החודש הזה לכן:

Rosh Chodesh Groups, Tkhines, and the Creation of a More Egalitarian Judaism

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Introduction

Among the web of social, cultural, and religious hierarchies under which Judaism has operated for centuries, one of the more significant has been that of scholarship and gender. At the top of the hierarchy stood the scholars, men who were learned in the Talmud and rabbinic literature more broadly; becoming a Torah scholar was one of the highest aspirations a young man could aim for, and their access to yeshivas allowed them to be trained to join this relatively-privileged class.[1] The vast majority of our knowledge about Jewish history and culture are based on sources from this learned elite.[2] Next were the laymen, who generally had some learning and who were often at least semi-literate in Hebrew, and halakhically required, because of their sex, to participate in a variety of religious rituals revolving around the synagogue and the formal Jewish calendar. Finally, there were the women who, with some exceptions, had no access to traditional Jewish learning, relatively little to the synagogue, and who could not read Hebrew (or who sometimes could not read at all, depending on where, and when, they lived[3]).

It would be difficult to underestimate the extent to which this hierarchy, and by extension Judaism, has undergone a revolution, and the extent to which these categories underwent fundamental changes and inversions. From the first records in the late-nineteenth century of women being counted in a minyan in small midwestern congregations in the United States,[4] to the private ordination of Regina Jonas in Germany in 1935, and the institutional ordination of Rabbi Sally Priesand under the auspices of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1972, women have taken on increasing roles within

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[1] Tova Hartman, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism: Resistance and Accommodation* (Brandeis University Press, 2007) p. 33.

[2] A number of scholars have pointed this out. See, for example, Chava Weissler, "For Women and for Men Who Are Like Women: The Construction of Gender in Yiddish Devotional Literature," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1989: p. 7.

[3] Compare, for example, the older Kurdish, Turkish, Yemenite, Iranian, Iraqi, and Moroccan women interviewed by Sered who were all illiterate, with the research done by Chava Weissler about Ashkenazi women which states that while almost no women mastered the "sacred and scholarly language of Hebrew," most could read Yiddish.

[4] Shari Rabin, "The First Egalitarian Minyan," https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/_blog/The_ProsenPeople/post/the-first-egalitarian-minyan/.

synagogues as rabbis, cantors, educators, and lay-leaders: roles that were once reserved for men, within institutions that were once inaccessible to women.[5] Indeed, within the halakhic world there are responsa arguing not only that women should fully participate in Jewish rituals, but that they should be included among those who are halakhically required to perform these rituals.[6] These changes have, in fact, been so profound and widespread, that the entire conversation about women within Judaism has shifted, and those who limit women's participation find themselves increasingly on the defensive.[7]

Whether by studying Talmud, serving on synagogue boards, or working as clergy, women are increasingly becoming part of what was considered to be the highest rank of the traditional hierarchy, reaching levels of religious learning and activity that were once exclusive to men. And as women have become increasingly visible within institutional and ritual Judaism, the unspoken assumption is often that they are replacing a role that is defined by absence and restriction with substance—i.e that "nothing" is being replaced with "something." A history of being barred from the yeshiva, kept out or pushed to the back of the synagogue, distanced from the bima, forbidden from wearing a tallit or wrapping tefillin, becomes a new world filled with ritual objects, access, and visibility.

In short, the Judaism of a woman living in the early twenty-first century, particularly within the more progressive Jewish movements, looks noticeably different from the Judaism of her mother, and even more unlike than the Judaism of her grandmother and previous generations. Yet it is worth pointing out that this twenty-first century Jewish woman is accessing a particular type of Judaism, one that would have been more familiar to her male ancestors than to what her female ancestors would

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[5] For a nice in-depth analysis of the evolution of women's leadership roles within Judaism, culminating in rabbinic ordination for women, see Pamela S. Nadell's *Women Who Would be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985*.

[6] See, for example, Rabbi Ethan Tucker's "Category Shifts in Jewish Law and Practice."

[7] To name just one example, the letter written by Rav Aharon Leib Steinman in 2011 responding to allegations regarding the exclusion of women in religious communities. In this letter, Rav Steinman adopts an almost-apologetic stance, taking care to bring sources and explain that the ultra-Orthodox do, in fact, respect women. See http://www.bhol.co.il/news/94698. תודה להרבה פ.א להערה הזאת.

have understood and experienced as Jewish practice. But the fact that this male form of Judaism is more visible, and includes more accoutrements, does not necessarily mean that it is a more substantial or authentic form of Judaism. Women of previous generations, while they had less access to the world of male Judaism, defined by a Judaism of institutions such as the yeshiva and the synagogue, and time-bound rituals that obligated only men, were able to create their own parallel religious system. There were, essentially, two religious systems that interacted, but operated separately: women's Judaism and men's Judaism, the halakhic system and the extra-halakhic system, the public and the private.[8] Women had their own spiritual lives and practices; it is worth examining what those might have been and exploring how to incorporate women's Judaism into contemporary Jewish practice—for women and men.

It may seem odd, and perhaps even shocking, to split Judaism into "men's Judaism" and "women's Judaism," but it is nonetheless true that until relatively recently men and women had practices and obligations that were not only distinct from each other, but that also took place in physically separate locations. Indeed, an example of this can be seen from the very beginning of the history of the Jewish people[9], after the splitting of the Red Sea, when Miriam grabbed her timbral and "went out" with the women, while the men sang. Compare "אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל" with " ותקח מרים הנביאה...את התף בידה ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה בתפים ובמחלת."[10] While both groups sang, it is clear that the women sang together, in a distinct group, possibly in a different location ("וַתֵּצֶאן כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ"), and that while song is emphasized in Moses' celebration of the victory over the Egyptians, action and instrumentation are emphasized with Miriam and the women: two different practices occurring separately, surrounding the same event. Other women in the Bible have also engaged in spontaneous

[8] Susan Starr Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 87.
[9] "History" in the mythic sense of the word.
[10] שמות ט"ו:א', כ'

prayer, including the Song of Deborah, and Hannah.[11] Hannah's prayer is particularly worth noting first because it is an example of what can happen when women's and men's religious worlds collide; Eli the Cohen, the main figure in the formal ritual institution, does not understand Hannah's spontaneous prayer and attempts to kick her out of the Temple. And second, because Hannah's style of prayer has been so thoroughly incorporated into Jewish practice that it is difficult to recall that it was once considered to be unusual—an example of women's Judaism that was thoroughly incorporated into the religious lives of women and men.

Nonetheless, in spite of the biblical and historical sources, not much is actually known about women's religious lives and practices. To name just one striking example of how little is known, Avraham Grossman points out that there is no extant work from the medieval period created by Jewish women, or work that explores her status within the family and within society.[12] This means that when it comes to the lives of Jewish women from a period spanning nearly 1,000 years, we know almost nothing firsthand about how they lived and how they experienced the world around them. While there are a number of reasons for this absence, perhaps the most important reason is the obvious fact that men, both in the religious sphere and in the academy, have historically had all of the institutional power.[13] Whether consciously or unconsciously, and for a variety of social, cultural, historical, and psychological reasons, the men from the highest level of the hierarchy tended to privilege male institutions and male narratives, while often marginalizing women and women's experiences; as Susan Starr Sered points out, within a system that defines men and men's experiences as normative, women, de facto, exist outside of the norm.[14]

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[11] Tracy Guren Klirs et. al, *The Merit of Our Mothers: A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women's Prayers* (Hebrew Union College Press), p. 1.
[12] Avraham Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe* (Brandeis University Press, 2004), p. xiii.
[13] Sered, p. 87.
[14] Sered, p. 87.

