as a religious rite."[16] So the Jewish genius for adaptation combined all the elements of an ancient tribal or puberty or redemptive act and infused it with religious significance. Circumcision, while not uniquely

Jewish in origin, has become for the Jew and for the world in which he lives a custom which makes the Jew unique. For the Jew "carries in his flesh a constant reminder of the fact that his own self-perpetuation is also the perpetuation of Israel's mission and that the offspring he begets are not merely his own heirs, but also the prospective agents and witnesses of an eternal God."[17]

From the injunction in Genesis to Abraham to circumcise himself and every male at the age of eight days, two major Jewish traditions and laws resulted concerning circumcision. First, "the operation must be performed on the eighth day, preferably in the morning" (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 262:1); and, therefore, "any circumcision performed before the eighth day is not a ritual brit milah (circumcision) and is contrary to Biblical law" (S.A. Yoreh Deah 264:3). Only the ill health of the child may permit postponement of the ceremony. For "extreme care should be taken not to circumcise an infant that is ailing; for the fulfillment of all precepts must be postponed in deference to human life" (b. Talmud, Shabbat 134a and S.A. Yoreh Deah 262:1). In a special circumstance, if the eighth day after birth is a Sabbath or holy day, then the circumcision is postponed. That circumstance is "if the child was delivered by a Caesarean operation, the circumcision may not be held on a Sabbath or a

holy day" (S.A. Yoreh Deah 305:23 gloss). So important is the precept of circumcision to the Jew that even "if the infant dies before his circumcision whether it be within the eight days of birth or thereafter, he should be circumcised at the grave" (S.A. Yoreh Deah 263:5).

The second major tradition and law which resulted from the command to Abraham is that "it is the duty and responsibility of every father to circumcise his son" (b. Talmud Kiddushin 29a and S.A. Yoreh Deah 260:1). "If the father himself knows how to perform the circumcision, he is not allowed to delegate his duty to someone else" (Sifte Kohen on Choshen ha-Mishpat 382, note 4). "In practice, however, it (the circumcising) is usually entrusted to a specially trained person...known as a mohel."[18] A mohel is chosen to perform the circumcision instead of a physician because "the circumciser takes the place of the father in a dedication rite going back four millennia. It stands to reason that he should be familiar with our religion and given to it."[19] Thus, the Biblical command to Abraham led to two major traditions and laws of circumcision which have been observed by the Jews through the ages. First, the eighth day after birth is absolutely required as the day for circumcision, unless reasons of health interfere. Second, the circumcision is the responsibility of the father. If he is able, he must perform the rite himself. Since so many fathers were not

medically qualified to perform a circumcision, a father had, therefore, to delegate his responsibility, and a new class of Jewish "professionals" came to be--the ritual circumcisers, the mohelim.

It may be assumed that as the Jewish consciousness grew, circumcision was regarded as an integral part of the ritual life of the people. "In Palestine where the Jews practiced circumcision in common with several neighboring peoples, the practice could not (yet) attain any great significance as a Jewish rite. This situation changed during the Babylonian exile. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia did not know circumcision. Therefore, it became a mark that distinguished the Jews from their heathen neighbors."[20] By the first centuries of the common era, "circumcision had become a religious ceremony of great significance. It was attended by benediction, and celebrated with joy and feasting. On the eve of the occasion, the house was full of activity."[21] It was by this period that "the operation was no longer performed by the fathers, but by (the)...mohel, who used a knife. The version of the benediction recited at the ceremony had already been fixed by this period. The mohel said, 'Blessed...and enjoined upon us the circumcision.' The father followed with 'Blessed ...and enjoined upon us to initiate our sons into the covenant of our father, Abraham.' The assembled people responded,

'As he has entered the covenant, so shall he also enter into the study of Torah, into the chupah and into good deeds.'"[22] These formulas were set down in the Mishnah, Shabbat 19:1, and in the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 130b, 137b and 156a.[23] About the ninth century, the circumcision ceremony was transferred from the home to the synagogue so that it could truly be a community affair. The circumcision, in the synagogue, was performed immediately after the recitation of the morning prayers.[24] "During the geonic period, it became customary to name the child at the brit milah (circumcision). An appropriate prayer was added to the ritual."[25] The traditional--or Orthodox--rite of circumcision practiced today is the culmination of the continually unfolding and growing rite of ritual circumcision practiced by Jews throughout the ages.

"All those present at the circumcision should remain standing during the entire ceremony..." (S.A. Yoreh Deah 265 gloss), because "all the people stood to the covenant" (II Kings 23:3).[26] And since the circumcision is an initiation of the infant into the House of Israel, "whenever possible, the circumcision should be performed in the presence of ten adult male persons" (S.A. Yoreh Deah 265:6).

"The child is usually carried to the ceremony by a female relative or friend of its mother, escorted by other women. The ladies retire, however, as soon as they reach

the door where the menfolk are assembled. There, a member of the company, known as the sandek, receives it. As he brings it in, all welcome it with the traditional Hebrew greeting, 'Blessed be ye that cometh.' The sandek then hands the child to the mohel who proceeds with it to a... chair placed in a prominent position. 'This,' he declares, is the Chair of Elijah,' and lays the child upon it. Meanwhile, the sandek takes his seat on an adjoining chair.... After a few moments, the mohel picks up the child and deposits it on the knees of the sandek where it is held throughout the operation."[27]

The sandek acts as an assistant to the mohel. It has been suggested that the name sandek comes from the Greek συνηκνος, or synteknos. This term could have meant simply "godfather,"[28] or more literally, "companion to the child." It may have had a more general application, meaning "representative" or "advocate."[29] A likely suggestion is that the term means "he who accompanies the child," and was a technical term for baptismal "sponsor" or "godfather."[30] Whatever the etimology of this word, the institution of the sandek became an integral part of the Jewish circumcision ceremony somewhere in the tenth century.[31] In practical terms, the sandek is usually a grandfather or elder of the family who is honored by being the assistant to the mohel at the circumcision ceremony.

The reason for the Chair of Elijah, on which the baby is placed, is suggested at the end of the twenty-ninth chapter of the Midrash, Pirke d. Rabbi Eliezar, which was probably written in Palestine at the beginning of the ninth century.[32] The prophet, Elijah, is portrayed, in this midrash, as complaining to God that Israel was rejecting God's covenant (I Kings 19:10-14). In consequence of this accusation, God ordered Elijah to be present at each circumcision so that he could witness Israel's loyalty to the covenant.[33] Thus, according to this explanation, a special place was set aside for Elijah so that he could be present to witness the circumcision.

As is often the case with customs that have no basis in fact or practicality, other explanations for the presence of the Chair of Elijah at the circumcision are suggested. These explanations will often use pagan rites for a basis, and introduce Jewish meaning into them. Thus, the Chair of Elijah is explained as follows:

> The Chair of Elijah...really goes back to the ancient Roman practice of spreading a meal for the household gods--and especially the dieties Pilumus and Picumus--on the occasion of a birth. Such a meal was called 'lectus' ('couch') and the seats on which the guests were expected to recline were known as thrones.
>
> The Jews simply took over this custom and 'naturalized' it by choosing Elijah as the patron of the ceremony, by virtue of the fact that in the First Book of Kings (19:10) he is said expressly to have been 'very zealous for Jehovah' when the children of Israel

> 'forsook the Covenant,' while in the prophecy of Malachi, he appears to be described as 'the messenger of the Covenant.' (3:1 cf. 4:5)[34]

This explanation uses the same proof text from the Bible as does the midrashic explanation in linking the need to watch over Israel's loyalty to Elijah. It goes further, however, in attempting to trace the custom to an ancient pagan rite. What is important, however, much like the importance of the role of the sandek, is that from wherever the original idea or application of the use of the Chair of Elijah came, since the ninth century or before, it has been an integral part of the Jewish circumcision ceremony. The Chair of Elijah serves as a chair of honor on which to place the infant who is soon to become a member of the House of Israel.

The service continues with the mohel reciting the formula beginning הנני מוכן, "I am ready and willing to perform the precept which the Creator, praised be He, commanded us concerning circumcision."[35] "This introduction is a simplified version of the prefactory meditation provided by the Cabalists to the performance of this precept, as well as to that of other precepts like Tephillin, Lulav and Succah."[36] The service continues with the following verses from Scriptures: "For Thy salvation I have waited, O Lord" (Genesis 49:18), "I have hoped for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy commandments have I fulfilled" (Psalm 119:166), "I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil" (Psalm 119:162),

"Great peace have they who love Thy law; and there is no stumbling for them" (Psalm 119:165), "Happy is he whom Thou choosest and bringest nigh that he may dwell in Thy courts" (Psalm 65:5), and "May we be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, the holy place of Thy temple" (Psalm 65:5).[37] "Between the second and third of these quotations ('I have hoped for Thy salvation' and 'I rejoice at Thy word') it is customary in many communities to insert the curious following sentence:"[38] "Elijah, thou angel of the covenant, lo, thine is before thee. Do thou stand at my right and sustain me."[39] "In the present form of the ritual, these verses are put into the mouth of the mohel but this obscures their whole point and purport. Originally, they were recited severally by the various participants in the ceremony and served as a prelude to the actual operation."[40]

"First, the mohel stepped forward to receive the child, and as he did so, expressed his reliance on Divine aid to prevent his doing aught amiss. 'For Thy salvation I have waited' (i.e. the power of deliverance), he declared, in reference to the making of the incision (milah) and 'I have hoped for Thy salvation' in reference to the tearing of the foreskin (periah). Next, the father gave voice to his joy at initiating his son into the Covenant, 'I rejoice at Thy word,' he exclaimed, 'as one that findeth great spoil.' Nevertheless, he could not altogether conceal his nervous-

ness and the bystanders thereupon reassured him that for those who cherish the Law, 'there is no stumbling for them.' Lastly, as the child was readied for the operation, those same bystanders cried out, Happy is he whom Thou choosest and bringest nigh...May we be satisfied....' As for the curious sentence that is sometimes addressed to Elijah, this was originally spoken by the sandek. Before taking his own seat, he pointed deferentially to the Chair of Elijah and bade the prophet occupy it, (saying) 'thine is before thee.'"[41]

"The service proper begins with the pronouncement by the mohel of the words, 'Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments and enjoined us the rite of circumcision.'"[42] The operation of circumcision is now performed. "The operation consists of three acts, a) the initial cutting of the foreskin (milah), b) the removal of it from the glans (periah) and c) the stanching of the blood by oral suction (mezizah) or by the application of salves."[43] "The mohel must perform these three operations to fulfill the mitzvah of milah."[44] The foreskin, known as the orlah, must be entirely removed from the glans penis, known as the atarah, so that the glans penis, the atarah, is entirely exposed.[45] The removal of the foreskin, the orlah, (periah) has religious significance, for, "it is absolutely impossible to say, in any given case, whether circumcision has been performed at all or not, for

if periah is not practiced, the soft elastic skin of the penis easily comes forward and re-covers the glans. To this day, therefore, the performance of periah is a distinct rite among the Jews, completely distinguishing them from even those nations of the world who practice circumcision."[46] In practical terms, the rite of suction of the blood (mezizah) is not widely practiced today, and the application of salves and bandages replace the mezizah part of the ceremony and serve to stop the blood of the wound from flowing, as suction once did.

As soon as the operation is completed, the father recites the blessing, "Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and hast bidden us to make him enter into the covenant of Abraham our father."[47] "To this, he adds the customary blessing on a joyous occasion, '...who has kept us alive....'"[48] (This addition does not appear in the service as outlined in HaMadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide, the Orthodox rabbi's manual, for some feel that "this is not entirely a pleasant occasion...because it entails considerable pain and distress for the infant."[49]) Those present then respond, "As he has been entered into the covenant, so may he be introduced to the study of the Law, to the nuptial canopy and to good deeds."[50] The mohel then recites the blessing over wine and the following blessing concerning circumcision:

> Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified the well-beloved (Isaac) from the womb and hast set Thy statute in his flesh, and has sealed his offspring with the sign of the holy covenant. Therefore, because of this, O living God, our Portion and our Rock, deliver from destruction the dearly beloved of our flesh, for the sake of the covenant Thou hast set in our bodies. Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, who hast made the covenant.[51]

"It should be noted that the blessing is in the present tense. The covenant is conceived of not only as a precious spiritual heritage from Abraham, but also as an immediate personal commitment. God enters into a covenant with each Jew individually."[52]

After the recitation of this blessing, the child is given his Hebrew name, because, "the name of Abraham was conferred on our great ancestor on the occasion of the institution of circumcision."[53] The prayer recited in order to name the child, instituted in the geonic period, was preserved by Abraham b. Nathan.[54] This prayer reads:

> Our God and God of our fathers, preserve this child to his father and to his mother, and let his name be called in Israel.....son of..... Let the father rejoice in his offspring, and let the mother be glad with her children; as it is written: 'Let thy father and thy mother rejoice, and let her that bore thee be glad.' And it is said: 'And I passed by thee, and I saw thee weltering in thy blood and I said unto thee: "In thy blood thou shalt live." Yea, I said: "In thy blood thou shalt live."'[55]

At this point, a few drops of wine are put into the mouth of the infant. The wine, being given to the infant, could be

symbolic of the verse recited in the blessing, "In thy blood thou shalt live," the wine being symbolic of the blood. It could be used to help alleviate the pain felt by the child over the circumcision, or it may simply be a way of letting the child participate in his first act as a member of the House of Israel--drinking the wine over which a blessing has been recited.

The prayer then continues:

> And it is said: 'He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; (the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for everlasting covenant.' And it is said: 'And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old as God commanded him.' O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for His loving kindness endureth forever. The little child....., may he become great. As he has entered into the covenant, so may he be introduced to the study of the Law, to the nuptial canopy and to good deeds.[56]

The <u>mohel</u> continues:

> Creator of the Universe! May it be Thy gracious will to regard and accept this (performance of circumcision) as if I had brought this infant before Thy glorious throne. And Thou, in Thy abundant mercy, through Thy holy angels, give a pure and holy heart to.....son of.....who was just circumcised in honor of Thy great name. May his heart be wide open to comprehend Thy holy Law, that he may learn and teach, keep and fulfill Thy laws.[57]

Finally, a prayer for the circumcised infant is recited:

> May He who blessed our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, bless this tender infant

> who was circumcised and may He grant him a perfect cure. May his parents (or: relatives) deserve to raise him up to the study of the Law, to the nuptial canopy and good deeds. Let us say, Amen.[58]

This, then, is the history of the development of the rite and the service of circumcision, and this is how the service appears in the rabbi's manual of American Orthodoxy, HaMadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide. The American Orthodox rite reflects the developing rite and the laws and benedictions which appear in the traditional law literature of Judaism. The service which appears in HaMadrikh contains nothing more than those blessings required by law, and those verses and prayers required by tradition. The English which appears is a direct translation of the Hebrew. There are no poetic translations or any additional English prayers or readings.

Our investigation now turns to the rite and ceremony of circumcision as reflected in the rabbi's manuals of American Reform and Conservative Judaism to determine how, and ultimately why, the circumcision ceremony of American Judaism's liberal movements differs from the traditional rite.

Except for a very few proposals, suggested by the early radical reformers in Europe, the Reform movement, both in Europe and the United States, rarely questioned the validity of circumcision for an infant. Some dissenting voices were

raised, however, early in the history of Reform.

The Frankfort Reform Association, in 1842-3, declared that "circumcision, as a religious act or symbol, is no longer required,"[59] and urged its members to abandon the rite of circumcision.[60] "A few Reformers shared the Frankfort Association's attitude toward circumcision. Among these were (Samuel) Holdheim and (Abraham) Geiger, who did so privately, only because they did not wish to be identified with the over-all program of the Association."[61]

Holdheim, considered to be a radical reformer, expressed his views at the Brunswick Conference in 1844. He said, "Anything which upon unbiased careful, scientific study contradicts the religious consciousness of the present age has no authority for us." During his lifetime, he advocated some of the most extreme measures, including abolishing circumcision and transferring the Sabbath to Sunday.[62]

Holdheim made clear his views on circumcision in his reply to the Reform Society of Arad, Hungary, in 1848.

> Circumcision is the sign of the covenant concluded between God and Abraham and his descendants...and its seal on the body of every Israelite. As long as such a covenant had significance for the religious consciousness of the Jews, as long as the idea of a close covenant of love excluding the other nations was deeply rooted in the people's thought...circumcision was the characteristic symbol of this covenant, and was, therefore, clung to with particular zeal in Israel. But after this idea of circumcision has ceased to be a religious truth and an object of faith, protest must

> be lodged against circumcision as the expression of an outlived idea.[63]

Abraham Geiger was the only other reformer who was openly against circumcision. He wrote:

> ...I must confess that I cannot understand the necessity of working up a spirit of enthusiasm for the ceremony (of circumcision) merely on the ground that it is held in high esteem. It remains a barbarous, bloody act. The sacrificial idea which in former days invested the act with sanctity has no significance for us.[64]

The Augsburg Synod of 1871 attempted to make room for the dissenting opinion within the majority view. The resolution of the Augsburg Synod stated:

> Although the Synod premises without any reservation the supreme importance of circumcision in Judaism, it yet declares, in answer to the question propounded, that a boy born of a Jewish mother who has not been circumcised, for whatsoever reason this may have been, must be considered a Jew, and be treated as such in all ritual matters, in accordance with the existing rules regarded binding for Israelites.[65]

This really did not do much to satisfy those who objected to circumcision, for the contents of the Augsburg Synod's resolution had solid basis in the law literature of Judaism. The opinion given was taken from the Talmud, Yebamot 70b, and the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 264:1.[66] Therefore, the few voices of dissent that were heard amongst the European Reformers were hardly heeded, and European Reform, in almost all its formal statements, stood solidly behind the concept

and practical application of circumcision.

What must be considered to be the opinion shared by most reformers concerning circumcision was articulated by Leopold Zunz in 1875. He wrote:

> Circumcision is, like the Sabbath, an institution, not a mere ceremony. It is not the operation itself (which might indeed be described as a ceremony) but the state of being circumcised from one's eighth day onward, that is the core and the essence of the commandment. All other rites and ceremonies recur periodically through life, and any single act of omission is in no way final and decisive. They permit of varying degrees of observance, so that remissiveness on any one occasion can be made up by increased zeal on the next. Not so circumcision; once neglected, the neglect remains permanent and irreparable. Circumcision is a symbol at once of the unity and eternity of Israel; an act which exemplifies in concrete form the inheritance of God's law from the past and the transmission of it to the future. Neglect of this rite is more than a personal matter; it compromises the succeeding generation. For it is unlikely that one who has been denied circumcision on principle will, on principle, retain his Jewish affiliations. To abrogate circumcision...therefore amounts to repudiating the past on the one hand and renouncing the future on the other.. It is to sever the thread of Jewish continuity. It is suicide, not reform.[67]

Thus, the liberal movement in Judaism, Reform, came to America, except in a few isolated instances, with circumcision as one of its abiding principles.

The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, the first real articulation by American Reform rabbis of their theological position, under the heading, "The Ceremonial Laws of Judaism",

stated:

> We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only the moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.[68]

The American Reform rabbis must have considered circumcision to be one of those ceremonies which "elevate and sanctify" the lives of Jews, for nowhere in the Pittsburgh Platform or in any other writings of the early American reformers is there any objection raised to the rite and ceremony of circumcision for the eight-day old Jewish male.

Not only did the rabbis feel strongly about circumcision, but the great lay leaders of the time felt likewise. Moritz Loth, the president of the congregation which was served by Isaac Mayer Wise, and the first president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, wrote as his personal recommendation that:

> ...it shall be a fixed rule that any Rabbi, who by his preaching or acts advises the abolishment of milah or to observe our Sabbath on Sunday...has forfeited his right to preach before a Jewish congregation, and any congregation employing such a Rabbi, shall, for the time being, be deprived of the honor to be a member of the Union of Congregations.[69]

It was with this kind of thinking that the Central Conference of American Rabbis went about the task of publishing its first rabbi's manual, and including within that manual

a service for circumcision.

One further point must be noted, which had an effect on the circumcision service that was ultimately to emerge from the thinking of American Reform. The concession to modernity which Reform chose to make was permission for a surgeon, instead of a mohel, to perform the circumcision, and the permission for the use of the most modern surgical equipment for the operation. This position was discussed at the first convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1890,[70] and is discussed in modern terms by Solomon B. Freehof in his many writings. Dr. Freehof indicates that, according to Reform practice, a surgeon may perform the circumcision, and, in times of necessity, even a non-Jew may perform the rite. To bolster his contention, he quotes from Abodah Zarah 26b: "R. Meir says, in a place where there is no Jewish expert, even a pagan may perform (the circumcision);" and the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 264:1: "in time of danger, a gentile may circumcise."[71] Therefore, "insofar as the operation itself is to be considered religious, it is, of course, preferable to have a Jewish physician. Certainly, a skilled mohel is acceptable beyond question, but he is not indispensable. A Jewish physician may perform the entire ritual, including reciting the prayers. A Gentile physician may circumcise, but the family should be present to conduct the re-

ligious service."[72] Further, since there had been many advances in techniques and instruments developed by modern science which were unknown to those Jews who created the laws concerning circumcision, Reform took the position that "modern surgical instruments could be used."[73] Specifically, this meant that "although the Orthodox differ as to the legitimacy of clamps or other mechanical devices at a circumcision, Liberal Judaism allows any proper surgical procedure."[74] In practical terms, this meant that a new functionary was added to the circumcision service. If a mohel did not conduct the service and recite the blessings, and if the physician were gentile, or Jewish and unable to recite the proper blessings, one who could recite the blessings, and maintain the religious aspect of the circumcision, was needed. Thus, the rabbi was now required to be a functionary at a circumcision service if a mohel did not preside. It is for this reason that the circumcision service in the rabbi's manuals of American Reform will include the rabbi as the functionary, and address the directions to as well as specify parts to be recited by the rabbi.

The first discussion of a Reform rite for circumcision took place at the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1910. Some of the suggestions made at that convention for the circumcision service found their way

into the Minister's Handbook published in 1917. Most of the suggestions revolved around the attempt to find poetic language with which to paraphrase the traditional Orthodox prayers for the child and his parents. No matter of consequence concerning the circumcision was discussed except for the suggestion that the blessing recited by the mohel be omitted.[75] The 1917 Minister's Handbook does not eliminate the blessing entirely, but, rather, suggests that the rabbi recite it.[76]

The 1914 Typescript presented to the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis by William Rosenau begins with an introductory note, which is repeated verbatim in the 1917 Minister's Handbook:

> It often happens that a surgeon performs the circumcision and the Rabbi is asked to read the accompanying service. The following service is suggested.[77]

Thus, the Reform movement recognized that officiating at circumcisions would not be the sole responsibility of mohelim, but that parents would often choose to have a physician perform the operation and have a rabbi read the service.

The 1914 Typescript eliminates the use of Hebrew wherever possible. The proposed text has the welcoming phrase, "Blessed be he..." and the blessing, formerly recited by the mohel, now by the rabbi, "...who has enjoined upon us the rite of circumcision," only in English.[78] The 1917 Minister's Handbook has the Hebrew as well as the English.[79] The Minister's Handbook adds the "who has kept us alive" blessing,

which the 1914 Typescript does not have, and also adds a paragraph of prayer concerning the covenant, concluding with the blessing over wine.[80] At this point in the service, both the 1914 Typescript and the 1917 Minister's Handbook contain a prayer asking God's blessing on the newborn child, whose name is given within the prayer.[81] Though these prayers differ in their exact wording, the intent is the same, and it may be assumed that the 1917 version was felt to be more poetic, or smoother, more readable English. The 1914 Typescript served as an important basis for the service of circumcision which finally appeared in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. Only slight changes, the addition of Hebrew and the rewording of the prayers, distinguish the two. The first circumcision service published by American Reform recognized the fact that physicians instead of mohelim would perform the operation, shortened the traditional service by eliminating the opening verses from Scripture and any reference to Elijah, and set the prayers to be recited into modern English as poetically and as beautifully as possible. This service served American Reform Judaism for more than twenty years.

The 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook," presented to the Central Conference of American Rabbis by Samuel S. Cohon as a basis for suggestions and discussions for a new Minister's Handbook, contains some variations from the 1917 service.

First, wherever possible, Cohon suggests the use of Hebrew. Each blessing is to be recited in Hebrew and then translated into English. New translations of the prayer of thanksgiving and rejoicing over the covenant, and the prayer for naming the child are given. This is an attempt to further modernize the language of the service. Cohon added a new dimension to the circumcision service by including a prayer to be recited, if conditions permit, after taking the child from the operating room to his mother. This is a prayer of thanksgiving to be recited in the presence of the child's mother.[82]

The service for circumcision which was published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in its newly renamed Rabbi's Manual in 1928, contained many more elements of the traditional service than had been included in the previous manual, and even many more than Cohon's revised manuscript reflected.

First, in a footnote, the Reform rabbis indicate their acceptance of the fact that many new parents choose to have a mohel perform the circumcision, rather than a physician. The footnote states:

> When a surgeon performs the circumcision, the Rabbi reads the accompanying service. When a Mohel officiates, it is sufficient for the Rabbi to read the closing prayer.[83]

For the liturgical parts of the service, i.e., the blessings

and prayers that are part of the traditional service, and not simply creations of those writing the manual, the Hebrew and the English are given side by side so that both may be recited, or so that the rabbi may choose to recite either the Hebrew or the English. Thus, this edition of the Rabbi's Manual does not dictate how a certain prayer of blessing should be recited.

The 1928 edition of the Rabbi's Manual returns to tradition by including some of the verses from Scripture which serve as an introduction to the circumcision ceremony. It also includes the prayer of the circumciser, "who has enjoined upon us the rite of circumcision," the blessing of thanksgiving, "who has kept us alive," and indicates that the father may also recite the blessing, "hast bidden us to make him enter the Covenant...." [84] Thus, the traditional elements of introduction to and blessings for circumcision have been brought back to the Reform service.

The traditional element is also reflected in the prayers to be said after the circumcision. Although modified and shortened, the traditional prayers, אלהנו וא"א קיים את הילד and מי שברך אבותנו...יברך את הילד are included in the Rabbi's Manual. A beautiful translation is provided:

> We praise Thee, O Lord, our God, in this hour in which a new born son has been brought into the covenant of Abraham. May this covenant be fulfilled in him by devotion to Thy law of truth and righteousness, by a marriage worthy of Thy blessing and by a life enriched with

good deeds.

> Be Thou, O God, with this child. Let him be known in Israel by the name.....Do Thou, O God, guard him and guide him. May he grow in health and strength, with clean heart and upright spirit. May his dear ones ever rejoice in him, and may his life bring blessings manifold to his parents, to Israel and to mankind. Amen.[85]

This 1928 Rabbi's Manual adds a new element to the circumcision service by indicating that the Priestly Benediction should be recited. Taking the suggestion from the 1927 Cohon manuscript, the 1928 manual includes a prayer to be said in the presence of the mother.[86] With a few changes, it is basically the prayer which Cohon suggested. Thus, the 1928 Rabbi's Manual of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, while including some innovative suggestions--the prayer with the mother and the Priestly Benediction--hearkens back to the traditional service and includes many traditional service and includes many traditional elements in its Service at Circumcision.

The Service at Circumcision of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual, which reflects almost exactly the suggested text as found in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual," eliminates many of the traditional elements found in the 1928 manual and is much more homiletical and interpretive than any past service. It begins, after the traditional greeting, "Blessed be He,..."

with the reading of the injunction of circumcision found in Genesis. This establishes, homiletically, the basis for the ceremony about to be performed. The verses from Scripture, part of the traditional service and included in the 1928 Rabbi's Manual, are eliminated, and after the reading of the verses from Genesis, the father recites the "commanded us to bring our sons..." blessing. An entirely new element is added to the service at this point. The manual instructs the rabbi to recite specific verses from Psalms:

> For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born. (Psalm 78:5-6)

And

> He hath remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; (the covenant) which He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; and He established it unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant. (Psalm 105:8-10)[87]

Without any precedent, these verses from Psalms were added to the circumcision service. It is clear that the themes they discuss are themes which are reflected in the circumcision ceremony, but it is curious that such a new element should be introduced into the circumcision service without any word of explanation. It can only be assumed that this is one further step in an attempt to make the liturgy of the circumcision service homiletical and interpretive.

The service continues with the blessing by the circumciser, "who hast enjoined upon us the rite of circumcision," and the blessing, "who hast kept us alive." No indication is made that these blessings should be recited by anyone but the rabbi. The service continues, in much the same way as did the 1928 service. The prayer for wine, the blessings of naming and thanksgiving, the Priestly Benediction and the prayer to be offered in the presence of the mother are all included.[88] The English translations, once again, reflect the attempt to modernize the language of the service.

Thus, the 1961 Rabbi's Manual of the Central Conference of American Rabbis,--the manual which is still in use today--removes the traditional elements of the service that were included in the 1928 manual. The service in this manual is much more homiletical and interpretive than ever before. It includes readings that had never before been part of a circumcision service, either traditional or reform. And it completes the circle of the Reform outlook toward the circumcision service. The original service, in the 1917 Minister's Handbook, moved as far away from the traditional service as possible. It eliminated much of the Hebrew, and it kept only those elements absolutely necessary to the performance of the operation and the naming of the child. The 1928 Rabbi's Manual gave both the Hebrew and the English for all the liturgical elements and returned to much of the tra-

ditional liturgy, including the recitation of the verses from Scripture before the operation. The 1961 Rabbi's Manual, while retaining both the Hebrew and the English for all its blessings and prayers, eliminates the formerly reinstated traditional elements, adds homiletical and interpretive sections and hones the English prayers to very fine style and prose. Thus, the 1961 Rabbi's Manual of the Central Conference of American Rabbis returns to the realm of reforming the traditional service for the rite of circumcision.

The 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual, the first rabbi's manual of Conservative Judaism, combines the strictly traditional elements of the circumcision service with some creative prose. The service itself is given, as it would be found in an Orthodox manual, all in Hebrew. Directions are given in English, but all the prayers are exclusively in Hebrew, without English translation. It is as if they are to be recited with a minimum of comment or ceremony, and the rubrics of the circumcision itself are to be conducted without any interruption. The manual then gives two alternative prayers that can be recited to give thanks for the covenant and to give the child his name. Both these prayers end with the recitation of the Priestly Benediction. Taking a cue from the 1928 Reform manual, the Rabbinical Assembly Manual includes

a prayer to be recited, if conditions permit, at the mother's bedside. It is a prayer of thanksgiving and rejoicing.[89]

Because there was never any question within the Conservative movement as to the mohel being the officiant at the circumcision, the ceremony in the rabbi's manual does not include the participation of the rabbi. Following traditional custom, the service is conducted by the mohel, with the father and those assembled participating. Only when it is time to recite a prayer that is not otherwise part of the traditional ceremony is the rabbi's participation indicated. At that point, creative prayers in fine English are included for recitation. The circumcision service of the 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual reflects the fact that the circumcision is to be performed by the mohel, and the rabbi's participation is simply an acknowledgment of the modern situation of the rabbi as a participant in life-cycle events.

The 1965 edition of the Conservative rabbi's manual, לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual, reflects some change in the approach to the circumcision service by the Conservative movement. First, although the mohel is still seen as the central figure, and the father and those assembled continue to participate in the service, the service has taken on an air of organization. No longer is it to be assumed that the mohel will rush through the blessings and prayers, and,

therefore, that those blessings can be ignored in the rabbi's manual. Each blessing is given an English translation, and the directions to the participants are clearly stated. Where, in the 1952 manual, it seemed that the rabbi was merely a by-stander, watching the mohel perform the ceremony, in this 1961 manual the rabbi seems to be the officiant, the director, with the mohel playing his specialized part, and the rabbi conducting the service.

A fine English translation of the prayer of thanksgiving and naming is given, and the Priestly Benediction is still included. The prayer to be said at the mother's bedside is eliminated, but Psalm 8 is included and the directions indicate that it may be recited at the end of the ceremony.[90]

The 1965 edition of the Conservative rabbi's manual, לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual, contains all the traditional elements of the circumcision service. It emphasizes the role of the rabbi, and it eliminates the one creative element--the prayer at the mother's bedside--which had been included in the 1952 manual. This circumcision service truly reflects the outlook of the Conservative movement, for it combines the traditional elements of Jewish observance with a modern approach--the fine and poetic English.

All three wings of American Judaism maintain and cherish the rite of circumcision for an eight-day old male. The

liturgy of the three wings of American Judaism for the service of circumcision differs; however, the difference is not exceedingly radical. The service in HaMadrikh, the Orthodox rabbi's manual, reflects all the traditions and laws which are stated within the law literature of Judaism. The two manuals of Conservative Judaism contain the basic rubrics of the traditional service, but also include English translations and paraphrases of the prayers and benedictions in an attempt to modernize and contemporize the ceremony. The earliest Reform manual eliminated all but the absolutely necessary traditional elements from the service. The second Reform manual returned to many of the elements of traditional liturgy which it had formerly rejected. The latest Reform manual includes many new elements in the circumcision service, which must be understood as homiletical and interpretive, in an attempt to make the service as meaningful as possible for those participants who know little of the reasons and the lore of the circumcision service.

"In the course of the ages, Judaism (has) found a... striking method of expressing (the) relationship (between man and God.) Circumcision (is)...the seal of God imprinted on the flesh."[91] The liturgy of the three wings of American Judaism reflects the fact that--at least in America--this seal will continue to be imprinted from generation to gener-

ation, and that the covenant made between God and Abraham so many centuries ago will be constantly renewed as father brings son into the everlasting covenant.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

"From its inception, Judaism has always recognized two purposes in marriage, both spelled out in the opening pages of Scripture. The first is the fulfillment of the commandment, 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28). Children are uniformly considered as a blessing...as constituting man's renewal and immortality. The second function of marriage is that of companionship...'It is not good for man to dwell alone: I will make a helpmate for him' (Genesis 2:18)."[1]

If the purposes for Jewish marriage have remained constant throughout the millennia, the ritual surrounding the marriage ceremony has not. The Jewish marriage ceremony has been a continually evolving rite, uniting differing elements, linking diverse ceremonials, into the ritual which finally came to be known as the Orthodox rite as performed in our time. An investigation of the rite of marriage as practiced by American Jews today requires an exploration of the diverse elements which have been combined over the ages.

"In Mosaic Law, no fixed forms of concluding marriage are mentioned, though the distinction occasionally made between the betrothed and the married woman (Deut. 20:7; 22:22-29) points to some kind of formality by which the different state was worked."[2] "Because in Biblical times the

marriage of a daughter meant the loss of a useful member of the household, the groom's family had to pay compensation in order to secure a bride."[3] "The father of the bridegroom, therefore, paid a sum of money to that of the bride. The ceremony took place in the latter's home. A formal contract was drawn up and witnessed. The bridegroom presented gifts to his betrothed, and there was often also an exchange of 'pledges.' Although the actual delivery of the bride might be deferred for some time, the couple was regarded from that moment as legally bound or 'espoused.'"[4]

The formal contract, or marriage writ, has played an important part in Jewish marriages throughout the ages. Louis M. Epstein, in his classic work, The Jewish Marriage Contract, suggests that since there was a writ of divorce known in Biblical times ("Let him write her a bill of divorcement...," Deut. 24:1-3), a marriage writ must have existed also, even though it is not mentioned.[5] The generally accepted notion, however, is that "we must trace the beginning of the ketubah (the marriage contract) to the period immediately on return from the exile."[6] It is felt that the Jews learned about the importance of contracts while in exile, especially since cuneiform documents from the ruins of Babylonia and Nineveh exist indicating that those societies used contracts extensively dealing with every phase of human existence.[7]

From the original intent of indicating the agreement

on the "brideprice" to be paid to the father of the bride, the purpose of the marriage contract subtly shifted through the ages as the actual purchasing of a bride became less and less prevalent. "As the institution of marriage developed among the Jews, the purchase money, instead of being turned over to the bride's father, became a fund set aside by the husband for his wife, a sum that would be hers in case of divorce or the death of the husband. Under these conditions, a clear agreement on money matters had to be made prior to marriage, to protect the wife's interests. And this agreement grew into the ketubah. It is at once a wife's insurance policy and her 'Bill of Rights.'"[8] "The minimum amount (of money to be specified in the ketubah) was two hundred silver dinars for a girl (a virgin) and a hundred for a widow. In priestly families and in some aristocratic lay families, four hundred dinars were the minimum."[9]

The paying of this large sum of money as a guarantee against the dissolution of the marriage often imposed a great financial hardship on a young man, especially when he was about to establish a home. "Accordingly, in the first century B.C.E., an important modification was introduced by Simeon ben Shatach, president of the Sanhedrin...It was ordained that the prospective husband could legally 'borrow back' the cash deposit, by inserting a clause imposing a lien on all his present and future property in favor of his

wife."[10] Simeon's reform "served two humane purposes. A man did not need two hundred dinars in cash to marry a girl, but he needed this amount if he wanted to divorce her. The ketubah, thus, protected the woman from being arbitrarily divorced by her husband."[11]

The marriage contract, or ketubah, is unique among contracts. "Normally, every contract, in Jewish law...is made out in duplicate. Both copies are signed by each party to the agreement and one copy is retained by each of them. But a ketubah is not duplicated. There is only one copy and that is retained by the wife (since) the ketubah is meant to protect her."[12] "The ketubah is given to the bride by the groom and she retains it as her personal possession."[13]

Thus, through the ages, the ketubah has become a solemn pledge coupled with an oath which the man is expected to take before the congregation...that he will perform all the duties and obligations which he voluntarily takes upon himself for the protection of his wife, now in his lifetime and after his death, all of which are entered in that document. If he divorce her, her property goes back to her and if he leave her a widow, part of her property returns to her. In any case, she has something to fall back upon in every circumstance of trouble and distress arising out of her married life."[14] Included within the ketubah are the date of the

marriage, the place it occurs, the names of the bride and groom, the conditions (the monetary considerations) and the following declaration made by the groom: "'Be thou my wife according to the Law of Moses and Israel. I will work for thee; I will honor thee; I will support and maintain thee, even as it beseemeth a Jewish husband to do, who work for their wives, and honor, support and maintain them in faithfulness.' The document proceeds to state, 'and the bride plighted her troth unto him and consented to be his wife.'"[15] The ketubah concludes with ending clauses to prevent insertions and with the signature of the witnesses.

Thus, the marriage contract, the ketubah, grew from its earliest form as a record of the contract to purchase a bride, to the bill of rights and insurance policy which is given from husband to wife to protect the wife's place and rights within the marriage. The existence and recitation of the ketubah play an important role within the ceremony and liturgy of a traditional Jewish wedding even today.

When Jewish marriage was conducted through the purchase of a bride, the marriage took place immediately upon payment of the brideprice. Already in Biblical times, however, there are hints of two distinct ceremonies constituting a Jewish marriage: betrothal and then, later, the nuptials. "Legally, this (indicated) postponement of the delivery of

the bride to her husband. Betrothal, or erusin, represented full consummation of the marriage. From that moment on, the betrothed, or arusah, was in every respect the wife of her husband. Nuptials, termed huppah or nissuin, had no legal significance whatsoever, save a slight change in the punishment for unfaithfulness. In tannaitic days, this Biblical marriage scheme prevailed and common usage allowed a year to elapse between betrothal and nuptials. It was not unnatural, however, for a social feeling to come into being in the course of time that the bride is not really a wife until she entered the nuptials. Although unfaithfulness of the betrothed may be treated as severely or even more severely than adultery, nonetheless, the betrothed was in her father's house looking forward only to a future common life with her husband. As the social feeling grew, the law kept thinning the bond of betrothal and enlarging the bond of nuptials. Nuptials became a real legal factor in the marriage."[16]

The betrothal may be defined as an "inchoate marriage. After the betrothal, the bride (was) considered as the bridegroom's wife, even though she continued to live in her father's house and (was) not allowed to cohabit with the groom"[17] until the nuptials took place.

The betrothal could take place by one of three means. The Talmud, at the beginning of the tractate Kiddushin,

spells out the methods: "A wife may be acquired in three ways,...by money, by a writ or by intercourse..." (b. Talmud Kiddushin 2a). Some scholars suggest that one of these methods was better, more acceptable, than the other two. Others suggest that all three were required before the betrothal and nuptials were considered complete. In actual practice, the betrothal by כסף, by money, the giving of something of value by the groom to the bride along with a declaration of intent, seems to have been the most popular and accepted.

"The betrothment or marriage contract by כסף (money) consisted in this, that, in the presence of two competent witnesses, the man gave to his chosen bride a piece of money or any object having the value of at least one prutah (a penny) with the words, 'Be thou consecrated (or wedded) unto me.' This formula could also be replaced by other words expressing the same idea as, 'Be thou my betrothed,' 'Be thou my wife,' 'Be mine,' or similar phrases. The first mentioned formula was more generally used. It was later on, probably not earlier than the twelfth or thirteenth century, increased by the words כדת משה וישראל (according to the Law of Moses and Israel), and when about at the same period it became customary to perform the act of betrothment with a plain ring instead of a piece of money, the words כטבעת זו (with this ring) were added, so that the formula now reads, 'Be thou consecrated unto me with this ring, according to

the Law of Moses and Israel.'"[18]

Thus, by Talmudic times, betrothal had assumed high religious significance, and a new term, kiddushin, sanctification, had come to signify betrothal. "In the Mosaic Law, the prohibition of incest and licentiousness was promulgated as a prerequisite for 'sanctifying oneself and being holy' (Lev. 20). This was the starting point for spiritualizing the matrimonial union and for declaring it as a preliminary for the sanctification of a man's life. Thus, the betrothal celebration was accompanied by a benediction."[19] The benediction, required by the ritual law of the Talmud, termed ברכת קדושין or ברכת ארוסין, "was, according to the Talmud, Ketubot 7b, formulated by Judah bar Jecheskel, the founder of the academy of Pumbaditha in the third century. It expresses the Lord's praise because of the regulation of sanctification and matrimony. Besides, it alludes to the law that the betrothed parties are not permitted to enter upon the conjugal life before having completed their union by the ceremonies of the nuptials."[20]

The blessing was worded, "Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to refrain from unlawful marriages, and forbidden us the betrothed and permitted us the married by canopy and sanctification. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who sanctifieth Israel." There seem to be a number of ver-

sions of this blessing, both in the traditional sources and in the versions which have survived to modern times. One of the versions reverses the words "by canopy and sanctification" to read "by sanctification and canopy", perhaps suggesting two consecutive stages of the betrothal. The modern version of this blessing, which appears in HaMadrikh, the Orthodox rabbi's manual, and reflects modern usage adds the words, על ידי חופה וקידושין, "through canopy and sanctification" to the very end of the blessing, thus reading, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who sanctifieth Thy people Israel through canopy and sanctification."[21]

"The sanctification of the bride, like the sanctification of the Sabbath was made over wine. (p. Talmud, Sotah vii 5 /22nd/) 'And one makes a blessing over it (wine), appoints a meal over it for saying grace together, and one sanctifies the bride over it and comforts the mourners therewith.'"[22]

The requirement of the recitation of a blessing and sanctification over a cup of wine removed the betrothal ceremony from a function of a completely private nature, "but no official form developed necessitating the presence of a priest or a large audience or the holding of the ceremony in a public place."[23]

The betrothal ceremony, the first and necessary prerequisite to marriage, is nothing like the modern notion

of engagement. The betrothal had legal, binding effect, and, for all intents and purposes, bound the man and woman to each other as husband and wife. Only lack of cohabitation differentiated the betrothed state from the state which would prevail after the nuptials took place. The rabbis gave high religious significance to the ceremony by elevating the betrothal to an act of sanctification, accompanied by a blessing recited over a cup of wine. The betrothal blessing still remains an integral part of the traditional marriage rite, even though the rite of betrothal and the rite of nuptials were to be combined in the Middle Ages.