Additionally, because Jewish men, particularly the scholarly elite, were often more literate than their female counterparts when it came to the religious languages of Hebrew and Aramaic, male Judaism has had the powerful advantage of being extensively documented. In contrast, women's traditions and practices, however, were often transmitted orally. Though there were numerous print publications in Eastern Europe of women's prayers (tkhines) that had been in print since the seventeenth century, when early twentieth century folklorists began collecting oral histories and traditions from these communities, they also collected a number of these prayers, evidence of an oral tradition of women's prayers that existed alongside, and in spite of, the printed prayers for women.[15] The way women practiced their Judaism was also often not dependent on written transmission. Women whose religious practices centered in the kitchen, and through food preparation—a practice that Sered points out is connected to the Jewish calendar, deals with Jewish dietary laws, and is part of preserving and defining Jewish identity—the customs and recipes passed from mother to daughter are done verbally, by means of gathering in the kitchen, and through observation and practice, not through writing.[16] As mentioned previously, women were almost never literate in Hebrew, and all-too-often illiterate in any language, making the preservation and transmission of these customs difficult—particularly if the women who would have passed down these traditions were suddenly killed, as happened all-too-often in Jewish history. Consequently, while male written scholarship often remained extant, these oral traditions often gradually disappeared.

It may be tempting to condemn the androcentric institutions and traditions that led to this state of affairs, but before casting aspersions it is worthwhile to consider the ways in which Jews and Jewish movements that are ostensibly fully egalitarian have, ironically, continued this culture of privileging

[15] Chava Weissler, "Tkhines," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tkhines.
[16] Sered, p. 88.

male Judaism and ignoring, or minimizing the importance of, women's practices. In effect, by exclusively celebrating women's entry into, and achievements within, traditionally male realms, male Judaism becomes increasingly defined as "real," or "normal," whereas women's Judaism—the more informal and individual traditions, rituals, and culture, that have sustained Jewish women for thousands of years—are marginalized at best, but often simply ignored. It is ironic that in egalitarian movements and communities, women are expected to undergo a transformation regarding their dress (tallis, tefillin), participation (counting in a minyan), and visibility (leading services, receiving synagogue honors), the men they are now permitted to sit beside in the pews are expected to make few, if any, changes to their own Jewish lives, nor are they expected to feel influenced by women or women's practices.

One possible objection to the assertion that women's traditional Judaism should be incorporated into egalitarian Judaism is that women's Judaism developed, by necessity, from the exclusion—and even oppression—that they faced from institutional male Judaism. If women can rise to the top of the Jewish hierarchy, why insist on maintaining practices from when they were at the bottom? This question can be answered by the following midrash, which describes women's rituals (broadly defined) and practices during the period of enslavement in Egypt:

דָּרַשׁ רַב עַוִירָא, בִּשְׂכַר נָשִׁים צַדְקָנִיּוֹת שֶׁהָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר נִגְאֲלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם **,** שֶׁבְּשָׁעָה (שיוצאות) [שֶׁהוֹלְכוֹת] לִשְׁאוֹב מַיִם, מְזַמֵּן לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא דָּגִים קְטַנִּים בְּכַדֵּיהֶן, וְשׁוֹאֲבוֹת מָחֵצָה מַיִם וּמָחֵצָה דָּגִים, וּבָאוֹת וְשׂוֹפְתוֹת שְׁתֵּי קְדֵרוֹת; אַחַת שֶׁל חַמִּין וְאַחַת שֶׁל דָּגִים, וּמוֹלִיכוֹת אוֹתָן אֵצֶל בַּעֲלֵיהֶן לַשָּׂדֶה, וּמַרְחִיצוֹת אוֹתָם, וְסָכוֹת אוֹתָם, וּמַאֲכִילוֹת אוֹתָם ,וּמַשְׁקוֹת אוֹתָם, וְנִזְקָקוֹת לָהֶם בֵּין שְׁפָתַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר , (תהלים סח) "אִם תִּשְׁכְּבוּן בֵּין שְׁפָתָיִם", בִּשְׂכַר שֶׁתִּשְׁכְּבוּן בֵּין שְׁפָתָיִם, זָכוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִבְזַת מִצְרַיִם ,שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (שם) "כַּנְפֵי יוֹנָה נֶחְפָּה בַכֶּסֶף, וְאֶבְרוֹתֶיהָ בִּירַקְרַק חָרוּץ". וְכֵיוָן שֶׁמִּתְעַבְּרוֹת, בָּאוֹת לְבָתֵּיהֶן .וְכֵיוָן שֶׁמַּגִּיעַ זְמַן מוֹלְדֵיהֶן, הוֹלְכוֹת וְיוֹלְדוֹת בַּשָּׂדֶה, תַּחַת הַתַּפּוּחַ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (שה"ש ח) "תַּחַת הַתַּפּוּחַ עוֹרַרְתִּיךָ, שָׁמָּה חִבְּלַתְךָ אִמֶּךָ, שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָה יְלָדַתְךָ". וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שָׁלַח מַלְאָךְ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמְנַקֵּר אוֹתָם, וּמְשַׁפֵּר אוֹתָם כְּחַיָּה זוֹ שֶׁמְּשַׁפֶּרֶת אֶת הַוָּלָד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (יחזקאל טז) "וּמוֹלְדוֹתַיִךְ בְּיוֹם הוּלֶּדֶת אוֹתָךְ, לֹא כָרַת שָׁרֵךְ וּבַמַּיִם לֹא רֻחַצְתְּ

לְמִשְׁעִי ,וְהָמְלֵחַ לֹא הֶמְלַחַתְּ, וְהָחִתֵּל לֹא חֻתָּלְתְּ". וְנוֹתֵן לָהֶם שְׁנֵי עִגֻּלִין, אֶחָד שֶׁל דְּבַשׁ וְאֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ,(דברים לב) "וַיֵּנִקֵהוּ דְבַשׁ מִסֶּלַע, וְשֶׁמֶן מֵחַלְמִישׁ צוּר ."וְכֵיוָן שֶׁמַּכִּירִים בָּהֶם הַמִּצְרִיִּים, בָּאִים (עליהם) לְהוֹרְגָם, וְנַעֲשָׂה [לָהֶם] נֵס וְנִבְלָעִים בַּקַּרְקַע, וּמְבִיאִים שְׁוָרִים וְחוֹרְשִׁים עַל גַּבָּם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (תהלים קכ"ט) "עַל גַּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חֹרְשִׁים". וּלְאַחַר שֶׁהוֹלְכִים, מְבַצְבְּצִים וְיוֹצְאִים כְּעֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (יחזקאל טז) "רְבָבָה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נְתַתִּיךְ" וְגוֹ'. וּלְאַחַר שֶׁמִּתְגַּדְּלִים ,בָּאִים עֲדָרִים עֲדָרִים לְבָתֵּיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (שם) "וַתִּרְבִּי וַתִּגְדְּלִי, וַתָּבֹאִי בַּעֲדִי עֲדָיִים". אַל תִּקְרֵי, "בַּעֲדֵי עֲדָיִים", אֶלָּא, "בְּעֲדְרֵי עֲדָרִים[17]."

The period of slavery in Egypt is one of the most difficult and oppressive episodes of the Jewish story. If Jewish women were disadvantaged by the patriarchal nature of Judaism, they were all the more so during their enslavement in Egypt. And yet, it was their practices while under oppression that led to their husbands being fed, and the continuation of the people. Oppression and membership in the underclass should not invalidate women's practices and their importance to Jewish life. It is under these circumstances that women's customs saved the Jewish people—and ensured there was a Jewish people to save.

This thesis will explore women's religious traditions and how they could be integrated into the Reform movement specifically, and modern, egalitarian, Jewish life more broadly, in the context of Rosh Chodesh celebrations, and the activities and prayers that were, or could be, connected with them. In dealing with the ways in which men and women have historically and traditionally practiced Judaism, it will attempt to answer the question posed by Tova Hartman (albeit on a slightly different topic): "what are the areas of a person's life in which two compelling traditions can be engaged without privileging one over the other?"[18] The first chapter will explore Rosh Chodesh, which is traditionally considered to be a women's holiday. This chapter will examine the various customs and practices that have arisen around this holiday, and the ways in which women have marked it as a special day for themselves. The

[17] סוטה יא:. Thank you to Rabbi Shlomo Fox for helping me to locate this source.
[18] Hartman, p. xii.

next chapter will explore and analyze the tkhines, Yiddish prayers written for (and sometimes by) women, and women's prayer practices before they were fully admitted into the synagogue. This work will conclude with a prototype for a siddur to be used by women and men, primarily on Rosh Chodesh, but also in any non-synagogue setting. The purpose of this work is to prove that our foremothers have created for themselves a rich religious life, and it is worthwhile to give that spiritual life more room within Jewish practice, just as men's practices have been increasingly granted significance and space within women's religious lives.

There are a number of worthy topics that, while they are related to the subjects that will be raised in this paper, are nonetheless ultimately beyond the scope of this work. This includes the ways in which society has begun to rethink the gender binary and what the consequences of this might be. Additionally, this work will focus on Jewish women who have explicitly embraced modernity, which does not include the religious lives of contemporary ultra-Orthodox women. It is my hope that this work serves to prompt additional questions and discussions, and that it can be used as a draft to rethink how we can create a Judaism that can appreciate the different forms of practice and expression that have brought meaning to our forefathers and foremothers throughout the ages.

Chapter One: Rosh Chodesh Groups

Rosh Chodesh is perhaps one of the most underrated foundational moments in the history of the Jewish people. The establishment of Rosh Chodesh as the first of the month, and as a noteworthy day, is the first commandment given to the Israelites as a people. The importance of this moment is noted by the commentators; the very first Rashi commentary on the Torah quotes a question from Rabbi Yitzchak, asking why the Torah begins with the creation of the world, and not with the creation of the Jewish people, indicating that Rosh Chodesh can be seen as just as significant as the creation of the world: "אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהַתְחִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה אֶלָּא מֵהַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, " ":החדש הזה לכם
עֶשְׂהִיא מְצָוָה רִאשׁוֹנָה שֶׁנִּצְטַוּוּ בָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמַה טַּעַם פָּתַח בִּבְרֵאשִׁית?"[19] That the question is specifically about Rosh Chodesh and the idea that it should be the starting point of the Torah indicates its importance; it is the first law given to the Israelites, and the first concrete step towards organizing them as a people around a shared system of law and values. Rosh Chodesh and its marking of the moon cycle also gave the soon-to-be former slaves an underlying organizing principle for taking control of time, an essential concept for a free people: " **החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים** מכאן ואילך יהיו החדשים שלכם, לעשות בהם כרצונכם, אבל בימי השעבוד לא היו ימיכם שלכם, אבל היו לעבודת אחרים ורצונם, לפיכך ראשון כי בו התחיל מציאותכם הבחיריי הוא לכם לחדשי השנה."[20]

Because Rosh Chodesh was an important day noted in the Bible, a number of prayers and halachot were eventually put into place on Rosh Chodesh in order to highlight its status as a holiday. These included a special prayer announcing the arrival of Rosh Chodesh the Shabbat before, the addition of יעלה ויבא, the recitation of partial Hallel, and a special Torah-reading for Ashkenazim; Mussaf for a Rosh Chodesh that falls on Shabbat is also different. Additionally, according to the Shulchan Aruch, one should feast on Rosh Chodesh. Fasting and prayers that are generally omitted on festivals (such as

[19] See Rashi on בראשית א':א'
[20] Sforno on שמות י"ב:ב'

Tachanun) are not said.[21] There is a Kabbalistic custom to wear new clothes on Rosh Chodesh, an additional practice that is indicative of a special, joyful, day.[22]

As a marker of time, the day on which a Rosh Chodesh—particularly Rosh Chodesh Tevet—fell became significant, with implications not only for the month itself, but for the rest of the year: " אם יהיה א' טבת יום המעונן דע שכל אותו חודש טבת יהיה מטר, כעין אותו מטר שיהיה ביום א' של חודש טבת. וכמו שיתנהג יום ב' של טבת- כן יתנהג כל חודש שבט. וכן כל י"ב ימים ראשונים של חודש טבת - הם סימן לי"ב חדשי השנה, אם למטר אם ליום מעונן. והכל בידי שמים."[23] But more than anything, Rosh Chodesh became a holiday with special significance for women.

This makes a certain amount of cultural and physiological sense: the waxing and waning of the moon that comprise the cycle of the month is analogous to a woman's menstrual cycle.[24] Indeed, Penna Adelman, one of the pioneers of the contemporary Rosh Chodesh groups, points out that that the term ראשי חדשים contains within it the word רחם. This is not a particularly compelling argument (anagrams are not proof of much), but her insistence on this analysis, and the fact that it has been repeated by other women involved in Rosh Chodesh groups, underscores the ways in which many women feel that Rosh Chodesh is a holiday that fundamentally corresponds to their experience in the world as a woman.

According to tradition, Rosh Chodesh was given to women as a gift, to reward them for their refusal to participate in the sin of the Golden Calf: " שמעו הנשים ולא רצו ולא קבלו עליהן ליתן נזמיהן לבעליהן, אלא אמרו להם: לעשות שקוץ ותועבה, שאין בו כוח להציל?! לא נשמע לכם. ונתן להם הקב"ה שכרן

[21] See עורך חים, תי"ח:א', תי"ט:א'. See also תכ"ג:א for a complete description of what services look like on Rosh Chodesh.

[22] Shmuel Chaggai, "מנהגי ראש-חודש ומקורותיהם," www.daat.ac.il/he-il/kitveyet/mahanayim/hagay-minhagey.htm.

[23] ספר תיקון ישששכר. Originally written by ישששכר בן מרדכי אבן שושן and published in Salonica in 1564.

[24] See, for example, רבי יצחק מוינה, "אור זרוע", הלכות ראש חודש סי' תנ"ד (זיאטמור תרכ"ב, 1862) which makes the connection between women's menstruation and sexuality and the cycle of the moon explicit.