Some time after the betrothal, often as long as one year later, the nuptials took place. "The nuptials have ever been attended with many kinds of ceremonies which varied in different ages and countries. The essence of the ceremonies consisted in the act of conducting the bride from her home to that of the bridegroom, or a place representing his home. By this act, indicating that she was now placed under his marital authority and that they now commenced to live together as husband and wife, the marriage was regarded as having been consummated. They were then, in all respects, considered as husband and wife though no conjugal intercourse had actually taken place."[24]

"The nuptials are termed Huppah or Nissuin. The latter term means, literally, 'taking' (namely the wife). Huppah originally denoted the bridal chamber or nuptial apartment, usually in the young husband's house, to which he conducted his bride."[25] The Bible itself makes it evident that the huppah was a tent or room belonging to the bridegroom. Psalm 19:6 speaks of "the bridegroom coming forth from his huppah," and Joel 2:16 says, "Let the bridegroom come forth from his chamber and the bride from her huppah." The room, or huppah, had to belong to the groom, had to be his (and then theirs) because until she came under his protection, or into his premises, she was still arusah, betrothed, and not yet nesuah, "taken by him."

The Midrash and the Talmud give many references to the loving generosity on the part of the father of the groom in building a beautifully decorated huppah for his son (Gen. Rabbah 28:6; b. Talmud Sanhedrin 108a). There is in the literature, however, an unsettled question as to whether or not there must be privacy within the huppah. The general conclusion is that not until the couple has privacy, so that sexual relations might take place, is the bride actually acquired as a wife.

Other customs grew up through the ages to indicate the privacy needed for the completion of the nissuin. At times, the bride was carried in a covered litter. Later, the bride

was veiled. Sometimes, the veiling of the bride was actually done by the groom, and, thus, was more clearly symbolic of the isolation under his huppah. Hence, the custom arose of having the bride under the groom's tallit at the marriage ceremony. (Two vestiges of these customs remain today. Often the bride is veiled before the marriage ceremony, either by the rabbi or by the groom or both. This ceremony is known as bedecken, "the veiling." The second custom, the use of the tallit as a covering, manifests itself in today's huppah being made of one or more prayer shawls.)

The huppah ceased to mean the actual room to which the bride had to be taken, but came to mean any covering in general. Huppah became an abstract noun meaning "the act or object by which the broom may be said to have 'taken' the bride." Even with the disappearance of the older variants, the issue of huppah remained a critical one, for the legal status of the marriage, and thus the legal questions of inheritance, adultery, etc., depended on when the bride legally became the wife of the groom.

Isserles, in a note to Eben HaEzer 55:1, gives the possible meaning of the word huppah in his time. The term could mean the retiring of the couple to a private place, or it could mean bringing the bride to the groom, even if there is no privacy. Huppah might also mean the spreading

of the cloth over their heads during the recitation of the blessing, or it might mean the time when the bride leaves her father's house veiled. But Isserles concludes, "The custom is widespread by now that we use the word huppah for the place where we put a cloth over four poles and then we lead them to the house where they eat together in a private place and that (that is, the huppah and the privacy) is the huppah which is now customary."

Joel Sirkes (the generation after Isserles) in commenting on the Tur, Eben HaEzer 61, states that because of doubt as to which of the forms of huppah is the crucial one, all interpretations are permitted. Sirkes also notes that the custom of spreading a cloth over four poles and reciting the blessings under it could be a response to the poverty of the times, and the lack of available private chambers.

The public nature of the tent-like symbol of the former bridal chamber allayed any doubts as to the legal acquisition of the bride. If the chamber to which the groom had led the bride had not legally been his possession, as would be the case for those who could not afford such luxuries, then the status of the marriage would be in question. Making the huppah into a common usage and a public form left no question as to the legality of the marriage.

The tent-like huppah, the cloth supported by four poles, was unknown before the sixteenth century, but it has become

an integral part of the Jewish wedding ceremony.[26] Homiletical meaning and interpretation has been given to the huppah used today so that it is often regarded as symbolizing the new home which the bridegroom and bride will create together. Whatever its original intent, the huppah has come to symbolize a Jewish wedding, and, thus, is still a required ritual object within traditional weddings today.

The nuptials of old consisted, therefore, of an actual or symbolic transfer of the bride from her father's house to the house of her new husband. It would seem that this ceremony carries with it the last vestiges of marriage as purchase or acquisition since the marriage is complete when the bridegroom "takes possession" of his bride and brings her to his house.

"The religious ceremonies attending the nuptials consisted mainly in the recital of ברכות נישואין, the nuptial benedictions, whether by the groom himself or by any of his friends present. These benedictions refer to the Divine origin of marriage, and invoke God's blessing upon the young couple...It is the Gemara (b. Talmud Ketubot 8a) which quotes them in their present form on the authority of...Rab Judah bar Jecheskel."[27]

The Talmud records these blessings, known in common parlence as the שבע ברכות, the "Seven Benedictions" because

of their number as follows:

> Our Rabbis taught: The blessing of the bridegroom is said in the presence of ten (adult males). What does one say? Rab Judah said: Blessed...who has created all things to His glory, and (Blessed...) the Creator of man, and Blessed...who hast created man in His image, in the image of the likeness of His form, and has prepared unto him out of Himself a building forever (a perpetual fabric) (meaning: woman), Blessed...Creator of man, and, May the barren (i.e., Zion) greatly rejoice and exult when her children will be gathered in her midst in joy. Blessed...who makest Zion joyful through her children, and, Mayest Thou make the loved companions (bride and groom) greatly to rejoice, as Thou didst gladden Thy creature (Adam) in the Garden of Eden as of old. Blessed...who makest the bridegroom and the bride to rejoice, and, Blessed...who has created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, rejoicing, song, mirth and delight, love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. Speedily, O Lord our God, may be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of bridegrooms singing from their canopies and of youths from their feasts of songs. Blessed...who makest the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride. (b. Talmud Ketubot 7b-8a)

These six blessings were recited over a cup of wine, which also had the appropriate blessing recited over it, making for a total of seven wedding benedictions, the שבע ברכות.

The first blessing is the standard blessing over wine. The second and third blessings praise God who has created all things to His glory and created man. The fourth blessing contains two related themes, that God has created man in His likeness (cf. Genesis 2:21-25) and has created woman

out of man. The fifth blessing speaks of Jerusalem, which is never forgotten, even in the times of our greatest joy (cf. Psalm 137:6). The benediction is based also upon Isaiah 62:5. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will God rejoice over Jerusalem. The sixth blessing is a prayer for perfect love between the two companions, as was the love between Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden. The seventh blessing is the culmination of the expressions of happiness in the other six blessings. In six different words for joy, in four synonyms for love and friendship, the blessing conveys the profound faith that a life of happiness, peace and affectionate companionship awaits the new husband and wife.[28] The source for the statement, "then again will be heard..." is Jeremiah 33:10-11. Though taken out of context, the Scriptural reference alludes to the importance of the voice of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and groom heard in the streets of Jersalem. The Seven Benedictions, then, are central to the nuptial ceremony and give a religious spirit and a spirit of rejoicing to the moment.

The nuptial, like the betrothal, was a private ceremony. The ceremony took place at home, the blessings were recited by the bridegroom or his friends, and no officiant was necessary. "The final part of the ceremony (the coming to the groom's house) was probably celebrated in public,"[29] but

the private nature of the ceremony, that is, not involving the community, remained.

The recitation of the Seven Benedictions and the nuptial aspect of the marriage ceremony remain within the traditional ceremony today, and form the basis for the second part of the marriage rite.

The eleventh century brought a change to the form of the betrothal and nuptial ceremonies. Instead of holding two separate ceremonies, often separated by a year or more, the custom became to hold both the betrothal and nuptial ceremonies on the same day. Scholars suggest a number of reasons for this change, but the two most compelling suggestions focus on pragmatic concerns. "The first explanation is found in a Responsum of Rashi (Rashi Resp. 194, Mahzor Vitry, p. 588) which declares: 'The custom of celebrating betrothal and wedding together arose because people were unwilling to arrange a banquet for the betrothal. When the betrothal is celebrated prior to the wedding, the groom and his relatives would be put to shame if they did not hold a big banquet from dawn to dusk. Hence, some people arranged the betrothal and wedding together and were content with one banquet.'"[30] Thus, one major opinion as to the reason for the combination of the betrothal and the wedding centers on purely financial considerations. It became too expensive

to hold two large, lavish banquets in close proximity, and the combining of the two ceremonies eliminated the need for double expense.

The second reason advanced seems even more compelling, for, "the definite character of the Jewish betrothal was not congruent with the conditions of those unstable, hazardous years, when it often happened that a bridegroom was separated from his bride before the wedding could be held. Legally, she was a wife from the time of the betrothal, and would remain 'lonely' (Hebrew: agunah) until she received a divorce from him. In order to avoid the risk, the communities ordained that the sanctification be postponed until the wedding day so that the bride would not have to stay alone unnecessarily."[31]

"The custom of fusing the two elements into one ceremony (was)...first mentioned (in the sources) as an exceptional arrangement and later as normal procedure. Sometimes the first part was arranged on the eve of the Sabbath, with the marriage blessings being recited to the couple under the canopy after the termination of the Sabbath; the day of rest itself, meanwhile, was devoted to the marriage banquet and festivities."[32] Eventually, the two ceremonies were not even separated by a twenty-four hour period, or even an hour or two, but came to be celebrated at the same time, one after the other. In the traditional wedding ceremony conducted today, the reading of the ketubah symbolically separates the betrothal, the kiddushin,

from the nuptial, the nissuin.

As the two ceremonies were combined into one, the marriage rite began to take on a more official, public character. Ten men were required for the recitation of the Seven Benedictions. Although the betrothal still required only two witnesses, when the two ceremonies were combined, ten now became the usual number present at the entire rite. The inclusion of ten adult males, the ritual quorum for Jewish worship, in an event gave it a public, community scope. It was during this time of combination that it became popular to hold the wedding ceremony in the public facility of the community--the synagogue courtyard--and to have the public leader--the rabbi--conduct the ritual and recite the blessing. Thus, the public form of the wedding service, and the combining of the betrothal and nuptial ceremonies came to be in the Middle Ages. It is this ceremony, and its public nature, which is the traditional wedding rite as practiced today.

The traditional wedding ceremony as practiced today includes the use of two ritual objects which bear investigation. Although the date is uncertain, and estimates range from the seventh or eighth century through the twelfth century, it is clear that at some post-Talmudic point a wedding ring replaced the coin as the object given by the groom to the bride in order to indicate betrothal. "It (the ring) is a deliberate

substitute for the small coin...which the bridegroom was originally required to put down in token of his ability to meet the financial obligation of the contract."[33] The Shulchan Aruch indicates the acceptance of the ring as the substitute for the coin in Eben HaEzer 27:1 where it states, "Some use a ring." A stipulation concerning the ring is also given in Eben HaEzer 31:2. There it states, "If he marries her with an object with regard to the value of which it is easy to err, such as precious stones, it is necessary to make an evaluation. Therefore, it is the custom to marry with a ring that has no stones." The permission to use a ring instead of the coin changed slightly the ritual objects of the Jewish wedding. The prohibition against rings containing precious stones was a safeguard to prevent any fraud taking place in pre-marital promises. Both customs, the use of the ring and the prohibition against precious stones, still prevail within the traditional marriage rite today. But as with its predecessor, the coin, "the giving and accepting of the ring in the presence of witnesses is the most important part of the ceremony, and the marriage is legalized when the groom places the ring on the bride's finger and pronounces the formula, 'Behold thou art consecrated unto me...'"[34] for "his act (giving the ring) and her willing acceptance of it effects the union."[35]

The custom of breaking a glass at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony has very old origins. The Talmud, Berachot 30b, gives a plausible explanation of the custom: "When the son of Rabbina was married, the father saw that the Rabbis present at the marriage feast were in an uproarious mood, so he took a costly white crystal vase worth 400 zuzim and broke it to curb their spirits." The medieval commentators, the Tosaphot, remark: "Hence we break a glass at weddings" (Berachot 31a). This explanation suggests, therefore, that the glass was broken to moderate the exceedingly great joy felt at a wedding.

Some scholars suggest, however, that the explanation given in the Talmud is merely an attempt by the rabbis to internalize and give some religious significance to a custom which had pagan origins. "Some of the very rabbis who advanced these explanations were aware of their artificiality. There are indications that the real purpose of the custom had not been forgotten, as in the comment that it was intended 'to give the accuser (Satan) his due....' The custom combined an attempt to frighten off the demons with noice and a direct attack upon them."[36] "The idea underlying this...ceremony is an ancient heathen superstition...that the evil spirits or demons are jealous of human happiness and therefore seek to spoil it or to harm the happy individual. The bride and groom, about to be married, are, accord-

ingly, the objects of envy of the demons and liable to be harmed."[37] It is quite plausible that a Jewish, religious explanation was given to a custom with pagan origins, for often within Jewish ritual customs with origins such as these have become internalized and Judaized. "We are, therefore, justified in assuming that we have a case of reinterpretation of the meaning of an older ceremony by the Rabbis who could not succeed in abolishing it altogether. In the popular mind the meaning of this ceremony was to offer a gift to the demons. This, of course, was objectionable to the Rabbis, as it meant worshipping other beings besides God. However, being forced by widespread popular usage to retain the ceremony, they tried to suppress the original idea about its significance by giving it another less objectionable meaning."[38]

"This theory is further supported by the persistent silence which the Geonim and all the rabbinic authorities up to the twelfth century maintain in regard to this ceremony, for we do not find this ceremony mentioned in Rabbinic Literature before the twelfth century. This silence can only be explained on the theory that the Rabbis did not like this ceremony, they merely tolerated it, hence they did not care to discuss it or comment upon it and they even avoided mention of it."[39]

"Possibly the ceremony would have been more strongly

opposed and eventually entirely abolished had it not been for an altogether new interpretation which freed it entirely from all objectionable superstitious beliefs with which it had been intimately connected. This new interpretation is found in Kolbo הלכות תשעה באב (The Laws of Tisha b'Av) (Venice 1547) p. 67, where speaking of the various reminders of the duty to mourn for the destruction of Jerusalem, the author also mentions our ceremony in the following words: ועל זה פשט המנהג לשבור הכוס אחר שבע ברכות 'For this reason also the custom became prevalent to break the cup after the recitation of the Seven Benedictions at weddings.' This is an altogether new interpretation and is probably original with the author of the Kolbo...It took some time before this altogether new interpretation was accepted by the majority of the teachers, but it gradually came to be recognized as the most acceptable interpretation of the ceremony."[40] Thus, a ceremony which is conceivably rooted in pagan origins was given a Jewish interpretation, and then a more acceptable Jewish interpretation and has been totally internalized and is a significant part of the marriage ceremony, even today.

"According to the Mahzor Vitry (p. 593 top) it is the glass over which the blessings of nissuin were recited which the groom throws agains the wall and breaks...In later centuries, it was felt to be an ill-omen to break the second cup, i.e., the cup of nissuin, which completed the ceremony

of marriage, and, therefore, they broke the first cup of erusin. Finally, it was felt to be objectionable to break either of the marriage cups, and, therefore, a third cup, not otherwise used in the marriage ceremony, was broken instead."[41]

Today, the breaking of the glass has been given other interpretations. "Anthropologists see it as a symbol of the husband's conquest of the virgin."[42] More homiletical interpretations are offered by Jewish sources. Joseph Hertz, the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, explains, "'Even as one step shatters the glass, so will one act of unfaithfulness forever destroy the holiness and happiness of the love.'"[43] Still another explanation suggests that "the breaking of the glass also symbolizes irrevocability. Just as this is an irrevocable act, so, too, marriage shall be unchangeable and permanent."[44]

Though the prevailing Jewish position is that the breaking of the glass is a symbol of sadness and mourning for the destruction of the Temple, many other interpretations are offered. In practice, the shattering of the glass at the end of the wedding is usually followed by shouts of "Mazel Tov," indicating anything but sorrow. Whatever its original reasons and purposes, the breaking of a glass at the end of the wedding ceremony has become the symbol of the Jewish wedding. It is, thus, included in the traditional ceremony

today.

The traditional, or Orthodox, wedding service as practiced today, and as it appears in HaMadrikh, the American Orthodox rabbi's manual, has its roots in the historical development of the marriage rite. The ceremony opens with the traditional greeting, "ברוך הבא בשם ה or ברוכים הבאים בשם ה", depending on whether the singular or plural is preferred, "Blessed be those who come in the name of the Lord." If the wedding service is held in a synagogue, it is customary to add "ברכנוכם מבית ה", "We bless you out of the house of the Lord." The source for this greeting is Psalm 118:26. Two other verses from the Psalms are optional. באו נשתחוה ונכרעה נברכה לפני ה" עושנו, "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95:6), and עבדו את ה" בשמחה באו לפניו ברננה, "Serve the Lord with joy, come before Him with exulting" (Psalm 100:2). Neither of these verses appears in HaMadrikh, but they are options noted in the Hertz Daily Prayer Book and the Singer Authorized Daily Prayer Book.

The service continues with a short selection from a poetic composition of unknown authorship, thought to be medieval in origin. "It calls upon God who is powerful and great to bless this tiny new unit in Israel, the bridegroom and bride. 'May He who is mighty above all, blessed above

all, great above all, May He bless the bridegroom and the bride.'"[45]

With the preliminaries over, the service continues with the old erusin blessing preceded by the blessing over the cup of wine. In a modern addition, HaMadrikh now has the officiant ask the groom and the bride for their consent concerning the marriage. The rabbi says: "(name of the groom/bride) do you of your own free will and consent take (name of bride/groom) to be your wife/husband and do you promise to love, honor and cherish her/him throughout life? If so, answer Yes."[46] The underlying assumption of old, that when the groom gave the coin or ring and spoke the words of betrothal, and when the bride accepted the coin or ring, willingness and consent were indicated is no longer taken for fact. The inclusion of this question in the Orthodox rabbi's manual could simply be a concession to popular custom, or an attempt to clarify, within the ceremony, the obligation of the bride and the groom. Most likely, however, it is a response to the civil law in several states. A number of states require that officiating clergymen put a question of consent to the bride and the groom within the course of the ceremony. For example, in California no particular form of a wedding ceremony is required, but the parties must declare, in the presence of the officiant, that they take each other as husband and wife. In New York the partners must solemnly

declare in the presence of the officiant and at least one other witness that they take each other as husband and wife.[47]

HaMadrikh now adds a sentence of explanation from the rabbi to the groom as to what the groom is about to do: "You will now betrothe the bride in the presence of these two witnesses, by placing this ring upon the forefinger of her right hand, and say to her in Hebrew...."[48] Then follows the declaration of betrothal from groom to bride. It is interesting to note that HaMadrikh retains the vestige of the two separate ceremonies, betrothal and nuptials, by specifying that in giving the ring, the groom is betrothing the the bride. "The groom slips the ring on the index finger (or forefinger) of the bride's right hand. This is the 'ring finger' in the Jewish marriage ceremony (as opposed to the third finger of the left hand which is American custom) for it was felt that the ring should be worn on the most important finger, the one we use most."[49]

The ketubah is now read, both to articulate the legal obligations which the husband assumes to his wife, and to serve as a symbolic interlude between the betrothal and the nuptial ceremonies. The service continues with the recitation of the Seven Benedictions. This recitation is from the old nuptial, or wedding, ceremony. The service in HaMadrikh ends quickly after the recitation of the Seven Benedictions with a short note: "A glass is now broken by the bridegroom, and those present proclaim: Mazel Tov (good fortune)."[50]

The marriage service in the American Orthodox rabbi's manual is exceedingly short and concise. It contains all the elements that have come to mark a Jewish marriage through historical development. It contains both the old betrothal and nuptial ceremonies, separated by the reading of the ketubah. It includes the introductory poetic material and some of the verses from the Psalms that were added to the wedding ceremony in the Middle Ages. In a concession to modernity, the rabbi inquires of the bride and groom if they enter into the marriage willingly and with full consent, and a note immediately preceding the betrothal blessing indicates, "An address may be delivered by the Rabbi at this point."[51] No additional prayer or readings are included in the wedding service in HaMadrikh. The necessary elements of the marriage rite, as prescribed by law and custom, conclude the marriage. There is no need felt for extraneous material.