בעולם הזה, שהן משמרות ראשי חודשים יותר מן האנשים."[25] While there are no explicit historical sources that indicate precisely when these customs began, or at what point in Jewish history the connection between Rosh Chodesh and women was observed, this midrash is significant for two major reasons. First, like the inclusion of this custom within the Shulchan Aruch, this midrash codifies Rosh Chodesh as a special day for women within the world of halacha, granting it religious legitimacy, even among men, as well as a written record for subsequent generations of women to refer back to.[26] Perhaps more significantly, however, it also gives this tradition legitimacy as an ancient custom dating back, no less, to the times of Moses. Indeed, both male rabbis and women themselves have used this midrashic framing to underscore the custom's importance; more than one rabbinic text has mentioned that the custom of women not working on Rosh Chodesh dates from the times of Moses, and contemporary women make the historical claim that it has been observed by women for millennia.[27] Whether this is historically true or not is beside the point; these statements point to a desire to see the connection between women and Rosh Chodesh as legitimate, and firmly rooted within Jewish tradition.

Further cementing the relationship between women and Rosh Chodesh is the fact that it is enshrined in one of the more significant works of rabbinic literature, the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Joseph Karo, which gives a seal of approval to a major Rosh Chodesh custom for women: " ראש חודש מותר בעשיית מלאכה והנשי' שנוהגות שלא לעשות בו מלאכה הוא מנהג טוב הַגָּה: וְאִם הַמִּנְהָג לַעֲשׂוֹת מְקֻצָּת מְלָאכוֹת וְלֹא לַעֲשׂוֹת קְצָתָן, אַזְלִינַן בָּתַר הַמִּנְהָג." There are a number of different opinions regarding whether the Shulchan Aruch is making a prescriptive statement—that because women have this custom, they are not permitted to work on Rosh Chodesh—or a descriptive one—that this custom exists among women and

[25] פרקי דרבי אליעזר מ"ה

[26] See the introduction regarding the challenge of women's Judaism typically consisting of traditions that are passed down orally.

[27] See, for example, *The Tapestry of Jewish Time: A Spiritual Guide to Holidays and Lifecycle Events*, which begins with the statement: "For at least 2,000 years, Jewish women have celebrated the appearance of the New Moon in their own way." Lynn Gottlieb, in her book *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism* states that Rosh Chodesh "has been known as a woman's holy day for over three thousand years" (p. 9).

those women who have this custom should continue to follow it—but regardless, it is clear from the wording of both the Sephardi Shulchan Aruch and the Ashkenazi Rabbi Moshe Isserles that, to varying extents, a significant amount of women had the custom not to work on Rosh Chodesh.

As the connection between women and Rosh Chodesh, and women's observing Rosh Chodesh, increasingly entered the mainstream as a result of male documentation, the day, in turn, became an opportunity for women to express their spirituality as women, within that halachic male framework. This ability to create and reframe experiences within a male context in order to make their experiences as women sacred is a common phenomenon:

> When a literate Jewish man listens to the Torah reading in synagogue, he is obeying a divine law, learning about the history of the Jewish people, and participating in the life of the community. When an illiterate Middle Eastern Jewish woman listens to the Torah reading in synagogue, she is seeking the most efficacious moment, the moment when the channel of communication between human and God is most open, to ask God a personal favor for a particular, loved person.[28]

The same religious experience can have a different effect on participants, and women have long taken events in which men are the primary, and visible, participants and reinterpreted it in a way that holds meaning for them. It is creative work that would eventually characterize modern Rosh Chodesh groups, and that will also come up with regards to tkhines. Another common example is related to food. Food preparation is a major way in which women have practiced Judaism and expressed their spirituality: "Although this is not an absolute distinction, it does seem that while men *celebrate* or *observe* the Sabbath and holidays, women *make* or *prepare* the holy days."[29] Food preparation is a way for women

[28] Sered, 32
[29] Sered, 102. Emphasis original

to ensure the physical nourishment and survival of their families, pass on traditions, and enact their own rituals for spiritual fulfillment (separating challah, reciting blessings, following the laws of kashrut, etc.). Just as in the example by Sered of the woman listening to the Torah reading in the synagogue and having a very different experience than the men in the same synagogue, women and men had different ways of practicing, ritualizing, and interpreting their roles within the same religious contexts. In the case of Rosh Chodesh, women have been able to use a holiday that was actually granted to them in order to engage in this process of personalizing the day and advancing their own spirituality.

Women did, in fact, establish a number of customs and practices surrounding Rosh Chodesh. The classical prohibitions on women during Rosh Chodesh were against doing laundry (including modern laundry with a machine), ironing, and sewing.[30] But other practices included the recitation of special tkhines, such as the "Tkhine for the Blessing of the New Moon" ("תחינה פון ראש חודש בענטשן"), which has references to the prayer men would say announcing the coming of Rosh Chodesh, but is clearly distinct from it.[31] Women would light candles, either home or at the grave of a family member or revered figure.[32] Ohad Ezrahi, a rabbi in the Jewish Renewal movement in Israel, that the Bible even references a Rosh Chodesh women's custom in the story of the אישה גדולה, the woman who would host the prophet Elisha. In exchange for her hospitality, Elisha blesses her with a son, who, a few years later, suddenly collapses and dies. As the woman prepares to ride to Elisha for help, her husband wonders

[30] Mordechai Eliyahu, "אתר ישיבה | הלכות ראש חודש," www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/6201.
[31] For a more in-depth examination of the ways in which the tkhines overlapped with, and were distinct from, traditional male prayers, see Devra Kay, *The Seyder Tkhines: The Forgotten Book of Common Prayer for Jewish Women* (Jewish Publication Society, 2005), pp. 76-85.
[32] Sered, 29.

why she would travel to him: "לא חדש ולא שבת."[33] Ezrahi sees this confusion on the part of the husband as evidence that on Rosh Chodesh (and Shabbat) women would gather in the courtyard of the prophet.[34]

Ezrahi's argument, in a sense, connects the modern phenomenon of Rosh Chodesh groups to an ancient practice. Although Rosh Chodesh was clearly observed, or at least marked, by women in one form or another for centuries (at least), Rosh Chodesh groups are a more modern innovation (or, if Ezrahi is correct, a modern reinvention) that began in the United States during the 1960s as second-wave feminism became increasingly popular.[35] In many ways, these Rosh Chodesh groups mirrored consciousness-raising groups, a framework for gathering and activism that became popular among feminists around the same time. Unlike consciousness-raising groups, however, Rosh Chodesh groups allowed Jewish women to gather and bond both as women and as Jews, within a specifically Jewish framework. The women who participated in these groups generally wanted to reclaim their Judaism, but in a way that removed them from its forms of patriarchy, and sought to discover—or rediscover—an authentically female Judaism: "What most groups do have in common is a wish to return to traditional sources as a way of reinforcing Jewish identity instead of breaking from it completely."[36]

Indeed, Rosh Chodesh groups have served as a continuation of traditional expressions of Jewish women's spirituality, both in format and in content. Perhaps one of the major characteristics that defines women's Judaism is its informality, in the sense that it does not require a synagogue or other institution to function. In contrast to traditional male Judaism, which has a tendency to be formalized and ordered down to the smallest detail, women's spirituality was often individual and ad-hoc, occurring when the need arose, and with each woman putting her own individual twist on the practice in a way

[33] מלאכים ב', ד':כ"ג.
[34] Ohad Ezrahi, *Hagiga-Celebration: How to Turn the Hebraic Holidays into Celebrations, The Inner Wisdom of the Hebraic Calander [sic]* (Dofen, 2013), p. 353.