With the coming of the enlightened, modern time in Europe in the early 1800's, the marriage service came under the scrutiny of the reformers who wished to make the marriage rite reflective of the times. The first published declaration of the European reformers concerning the marriage ceremony is the Edict of Royal Westphalion Consistory of 1810. This declaration dealt, for the most part, with the logistics and aesthetics of the wedding service and simply banned some

customs which may have diminished the dignity of the marriage rite. The Edict read, in part:

> 1. Weddings shall take place only in the synagogue, before the Holy Ark under a canopy (huppah)....
> 4. The ceremony will open with a brief German address, by which the bridal couple shall be duly impressed with their new obligation.
> 5. The marriage shall take place in the following manner: After the end of the German address, the officiant (without having his own name called out by anybody) shall speak the first blessing slowly and with dignity. He then asks the bridegroom to present his bride with the marriage ring while pronouncing the customary formula; thereupon, he reads, word for word, not the customary aramaic contract, but the German one... (ketubah). And none, save the bridegroom, may pronounce the seven blessings (sheva berachot).
> 6. Thereafter, no further ceremony, whatever its name, shall take place. We mention here the custom of breaking glass, the singing and blessing by the cantor...the procession of the bride around the bridegroom, the improper use of a bottle instead of two wine glasses, the question posed by the bride whether this wedding ring was the property of the bridegroom, and whether it really had the necessary value of a prutah...etc.[52]

The Edict of Royal Westphalion Consistory served to eliminate what were thought to be objectionable customs which had grown up around the wedding ceremony, while retaining the overall format and intent of the rite. A major step taken by the Edict demands that an address be spoken to the couple and the marriage contract be read in the vernacular.

Samuel Holdheim, in his book Autonomy of the Rabbis and the Principle of Jewish Marriage Laws, in 1843, was the first

to officially articulate the position that the laws of the state and not Talmudic legislation should regulate matters of marriage. He insisted that Jewish nationality had come to an end and that Jews were distinct from others only in their religious views.[53]

With the emerging status of the individual in Europe, the role of the woman within the marriage service came under consideration. The 1844 Brunswick Conference appointed a committee to investigate possible modification of the Jewish marriage laws, and in 1845 at the Frankfort Conference, the committee appointed at Brunswick was directed to ready their report for the next Conference.[54]

The scene for the next declaration for reform within the marriage ceremony shifted to America, where a far-reaching decision was made at the Philadelphia Rabbinical Conference of 1869. The role of the woman in the marriage ceremony was totally changed.

> The bride shall no longer occupy a passive position in the marriage contract, but a reciprocal avowal should be made by the bridegroom and the bride by pronouncing the same formula, accompanied by the exchange of rings.[55]

The Philadelphia Conference also suggested a change in the declaration that was to be made. Instead of the traditional declaration, the words, "'Be thou consecrated unto me according to the Law of God'"[56] were suggested. Thus, with this statement, women were given an entirely new role within the

marriage ceremony by the reformers, the permission to use two rings was granted, and the old formula "according to the Law of Moses and Israel" was exchanged for "according to the Law of God."

Back in Europe, the Augsburg Synod of 2872 also moved to eliminate the inequities suffered by woman in the marriage ceremony. Its resolution reiterated the position taken in Philadelphia. It stated:

> It is permissible that during the marriage ceremony, after the bridegroom has presented the ring to his bride with the words harai at ...the bride, in her turn, may also give the bridegroom a ring with a few appropriate words.[57]

The role of the woman was well on its way to that of equal status within the marriage rite.

Moses Mielziner, professor at the Hebrew Union College, spoke for American Reform concerning the modernization of the marriage ceremony. His view considered the ceremony as a whole.

> In the modern mode of solemnizing marriage, the essential elements of the combined acts of betrothal and nuptials are retained though more or less modified. These essential elements are the placing of the wedding ring on the bride's finger by the bridegroom in the presence of two witnesses, and the recital of the established formula of betrothal by him, preceded by a benediction (bercat erusin) and followed by the nuptial benedictions (bercat nissuin).[58]

> Some immaterial and obsolete ceremonies and usages, however, are mostly done away with and replaced by other forms more in harmony with the views and tastes of our lives. Of

> the usages dispensed with, I mention especially the canopy (huppah) spread above the heads of the couples during the marriage ceremony, and the use of the ketubah. Formerly, when, as was often the case, the marriage ceremony took place in open air, such a canopy was regarded necessary as a representation of the bridegroom's home, into which he conducted his bride and besides, it added somewhat to the solemnity of the occasion. In our time, the room in which the marriage ceremony is performed, be it a hallowed place of worship or a place of family or social gathering, represents more fittingly the original huppah.
>
> To the laudable innovations almost generally adopted in the wedding belong: 1) The introductory address by the officiating rabbi, in which he reminds the parties to the marriage of the importance of the step they are about to take, and the sacredness of the marital duties their new relation imposes upon them, and, 2) The question put to each of the parties, whether they of their own free will consent to be united as husband and wife, and pledge themselves to fulfill their respective duties in love and faithfulness.[59]

In suggesting his "Marriage Agenda" to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Mielziner also addressed himself to the question of the use of the vernacular in the wedding service. He said:

> The main reason for retaining the marriage ritual in the Hebrew language is the regard for the prevailing custom among our fellow believers in all countries of the world. There are, besides, circumstances where the use of the Hebrew ritual becomes necessary, namely in cases where one or both of the parties to the marriage are foreigners and not yet sufficiently familiar with the language of the country.
>
> I, therefore, deem it advisable that in the Agenda to be adopted by our Conference, the ritual be given in Hebrew as well as English

> and that it be left to the option of the officiating minister to use either or both. It is a matter of course that the English ritual is not to be a mere translation of the Hebrew, though retaining its general character and contents.[60]

American Reform, thus, in its earliest stages, desired to stay within the spirit and general contents of the traditional marriage service. But even by 1890 when Mielziner brought his proposed "Marriage Agenda" to the Central Conference of American Rabbis for consideration, some alterations and changes in the traditional service were taken for granted. That the woman would participate on equal grounds with the man, that a double ring ceremony was permissible, that the ketubah was not a necessary part of the ritual and that the huppah was optional if not undesirable and that English might certainly be used for the ritual as well as for the address to the couple by the rabbi, all were matters of general consensus which raised no questions among the members of the Conference. The traditional marriage ritual had been reformed.

Even though the "Marriage Agenda" which Mielziner proposed to the Conference in 1890 contained the traditional blessing of betrothal, the seeds for its ultimate elimination from the Reform wedding ritual were already being sown. Mielziner reported that

> ...the rabbinical authorities of the Middle Ages already criticized the phraseology of this (betrothal) benediction. They found it strange that here וצונו על העריות ואסר לנו את הארוסות

> ('who has commanded us concerning forbidden connections and has forbidden us the betrothed') a benediction is pronounced for a prohibitory law, which is without parallel in the Jewish liturgy, as this otherwise established benedictions for the fulfillment of commandatory laws only.
>
> Besides, the objection was raised that in the phrase על ידי חופה וקידושין ('through the canopy and sanctification') the order of the succession of the two acts is reversed since betrothal (sanctification) precedes the nuptials (canopy).[61]

Seemingly, some Reform rabbis in America had been altering, modifying or changing the betrothal blessing even before 1890. Mielziner continued his discussion of the betrothal blessing by saying:

> In some respects...there is no uniformity in the modern mode of solemnizing marriage. The main difference concerns the language of the ritual. Instead of the established Hebrew formula of betrothment and the benedictions preceding and following it, some modern rabbis prefer to use a corresponding formula and corresponding prayers in the vernacular. I think that even from a strictly rabbinical standpoint, there can be no objection against this innovation. Regarding the formula of betrothment, Maimonides expressly says: ויש לאיש לקדש האשה בכל לשון שהיאן מכרת וכו"
> 'A man may betroth the woman in any language or phrase which she understands and which expresses the meaning that he betroths her' (Hilchot Ishot iii 8; see also Beth Shemuel on Eben HaEzer xxvii 1).
>
> Regarding the benedictions in general, the same authority says: כל הברכות כולן נאמרין בכל לשון והוא שיאמר כעין שתקן חכמים ואם שינה את המטבע הואיל והזכיר אזכרה ומלכות ועין הברכה אפילו בלשון חול יצא 'All ritual benedictions may be recited in any language provided their contents, as established by the sages, is retained. Hence, though one is reciting, then, this changed form, as long as God's name and His dominion are men-

> tioned, and the main contents of the benediction is rendered, be it even in a common language still, he has done his duty' (Hilchot Berachot 6).[62]

Undoubtedly, much dissatisfaction had been expressed by the American Reform rabbis as to the use of the betrothal blessing, and it may be assumed that many had already eliminated it from the weddings which they conducted. Mielziner was paving the way for the comfortable elimination of the blessing, basing his argument on the opinion of accepted rabbinic authorities. None of the three editions of the Reform rabbi's manual contains the betrothal blessing. Thus, the groundwork laid by Mielziner led to eventual reform.

In place of the betrothal blessing at the wedding ceremony, a new custom has grown up within modern Reform to respond to the period of "engagement" which couples experience. "On the Sabbath following the engagement announcement, each on of the couple should attend services to invoke the blessings of God...In some congregations, it is customary for the engaged couple to be invited to the altar to be blessed or to participate in the services."[63]

Immediately preceding the giving of the ring by the groom to the bride or the exchange of rings by groom and bride, American Reform has added to the wedding service the indication of willing consent by the couple. (As was noted, even American Orthodoxy has adopted this custom). "While the putting of this question (of consent) to the bride and

groom is not a traditional part of the formal ceremony, it fully expresses the spirit of Jewish marriage. The law is clear that marriage cannot take place except by consent of the parties."[64] This affirmation of consent, even though it is required by civil law in some states, is not to be confused with the Christian notion of "wedding vows," where promises are made and sealed by the bond of matrimony. The response "Yes," or "I do," or "I will" to the question posed by the rabbi simply indicates the willing consent of the bride or groom to enter into the marriage as the giving and accepting of the ring did in olden times.

The official policy of America Reform concerning the use of two wedding rings is expressed in the 1961 Rabbi's Manual. Noting the decision of the Philadelphia Conference of 1869 to permit the exchange of rings, the manual states:

> While according to the established custom, only one wedding ring is used, which the bridegroom places on the bride's finger...while pronouncing the ancient formula of betrothal, some modern rabbis introduced the custom that, in addition to this act, also the bride on her part tenders a ring to the groom while pronouncing similar words. By this innovation, it is intended to express full equality of woman with man in the conjugal relation and in moral life so that, just as he consecrates her to be his alone, she also consecrates him to be hers alone in person and affection."[65]

With regard to the matter of using a ring with precious stones instead of a plain band, the Reform position is stated by Solomon B. Freehof in his book, Reform Jewish

Practice. He writes:

> This custom of avoiding a ring with stones, involved as it is in the question of estimating the value claimed, no longer has meaning in Reform Jewish congregations. We follow the spirit of the opinion of Asher b. Jehiel (13th-14th century), 'We do not need any evaluation unless the price were mentioned and it is not customary to mention the price of wedding rings.'[66]

Concerning the use of the ketubah, the marriage contract, the reformers felt that "the function of the ketubah in our day is practically no other than to perpetuate an ancient tradition. Its effectiveness in actual question of law, even Jewish law, is very slight, since it is stereotyped and reduced to the very minimum of specifications. Every ketubah is like every other ketubah. In former days, its effectiveness as a document of rights and guarantees was real. But as far back as the days of the tannaim of about the beginning of the second century, it did nothing more than that. It played no part in the consummation of the marriage. The marriage was valid or invalid on its own merits, regardless of the validity of the ketubah. The clause in the ketubah, 'Be thou my wife according to the law of Moses and Israel,' was taken to be a record of the marriage, not a pronouncement of marriage."[67] Further, "regarding the ketubah, it is true that great importance was attached to that document in ancient times as long as the wife was not regarded as legal heiress to the estate of her deceased husband and as long as

a man could divorce his wife against her will. Her claim, to which she was entitled by the ketubah, secured her at least a little sum in case of her becoming a widow, and proved, in many cases, an effective means of protecting her against a rash and inconsiderate divorcement. Since the wife in our days is in both respects sufficiently protected by civil laws of the country, and in many cases also by marriage settlements made in more legal and binding form, the ketubah has entirely lost its former importance and is an unnecessary, useless formality."[68] The custom of requiring a ketubah to be written and then read at the marriage ceremony was eliminated by the American reformers. None of the rabbi's manuals contains either a form of the ketubah or a place for its recitation within the ceremony. Instead of the ketubah, modern Reform rabbis issue a marriage certificate published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations simply stating that on a certain date, so and so were married by such and such a rabbi in the presence of witnesses. This certificate serves only as a record of the marriage, and in no way includes any contractual obligations.

The ceremony of breaking the glass at the conclusion of the wedding has been eliminated by most American Reform Jews. In the attempt to deal with religious customs in a rational, intellectual manner, a custom such as breaking the glass, if its original origins of keeping away the evil spirits were

considered, would surely be unacceptable. With the connotation of the smashed glass representing the groom overpowering his virgin bride, such vulgar, sexual references would not be in keeping with the liberal, enlightened position. If the ceremony were to be considered a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, the custom would surely be unacceptable to the reformers who rejected the idea of Jewish nationalism. Thus, the American Reform position concerning the breaking of the glass at the conclusion of the wedding is that the custom "has neither religious nor Jewish significance and should be discouraged."[69] None of the rabbi's manuals indicate that the custom should be followed.

This understanding of the growth of the Reform position concerning the various rituals and rites and customs of the marriage ceremony provides the background necessary for consideration of the wedding service as found in the rabbi's manuals of American Reform.

The model of the marriage service which was, undoubtedly, used in the early days of American Reform was written by Moses Mielziner and published in the C.C.A.R. Yearbook in 1890. The service begins with an address by the officiating minister, and continues with the questions posed by

the officiant to the groom and bride. The minister says, "Before proceeding to the sacred act by which you are to be united in wedlock, I have to ask you the following: Mr/M (name of bridegroom/bride), do you of your own free will and consent wish to be united in marriage with this your bride/groom and do you pledge yourself to fulfill your duties as her/his husband/wife in love and fidelity? If so, please answer: 'Yes.'".[70] The service continues with the recitation of the old betrothal blessing. A note states that the blessing may be recited either in Hebrew or English. The English provided is not a direct translation, but an interpretative statement. It reads:

> Be praised, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hast sanctified us through thy law and hast instituted the holy state of matrimony, and by the union of husband and wife has provided for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Be praised, O God, who sanctifiest us through the holy covenant of matrimony.[71]

The blessing over wine, and the drinking from the cup of wine are omitted.

The text now indicates that the groom is to place the ring on the finger of his bride and recite the traditional marriage declaration. The translation of that declaration is given as, "Be thou consecrated to me as my wife according to the law of God and man."[72] The bride is now to make the same declaration to the groom, but only the English, not the Hebrew, is provided.

A shortened form of the Seven Benedictions follows. The blessing over and drinking from the cup of wine is eliminated. The second blessing is given, as is the fourth. The third blessing is eliminated. Since the fourth blessing speaks about the creation of man, as does the the third, this was probably felt to be redundant, and the longer of the two remained. The fifth blessing is eliminated entirely, on the basis of its reference to the return to Zion which is not in keeping with nineteenth century Reform theology. The sixth blessing is tacked onto the end of the seventh which is itself shortened with the elimination of the reference to the "streets of Jerusalem." Again, an interpretative statement is given in the English instead of the direct translation. It reads:

> O God who art glorified in all thy creation, thou hast created man in thy image and hast implanted in his heart noble impulses of love and kindness, and desires for joy and happiness. Thou hast destined woman to be man's helpmate, to share his joys and his sorrows, and to assist him in his labors and endeavors. Be praised, O God, who providest for the happiness of man.[73]

There follows a prayer to be recited by the rabbi invoking God's blessings on the marriage, and requesting the future happiness of the bride and groom as husband and wife.

The service concludes with the pronouncement by the rabbi that the couple is now legally married, and the recitation of the Priestly Benediction. The Mielziner service is

innovative in that it eliminates the two cups of wine and their blessings, gives interpretative statements in English for the Hebrew of the wedding blessings, eliminates some of the Seven Benedictions and modifies others, includes a prayer, in English, for the couple, and includes the Priestly Benediction. This service served the American Reform community from before its publication in 1890 (since this was the service taught to the graduates of the Hebrew Union College) until the publication of the Minister's Handbook in 1917.

The 1914 manuscript of the proposed Minister's Handbook, which was presented to the Conference by William Rosenau who chaired the committee which prepared the material, suggests a number of changes, mostly homiletical in nature, from the Mielziner text. The typescript of this service does not include the Hebrew text for the various blessings, simply the indication that the Hebrew is to be recited. For this reason, it is impossible to know if the "Typescript" proposed the traditional Hebrew blessings or the modified Hebrew text of the Mielziner service.

The service begins with the traditional wedding greeting, "Blessed be ye that come..." and continues with the indication that the address to the bride and groom is to follow. The "Typescript" gives a specimen address which might be given. It bears reproduction here to indicate how the Reform rabbis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries considered marriage and their role as officiant.

> Dear Bride and Groom! The step which you are about to take is one of the most serious and one of the most sacred possible to human life. It involves possibilities for weal or woe beyond present discovery. Bear in mind, to begin with, that by this step, you each take upon yourself responsibilities and the other's welfare and happiness. If you would realize that deeper joy which is the crowning blessing of true marriage, look for it in a relationship that is based upon true worth and upon what you are to each other, but not upon what you have. Happiness is in being, not having. Let your union be a sweet companionship. Try to have, as far as you can, the same hopes and realize the same ideals. Let not selfishness of thought, word or action ever come between you, for neither one of you can ever be truly worthy or happy unless the other is also happy. Keep the lamp of religious faith aglow in your new life. It matters not how successful you may be in things material, you will never pass beyond the need of assistance that is spiritual. If you have joys, a grateful attitude to God will deepen them. If you have sorrows, trustful thought of God will strengthen you and lighten them. With such convictions, may you go forward living with each other, for each other, and through the success of your union for the betterment of the world. And may the Source of all Good attend and bless you. May He realize your own hopes and fulfill the prayers of the dear ones gathered about you. May you be blessed with length of life and the longer you live, may, by Heaven's blessing, your life increase in all things that are beautiful and good. Amen.[74]

The service continues with the questions posed by the rabbi to the bridegroom and bride asking if they enter into the marriage with willing consent. The Mielziner service retained the betrothal blessing, and eliminated the blessing over and drinking of the wine. The Rosenau "Typescript" eliminates entirely the betrothal blessing but contains, at

this point in the service, a blessing over a cup of wine, preceded by the explanation that "it is customary in Israel to consecrate every religious act with a benediction over the goblet of wine, because wine brings joy to the heart of man. I shall pronounce a blessing over this goblet, from which you, dear Bride and Groom, will drink, symbolical (sic) of your agreement to drink henceforth from the cup of life all the joy and happiness, sorrow and misfortune which life may have in store."[75]

After this homiletical statement concerning the use of wine in the service, another homiletical statement follows immediately, this one concerning the ring which is about to be given from groom to bride. The rabbi says:

> This ring, by which you now do promise life-long faithfulness to one another, is a beautiful emblem, whose meaning I hope neither of you will ever forget.
>
> Notice this ring is an endless circle. Endless as is this ring, so must be your love for one another. This ring is undivided. It forms a unit. Even so, husband and wife must be a unit. You must be one in your desire to promote each other's happiness and well-being.
>
> The ring is fashioned of gold. Gold is the recognized symbol of purity. Pure as is the gold, so must be your relation to one another. There must be no suspicion in your minds. There must be absolute confidence between husband and wife.
>
> And now, my dear Bride-groom, in token of marriage, and as expression of devotion and loyalty, place this ring on the finger of your bride and repeat....[76]

The exchange of rings now takes place, with the marriage declaration in Hebrew, and with this English translation:

"Be thou consecrated to me as my wife/husband according to the law of God and the custom of Israel."[77]

Another cup of wine is used for the recitation of the Seven Benedictions, although, since the Hebrew text is missing, it is impossible to tell what blessings were being suggested. The English interpretative statement which is given in place of the translation follows the Mielziner service. A prayer, differing in words but not greatly in meaning from the Mielziner service prayer, invokes the blessing of God upon the marriage and prays for the happiness of the couple. The service concludes with the pronouncement by the rabbi that the couple is now legally married, and the Priestly Benediction.

This "Typescript" service re-introduced the use of the wine, but eliminated the betrothal blessing. Its most innovative feature was to provide homiletical sermons for the rabbi, both as an address and as an explanation of the ring. The committee realized the innovative nature of this service, for the "Typescript" contains an appendix which suggests an alternative marriage service with these words:

> At the meeting of the sub-Committee of the Minister's Handbook Committee, it was moved, seconded and carried that this (the following) service, prepared on more conservative lines, be recommended for special consideration as an alternative for the service in the body of this book.[78]

The service which follows is based largely upon the traditional

service. It begins with an innovative greeting by the rabbi to the couple:

> In the name of the God of our Fathers, Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the guardian spirit of the Jewish home, I welcome you beneath this marriage canopy. May this ceremony, which is to solemnize your union, prove unto you a source of lasting happiness and unfailing inspiration. Amen.[79]

It is interesting to note in these few lines that the rabbi speaks "in the name of...God," and that the patriarchs are called the "guardian spirit of the Jewish home." Finally, it is not the union or marriage which is invoked as a "source of lasting happiness and unfailing inspiration," but "this marriage ceremony" which is invoked to fulfill that need. Thus, in a few short sentences, a number of curious concepts appear.