[35] See *Esther Broner: A Weave of Women* for a nice overview of this historical moment.
[36] Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year* (Biblio Press, 1996), p. 1.

that ensured that the ritual was fulfilling her personal and spiritual needs at the moment. This custom will be discussed more in-depth later, but Sephardic women lighting candles on Rosh Chodesh could, depending on their life circumstances, intend for their candles to be in memory of deceased loved ones, or a celebratory candle in honor of the holiday.[37] An Ashkenazi woman taking her child to cheder for the first time (א תחינה פאר א מוטער וואס פירט איהר קינד דעם ערשטען מאל אין חדר) would choose a different tkhine than one who was having bad luck with her children (דיא ווייבער וואס באבין איין שוועריין מזל צו קינדר זאלין דיא תחנה זאגין).[38]

Although a number of books and articles were eventually published offering suggestions for women who wanted to start their own Rosh Chodesh groups, these were intended as guidelines, and not as prescriptive rules; many of these groups developed their own traditions and programming as they went along. As one guide clearly demonstrates, Rosh Chodesh groups illustrate a flexibility that is characteristic of women's religiosity:

> The range of program ideas is virtually limitless. Programs can include life cycle celebrations, observance of Jewish holidays, traditional and creative prayer, study of Jewish texts, artistic pursuits, learning new Jewish skills, and discussion about a variety of shared experiences. While connecting to the themes of the Jewish month can help the group focus, some groups may prefer to branch out into nonthematic areas.[39]

As part of this flexibility and informality, these Rosh Chodesh groups also tend to meet outside of the synagogue. While men's religiosity is expressed in public, among the crowd, women's was more domestic and solitary.[40] In many ways, by choosing to meet in spaces outside of the synagogue and

[37] Sered, 29.
[38] Klirs, et. al., p. 117, 135.
[39] Ruth Berger Goldston et. al "Starting and Growing a Rosh Chodesh Group," ritualwell.org/ritual/starting-and-growing-rosh-chodesh-group.
[40] Sered, 91.

other traditional Jewish institutions, and particularly in the choice to meet in the home of one of the participants, women transform the domestic realm that was their traditional domain into a place with opportunities for their experiences to become sacred. In many ways, the feminists who pioneered Rosh Chodesh groups were discovering new paths towards expressing their Judaism, but in a way that was familiar to Jewish women's religiosity through the ages. And the fact that these groups met on a date that was traditionally known as being set aside for women helped grant them a level of authority and legitimacy.

As women-centered groups operating in a women-centered historical and religious context, many of the Rosh Chodesh groups emphasized the female body. Books and guides of rituals for women—both Rosh Chodesh-centered and otherwise—have been written about fertility, with a particular focus on childbirth. Rosh Chodesh guides generally offer months of activities designed around menstruation and fertility, with a secondary focus on weddings (i.e the community-sanctioned start of a woman's sex life)—if these are not the sole topics and rituals undertaken by these groups.[41] On the one hand, this emphasis has the danger of reducing women to their bodies; in a sense, conforming to rabbinic (male) Judaism's focus on women's bodies and their various statuses of purity and impurity. In this, these Rosh Chodesh groups can be seen as less of a reinterpretation of women's ritual, and more of a confirmation of the status quo. However, it is also possible to see this focus as a rethinking of women's traditional roles within Judaism. One of the three major laws that fall solely on women is niddah, the laws and rituals surrounding menstruation.[42] Within the context of Rosh Chodesh groups, discussions about, and rituals surrounding, menstruation and the body, are directed and ritualized by women

[41] See, for example האוהל האדום בטבעון, which emphasizes the "רעב של נשים לשבת יחד במעגלים כדי להביא הכרה והוקרה לעת הלבנה שלנו וכדי להיות מוכרות ומוערכות כנשים" and whose activities focus on women's bodies in all of their stages of development.

[42] Another one of the three women's commandments, separating challah, has also gained popularity in Israel in recent years, with groups of women gathering to bake and separate challah, and create for themselves a spiritual space. These gatherings sometimes take place specifically on Rosh Chodesh.

themselves, for example, a ritual for Rosh Chodesh Adar Aleph in which the matriarch Rachel acts as a guide for a pregnant woman, and includes the participants bathing and massaging the woman.[43]

But just as women should not be reduced solely to the physical, women's rituals have never—and should not—focus only on the body. Although these rituals may not have been adopted (and adapted) yet by Rosh Chodesh groups, the flexibility and openness that characterizes these groups, and the women's Judaism they seek to perpetuate, leaves plenty of space for traditional women's rituals to be revived and reincorporated into contemporary practice. One example is the custom of lighting candles, which is a Mizrachi custom specifically on Rosh Chodesh, and a woman's custom more generally. Lighting Shabbat and holiday candles is one of the three major commandments for women, and women have traditionally been responsible for lighting memorial candles for relatives.[44] There are also a number of customs regarding candles which have since been lost, or fallen into disuse, including making memorial candles on the eve of Yom Kippur for use on Yom Kippur.[45] Like the yortsayt candle lit by Ashkenazi women on the anniversary of a loved one's death, the Rosh Chodesh candle of their eastern counterparts was also lit on behalf of the dead: "we [Iraqi women] light candles for family members, wise men and scholars, and saints who have died…No, we don't say a real blessing—just that the soul of the dead one should be in Gan Eden," but also for the holiday of Rosh Chodesh itself: "When I was first married I didn't light for relatives—there were no dead relatives to light for. I only lit one candle for the Festival of the New Moon."[46] It is a tradition that can be both ritually important or personally significant, depending on each woman's individual circumstances, and can take on religious meaning even without the use of an official blessing.

[43] Adelman, p. 56.
[44] Sered, p. 132.
[45] Chava Weissler, "Sore Bas Toyvim,"www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Sore_bas_Toyvim.
[46] Sered, p.29.

The tradition of lighting candles has also proven to be remarkably adaptable. After the Ministry of Religion prohibited the lighting of candles in tombs, and hired (male) guards in order to enforce the prohibition, and erected barriers around the tombs preventing people from touching them—an explicit example of male Judaism (praying at the tombs of holy people) being legitimized and privileged over women's Judaism, touching and lighting candles at the graves—women began adapting the custom of lighting candles and physically touching the tombs with the practice of throwing unlit candles at the tombs.[47] This ritual perfectly illustrates the informality and adaptability that has defined Jewish women's religious practices through the centuries, and should not be overlooked when it comes to the role it could play on Rosh Chodesh.

Another traditional role for women that is more obscure (and perhaps more unexpected), is that of benefactor, or philanthropist. Historically, women were often the ones who gave money to charity, and ensured the ability of the community's synagogues, and other social institutions, to continue functioning. Indeed, some scholars argue that women may have acted as patrons of early synagogues within the Roman Empire, indicating that their role as community philanthropists has ancient roots.[48] According to the Chemdat Yamim, it was a custom for "נשים צנועות" to collect money for the poor on Rosh Chodesh, an example of women ritualizing a social role and making it part of their spiritual experience. While many of the examples of Rosh Chodesh group activities focus inward, personalizing the experience for each member of the group, there is precedent for women, on Rosh Chodesh and otherwise, to be focused outward, and incorporate helping others in need as part of the ritual of the holiday.

[47] Sered, p. 132.
[48] Peter J. Haas, ed., *Recovering the Role of Women: Power and Authority in Rabbinic Jewish Society* (Scholars Press, 1992), p. 18.