The service continues with the medieval poetic invocation, "He who is mighty...." The blessing of betrothal is included with a paraphrase translation. The rabbi's address follows, and ends with the question of willingness and consent put to groom and bride. The wedding declaration is spoken by groom and bride, and the recitation of the Seven Benedictions follows. It is difficult to determine how many of the blessings were to be recited, for the Hebrew text does not appear, and the English translation is modified. The service concludes with the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married, and the Priestly Benediction.

It is obvious that there must have been some dissension within the Conference as to the maintenance of a fairly traditional form of the wedding service. The majority of members must have favored a reformed, innovative service, for that kind of service is the main suggestion of the Minister's Handbook Committee. Yet there must have been enough conservative feeling within the Conference to include as an alternative a rather traditional wedding service in the proposed manual.

The most liberal element within the Conference prevailed, for the Minister's Handbook, published in 1917, contains a very short, very reformed service. It opens with the Hebrew greeting, ברוכים הבאים, and its English translation. This is followed by an address by the rabbi. The place for such an address is simply indicated; no sample is given as in the "Typescript." The questions of willingness and consent to the groom and bride follow, and then the exchange of rings takes place. No Hebrew is given for the marriage declaration, only the English phrase, "Be thou consecrated unto me with this ring as my wife/husband according to the faith of Israel and the law of God."[80] There is a note which indicates that even if the bride does not give the groom a ring, she is to make the marriage declaration anyway.

A goblet of wine is raised, and the blessing over wine is recited in both Hebrew and English. A blessing is spoken

by the rabbi which includes elements of the concepts of the traditional wedding blessing, but is, basically, a newly created blessing. The rabbi says:

> Be praised, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy law, and hast instituted the sacred relationship of marriage, so that by union of husband and wife, the welfare and happiness of mankind are furthered and consecrated. Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, who sanctifiest life by the holy covenant of marriage.[81]

The pronouncement that the couple is now legally married follows, and the service concludes with the recitation of the Priestly Benediction in Hebrew and English.

This wedding service is exceedingly liberal in its very sparse use of Hebrew, to the extent that even the wedding declaration is made only in English, and the elimination of both the betrothal blessing and all of the Seven Benedictions. The blessing over wine is recited, but with no apparent reason. It is clear that the wine blessing is a vestige from the traditional service but, as it stands alone, with no explanation, it seems to have little place in the service. The innovations to the traditional service, carried over from the Mielziner service and the "Typescript" service include a prayer near the end of the service and the recitation of the Priestly Benediction.

The 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook," edited by Samuel Cohon, which served as a model for the 1928 Rabbi's

Manual, returned to some traditional forms. This proposed revision does not contain any of the Hebrew text; it simply indicates where the text is to appear, so there is no way of absolutely determining if the Hebrew is to be modified from the traditional text.

The service begins with the recitation of the medieval poetic statement, "The Almighty God, who ruleth over all, may He guide and bless this groom and bride,"[82] preceded by the Hebrew. It continues with an address by the rabbi, and then the posing of the questions, to groom and bride, of willingness and consent. Instead of continuing immediately with the marriage declaration, the rabbi now recites a number of benedictions in Hebrew and/or English. The first blessing concerns the creation of man, and the third is the blessing over wine. The second, slightly reminiscent of the seventh benediction of the Seven Benedictions, becomes a prayer, which reads:

> O Thou, who art the source of life and blessing, bestow Thy gifts of friendship, love and peace upon this groom and bride. Make them rejoice in the sweetness of that family union that is founded on purity and fidelity, on duty and religious consecration. Be with them at this hour of their gladness, hallow their covenant and seal their bond of wedlock with love everlasting. Amen.[83]

After the blessing over the cup of wine, a very short homiletical statement is made about the drinking from the same cup, and there follows the exchange of rings. The Hebrew is

indicated for the declaration of marriage, and the English translation reads, "Be thou consecrated to me as my wife/husband according to the Law of Israel."[84] Another short homiletical statement follows concerning the rings as symbolic of the marriage, the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is made, and the service concludes with a benediction. The Priestly Benediction is not given, but Hebrew is indicated for the closing blessing, so the Priestly Benediction could very well be intended. The English benediction given reads:

> May our Heavenly Father be nigh unto you and shelter you beneath His wing against all the vicissitudes of life. May He satisfy you with long life, with health and with happiness.[85]

The "Revised Minister's Handbook" of 1927 includes some traditional elements that had been eliminated from the earlier wedding service. It begins with the traditional greeting ברוך הבא בשם ה" ברכנוכם מבית ה", to which is added the following verses: אלי אתה ואודך אלוהי ארוממך and הודו לה" כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו.[86] These verses are given only in Hebrew, without English translation, and it is indicated that they are to be sung by a soloist or choir, or else omitted from the service. The verses, both taken from Psalm 118, are not part of any traditional marriage rite. They seem to be added here to express the thanks felt on a wedding day. ("Thou art my God, I will give thanks unto thee. Thou art my God, I will exalt thee," Ps. 118:28; and "O give thanks unto the Lord

for He is good, His loving kindness endureth forever," Ps. 118:1).

The traditional medieval wedding poem follows in both Hebrew and English after which it is indicated that the rabbi may give his address. The questions posed by the rabbi as to willingness and consent follow the address, and, as in the "Revised Minister's Handbook," an interlude of blessings and prayers is suggested before the exchange of rings and the marriage declaration. The benedictions begin with the first three of the traditional Seven Benedictions. At this point, an optional blessing is given to be recited if it is the wish of the rabbi. The blessing begins as does the seventh of the traditional Seven Benedictions, and stops immediately before the reference to Jerusalem. Now is added a section of the blessing which contains totally new words. It is given only in the Hebrew and not in English. The words read:

ויזכו לבנות בית בישראל לשם ולתהלה,
ויהי שלום בביתם ושלוה והשקט בלבותם,
ויראו בנחמת ישראל ובתשועת עולם.[87]

("And may they merit to build a praiseworthy house in Israel, and may there be peace in their home and soothing tranquility in their hearts. May they see the comfort of Israel and the salvation of all." Translation mine). The blessing concludes with the traditional ברוך אתה ה" משמח חתן עם הכלה ("Blessed art Thou O Lord, who makes the bridegroom rejoice with the bride"). This entire blessing, however, is optional.

A prayer of thanksgiving, expressing the hopes for the couple, follows. It is inteded to capture, in English, the spirit of the benedictions just recited. It reads:

> Unto Thee, O God and Father, we lift our souls in praise. As all creation reflects Thy glory, even so man, fashioned in Thine image, reveals Thy majesty. Within his heart didst Thou implant the ennobling impulses of love and devotion. Thou, Source of all life, of all joy, sanctify the covenant which this groom and bride are consummating in Thy name. Bestow upon them Thy gifts of friendship, of love, and of peace. Make them rejoice in the sweetness of that family union that is founded on purity and fidelity, on duty and religious consecration. Be with them at this hour of their gladness, bless their covenant, and seal their bond of wedlock with love everlasting. Amen.[88]

The blessing over the cup of wine, in Hebrew and English, concludes this set of benedictions. A homiletical statement is made concerning the sharing of the same cup of wine.

The wedding declaration is made by groom to bride in Hebrew and English, and by bride to groom only in English. The English version reads, "Be thou consecrated unto me as my wife/husband according to the faith of Israel."[89] A homiletical statement follows concerning the ring as symbolic of the marriage bond.

Now the last sentence of the old betrothal blessing, ברוך אתה ה" מקדש עמו ישראל על ידי (חופה ו)קידושין, is recited by the rabbi.[90] No translation is given. Certainly, this one sentence blessing fits into the context of the marriage ser-

vice at this point, and it harks back to an older form. The pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is followed by the English benediction from the "Revised Minister's Handbook," and the Priestly Benediction in Hebrew and English.

This service, like the circumcision ceremony in this 1928 Rabbi's Manual, returns to much more traditional forms than the service in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. The traditional greeting is provided, and the medieval wedding poem is included. Much more Hebrew is used, including the marriage declaration. Shortened forms of the Seven Benedictions are provided, along with a new addition in the Hebrew to the last blessing. A beautifully worded prayer is given based on the content of the Seven Benedictions, and homiletical statements are made about the use of the wine and the ring. The old betrothal blessing is referred to with its last sentence being spoken. This 1928 Rabbi's Manual returns to the rubric and the spirit, if not the exact form, of the traditional wedding service.

There must have been general dissatisfaction with the wedding service of the 1928 manual, or there must have been much controversy over what form the wedding service should take in the future, for the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual" contains three suggested ceremonies for consideration by members of the Conference before the publication of a new rabbi's manual.

The first service follows, in large part, the 1928 service. It begins with the Hebrew and the English of the traditional wedding greeting, and suggests the addition of the two verses from Psalms ("O come let us worship..." and "Serve the Lord with gladness...") which a number of the Orthodox rites (though not HaMadrikh) include. The medieval wedding poem is also given. Before the address by the rabbi, a prayer is to be recited. This prayer, proposed in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual" is also included in one of the services of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual. It reads:

> Unto Thee, O God and Father, we lift our souls in praise. All creation declares Thy glory; through man, fashioned in Thine image, Thou hast revealed Thy majesty. Within his heart, Thou hast implanted the ennobling influences of love and devotion. Thou Who art the Source of life and joy, bless the covenant which this bridegroom and bride now seal in Thy name. May peace be within their homes, quiteness and confidence within their hearts. May they be sustained by Thy comforting presence in the midst of Thy people and by Thy promise of salvation to all mankind. Be with them in this sacred hour and in all the days to come. Amen.[91]

This prayer is a combination of the prayer of the 1928 manual, based upon the content of the Seven Benedictions, and a free translation of the Hebrew added to the last of the Seven Benedictions in the 1928 manual.

After the address by the rabbi, the questions are posed asking willingness and consent from the groom and bride. Here it is indicated that the blessings given in the Hebrew in the

1928 manual, the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions, are to be recited, concluding with the blessing over wine without interruption by any other prayers. A note also indicates that the full, traditional Seven Benedictions are to be printed in the final draft of the manual for those who wish to recite them. The blessings are followed by a short homiletical statement about the sharing of the wine, and rings are to be exchanged with the traditional marriage declaration. Hebrew is provided not only for the groom to speak to the bride, but also for the bride to speak to the groom, with the Hebrew grammar appropriately altered. The translation of the marriage declaration reads, "With this ring, be thou consecrated unto me as my wife/husband according to the law of God and the faith of Israel."[92] The last line of the old betrothal blessing is recited, as was indicated in the 1928 manual, and the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is made. A new innovation asks the couple to bow their heads for a moment of silent prayer, and the service concludes with the recitation of the Priestly Blessing.

The second suggested service of the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual" begins with a choice of two prayers. These prayers both reflect thanksgiving to God for the joy of the wedding hour and the hopes and wishes for the couple as they begin their married life together. The service continues with the

traditional wedding greeting and the two verses from Psalms as suggested in the first service, followed by the medieval wedding poem. The address by the rabbi is to be given, and the questions of willingness and consent posed. Immediately, the exchange of rings takes place, with the declaration made both in Hebrew and in English by both bride and groom. The last line from the old betrothal blessing, the blessing over the cup of wine, and the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions from the 1928 manual , again with the option of reciting the full traditional Seven Benedictions, follow. The pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is made, and the silent prayer of the couple is followed by the Priestly Benediction.

The third service in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual" begins, as did the other two, with the traditional wedding greeting, the two verses from Psalms and the medieval wedding poem, both in Hebrew and English. The rabbi's address is followed by the recitation, by the bride and groom, of the blessing, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who dost sanctify Thy children by the holy covenant of marriage,"[93] with the rabbi reciting the Hebrew immediately after the English recitation by the bride and the groom. The questions of willingness and consent are posed, and the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions is recited. In this third service, the option for reciting the full Seven

Benedictions is not given, but a full, literal translation of the shortened form of the blessings is given. The blessing over wine is recited and a sentence of homiletical interpretation is given. The rings are exchanged, with the marriage declaration being spoken by both groom and bride in both Hebrew and English. The ring ceremony is preceded by the rabbi reciting the words of the prophet, "I will betroth thee unto me forever...."[94] Again, the last line of the old betrothal blessing is recited, and the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is followed by silent prayer and the Priestly Benediction.

These three services, proposed in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual," do not differ greatly in content, but, rather, in form. The changes revolve around the placement of the various elements of the service within the ceremony. Each of the services contains some innovative or homiletical material or creative prayers which add to the beauty of the ritual.

Three alternative marriage services appear in the 1961 Rabbi's Manual. Each of the three follows quite closely the suggested text which had been proposed in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual," but each service incorporates elements from the other two.

Marriage Service I is the service which begins with the traditional greetings, continues with the prayer based on the content of the Seven Benedictions. It deletes, however, the

translation of the Hebrew added to the seventh benediction which first appeared in the 1928 manual, and which was part of this prayer in the 1958 revision. The service continues with the questions of willingness and consent, followed by the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions. The note is added that the full text of the Seven Benedictions also appears in the manual and may be recited if the rabbi chooses. Added to this service is the direct translation of the shortened form of the benedictions, which appeared only in the third service of the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual." The homiletical statement about the sharing of the wine follows, and then the marriage declaration is recited by groom and bride in both Hebrew and English. The last line of the old betrothal blessing follows. The pronouncement that the couple is now legally married, a moment of silent prayer and the Priestly Benediction conclude this service. Marriage Service I thus differs from the proposed first service in that it changes the words of the prayer at the beginning of the service and includes the translation of the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions.

Marriage Service II of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual is an exact duplication of the proposed second service in the 1958 revision with only one exception. Here, too, the translation of the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions is given. This service begins with a choice of opening prayers, con-

tinues with the traditional wedding greetings, the questions of willingness and consent, the exchange of rings and the marriage declaration, the last line of the old betrothal blessing, the homiletical statement concerning the wine, the recitation of the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions (with the option to recite the full traditional blessings), the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married and, finally, the Priestly Benediction.

Marriage Service III, again, follows the format of its predecessor in the 1958 revision. This is the most homiletical service, with more explanations and interpretations than the other two. This service begins with the traditional wedding greetings, the last line of the old betrothal blessing, the questions concerning willingness and consent, the recitation of the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions and their translation. Unlike the 1958 revision, this manual indicates the option of reciting the full, traditional blessings. The service continues with the blessing over the wine, preceded by the one sentence, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord"[95] in Hebrew and in English. The marriage declaration of the groom and bride follow in both Hebrew and English, and the second recitation of the old betrothal blessing, as indicated in the 1958 revision, is eliminated. The service concludes with the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married,

a moment of silent prayer and the Priestly Benediction.

The 1961 Rabbi's Manual follows very closely the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual." The only changes are those which make the services more uniform in the parts they have in common (e.g., the inclusion of the translation of the shortened form of the Seven Benedictions in every service), and an attempt to make the English more cogent. That three alternate services are given could indicate a general dissatisfaction with any one service, but since the elements of the services do not differ greatly, it is probably merely a provision for the rabbi who does not wish to use the same service time and time again, much as the Union Prayer Book provides different services.

The 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual, the first rabbi's manual of Conservative Judaism, contains the traditional marriage ceremony with a few short English interludes between sections of the service.

The service begins with the traditional wedding greeting and the medieval wedding poem. Now indicated is an address by the rabbi or one of two prayers which are given as an appendix to the marriage service. The prayers each ask for the blessings of God to be bestowed upon the couple as they enter their married life. The service continues with the blessing over the first cup of wine and the complete betrothal

blessing in Hebrew. An English translation for these blessings is not given. The rabbi now poses the question of willingness and consent to the groom and bride. The declaration of marriage is made by the groom to the bride as he puts the ring on her finger, first in Hebrew and then in a direct English translation, "Be thou consecrated to me, as my wife, by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel."[96] The rabbi is now to ask the bride to say the following: "May this ring I receive from thee be a token of my having become thy wife, according to the Law of Moses and Israel."[97] If two rings are used, the bride is to say, "This ring is a symbol that thou art my husband in accordance with the Law of Moses and Israel."[98] The bride does not recite the Hebrew wedding declaration. The ketubah is now read, the Seven Benedictions are recited and the pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is made. The service concludes with the recitation of the Priestly Benediction, with the addition of a paragraph of prayer at the end which reads:

> May the Lord implant His spirit within you and grant you length of days, vigor of body, deep and abiding mutual understanding, companionship and love, increasing with the passage of years and in the fullness of peace. Amen.[99]

In an attempt to make the breaking of the glass, which is included in this service, as meaningful as possible, the rabbi says:

> At the conclusion of the traditional marriage service, it is customary for the groom to break a glass, זכר לחורבן, in symbolic recognition of the fact that even in the moment of our supreme personal happiness we are not forgetful of the sorrows that have overtaken the house of Israel in the course of the centuries.[100]

The marriage service of the 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual, therefore, is a very traditional one. Two English prayers are added which can be read at the discretion of the rabbi, and a concession is made to the fact that many ceremonies performed will be double-ring ceremonies. However, the bride is not permitted to make the traditional marriage declaration but, rather, states her acceptance of the ring from the groom and the fact that the ring she gives him is symbolic that he is her husband. Otherwise, all the traditional elements--the betrothal blessing, the ketubah, the two cups of wine, the full text of the Seven Benedictions, and the breaking of the glass--are present in this ceremony.

The marriage service in the 1965 לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual of the Conservative movement does not differ in any great detail from the service in the 1952 manual.

The service opens with the tradional wedding greeting and the medieval wedding poem. It is indicated that at this point, the rabbi may offer a brief prayer. Two alternate prayers are given, and although they differ from the prayers in the 1952 manual, their substance is the same. The prayer

is that the blessings of God be bestowed upon the couple about to be married. The service continues with the blessing over the first cup of wine and the traditional betrothal blessing. Again, the English translation is not provided. A one sentence homiletical statement concerning the sharing of the wine follows. Without the questions of willingness and consent being posed (this is the first time that any American rabbi's manual eliminates these questions), the groom is to make the marriage declaration to the bride in Hebrew and English. It is indicated that the bride may say, "In accepting this ring, I pledge you all my love and devotion."[101] This is a more poetic form of acceptance than that found in the 1952 manual. At this point, it is indicated that the ketubah is read. Thus, if a double-ring ceremony is performed, not only may the bride not recite the traditional wedding declaration, but the giving of the ring to the groom is separated from the giving of the ring to the bride by the reading of the ketubah. In traditional terms, this lessens the possibility of confusing the legal betrothal. The bride is in no way involved in the active process of betrothing, but it is clear that she is betrothed by her acceptance of the ring. Following the reading of the ketubah, if a double-ring ceremony is performed, the bride, on giving the ring to the groom, is to say, "This ring is a symbol that you are my husband, and a sign of my love and devotion."[102]

In practical terms, most Conservative rabbis, when faced with a double-ring ceremony, have the exchange of rings before the reading of the ketubah.

The reading of the ketubah presents a special significance in this service. After facing the difficult question of the agunah, the abandoned wife who could not remarry without a proper Jewish divorce, the United Synagogue of America devised its own ketubah which binds the parties to the marriage to the decisions of the Beth Din of the United Synagogue of America "to decide what action by either spouse is...appropriate under Jewish matrimonial law"[103] if civil divorce occurs. (This ketubah, and the entire question of the Jewish marriage contract in our day, will be discussed in Chapter Five.)

The service continues with the recitation of the Seven Benedictions. At this point, a number of selections are presented in this manual to be read if the rabbi chooses, or he may choose, at this point, to address the couple. The pronouncement that the couple is now legally married is made, and a benediction follows. Two choices are given. The first benediction reads, "May you be blessed with joy and gladness, vigor of body and spirit, love and harmony, companionship and peace,"[104] taking its theme from the last of the Seven Benedictions. The second choice for the benediction is the traditional Priestly Benediction. The instruction is now

given that a glass is to be broken, but the homiletical statement concerning the glass which appeared in the 1952 manual is eliminated.

Thus, the marriage service which appears in the 1965 לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual of the Conservative movement retains all the elements of the traditional service. The English readings and the prayers provided give a more poetic flavor to the service, but all the traditional elements remain. The greatest changes embodied here are the separation of the giving of the ring to the groom from the giving of the ring to the bride by the reading of the ketubah. In practical terms, however, this is not usually followed. The other major change in this service is the introduction of the new ketubah of the United Synagogue of America.

All three wings of American Judaism maintain the concept of Jewish marriage and provide a ritual for that marriage which reflects each's understanding of the thrust of historical development tempered with the needs of the time. The Orthodox service, as seen in HaMadrikh, is the traditional service as it has grown through the ages. No English prayers or explanations are provided in HaMadrikh, just the simple, straightforward marriage ritual. In one concession to modernity and state law, HaMadrikh has the rabbi ask the groom and bride if they are entering into the marriage will-

ingly and with consent. The two manuals of Conservative Judaism reflect the traditional service rather closely. The earlier manual includes the questions to groom and bride; the later manual eliminates them. Both manuals include English prayers and readings in an attempt to give a more poetic meaning to the service, and the 1965 manual introduces its own version of the ketubah. Nevertheless, even with its attempt to modernize and add relevant, meaningful prayers to the service, the Conservative manuals retain the Orthodox rite. The three editions of the Reform manual differ greatly in their approach to the wedding service. Although it was preceded by rather traditional wedding ceremonies in the publications of the Reform movement, the first Reform rabbi's manual, the Minister's Handbook, provides a wedding service that is starkly simple. It eliminates many of the traditional elements--the betrothal blessing, the ketubah, the Seven Benedictions, the glass--and retains only what is absolutely essential to complete a marriage. The second manual returns to many of the traditional elements, including a shortened version of the Seven Benedictions, and a lengthier service. The latest edition of the Rabbi's Manual provides three alternate services which contain many of the same elements but differ in their form. The ketubah, the breaking of the glass, and all but the last sentence of the betrothal blessing have been eliminated from the Reform ritual. Yet, the Reform ritual is the one rite which recognizes the rights and

equality of women in entering into marriage and gives the bride the same marriage declaration to make to her groom as he has made to her.