While the possibilities for rituals may be expansive, with a number of traditional women's practices that can be incorporated into contemporary groups, in attempting to find the balance between staying true to the ethos of women-centered Judaism and operating within a dominant male tradition, many of these groups have struggled to find an appropriate leadership model. While it might make sense logistically for there to be a group leader, some groups struggle with the idea of imposing this top-down leadership structure on a women-centric activity:

> Unlike other Jewish women's organizations, Rosh Chodesh groups do not have any kind of central agenda imposed on them by local or national policy or leadership… The women's movement has taught us that we can question some of the basic assumptions that seem to be the legacy of centuries of patriarchy. One of these assumptions is that of hierarchy, in which someone is at the "top" and therefore, inevitably, someone is also at the "bottom." Women, having been an underclass for so long, are particularly sensitive to the problems of those at the "bottom." We have learned that one solution is to create a more egalitarian group, where leadership functions are shared among group members. We favor a shared leadership model for Rosh Chodesh groups, realizing that there are many ways that leadership can be shared. [49]

However, there is a historical and religious model of women's leadership that has not been considered as a model for leadership within women-centered groups: the zogerke, a role dating to the middle ages that literally means "speaker (female)," and which has been largely forgotten.

Sources dating from the middle ages refer to "women's synagogues;" some synagogues, rather than having a separate women's section located somewhere within the main sanctuary space, instead had a separate structure for women with a small and narrow opening connecting the women's section

[49] https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/starting-and-growing-rosh-chodesh-group

to the men's section.[50] The zogerke was a woman who could understand, and perhaps even read, Hebrew, who would stand near the opening, follow the male cantor, and repeat the prayers for the rest of the women. The tombstone of one of the more well-known zogerkes, Urania of Worms, who died in 1275, describes her as a woman "who sang piyyutim for the women with a musical voice," indicating that there may also have been a cantorial component to the role.[51] Indeed, one theory regarding the initial development of tkhines (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter) is that the zogerkes began by repeating and translating the prayers for other women, and then possibly started adding their own interpretations and embellishments.[52] The zogerke as a model of a woman whose knowledge grants her both access to formalized male Judaism, and the ability to use that framework for creativity, should be more present as a form of leadership that was once open to women, and as a leadership model for Rosh Chodesh groups that are seeking female leadership models.

In *Moonbeams*, Penina Adelman's guide for women who would like to start their own Rosh Chodesh groups, Adelman writes about an activity undertaken by a Rosh Chodesh group in Philadelphia. One of the group's members had previously attended a class on the Torah portion of VaYishlach, in which the matriarch Rachel gives birth to her second son, Benjamin. The class learned the midrash that stated that each of Jacob's oldest eleven sons was born with a twin sister, while Benjamin, the youngest, was born as a triplet, with two twin sisters; in total, according to this midrash, Jacob had twelve sons, and thirteen daughters. Adelman writes that the group began to structure itself around this "tabula rasa" of the thirteen sisters, who are not mentioned in the text, and whose names are not recorded in the midrash.[53]

[50] Grossman, p. 180. Indeed, some synagogues were structured in a way such that the women's section was in an adjacent building, with no direct passage between the women's building and the men's building.
[51] Grossman, p. 181
[52] Klirs, et. al., p. 2.
[53] Adelman, p. 3-4.

It's a creative use of midrash, and another example of the ways in which Rosh Chodesh groups allow women to come together and construct an alternate view of religious reality. But it also focuses on the absence of women, reinforcing the idea that Jewish women have been defined by their invisibility and absence. It is an acknowledgement that is important to make, and to work to correct, but it also ignores the very real women that have existed through the centuries who could serve as practical models, and the ways in which women have existed within Judaism as philanthropists, patrons, commemorators of the dead, preservers of domestic traditions, and more. This is only one example of a Rosh Chodesh group format; there are many others that function very differently.[54] But Rosh Chodesh, and the existence of these groups, serve as a platform that has the potential to highlight Jewish women's presence, not their absence. Rosh Chodesh groups should exist to reclaim a holiday that was set aside for women, and serve to increase the visibility of women within Jewish tradition. These groups should highlight women's rituals, while leaving room to continue the process of renewal and redefinition that marks women's Judaism. Rather than serve as a confirmation of women's invisibility within Judaism, Rosh Chodesh groups are an opportunity for women's Judaism to be present and strongly felt, in ways that are not marginalized from mainstream Judaism, but fully a part of it.

[54] Indeed, a number of Rosh Chodesh groups function as opportunities for women to gather and learn Jewish texts, with an agenda that is more educational than spiritual at its core. Thanks to Katy Thomas for sharing her experience organizing a Rosh Chodesh group.

Chapter Two: Tkhines

The previous chapter explored women's rituals that took place within the framework of male Judaism, with a focus on Rosh Chodesh. It discussed the connection between women and Rosh Chodesh, and the ways in which Rosh Chodesh groups can be used as a framework to explore, revive, and reinterpret traditional women's practices—or, how Rosh Chodesh has been used as a framework to invent new women's rituals. But it would be inaccurate to claim that women's only means of spiritual expression is through ritual. For millennia, one of the main ways that Jewish women have expressed themselves religiously has been through prayer; indeed there are examples of women's prayer that appear in the Bible.[55] Like Rosh Chodesh groups, which sought to create a legitimate Jewish space for women to express and explore their spirituality, women's prayer has also attempted to find ways for women to forge a relationship with God in a way that is unquestionably Jewish, but not dependent on the synagogue.

This chapter will concentrate on these women's prayers, and will focus almost exclusively on the tkhines, prayers for Ashkenazi women. While Sephardi women undoubtedly had their own prayer traditions, they were not printed nearly to the extent that the tkhines were; while a few prayer books were written in Judeo-Italian in sixteenth century Italy, and Ladino siddurs specifically for use by women were compiled during the sixteenth century, special prayers specifically for women (as opposed to translations of prayers into the vernacular) were less popular in the non-Ashkenazi world; indeed, no siddurs for women were written or printed in the Sephardi Judeo-Spanish speaking community after the sixteenth century.[56] Rather, this chapter will examine what is known about women's prayer more

[55] See the introduction for examples of women praying in the Bible.
[56] Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald, "Two Sixteenth-Century Ladino Prayer Books for Women" (*European Judaism*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2010), p. 49

generally, and the tkhines specifically, and the ways in which prayer has historically been incorporated into lives and given meaning by them.

An interesting phenomenon takes place every weekday in Israel. Religious men and women leave their homes in the morning: religious men for the synagogue for Shacharit, and religious women for work. Men spend their early morning in praying in the synagogue, a communal setting, while women proceed to take out their prayerbooks, book of Psalms, or Perek Shirah texts, on public transportation in individual, silent prayer. Each of these groups—the men in the synagogue in their tallit and tefillin, and the women on the buses and trains in their work clothes; the men sitting and standing at various points in the service, and the women sitting or standing depending on the availability of seats; the men reading from a siddur, the women from a variety of sources—has a prayer life that exists in parallel to the other's and that takes place at approximately the same time, but in different physical locations, with different choreographies, and at different levels of formalization and formality.

Certainly, the split between men's and women's prayers, did not begin in the modern State of Israel. Because of their domestic duties, particularly taking care of children, halacha determined that women were exempt from most time-bound commandments. While this exemption did not extend to prayer more generally, women were not obligated to pray three times a day, nor were they required to pray in a minyan.[57] As a result, women were not expected to attend synagogue services. Indeed, during the fifteenth century women were granted permission by Rabbi Israel Isserlein (1390-1460, Austria) to enter the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur "because it saddened their spirits and sickened their hearts that all are gathered together and they must stand outside," indicating the extent to which the synagogue had by then become a male space, and that there was no expectation that women would

[57] Of course, women also did not count in a minyan. For women's obligation to pray, see רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות תפילה וברכת כהנים, א':ב'. For a strong opinion against women in synagogue spaces, see שו"ת שבות יעקב, חלק ג', סימן נ"ד.

attend, even on the most important days of the Jewish calendar.[58] Additionally, women almost never received an education in the traditional languages of Hebrew and Aramaic, which meant that the vast majority of women would not have understood the prayers even if they did attend synagogue services. As a result, the synagogue increasingly became a space that was almost entirely reserved for men, while women's social and religious role was increasingly expressed outside of the synagogue.