The Jewish wedding service, in whatever its form--Orthodox, Conservative or Reform--is a ritual which speaks to the deep spiritual needs of man and woman. It is not simply a rite to meet legal requirements or to pronounce legal formulas. It is a ritual which elevates a moment of great importance in the lives of a man and a woman to high sanctity and gives it ultimate meaning. The Jewish marriage ritual captures in time a moment which joins the spirit of God with the spirit of man. Therefore, whatever words and whatever blessings are chosen by the three wings of American Judaism to solemnize the marriage, the purpose of the ceremonies is the same, and the result is that another family is added to the community of Israel.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUNERAL RITE

Death is, perhaps, the most traumatic of all human experiences. Not only does it mean the cessation of existence for an individual human being, but it means an immediate change in status for many others. Wives and husbands become widows and widowers at the death of a spouse. Children become orphans at the death of a parent. Parents may become childless at the death of a child. The death of a best friend, or a boss, or an active community worker may change the status of any number of people.

Each society and culture throughout the history of man has attempted to deal with death and the great changes in status which it brings in its own way. The Jewish response to death has been, historically, to honor the deceased and to comfort the mourners. Most of the laws and customs of Judaism dealing with death revolve around the time from the moment of death until the funeral, and from the time of the funeral through a slow porcess of mourning and the re-entry of the mourners into normal life. The laws and customs of pre- and post-funeral activity are beyond the scope of this study. This study is concerned with the simple yet starkly beautiful Jewish funeral.

"The Jewish practice of interring the dead in the ground

has its basis in the words of God to Adam, 'Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return' (Genesis 3:19)," [1] "'but the spirit returns to God who gave it' (Ecc. 12:7)." [2] This injunction in Genesis served as the basis for the practice of Biblical man in disposing of his dead. Abraham purchased a field to be the family burial ground (Genesis 23:3ff). Even the one whose life was taken for a capital offense was to be buried in the ground (Deut. 23:21). Burial in the ground, for Biblical man, was the simplest way of disposing of the remains of the deceased.

When the Jews lived within other cultures, they saw other practices. "In Rome, cremation was used more than interment. In Babylonia, where the fire worshippers ruled, interment and cremation were both interdicted on the grounds that neither earth nor fire should be contaminated by a corpse, which was exposed on an elevated place to be devoured by the birds of prey. Unlike the Romans and the Persians, the Jews exclusively disposed of the dead by burial. Since their attitude was distinguished from their non-Jewish neighbors, their interment of the dead assumed among them a religious aspect." [3] Burial in the ground for the Jew, therefore, became not merely the convenient thing to do, or the fulfillment of a folk custom, but took on religious significance.

In modern times, sometimes a Jewish funeral includes

the use of a coffin, while at other times it does not. "The burial required by law is in the earth itself. (But) in many localities...it is customary to place the dead in a coffin made of boards and to inter him thus; as it is unlikely that there should not be any aperture at all in the coffin, this manner of burial fulfills the requirement of the Law (Yoreh Deah 362:1. Be'er Hetev on Yoreh Deah 1.c, note 1)."[4] Burial without a coffin was so that the body might more quickly "return to the dust." Burial without a coffin is the custom followed in Israel today. "In America and Europe (today), municipal administrations usually force the use of a coffin."[5] Coffins used in a traditional funeral today must be made only of wood which "returns to the dust" more quickly than metal. The most traditional practice insists that slats from the bottom of the coffin be removed before burial so that the body may actually touch the ground.

Only in recent times have liberal Jews in America declared that "cremation is permissible."[6] This practice defies the age-old traditional practice; yet, for many liberal Jews, it meets the needs of a new, modern age.

"Most of (the Israelite rites of burial and mourning), it seems, had their origins in early pre-Yahwistic beliefs and practices and continued to be observed in Biblical and Rabbinic times, many even down to the present day."[7] Man is

rather conservative concerning rites of passage, and once a custom finds its way into the observance of a people, it tends to remain. That is why the rites and customs surrounding death practiced by the Jews today differ very little from the rites and customs practiced during the historical development of Judaism. However, with the passage of time, many of the more ancient Jewish customs have fallen into disuse. "The practice ordered in the Mishnah, 'Even the poorest man must provide no less than two flute players and one lamenting woman' (b. Talmud, Ketubot 46b), has been discontinued, as have the use of musical instruments (pipes, harps, tambourines), and the employment of torch bearers and barefoot mourners."[8]

"The funeral service is a brief simple service designed primarily as yekara d'schichba--for the honor and dignity of the deceased."[9] "The chapel funeral service is of recent origin. Originally, there was a brief Psalm service in the home, the cortege passed the synagogue, whose door was opened in respect, and the major service was graveside. The difficulty in reaching distant cemeteries and the wish of large numbers to be present at at least part of the funeral produced the chapel service."[10]

One of the major elements of the funeral service is the eulogy. "In Rabbinic times, the delivery of a eulogy was a well established practice...Its object was, according to one

of the sages, to arouse loud lamentations and weeping (b. Talmud Berachot 6b). But the orators were warned not to exaggerate the merits of the deceased. 'Just as the dead are punished (for their sins), so the funeral orators are punished (for exaggerated praise of the dead)' (b. Talmud Berachot 62a)."[11] Thus, "the purpose of the eulogy is twofold. First, it is hesped--the praising of the deceased for his worthy qualities. Second, it is bechi--expressing the grief and the sense of loss experienced by the mourners and the entire Jewish community."[12] Until modern times, "funeral discourses were uniform, always citing the same verses of the Bible and the same passages of the Talmud. The text of the discourse embellished by the preacher was usually Isaiah 57:1. 'The righteous perisheth, and no men lay it to heart, and godly men are taken away, non considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.' The preacher inferred that disasters and evil decrees were impending because of the death of the righteous resting on the bier, and he reminded the people that 'Repentance, prayer and charity avert the evil decree.'"[13]

It is the modern Orthodox contention that "the eulogy... is not to comfort the bereaved, although by highlighting the good and beautiful in the life of the departed, it affords an implicit consolation for the mourner."[14] Rather, the eulogy is solely to honor the deceased. The modern liberal

position would suggest that the eulogy might best be used to comfort the mourner who has suffered a great loss.

"The act of submission to God's dispensation is the essence of the Jewish burial service. It is called Tzidduk HaDin, the justification of God's judgment, and the verses quoted by Rabbi Hanina (b. Talmud Ab. Zarah 17b-18a, quoting Deut. 32:4 and Jer. 32:19) are an essential part of the ritual...The Tzidduk HaDin begins with the verse attributed to R. Hanina and his wife at the time when they were condemned to death. A number of rhymed poetic passages proclaiming God's justice follow. The prayer is concluded with several Scriptural verses, among which is the one uttered by R. Hanina's daughter (Jer. 32:19), and Job's famous words, when he learned of his sons' and daughters' deaths: 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21)."[15]

"The Tzidduk HaDin, or justification of the Divine decree, is a magnificent and moving prayer recited immediately before, or immediately after the body is interred (depending on local Jewish usage) when the reality of the grave confronts the mourners."[16] The prayer has three major themes. "1. God ordained this dreadful end, and His decree is justified. God gives to each his due, in accordance with reasons He alone knows. Although we may not understand His ways, we know that there can be no imperfection in Almighty

God. 2. We pray that God will be merciful to the survivors. Although He has taken the life of this dear one, may He, in His great mercy, spare the lives of the remainder of His flock and stay the hand of death. Even at this most personal moment of grief, the Jew must concern himself with unselfish thought and pray for all of humanity. 3. God's degree must be accepted. To the very end, we must remember that as God, in His kindness was beneficent to give us this dear one, and bring him into life, He is the same just God when He beckons that soul to return to Him. 'The Lord has given and the Lord has taken.' We thank the Lord for the years that were given. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"[17]

The form of the Tzidduk HaDin which is in use today dates "from the Gaonic period (Zunz Literaturgeschichte p. 21). Some portions (as was noted) are already cited in the Talmud ...(but) the rhymed verses (were introduced at a)...later (date)."[18]

"In the modern mind, the recitation of the Tzidduk HaDin at the cemetery is a mere supplement...,"[19] instead of having the place of prominence which it had throughout the historical development of the funeral ritual. Today's funeral revolves much more around the recitation of certain Psalms.

As the coffin is borne to the grave, "the very beautiful and moving Psalm 91 is recited."[20] It is customary to halt the funeral procession "seven times and to make lamen-

tation over the dead (Mishnah Ketubot 2:10, Baba Batra 6:7, Oholot 18:4 and b. Talmud Baba Batra 100b). Even if seven halts are not made, it is still customary to halt at least three times (Yoreh Deah 358:3)."[21] "The seven halts are symbolic of the seven times the word hevel (vanity) occurs in the Book of Ecclesiastes (Ecc. 1:2, b. Talmud Baba Batra 100b). The number seven, too, corresponds to the days of the world's creation and also to the seven stages which man experiences in his lifetime (Ecc. Rabbah 1:1)."[22] We, therefore, "are to pause as we approach the grave in order to give us time to reflect upon the true meaning of Life and to help us comprehend the vanities that are often mistaken for a meaningful life."[23] Psalm 91, a prayer which refers to the refuge and protection given by God, prepares the mourners "for the supreme test of faith, the acceptance of God's judgment at the very moment when their dead (is) being buried."[24]

After the coffin has been brought to the grave, and the Tzidduk HaDin is recited, Psalm 16 is often read. "When the coffin is lowered into the grave, the following sentence is said: 'May he (she) come to his (her) place in peace.'"[25] This concept is taken from Exodus 18:23 which says, "All this people shall go to their place in peace." "Jethro's meaning (in context) was that if Moses followed his advice and appointed assistant judges, the people would not need to stand all day before Moses, but could quickly return home satisfied.

The phrase is aptly transferred to man's eternal place, the Rabbis explaining several expressions in the (Biblical passage) as references to visiting the sick and burying the dead (...Mekilta and Targum on Exodus 18:20)."[26]

"The mourners are also required to witness the coffin being lowered into the grave (Mishnah Semachot 1:5)."[27] "It is a mitzvah to fill the grave. Three spadesful of earth are dropped into the grave by those present as a symbol of the threefold composition of man: sand, spirit and breath."[28]

"When the grave is covered, another moment of intense emotional pain, the mourner is expected to move away several feet and recite the Kaddish. Thus, at the moment of severest grief, the mourner must affirm God's will and His plan."[29] "The Burial Kaddish is different from the other forms of Kaddish recited in the synagogue. It takes the form of a prayer and not a formal doxology. It is, therefore, not circumscribed by all of the regulations regarding the Kaddish of the synagogue service. This why it may be recited directly following burial, whereas, the synagogue Kaddish is recited only after a portion from the Psalms or Torah is read."[30] The Burial Kaddish confirms the rabbinic doctrine concerning the resurrection of the dead during the messianic era. Its special section says,

> May His great name be magnified and sanctified in the world that is to be created anew, where He will revive the dead and raise them up into life eternal. Then will the city of Jerusalem

> be rebuilt, and the Temple will be established in the midst thereof, alien worship will be uprooted from the earth, and the worship of the true God restored to its dignity. O may the Holy One Blessed Be He reign in His sovereignty and glory during your lifetime....[31]

The Burial Kaddish is not recited on festivals and during times when tachanun is not recited--the "joyous occasions" of Jewish life. The Burial Kaddish is also not recited when no mourners are present at the burial (mourner being defined as husband, wife, brother, sister, son, daughter, parent). At those times, the regular Mourner's Kaddish is recited.[32]

The Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch indicate an act which is to be performed by the mourner and which has become part of the funeral ritual:

> One who has lost his next of kin for whom he is required to observe mourning, must perform the ceremony of tearing a rent in his clothes. This ceremony must be performed while standing; if performed while sitting, the obligation is not fulfilled, and it must be performed again while standing. It is best to tear a rent in the clothes before the coffin is closed when one's sorrow is still intense (Moed Katan 24a, 20b; Maim. Abel 8:1,3; Yoreh Deah 340:1).[33]

"The rending of the garments as a sign of mourning was common among the ancient Hebrews (see Gen. 37:29; II Sam. 1:2,11; Isaiah 37:1; Job 1:20)."[34] "The rending is an opportunity for psychological relief. It allows the mourners to give vent to...pent-up anguish by means of a controlled, religiously sanctioned act of destruction."[35]

"While it has been a custom for many years to rend the clothes and recite the blessing of the 'True Judge' at the time of death, it is now customary to do this at the funeral service. At that time all the relatives are assembled, the rabbi supervises the correct manner of rending the clothes and leads in the correct recital of the blessings."[36] A.Z. Idelsohn, in Jewish Liturgy and Its Development, indicates that the mourners rend their garments at the cemetery immediately following the lowering of the coffin into the ground and before the recitation of the Burial Kaddish. As they rend the garment, the mourners say, "Blessed be the Judge of Truth" (Berachot 58a, based on Gen. 37:34 and I Sam. 2:11).[37] With the advent of the chapel funeral service, the rending is now usually done at the funeral chapel prior to the service there.

Reform Judaism in America has eliminated the custom of rending the garment as a sign of mourning, and, therefore, it is not part of a Reform funeral service. "Instead of the rite of...the ritual tearing of the garment or black ribbon used as a sign of mourning, it is recommended that the (Liberal Jewish) mourners make a contribution to charity commensurate with their means."[38]

With the advent of the chapel funeral service, the Memorial Prayer, which was said at the cemetery, is now often recited in the midst of the chapel funeral service.

Its recitation at graveside, therefore, has become optional.

The "Funeral Service at the Chapel" which is in HaMadrikh, the Orthodox rabbi's manual, reflects the minor role which the chapel service plays in the funeral ritual of the American Orthodox Jew. A note indicates that Psalm 23 and Psalm 16 may be recited. A prayer based on Psalm 8, which speaks of the fragility of man and his place in the universe, is recited. El Male' Rachamin, the Memorial Prayer, is then recited. This prayer, which "entered the liturgy as a result of the Chmielnicki massacres in seventeenth-century Poland,"[39] is a supplication to God, who is characterized as "full of compassion," that the deceased might be accepted into the heavenly realm and that his/her repose might be in Paradise. It is a prayer for God's protection of the deceased "under the cover of His wings," and an expression of hope that the soul might "be bound up in the bond of eternal life."[40] Although there is no written indication that a eulogy is to be delivered, it may be given between the reading of the Psalms and the recitation of the Memorial Prayer.

The funeral rite in HaMadrikh continues with "The Funeral Service" which is to be recited at the cemetery. It begins with the recitation of the Tzidduk HaDin prayer, which forms the core of the traditional funeral service. The Memorial Prayer is then to be recited once again, and is followed

in HaMadrikh by the recitation of Psalms. Psalm 49 is recited if there is a mourner present (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 199:9). On the days when tachanun (the prayer of supplication) is not recited, Psalm 16 is then recited (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 1.c.). The Burial Kaddish is then recited by the mourners, and the funeral rite is concluded with the mourners leaving the grave-site by passing through rows which have been formed by those present at the cemetery.[41] Thus, the hallmark of the traditional funeral service is simplicity. The service at the chapel includes the recitation of Psalms, a eulogy to honor the deceased and the recitation of the Memorial Prayer. At the cemetery, the funeral rite revolves around the recitation of the Tzidduk HaDin prayer. The Memorial Prayer is recited again, and certain Psalms are read, depending on various conditions. The Burial Kaddish is recited by the mourners. HaMadrikh includes no prayers or readings to be recited by the rabbi, no homiletical statements, no extraneous material. The liturgy is concise and the service is short. The dignity and honor which mark a Jewish funeral are present in the service found in HaMadrikh.

Very few reforms were suggested by the European or American reformers concerning the funeral service. The reforms that were suggested in connection with the rites of passage surrounding death were mostly concerning mourning customs.

As was noted, the custom of rending the garment as a sign of mourning was eliminated. Sugestions were made at the Breslau Rabbinical Conference of 1846 concerning the period of mourning, the form which the mourning was to take, and the personal conduct of the mourner.[42] Reforms for the funeral service itself were not suggested. Therefore, the early rabbi's manuals of American Reform reflect a fairly traditional funeral rite, with the addition of prayers and homiletical statements in English.

In 1914, William Rosenau, chairman of the committee on the Minister's Handbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, presented to his colleagues at their convention the proposed text of a rabbi's manual. The typescript of this proposed text is in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. The funeral service of the "Typescript" has two sections, one section to be recited at the home or the funeral chapel and the second section for recitation at the cemetery.

The home or chapel service begins with the recitation of Psalm 90. This Psalm speaks of the relationship between the eternal God and finite man. It includes the beautiful words,

> ...The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and fly away. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom...
>
> Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.

The "Typescript" indicates that a eulogy may be delivered at this point, and the service at the home or chapel concludes with this prayer:

> Out of the depths of our sorrow, we cry unto Thee, O God, our Heavenly Father. In Thy hand are the souls of all the living and the spirits of all flesh. Thy loving kindness is never withdrawn from us, but abides with us for aye, in death as in life. Thou, in Thine infinite wisdom, which is past finding out, hast seen fit to lay upon us this heavy burden; mayest Thou also in Thine infinite mercy give us the strength to bear it.
>
> Guide and sustain us, lest we stray from Thy paths. Give us the courage and strength of true faith that shall keep us from murmuring against the justice of Thy dispensations, even though Thou has sorely amitteh (sic) us. Grant us, we pray Thee, that power of spiritual vision which shall enable us to see in the hand that hurteth, the hand that healeth; in the hand that woundeth, the hand that bindeth up again. Thou art the Life of all Life. Into Thy hand do we commit our destinies. And though our skies be dark with suffering, and our eyes dim with tears, though our hearts writhe in anguish and our lips falter with pain, may Thy Great Spirit be with pain, may Thy Great Spirit be with our frail spirits, to teach us to say in this hour of bereavement, 'The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken; May His name be glorified forever and aye. Amen.'[43]

With this prayer, the service at the home or funeral chapel is concluded. Only one Psalm is recited, and the Memorial Prayer is omitted.

At the cemetery, the traditional Tzidduk HaDin is to be said. The "Typescript" indicates that the Hebrew text should be recited, although it does not give the Hebrew in the manuscript. Following the Tzidduk HaDin, the following prayer

is to be recited:

> Standing at the threshold of thine eternal home, dear friend, we bid thee a tender farewell. Thou hast gone before us, whither our own faces are set. While our immortal feet tend toward the valley of the shadow of death, thine immortal soul will follow the path which eye hath not seen or heart understood. Yet will thy presence ever remain with us, our silent companion, unutterably near to our affection and love. Affection for thee mirrors thine affection for us. Our love for thee is undying even as thy soul is undying.[44]

This prayer adds an entirely new element to the funeral service; it speaks directly to the deceased, as if he were able to hear and to comprehend.

As the coffin is borne to the grave, Psalm 91 is to be recited. As the coffin is lowered into the grave, Psalm 93 is to be recited. Both Psalms are given in the "Typescript" in English only. A prayer of committal is now given which indicates that the survivors know that they must bow to God's decree, and which asks for God's protection for the beloved who is being placed in the grave. A prayer based on Psalm 8 is recited, followed by the Kaddish. Since the Hebrew text is not given, it cannot be determined if the Burial or the Mourner's Kaddish is intended. The service concludes with another prayer which is an attempt to bring comfort to the mourners.

The service at the cemetery in the 1914 "Typescript" includes the traditional elements of the recitation of Psalms

and the Kaddish. It also includes the core of the traditional funeral, the Tzidduk HaDin. However, it eliminates the recitation of the Memorial Prayer. It may be assumed that the Memorial Prayer, which speaks about an anthropomorphic God and the Heavenly Hosts, was not in keeping with modern, liberal Reform theology. The service does include a number of prayers and homiletical statements, one of which speaks directly to the deceased. Nevertheless, the funeral ritual of the 1914 "Typescript" is fairly traditional in nature.

The 1917 Minister's Handbook retained much of the service proposed in the 1914 "Typescript". The Funeral Service begins with a service for the home. Psalm 90 is to be recited, followed by the address or eulogy. The prayer that was suggested in the 1914 "Typescript" is then read, followed by the recitation of Psalm 23 and the declaration, in Hebrew and in English, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen."[45]

The second part of the funeral ritual is to take place at the cemetery. The Tzidduk HaDin prayer is given in a shortened form only in Hebrew. As the coffin is borne to the grave, Psalm 91 is recited, and as the coffin is lowered, the following prayer is to be recited:

> The dust returns unto the earth as it was, but the spirit unto God Who gave it. Thus, we give back to earth that which was of earth. It is but the house of the spirit,

> which we now lay in the bosom of the earth. The spirit itself cannot die. Even here on earth the dear ones continue in the loving rememberance of those to whom they were precious. Their good name is a crown that never fadeth. Their good life is an inspiration to those who come after them. Receive in mercy, O God, the soul of our departed. Graciously pardon his (her) sins and blot out the rememberance of them. For there liveth no man on earth who is so righteous that he sinneth not. Grant him (her) that everlasting peace and joy which Thou hast laid up for us in the world to come. Though no human eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard nor mind hath compassed it, it is still our sure inheritance and our everlasting portion.[46]

Though this prayer does not speak directly to the dead as did the prayer in the 1914 "Typescript," (that prayer was excluded in the final draft of the Minister's Handbook) it is, nevertheless, full of the imagery of reward and punishment and the world to come.

The service concludes with the recitation of the Kaddish. The Kaddish which appears in the Minister's Handbook is not the traditional Burial Kaddish, but a special Reform Mourner's Kaddish which was first introduced in the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook of 1819. The European reformers recognized that the Kaddish recited by mourners as part of worship services had become, to the popular mind, a prayer for the dead instead of a doxology expressing faith in God. They added, therefore, a paragraph to the traditional Mourner's Kaddish which spelled out the meaning which people had read into it all along. The wording for this paragraph was taken from

the Hashkabhah, the prayer in the Sephardi rite which is recited for the repose of the deceased, from the traditional Burial Kaddish and from the Kaddish D'Rabbanan, the scholar's Kaddish.[47] The Kaddish in the Minister's Handbook is given in both the traditional Aramaic and in English. The translation given for the special paragraph is,

> To the departed whom we now remember, may peace and bliss be granted in the world of eternal life. There may they find grace and mercy before the Lord of heaven and earth.[48]

The 1917 Minister's Handbook includes a rather traditional funeral ritual. It includes the recitation of the "funeral Psalms," and the Tzidduk HaDin. It added a number of prayers and homiletical statements which go beyond the scope of the traditional liturgy, but attempt to add beauty and meaning to the service. This rite eliminates the traditional Memorial Prayer and substitutes the Reform Mourner's Kaddish for the Burial Kaddish. It is, however, a very traditional yet Reform ritual.

The 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook," which preceded the 1928 Rabbi's Manual, added many elements to the funeral ritual which were not in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. The funeral rite begins with a prayer service for recitation at home even if the funeral is to be held in a chapel. It begins with the recitation of Psalm 121 ("I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains, From whence shall my help

come"). The service continues with a lengthy prayer speaking of the eternal God in relation to finite man, the deep sorrow felt at the death of this loved one, a declaration of faith in God and His ways, even though they be beyond man's understanding, the hope for eternal rest and peace for the deceased and another statement of faith in God.

The service for the home or funeral chapel begins with a choice of a prayer based on Psalm 8 or Psalm 16. It continues with the recitation of Psalm 90 or Psalm 23, and retains the prayer which appeared in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. The service then continues with another choice of prayers to be recited. A general prayer is given, which again speaks of the relationship between the eternal God and finite man, and continues with a paragraph of comfort for the mourner. Other prayers that may be chosen instead are prayers concerning the death of a young parent or a child. At this point in the service, the address or eulogy may be given. The home or chapel service concludes with another prayer which states:

> Almighty God, who governest all things with infinite wisdom and mercy, and who guidest the destinies of man! As a father dost Thou love us and showerest Thy blessings on us. Therefore shall we not murmur even when sorrow befalls us, but humbly and with unfaltering trust accept Thy holy decrees. In joy and in sorrow, alike, we praise Thy goodness and acknowledge Thy justice.
>
> We remember that we are but strangers upon earth. Like a shadow our life fleeth away. Help us, therefore, O God, so to walk in Thy

> sight that when the few years of our earthly pilgrimage are ended we may be ready to meet our end with tranquil mind. To Thee we look for comfort and strength when one of our beloved is taken from us, and a link is broken in the chain of love that binds us together in family union. Though we walk in the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil, for Thou art with us. Be praised O Eternal God, in all Thy dispensations, and sanctified by (sic) Thy name for ever and ever. Amen.[49]

The home or chapel service of this 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook" concludes with the recitation of the Memorial Prayer. Because the Hebrew is not given in this manuscript, it cannot be determined if it is the traditional Memorial Prayer which is intended.

The Burial Service begins with the recitation of the Tzidduk HaDin, continues with the recitation of Psalm 91 as the coffin is borne to the grave and, when the coffin is lowered into the grave, the Hebrew of the second paragraph of the Amidah, the גבורות, is to be read and ended with the English, "Thou art mighty forever, O Lord...who hast implanted within us immortal life."[50] The Burial Service concludes with the following prayer:

> All flesh is grass and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth. The body dieth and is laid in the earth. Dust returneth to dust, but the spirit returneth to God who gave it. God gave and God took away, praised be the name of God! May God spread the sheltering tabernacle of His peace over.....who is laid to eternal rest. And in love may He send His heavenly comfort unto you who mourn his (her) departure. May His grace be with you and announce peace to those who are nigh

> and to those who are far. In the night of your sorrow, lift up your hearts unto Him who is the source of all light and of all joy. He wounds and He heals; He causes death and He gives life. In His hands are the souls of all the living and the spirits of all flesh. Find consolation in our Heavenly Father and praise His name in words sanctified by memory and glorified by hope.[51]

The opening paragraph of this prayer alludes to imagery found in Psalm 90. The opening sentence of the second paragraph alludes to the imagery found in the evening prayer, השכיבנו. The Burial Service concludes with the Kaddish, but since no text is given, it cannot be known if the Burial, Mourner's or Reform Mourner's Kaddish is intended.

The funeral rite found in the 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook" is noteworthy for its many English prayers and homiletical statements. The liturgy follows the traditional rite and adds the Memorial Prayer which was eliminated from the 1917 Minister's Handbook.

The 1928 Rabbi's Manual follows much the same format as that suggested in the 1927 "Revised Minister's Handbook." The funeral ritual begins with a service at the home which includes the recitation of Psalm 121 and the lengthy prayer that was first suggested in the 1927 revision. The service for home or chapel begins with the recitation of a prayer based on Psalm 8 and continues with a choice of selected verses from Psalm 90 or Psalm 23. Four prayers follow, one of which may be chosen to be recited. The first two prayers

are general in nature, the third is for a young parent and the fourth for a young child. They all express the anguish felt at the death of the loved one and yet confidence in the ways of God. The closing prayer is the one suggested in the 1927 revision. The service concludes with the recitation of a shortened form of the Memorial Prayer. This Memorial Prayer eliminates the reference to the Garden of Eden.

The service in the cemetery begins with the recitation of selected verses from Psalm 91 as the coffin is borne to the grave. At the grave, the Tzidduk HaDin is to be recited. Only the Hebrew is given in this manual. As the coffin is lowered into the grave, the 1928 Rabbi's Manual adds a new element to the funeral service. The following blessing is recited in Hebrew and in English:

ברוך אתה ה" אלוהנו מלך העולם אשר יצר
אתכם בצלמו. וזן וכלכל אתכם בטובו.
והמית אתכם בדין. ונטע בתוככם חיי עולם.
ברוך אתה ה" דין האמת.

> Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who forms us in His image, who nourishes and sustains us in His goodness, who causes us to die in accordance with His law, and who implants within us immortal life. Praised be Thou, O Lord, Judge of Truth.[52]

The service continues with the recitation of the second paragraph of the Amidah, the גבורות, in Hebrew and English as was suggested in the 1927 revision. This blessing and the recitation of the second paragraph of the Amidah, the גבורות, is based upon the traditional blessing which is recited by one

who enters a cemetery after not having been there in at least thirty days (cf. b. Talmud Berachot 58a and Orach Hayim 224: 11).[53] The traditional version of the blessing includes references to God's judgment (presumably in the world to come) and the resurrection of the dead. These concepts have been replaced in the Reform version of the blessing by the concept of God's goodness and of eternal life implanted within man. The blessing, which traditionally is recited individually by those who have not visited a cemetery for more than thirty days, becomes in the Rabbi's Manual part of the public funeral service. The prayer at the grave from the 1917 Minister's Handbook ("The dust returns unto the earth...") is recited, followed by the Kaddish.

Alternate services for the cemetery are given in the 1928 manual. The alternate services, however, are very short, and it may be assumed that, if either one of the alternate services is used, parts of the first and main service should also be included.

Service II begins with verses 8-18 of Psalm 8 and continues with the prayer suggested in the 1927 revision ("All flesh is grass...") based on Psalm 90 and the Evening Prayer. The service concludes with the Kaddish.

Service III is a service "to be used when body is placed in a mausoleum or in a receiving vault."[54] Its prayer states:

> The dust returns unto the dust as it was, but the spirit unto God who gave it. We have reached the solemn and sacred moment

> of parting from the visible presence of our loved one. With reverent hands and sorrowing hearts we have borne to its resting place that frail house of clay which was the abode of the spirit. As we commit the body to its sepulchre, so we commit the soul to God. We pray that He may receive it under the wings of His protection. Even in our grief we gather strength from our faith in God, who is just and wise and merciful, and from His promise of life everlasting.[55]

The service concludes with the recitation of the Kaddish. The form of the Kaddish given here is the Reform Mourner's Kaddish as appeared in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. It may be assumed that it was this form of the Kaddish which was intended for the other two Burial Services.

The funeral service in the 1928 Rabbi's Manual is a very traditional rite. It includes all the traditional "funeral Psalms." It includes the traditional Tzidduk HaDin, and a shortened version of the Memorial Prayer which had been eliminated from the earlier Minister's Handbook. Its liberal elements include the substitution of the Reform Mourner's Kaddish for the Burial Kaddish, and a special service for placing a body in a mausoleum or receiving vault, which could not possibly be a part of the traditional service, since anything but burial in the ground is forbidden by Orthodox law. It also includes many prayers and homiletical statements in English to give a sense of beauty and dignity to the occasion for the American Jew. But this manual spreads out these prayers over a number of services and does not have

an over abundance of English prayers at any one spot in the service as did the 1927 revision.

The funeral services in the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual" and the 1961 Rabbi's Manual are so similar that they shall be considered as one. For clarity's sake, the discussion shall be of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual, but it is to be understood that what is noted applies equally to the 1958 "Revised Rabbi's Manual."

The 1961 Rabbi's Manual contains two distinct and complete funeral services. Funeral Service I begins with the reading of one or more passages from the choices given. The selections are: Psalm 121, selected verses from Psalm 90, Psalm 93, Psalm 16, verses from a prayer based on Psalm 8 and selected verses from chapter three of the Wisdom of Solomon. The service continues with the prayer that first appeared in the 1914 "Typescript" ("Out of the depths we call unto Thee..."). At this point in the service, the address or eulogy is delivered. Following the eulogy the prayer, "Almighty God, who governest all things...," which first appeared in the 1917 Minister's Handbook, is recited. The shortened version of the Memorial Prayer concludes the service at the home or chapel.

At the cemetery, as the coffin is borne to the grave, it is indicated that any of the Psalms found at the beginning of the home or chapel service may be recited. The Hebrew and English text of the Tzidduk HaDin is given and is followed by

the blessing, "...who dost form us in Thine image and who dost nourish and sustain us..." which was introduced in the 1928 Rabbi's Manual. The service continues with the recitation of the גבורות, the second paragraph of the Amidah, and concludes with the prayer, "The dust returns to the earth..." from the 1917 Minister's Handbook and the Kaddish, which is the Reform Mourner's Kaddish. In Funeral Service I, both the home or chapel and the cemetery portions are very traditional. It includes every element of the traditional service, though some sections are shortened or abridged. It contains prayers and homiletical statements in both Hebrew and English, and it follows the pattern set by the earlier Reform rabbi's manuals of having the Reform Mourner's Kaddish instead of the Burial Kaddish.

Funeral Service II of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual is a much more homiletical, interpretative service. It opens with the statement by the rabbi,

> In this hour of grief, let us listen to the voice of the Psalmist as he brings us the message of God's nearness, of our fellowship with Him in light and in darkness, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death.[56]

This statement is followed by the recitation of Psalm 139, beginning with the seventh verse. It is a Psalm which recognizes the power and the might of God. It is not one of the traditional "funeral Psalms," but one introduced into the funeral ritual by this rabbi's manual. The service continues

with a prayer, also used for the first time in a rabbi's manual.

> Death has summoned our beloved.....Our souls cry out unto Thee, O Lord, 'What is man?' Is he the creature of dust, whose destiny is but to return to the dust from which he came?
>
> The ancient sage has taught us, 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.' Not even the darkness of death can extinguish God's light which He has kindled in the sanctuary of man's soul. Therefore, O Lord, we thank Thee in this solemn hour for that which was deathless in the life of our cherished....., and which is now revealed to us in all its beauty.
>
> For his (her) love that united us in life and which death cannot sever; for his (her) companionship which we shared along life's path, and which still continues through the tenderness of memory; for the gifts of his (her) heart and mind which brought us joy and happiness and now have become a precious heritage of the spirit, for all these and more, we give Thee our praise.57

Following this prayer, a homiletical statement is made revolving around the verse, "The Lord hath given...."

> Grant unto us, O Lord, the strength of all the generations of our people who in the face of bereavement proclaimed:
>
> ה" נתן וה" לקח יהי שם ה" מכרך
>
> The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.
>
> ה" נתן
>
> Lord, Thou hast given. Thou didst give unto us our dear.....For all that was good and endearing in his (her) life, we offer the deepest thanks of our hearts.
>
> ה" לקח
>
> Lord, Thou hast taken. Thou hast called him (her) unto Thyself. We pray Thee, O God, for the courage to make our broken hearts an altar before which we acknowledge Thy sovereignty and love as we say,

יהי שם ה" מברך

May Thy name be blessed now and forever-
more. Amen.[58]

At this point it is indicated that "the rabbi may read a poem or some other selection to be followed by the funeral address."[59] Following the address, verses 6-9 of Psalm 62 are to be recited. This is, again, the first time in the funeral liturgy of the Orthodox or the Reform rabbi's manuals that this Psalm appears. A period of silent prayer is followed by the sentence, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before Thee, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen,"[60] taken from the final paragraph of the Amidah which is recited silently. The home or chapel service concludes with the recitation of the shortened version of the Memorial Prayer.

At the cemetery, it is indicated that as the coffin is borne to the grave, any one of the Psalms found at the beginning of Funeral Service I may be recited. At the grave, it is indicated that Psalm 130 is to be recited in English. Again, this is the first time that this Psalm appears in the funeral liturgy of the Orthodox or Reform rabbi's manuals. The recitation of this Psalm is concluded with the Hebrew verse which is traditionally said by the mourners as they rend their garments,

ברוך אתה ה" אלהינו מלך העולם דין האמת

A prayer is now given to be recited if flowers are deposited

in the grave, based on the words of Psalm 90, "the grass withereth...." The Kaddish, which is the Reform Mourner's Kaddish, is introduced with the following prayer:

> O Lord, help us to understand that grief and love go hand in hand, that the sorrow of loss is but the measure of a love that is stronger than death. Even though we cry in the bereavement of our hearts, may we be as children who know that their father is near and who cling unafraid to the trusted hand. In this spirit, O Thou Who art Master of our destiny, do we commit all that is precious to us into Thy keeping, as we repeat the words hallowed by generations:...[61]

Following the Kaddish, it is indicated that the service may be concluded with the recitation of these verses:

לך כי שלחך ה"
לך וה" יהיה עמך
והלך לפניך צדקך. כבוד ה" יאספך

> Go thy way for the Lord hath called thee.
> Go thy way and may the Lord be with thee.
> May thy righteousness go before thee and
> the glory of the Lord receive thee.[62]

Funeral Service II of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual is innovative and creative. It includes many Psalms and readings that appear in no funeral service of any other rabbi's manual. It has moving homiletical statements and fine prayers to be recited in English. Funeral Service II provides an interesting contrast to the traditional Funeral Service I of the 1961 Rabbi's Manual.

Following the two services, this manual includes many additional funeral prayers, both of a general nature, and for specific circumstances, such as the death of a young parent

or a child. It also includes prayers to be recited when the body is placed in a mausoleum or receiving vault, or when the body is to be cremated.

The funeral service of the 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual, the first rabbi's manual of American Conservative Judaism, is very traditional in nature, but leaves a great deal of room for choice and selection of the prayers and Psalms to be recited.

Like the Orthodox and Reform manuals, this Conservative manual divides the funeral rite into two services, one at the home or chapel, and the second at the cemetery. At the beginning of the home or chapel service, it is indicated that the act of rending the garment is performed before the ceremony begins. The traditional statement, "The True Judge," is provided.

The actual service begins with a reading to be selected from six passages that are given. The selections are taken from a prayer based on Psalm 8, Psalm 90, Psalm 121, Psalm 91 and from Pirke Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers. Following this reading, another four choices are given from which the most appropriate selection should be chosen and read. The full texts of Psalms 16, 23 and 90 are given, as is the reading from Proverbs 31, "A woman of valor...." Again, a selection of prayers is given, each dealing with a different aspect

of death, mourning and the relationship between the eternal God and finite man. The most appropriate is to be selected and read. The service at the home or chapel concludes with the recitation of the Memorial Prayer. An alternate prayer is given for those days on which tachanun is not said.

At the cemetery, Psalm 91 is recited as the coffin is borne to the grave, and the phrase, "May he (she) go to his (her) place in peace" is recited as the coffin is lowered into the grave. The Tzidduk HaDin is recited, with only the Hebrew text given in this manual. The Burial Kaddish is recited to conclude the service.

The funeral service in the 1952 Rabbinical Assembly Manual includes all the traditional elements. It leaves room for choice in selecting appropriate prayers and Psalms to be recited. The service at the cemetery differs from the service given in HaMadrikh only in that the Memorial Prayer is not recited again.

The funeral service in the 1965 לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual of the Conservative movement differs from the service in the Rabbinical Assembly Manual only in that it gives a greater number of choices of Psalms and prayers to be recited.

The blessing for the rending of the garments is given, and the service itself begins with one or more readings from a wide choice. The readings included in this manual are from Isaiah 40:6-8 ("A voice says cry out, and I say what shall I

cry..."), Psalm 103:13-17 ("Tender as a father with his children, the Lord is merciful..."), Psalm 73:26 ("My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart..."), Psalm 24:1-6 ("The earth is the Lord's..."), Isaiah 41:10 ("Fear not for I am with you..."), Psalm 15 ("O Lord, who shall dwell in your sanctuary..."), Psalm 23, Psalm 90, Malachi 2:6 ("True instruction was on his lips..."), Proverbs 31, Berachot 17a ("The end of man is death..."), Job 28:1-2, 12 ("When a wise man dies..."), Jeremiah 8:18, 23 ("My grief is incurable..." and "O that my head were water..."), the Wisdom of Solomon and Ben Sira.

Following the selection of one or more of these readings, four prayers, each dealing with a different aspect of death, mourning and the relationship between the eternal God and finite man, are given. One, the most appropriate, is to be chosen. The home or chapel service concludes with the recitation of the Memorial Prayer. An alternate prayer for the days when tachanun is not recited is given.

The Burial Service begins with the recitation of Psalm 91 as the coffin is borne to the grave. The phrase, "May he (she) go to his (her) place in Peace" is recited as the coffin is lowered into the grave. The Tzidduk HaDin is recited, with only the Hebrew text given in this manual. Two short prayers based on the theme of "return to the dust" are given. One is to be chosen and recited. The Memorial Prayer is given in

this manual as optional at the burial service. The service concludes with the recitation of the Burial Kaddish.

There is very little difference between the funeral services given in the two editions of the Conservative rabbi's manuals. Both are based on the traditional service. Both give choices as to the prayers and the Psalms to be recited. The 1965 manual simply gives a greater selection, and, thus, a wider choice of readings.

All three wings of American Judaism maintain the simplicity and dignity that are the hallmark of the Jewish funeral service in the rituals which appear in their rabbi's manuals. The Orthodox service, as seen in HaMadrikh, has the major ritual at the cemetery. A short home or funeral service is provided which includes the reading from Psalms, a eulogy and the Memorial Prayer. The service at the cemetery begins with the recitation of Psalm 91, as the coffin is borne to the grave, revolves around the funeral prayer, the Tzidduk HaDin, and concludes with the special Burial Kaddish.

The three rabbi's manuals of American Reform also contain the traditional funeral liturgy. Traditional "funeral Psalms" are included, and the Tzidduk HaDin is a major part of the cemetery service. The major reforms that are included in the Reform manuals are the substitution of the Reform Mourner's Kaddish for the Burial Kaddish, the elimination

of the Memorial Prayer from the 1917 Minister's Handbook, and a shortening of it in the 1928 and 1961 Rabbi's Manual, and the inclusion of many English prayers, readings and homiletical statements. Only the second service of the 1961 manual is highly innovative, including Psalms and readings that are found in no other funeral service.

The two manuals of American Conservative Judaism follow the traditional rite exactly. They include, however, a wide selection of Psalms, prayers and readings from which the rabbi may choose. The 1965 manual includes even more selections than does the 1952 manual.