This did not mean, however, that women did not pray. Even when women were unable to enter the synagogue because there was no space made for them, they nonetheless insisted on their right to pray, either by protesting their exclusion, as in the High Holidays example mentioned above, or finding other ways to engage in communal prayer, such as through the zogerke. But women's prayer lives also developed away from the synagogue, and were increasingly centered within the domestic sphere. Though many of these women's prayers, and women's prayer traditions, were transmitted orally and by example, which unfortunately means that there are no extant records of them, by the sixteenth century the rabbis of Central Europe were concerned enough about women's spiritual lives (perhaps because their prayer practices were so individualized, informal, and unchecked), that prayers for women first began to be published. Because, as mentioned previously, most women could neither read nor understand Hebrew or Aramaic, these prayers were written in the vernacular, Yiddish, which would allow them access to prayer, as well as to Jewish tradition and religious literature.[59] These were prayers that were structured around certain moments in women's lives (lighting candles, holidays, and Rosh Chodesh, to name a few), but did not have strict requirements for when, precisely, they needed to be said, in contrast to the time limits for formal prayers. Nor did they require any sort of choreography (standing or sitting, not moving, taking steps backwards or forwards, etc.) or the presence of any other

[58] Grossman, p. 184.
[59] Weissler, "For Women and for Men Who are Like Women: The Construction of Gender in Yiddish Devotional Literature," p. 8.

person; indeed, the deeply personal nature of the tkhines would have made any requirement to pray in a group setting entirely counterproductive. These were prayers that could be said by busy wives and mothers whenever they felt the need to pray, or had a few free moments. Indeed, even the two Ladino siddurs aimed at women that were published during the sixteenth century were intended, to varying extents, to be used by women in the home; the first siddur has instructions for women for public prayer in the synagogue and private prayer at home.[60] Meanwhile, the second siddur, which was published in 1565, was meant for exclusive use in the home, and written with the assumption that it would be used by women with children who would invariably interrupt her.[61]

These private prayers for women to recite at home evolved from attempts by rabbis during the mid-sixteenth century to correct what they saw as worrying deficiencies in the religious lives of women, as well as of uneducated men.[62] The first religious texts that were published specifically for women in Ashkenaz were simply translations of the siddur and of the Bible into Yiddish. This led, shortly thereafter, to the publication of tkhines, which were not translations of existing prayers, but new Yiddish prayers geared specifically towards women. It is unclear exactly how the tkhines developed; as mentioned in the previous chapter, one theory is that they were originally developed by the zogerkes, women with enough knowledge to literally translate the men's services for women, and who may have eventually started to add their own interpretations to their translations.[63] The idea that women spearheaded the publication of prayers directed at them is a nice one, and also plausible, considering that both men and women wrote tkhines.

[60] Schwawrzwald, p. 43.

[61] Schwarzwald, p. 43.
[62] Klirs et. al., p. 2.
[63] Grossman, p. 181.

It is nearly impossible to determine with any degree of certainty who wrote many of the tkhines. Many were written anonymously, while others were attributed to anonymous women: "ishe tsnue" ("a modest woman"), "groyse tsdeykes" ("a great tzaddik"), "noshim tsidkonies" ("righteous women").[64] There were women who wrote tkhines, including Sore bas Toyvim, perhaps the best-known author of tkhines, Seril Rappoport, and Leah (Sore Rivke Rokhl Leah) Horowitz.[65] All of these women were the daughters and/or wives of rabbis, the scholarly elite of the Jewish world; generally, the women who did manage to receive a thorough Jewish education were almost always from rabbinical families.[66]

There were also men who wrote tkhines. Some, such as Ben Tsiyon Alfes (1850-1940), wrote for ideological reasons, seeking the tkhines as a means of countering secularism; *Shas Tkhine Khadoshe*, written by Alfes, was intended to convince readers of the beauty of traditional life, and emphasize the critical role that women play in maintaining a Jewish home and raising Jewish children.[67] Other men wrote for economic reasons, hoping to earn some money from the work. Confusing things, however, is the fact that some men wrote tkhines, but attributed the tkhines they wrote to women, including Sore bas Toyvim.[68] This can be seen as both a cynical ploy to increase sales by attributing tkhines to a popular author. Additionally, even if men attributed tkhines to anonymous women, it allowed them to market their tkhines to women as works ostensibly from another woman who would understand them, while also not being forced to suffer the indignity of having their names attached to such a lowly genre. Men who needed to pray in Yiddish were, by definition, uneducated, so there was already a historical stigma associated with men and Yiddish prayers.[69] Additionally, many male proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment saw women's literature, and women's religious literature specifically, as cementing

[64] Klirs, et. al., p. 5
[65] Tamar Salmon-Mack, "Horovitz, Leah," www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Horovitz_Leah.
[66] Klirs, et. al., p. 4.
[67] Weissler, "Tkhines."
[68] Klirs, et. al., p. 4.
[69] Weissler, "For Women and for Men Who Are Like Women: The Construction of Gender in Yiddish Devotional Literature," p. 8.

superstitions and belief in the supernatural (demons, spirits, etc.) in the minds of Jewish women.[70] Perhaps one of the strongest illustrations of attitudes towards tkhines comes from Dvora Baron's story "Genizah," in which the main character's brother refuses to bury her mother's book of tkhines with the rest of the holy books.[71]

Regardless of how the tkhines originally came into existence, and who wrote them, what is known is that the first printed pamphlet of tkhines was published in Prague in 1590. The pamphlet was eight pages, and included five prayers, each in Hebrew and Yiddish. Each one of the prayers had a title taken from either the siddur or the Bible, a way of granting them some legitimacy within the framework of traditional prayers.[72] The publication of this small pamphlet eventually opened the floodgates for more tkines, and multiple reprintings of the most popular ones. As time went on, tkhines became increasingly ubiquitous, hitting their peak during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This makes sense; the seventeenth century saw the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-1649, one of the more deeply traumatic events for Eastern European Jewry, and the proliferation of a number of mystical Jewish movements in the aftermath as Jews sought to express, and cope with, their sense of loss, dislocation, and grief. Men could turn to Kabbalah or other forms of mysticism, as well as the burgeoning Chassidic movement. And women increasingly had tkhines, whose popularity indicates that they fulfilled a deep spiritual need within their readers during a period in which spiritual outlets were especially necessary.[73]

The tkhines themselves have the usual markers characterizing them as being part of women's Judaism, including informality (their use outside of the synagogue), flexibility (each woman could choose for herself what she wanted to say, and could choose from a wide variety of tkhines). Additionally, they

[70] Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Brandeis University Press, 2004), p. 138.
[71] Avner Holtzman, ed., *Dvora Baron: Early Stories (1902-1921)* (Raphael Chaim HaCohen Printing, 1988) p. 421-426.
[72] Klirs, et. al., p. 3.
[73] Klirs, et. al., p. 3.

are deeply personal, and demonstrate an immediacy in the relationship between the women and God that does not exist in the more structured and communal experience of men's prayer. Tkhines were written in the first person singular, and God is referred to using the familiar דו, rather than the formal איר.[74] There is a consistent, fundamental belief underlining these prayers that God can hear and respond to prayer; God is frequently anthropomorphized and serves as a friend, one who can empathize with the suffering of the woman praying, and who will show mercy to the woman and her loved ones.[75] The tkhines lay out a religious world in which God is emotionally close and present for the woman praying, a figure that she can speak to not at a remove, with unfamiliar or formal language, but as an especially close, albeit all-powerful, friend.