A funeral is a rite of passage which makes order out of chaos. It is a structured ritual which attempts to control and channel overwhelming grief into an emotion which can be kept from consuming the mourner. The hallmark of the Jewish funeral is simplicity, dignity and a great honor and respect for the deceased. All three wings of American Judaism, through the services in their rabbi's manuals, maintain the Jewish heritage of dignity and honor, and attempt to bring comfort and consolation at a moment of great loss.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIFE CYCLE LITURGY IN RETROSPECT: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The wide differences in theology and in practice which often separate Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews in America are not reflected in the prayers and rituals of life cycle ceremonies. This detailed study and comparison of the life cycle liturgy of American Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism, as seen in the rabbi's manuals of each of the groups, has served to point out that there are many more similarities in ritual and liturgy than there are differences.

The most significant change made by American Conservative and Reform to the traditional Orthodox rite, which is the result of the historical development of the law and traditions of each life cycle ceremony, is the addition of English translations, readings, prayers and interpretative statements to the basic rubric of the ritual. Only the 1917 Minister's Handbook of American Reform contains radical departures from the traditional rites and ceremonies. The reform reflected in that rabbi's manual can be understood to be part of the purposeful reform of all liturgy and all ritual which served to distinguish the American Reform movement, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from the rites and practices of traditional Judaism. The later Reform rabbi's manuals reflect a return to much of the traditional rubric and a desire to provide greater understanding and involvement for

those participating in the life cycle event.

The rabbi's manuals currently in use, the Orthodox HaMadrikh, the Conservative לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual of 1965, and the Reform Rabbi's Manual of 1961, contain very few substantive differences which could be said to widely separate the three wings of American Judaism with regard to life cycle ceremonies and observances. Nevertheless, even though the rabbi's manuals reflect few differences in the prayers and rites, the feeling persists, among those involved in Jewish life in America, that there is a great difference in the approach to life cycle ceremonies among the three wings of American Judaism. There is no great feeling that one participates in a life cycle event as part of k'lal yisrael, but, rather, as an Orthodox, Conservative or Reform Jew. Since this study of the liturgy in the rabbi's manuals shows so few differences in the prayers and rituals of each of the groups, the central question, when evaluating the life cycle liturgy of American Judaism, becomes: Why does there seem to be such a great difference in approach between the three groups? The answer lies in exploring vital issues which affect the performance of the life cycle rituals and go far beyond the prayer or blessing recited. Only when we begin to find solutions for these issues will the rites of k'lal yisrael, instead of rigidly defined Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, rites become part of the American Jewish experience.

Each of the three wings of American Judaism demands circumcision of a male infant so that he may be considered to have entered the covenant of Abraham. It might be assumed that Reform Judaism, as part of its nineteenth century rationalistic approach to religion, would object to circumcision as an unnecessary act. The Reform position, however, is stated in the 1961 Rabbi's Manual:

> Circumcision has always been recognized in Judaism as a religious institution, not merely a hygienic practice. It should, therefore, be mandatory that it be conducted as a religious rite withe the appropriate prayers and benedictions.[1]

In this modern age, especially when mothers often leave the hospital on the third or fourth day after the birth of their children, and when most male children are circumcised soon after birth as a matter of course, some question has been raised within Reform circles as to the necessity of waiting until the eighth day to perform the circumcision. In addition, as was noted in Chapter Two, Reform Judaism permits the use of all modern surgical equipment during the circumcision. Even with these modifications in the traditional practice, Reform Judaism recognizes and maintains the practice of circumcising the male infant to initiate him into the Jewish people and to renew the covenant between God and Abraham in each generation.

Historically, circumcision has served not only to initiate the male infant into the covenant of Abraham, but the

male convert as well. "The traditional halacha requires male converts to submit to circumcision and afterwards to receive a ritual bath (women are converted by the ritual immersion)."[2] American Orthodox and Conservative Judaism maintain this requirement as part of their conversion procedures. "But in 1893, the Central Conference of American Rabbis declared that no initiatory rite was necessary; the prospective convert should simply declare, orally and in writing, in the presence of a rabbi and no less than two associates, his acceptance of the Jewish faith and his intention to live by it."[3]

The Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis concerning the admission of proselytes was offered and adopted at the 1893 convention. Its provisions have been followed by the majority of Reform rabbis ever since.

> With regard to the admission of an adult proselyte to Judaism, the committee concludes:
> 1. That there are known in history three initiatory rites for the proselyte to Judaism viz: the Sacrificial, the Ritual Bath and Circumcision.
> 2. Neither of these three initiatory rites for the proselyte is ordained or otherwise suggested in the Torah, the Prophets and Hagiography.
> 3. They appear not in history and literature prior to the conquest of Iduema by John Hyrcan, who decreed circumcision on the Edomites, contrary to law and custom (134-107 B.C.).
> 4. From and after that time, initiatory rites for the proselyte became customary, but never became canon law, not even rabbinical law proper, and have therefore found no place in the Mishnah; nor were, generally, all three rites considered necessary to every one proselyte; there existed a difference of opinion

> as to which rite was necessary, down beyond the last of the Tannaim.
> 5. After all legislative authority had been defunct in the time of the Amoraim, without any lawful enactment, the two rites--the Sacrificial having been abolished--were considered necessary to make a proselyte, but this never did and never could become canon law. It always remained custom (מנהג) without foundation in the Torah....
>
> Therefore, be it resolved that the Central Conference of American Rabbis...considers it lawful and proper for any officiating rabbi, assisted by no less than two associates, to accept into the sacred covenant of Israel and declare fully affiliated to the congregation לכל דבר שבקדושה any honorably, intelligent person, who desire such affiliation, without any initiatory rite, ceremony or observance whatsoever, provided such person be sufficiently acquainted with the faith, doctrine and canon of Israel; that nothing derogatory to such person's moral and mental character is suspected, that it is his or her free will to embrace the cause of Judaism, and that he or she shall declare verbally and in a document signed and sealed before such an officiating rabbi and his associates his or her intention and firm resolve,
> 1. To worship the One, Sole and Eternal God and none besides Him,
> 2. To be conscientiously governed in his or her doings and omissions in life by God's laws ordained for the child and the image of the Maker and Father of all, sanctified son or daughter of the divine covenant,
> 3. To adhere in life and death, actively and faithfully, to the sacred cause and mission of Israel as marked out in the Holy Writ.[4]

This argument against circumcision for adult proselytes, put forth by the early American reformers, is concerned with early historical practices, but totally ignores two thousand years of development and practice. Whether or not circumcision for adult proselytes was a Biblical or even Mishnaic

requirement does not matter in the face of the practice of the Jewish people throughout succeeding centuries. Circumcision had become and was the sign of a convert joining the Jewish people--it was part of his rite of initiation.

On one hand, the American reformers require--as part of the initiation rite--circumcision for an infant so that he may become part of the Jewish people. On the other hand, perhaps because adult circumcision is a very painful operation, perhaps because it seemed outdated and exceedingly parochial, the American reformers did not require the same initiation rite for an adult who wished to become part of the Jewish people. Never do the reformers explain why an initiation rite is important and required for an infant to mark his acceptance as part of the Jewish people but is unnecessary for an adult who is signifying the same thing--that he wishes to be part of the Jewish people.

The prayer service and the rituals which mark the rite of circumcision pale in importance when as crucial an issue as <u>who</u> must be ritually circumcised is not resolved. The liturgy of American Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism for the circumcision ceremony may be very similar; however, the opinion as to who must be circumcised to mark his entrance into the Jewish community is very different. As crucial a question as "who is a Jew?" hangs in the balance. Until this question is resolved, no matter how similar the liturgy,

the feeling will persist that there is a great difference in the approach to circumcision between the traditional and liberal Jewish communities in America.

The most significant difference between the traditional and the liberal groups concerning life cycle liturgy revolves around the marriage rite. Difference in approach to two major rituals of the wedding service separate the Orthodox (and Conservative) from the Reform.

First, the Reform wedding service has eliminated the betrothal blessing. The betrothal blessing remains in the traditional wedding service as a vestige of the two ceremonies--betrothal and nuptial--which, in the Middle Ages, were combined into one ceremony. In discussing the marriage rite, Moses Mielziner, speaking to the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1890, noted that, "The legal validity of betrothment is by no means affected by omission of that benediction."[5] A couple could be legally betrothed without the blessing having been recited, and could participate in the nuptial ceremony and become husband and wife without any question as to the legal status of their marriage. The American reformers, in their modern, rational approach to ritual, omitted the betrothal blessing from the wedding ceremony. First, they reasoned, the betrothal and the subsequent nuptial were legal with or without the blessing. Second, they felt no reason

to maintain the legal fiction that two distinct ceremonies were taking place at the time of the wedding. When the betrothal and nuptial were separated by days and months, the two distinct ceremonies had validity. In modern times, with the combination of the two ceremonies, and with a period of "engagement" taking the place of the old form of betrothal, it was felt that the wedding ceremony was sufficient to indicate that the couple is legally wedded. Finally, the wording of the blessing which speaks of forbidden marriages could have been considered aesthetically displeasing at the time of a happy, joyous wedding. For these reasons, the Reform wedding service does not contain the betrothal blessing.

The second ritual which is eliminated from the Reform wedding service which is part of the Orthodox service is the use of the ketubah, the wedding contract. American Conservative Judaism, as was noted in Chapter Three, has created a modern version of the ketubah to meet what are considered the special needs of a modern Jewish couple. The Talmud states that a woman may be acquired in any one of three ways, the most prevalent method of marriage being the giving of a coin or ring by the groom to the bride while reciting the words of the wedding declaration. Even without a document or contract, this form of marriage seems to be legal. However, "a tradition runs through rabbinic literature that a ketubah-less marriage is not a marriage at all. R. Meir says (b. Talmud

Kiddushin 89a), 'It is forbidden to every man to live with his wife without a ketubah even for one hour.'"[6] The thrust of tradition, and the Orthodox practice from the time of the Talmud, dictate the use of a ketubah in modern traditional wedding ceremonies, for "although the bride's interests are nowdays protected by the Civil Courts, the ketubah remains more than a mere formality because of the emphasis it lays on the religious character of the contract...."[7]

Reform Judaism has eliminated the use of the ketubah from its wedding ceremonies. Civil law protects the rights of the wife if a divorce occurs, and modern insurance policies protect her in the event of the death of her husband. No matter how stripped of the older notion of acquisition the ketubah had become, it still carried, to many minds, the implication of purchase. This notion was totally unacceptable to the modern, rational Reform Jew. Finally, since the betrothal blessing had been eliminated from the Reform marriage ceremony, and since the ketubah was really part of the old betrothal ceremony and serves, in modern weddings, to separate the betrothal ritual from the nuptial ritual, it surely had no place in a Reform wedding. For these reasons, then, the ketubah is no longer used by Reform Jews.

The question of the use of the ketubah as the marriage document has been addressed by others. The Conservative movement has written a modern version of the ketubah. This ketubah,

which appears in the 1965 Conservative rabbi's manual and is used by many Conservative rabbis, deals before the fact with the possibility of divorce and abandonment. The couple, by signing the ketubah, agrees, if there ever be a divorce, to abide by any decision concerning that divorce made by the beth din of the Rabbinical Assembly of America. This clause is included to deal with the husband who divorces his wife civilly and then refuses to grant her a Jewish divorce. Without a get, the woman may not remarry in a traditional Jewish ceremony. Signing the ketubah binds the husband to grant the get, which, presumably, would be the decision of the beth din. Adding a special clause to the ketubah is not without precedent, for "the ketubah is not fixed in every detail. Its present form is established by custom, but there is nothing in Jewish law that would preclude making additional conditions and premarital agreements part of the ketubah."[8]

It is this possibility of adding clauses and conditions to the ketubah which has led some modern couples to write their own marriage documents, indicating the promises they make to each other. This kind of ketubah is a contract in the highest sense, for it outlines the obligations to which the parties agree.

Various rabbis, both individually and in groups, are grappling with the problem of the ketubah. A number of suggested texts are circulating the Jewish community, and are often being

used at weddings. A group of rabbis, some affiliated with the B'nai Brith Hillel organization, but all involved with young people on college campuses, are experimenting with a ketubah which is written in duplicate and which is more a marriage declaration than a set of promises or obligations. One document is given from the groom to the bride, and one from the bride to the groom to indicate intent and willingness to enter into the marriage.

Thus, between the Orthodox position which demands the use of the ketubah, and the Reform position which has eliminated the use of the ketubah stand a number of rabbis and concerned Jews who wish to retain the spirit of the ketubah as a marriage document, but wish to modify, in some way, its form. There persists the feeling that the ketubah, as a marriage document, has importance and validity. Yet, its original form and intent are not acceptable to the extent that these rabbis and concerned layment will leave it untouched.

The concern that some form of ketubah be used results from the persistent feeling, held by Orthodox Jews, particularly those in Israel, that a ketubah-less marriage is no marriage at all. With this crucial matter involving the personal status of individuals, and the progeny of the couples who marry within Jewish law, there is a tendency, among all but the most liberal Reform Jews, to conform in some way to the requirements set out by traditional Judaism. If the use

of a ketubah will avoid later questions as to the validity of the marriage, and the Jewishness of the progeny of the marriage, it is felt that this is a small price to pay. Unfortunately, Orthodox Judaism is not always consistent in its position and in its demands. More than once, Israeli rabbinical courts have ruled valid a marriage that was entered into in jest with the exchange of a ring and the utterance of the marriage declaration. No blessings need be recited, no huppah need be used, no ketubah need be written. If the words are spoken, that is often enough for Orthodox authorities. Thus, Orthodoxy can hardly insist on the use of the ketubah by liberal Jews when it is itself inconsistent.

Still, though, the feeling persists that traditional and liberal Jews have widely separate attitudes toward the marriage rite, even though the modifications which liberal Judaism has made to the traditional rite do not involve crucial matters of importance within Orthodox law. That which serves, then, to separate traditional and liberal Jews in matters of marriage is who is eligible for Jewish marriage. The words of the liturgy and the rituals pale in importance when rabbis officiate at marriages between Jews and non-Jews. Until the liberal factions within Judaism begin to maintain the standards of Jewish marriage--that a Jewish marriage, solemnized by a rabbi with the words and rituals of the Jewish law and tradition, must be between two Jews--the Orthodox community will continue

to look upon with disfavor, and even reject, liberal Jewish marriages.

It is in the liturgy and ritual of the Jewish funeral that there are the fewest differences between American Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism's life cycle rites. The prayers and the services in the rabbi's manuals of the three groups are very similar, and, with the exception of the addition of English prayers and readings and the modifications made by Reform in the Memorial Prayer and the Kaddish and the substitution of the concept of immortality for the concept of resurrection, the rites are virtually identical. It should be noted also in this regard that the Orthodox law prohibiting the recitation of the regular Memorial Prayer and the eulogy on certain days has been abandoned by Reform. Strangely, however, the attitudes toward death and the funeral rites, in which traditional and liberal Jews differ widely, are not manifest in the liturgy surrounding death.

There are five fundamental teachings of the Jewish faith emphasized in the traditional funeral service. They are: resignation to the will of God, immortality of the soul, belief in a Judge and a Judgment Day, resurrection of the dead, and immortality and resurrection of Israel.[9] The liturgy of the funeral, the Psalms that are recited, the Memorial Prayer and the Burial Kaddish speak of these tenets. The purpose of

the traditional funeral service is to articulate these teachings and to provide a "meaningful farewell to the deceased. The service does not attempt to comfort the mourners. The Sages...noted that it is sheer mockery to comfort the bereaved while their beloved dead lies before their eyes. Moreover, it is psychologically futile to effect a reconciliation between the mourner and his fate at this time. The service is directed, rather, at honoring the departed."[10] Thus, this modern Orthodox view of the funeral service, articulated by Maurice Lamm in his book, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning, sees the funeral not as an exercise to aid the mourner in confronting his bereavement, but as an exercise to articulate Jewish theology, to honor the deceased, and, among the most Orthodox, to give the body back to God from whence it came. If the funeral does have any psychological benefits to the mourners, "this...is not its primary purpose."[11]

The liberal approach to the funeral, not manifest in the funeral liturgy of the rabbi's manuals, but understood in the light of the modern liberal rabbi as a student of human relations and psychology, is that the funeral ought to be an exercise which helps the mourner confront his grief. "The funeral is not only a necessary ceremony in consequence of a death, but it can be extremely beneficial emotionally...The one fundamental purpose of the funeral should be to encourage the mourner to face the reality of death. In accomplishing this objective, it helps the mourner to avoid repression, denial

and other defenses which would only hinder the therapeutic process of mourning."[12] The funeral service does not attempt to deny or even hide death. It acknowledges it and forces the acceptance of its reality. The modern, liberal Jew recognizes the funeral service to be the first step in the process of mourning. The mourner cannot deny or rationalize away the reality of death; he must face it and begin to accept it.

Yet, there is a great deal of difference between accepting the reality of death--that is, to be able to say, "yes, I realize that my spouse/parent/child is no longer alive, he will not be here for breakfast tomorrow"--which the funeral service helps bring, and the acceptance of death in theological/psychological terms. To accept death theologically often takes much longer, and a much more extensive grief work than does acceptance of the stark reality that the loved one will not be at breakfast. The hesitation to accept the theological reality of death often manifests itself in statements by the mourner such as: "How could God do this to me?" "What kind of God would do this to me?" "I can't believe in a God who would do this." "Why did You do this, God?"

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, in her work, On Death and Dying, suggests that a terminally ill patient goes through five stages in preparation for his death. The first stage is denial ("I'm not really sick; the doctor made a mistake"). The second is

anger ("Why me?" "What have I done to deserve this?" "How can You do this to me, God?"). The third stage is bargaining ("If only I'm cured of this disease, I'll dedicate the rest of my life to doing good for others"). The fourth stage is depression marked by great sadness and a reluctance to participate in any kind of activity ("What's the use?"). The final stage is acceptance. The patient knows he is going to die, accepts the fact, and often is better adjusted to it than his friends and relatives.

I would suggest that a mourner goes through these exact same stages. First, there is denial ("Mother isn't really dead; it's all a mistake"). Next comes anger ("How could this happen?" "Why, God, why?"). After the anger subsides comes the stage of bargaining ("Listen God, mother isn't really dead. When I go to that funeral home, You just let her be alive and I'll...."). When this ploy does not work, the mourner enters into a period of depression and great sadness, to be followed, finally, by acceptance of the death. When this acceptance takes place, the grief work is over, and the mourner can enter into normal life again with his psyche intact. This process of accepting the theological and psychological reality of death takes a great deal longer than accepting the physical reality of death, that the loved one will not be at breakfast the next morning.

The short time between the death and the funeral is often

not enough time for this lengthy grief work to take place. The mourner at the funeral is often very angry with God, or still trying to bargain with God, or at the very least, greatly depressed and not particularly interested in communicating with God. Then there are the people, in our day and age, who do not believe in a God with whom communication is possible.

Yet strangely enough, even with our modern psychological understanding of the grief process, and with so many Jews who no longer profess a blind belief in an all merciful, all good God, the liturgy which is recited at liberal Jewish funerals is the same liturgy which is recited at Orthodox funerals, which do not attempt to comfort the mourner and where, at least in theory, there is a great and abiding belief in the traditional God concept. Still we recite Psalms that speak of the acceptance of God's dispensations with absolute faith in His inscrutable justice. Still we recite Psalms which speak of man as dust, as a flower that blows away in the breeze, and of God as all powerful and all wise. Still we recite a funeral prayer which speaks of God as perfect in all His deeds, gracious in all His works, pure and true in His judgments, while little children and young wives lie dead before us.

I would suggest that the funeral liturgy that serves as part of the Orthodox funeral rite, which has one very clear purpose, is out of place in a liberal funeral rite which has an entirely different purpose.

It is the job of the modern liberal rabbi to attempt to assess at which stage of the mourning process (based on Kubler-Ross's five stages) the particular mourners are. Then, he might attempt to choose readings and Psalms which reflect the stage of mourning and grief work of the mourners. There is no reason why readings and prayers might not reflect denial or even anger. There is no reason why readings and prayers might not praise the deceased, if that is what would comfort the mourner, rather than praising God. The 1965 לקוטי תפלה, A Rabbi's Manual, Conservative Judaism's latest rabbi's manual, contains many readings and quotations out of the literature of Judaism which might serve as a basis for choosing new funeral articulations. Other readings and prayers can be culled from Jewish literature, and even from secular sources, in order to reflect modern man's confrontation with death.

The funeral Psalms and readings which are part of the Orthodox funeral service and have become, out of habit or convenience, part of the Reform funeral service are from a different time and a different age. Man's relationship to God was looked upon differently than it is today. Man's understanding of and relationship to death was viewed differently. The modern age, with its new forms and new theologies, ought to produce new liturgies to deal with death and mourning. The Reform funeral ought to reflect all the theological and psychological break-throughs of modernity and not be tied to old

forms and old approaches.

Although the life cycle liturgies of American Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism, on the surface, seem very similar, it has become clear that the motivations behind the prayers and rituals are often greatly different. Circumcision and marriage are matters of personal status which affect the future of the Jewish people. What is said at the circumcision and wedding ceremonies is not as important as who is participating. In order to insure the future of the Jewish people and in order to be a continuing part of the process of k'lal yisrael, Reform Judaism will have to re-evaluate its positions concerning circumcision and marriage.

To be true to a new theological and psychological age and to better serve Jews who are a part of this new age, Reform Judaism might well re-evaluate the liturgy of the funeral service in order to make it more consistent with an enlightened understanding of modern man.

With a new understanding of the historical process which has created the Jewish life cycle liturgy, with an appreciation of the beauty and the power of the rituals, and with an evaluation of how the liturgy might best be adapted to a modern age, we can now better serve our people who look to us for ceremonies of purpose and sacredness at significant moments of their lives.

FOOTNOTES

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