Additionally, tkhines and other texts such as the Tsena Urena, the Yiddish version of the Bible that was first published in 1622, gave women access not just to a relationship with God, but also a relationship with Jewish tradition. Sources for the tkhines included classical religious texts translated from Hebrew and Aramaic, Psalms, Midrash, Talmudic stories and concepts, halachic codes, and even some Kabbalah.[76] Other texts, such as the Tsena Urena, that were not specifically for prayer, allowed women to learn about—and be aware of—the weekly Torah portion, as well as the traditional commentaries. For example, in at least one printing of the Tsena Urena, each Torah portion begins with a Hebrew quote from the first verse of the portion, and then continues in Yiddish: " בראשית ברא אלוקים את השמים ואת הארץ, און ערשטין באשעפענוש פון הומל און ערד אוז גוועז דו ערד וויסט און לער און דער כסא הכבוד פון גאט האט געשוועפט".[77] Women may not have had the same access to elite institutions such as

[74] Klirs, et. al., p. 6.
[75] Klirs, et. al., p. 7.
[76] Klirs, et. al., p. 8.
[77] "And the first creatures of the heavens and the earth, and the earth was deserted and the splendor of God's Throne of Glory was wasted," צאינה וראינה פון הרב החסיד מהר"ר יצחק ז"ל מק"ק יאנאוו. This printing also contains all of the haftarahs and megillah readings.

the yeshiva, but through the tkhines and other religious texts aimed at them, they were able to understand their tradition more deeply.[78]

Another layer of the personalization and relationship-building that occurred when women prayed using tkhines was the creative process of reinterpretation they engaged in while in prayer. This was particularly apparent during the nineteenth century. As the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) became increasingly popular, poor maskilim (proponents of the Haskalah) began writing tkhines, both in an attempt to earn some money, and to take advantage of the popularity of the tkhines to help transform the traditional Jewish family into a model Western European-style middle-class family.[79] So, for example, a tkhine written by a maskil imploring God to heal a sick child (a common tkhine topic) makes sure to stress the importance of proper domestic hygiene (less common in traditional tkhines).[80] Additionally, according to a number of scholars, many of these maskilic tkhines subtly mocked their audience; they were consciously melodramatic, written in over-the-top flowery language as a way of simultaneously seeking to appeal to their intended audience, while quietly ridiculing those who would find it compelling.[81] To add insult to injury, many of these maskilic tkhines were attributed to Soreh bas Toyvim, one of the best-known of the women authors of tkhines, or to women who never existed at all.[82]

From the author attribution, to the style, to the relationship between the author and the intended readers, these tkhines can be seen as somewhat illusory. And yet, these tkhines were used unironically by women; regardless of the author's intent, the women reading them nonetheless saw

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[78] For examples of elements of traditional rabbinic literature that made their way into the tkhines, see Kay, pp. 76-85.

[79] Chava Weissler, "Women in Paradise" (*Tikkun*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1987), p. 119.

[80] Chava Weissler, "Tkhines," http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tkhines

[81] Weissler, "Tkhines."

[82] Chava Weissler, "Voices from the Heart: Women's Devotional Prayers," in Richard Siegel and Carl Rheins, eds., *The Jewish Almanac* (Bantam Books, 1981), p. 542.

them as answering a spiritual need in their lives, and, however consciously, reinterpreted these maskilic tkhines so that they could be relevant and meaningful to their lives. And even if the authors of the tkhines, whether maskilic or otherwise, wrote them with the best of intentions, or from a neutral standpoint, each woman who recited tkhines was engaged in a process of interpreting the words to fit her own particular life circumstance, making prayer a powerful fore in her life, with the power to make things better. It is an example of women discovering meaning and insisting on religious access in spite of sexism, a lack of access to traditional texts, and the various agendas of those taking responsibility for their spiritual lives.

As uncomfortable as the approach of the maskilim to the tkhines and their readers may have been, their position is understandable. It can, in fact, be difficult for a modern reader to understand what made these prayers so emotionally powerful for so many women. While the ideas and associations expressed within them can be interesting, they tend to emphasize the sinfulness and unworthiness of both the author and the readers, and advance a theology in which people need to be careful because they are constantly at risk of being punished for their sins. Sore herself writes to her readers in one of her most famous and beloved tkhines, *Shloyshe Sheorim*, about the consequences of one of her sins: "I constantly remind myself of all the wrongdoings I have committed. I would frequently come into the beloved shul wearing expensive jewelry and I would joke and even laugh…Today I am a wonderer; my heart moans within me when I remember that God forgets no one."[83] And, in fact, the language is incredibly dramatic: "The angels' tears fell on Avrom's knife and did not let him slaughter his son Yitzchok. So, too, may my tears fall before You and prevent me and my husband and my children and all my good friends from being taken away from this world. I beseech You to have mercy on me and that

[83] "Moral Reproof for Women," in the tkhine *Shloyshe Sheorim*, Sore bas Toyvim, quoted in *The Merit of Our Mothers*, p. 30.

You Yourself should be my defender in the trial in which You will judge me."[84] Modern readers, and those looking to understand and incorporate women's prayers and prayer traditions, are probably more likely to empathize with the maskilim who may have written them while rolling their eyes, rather than with the women who found meaning in them.

However, in spite of the dramatics and outdated style of these prayers, it is possible to glimpse the emotional, religious, and even (though this is more difficult) political worlds that these women inhabited. Numerous prayers ask God to allow their children to live to adulthood, or mention children who have died young: "May our little children who died young, before their time, pray for us." Others request that the petitioner not be left a widow, and their children not be left orphans.[85] As mentioned previously, tkhines took on increasing popularity and importance in the aftermath of the deep trauma of the Chmielnicki massacres. It is therefore not necessarily surprising that death, and the fear of death, is not only very present in the tkhines, but is also referred to so often, and so straightforwardly.[86] Nor is it unusual for there to be numerous references to the Binding of Isaac, which was used as a metaphor for Jewish martyrdom since at least the Crusades. References to the World to Come, and hopes for the rebuilding of the Temple after the coming of the Messiah are also numerous: "May we merit that You cause us to inherit that day which is wholly Shabbos, which means: May we live until the time of the resurrection of the dead," "for this mitzva that we fulfill, may we live to bring candles to the beis hamikdesh, as was the custom in ancient times."[87] These can be taken literally, or they can be

[84] *Tkhine of the Matriarchs for the New Moon of Elul*, Seril daughter of Rabbi Yankev HaLevi Segal of Dubno, wife of Rabbi Mordkhe Katz Rapoport, quoted in *The Merit of Our Mothers*, p. 48. The Yiddish text makes the parallel between the Binding of Isaac and the woman's prayer more explicit, heightening both the drama and the stakes.
[85] "When One Blesses the New Moon, One Says This," in the tkhine *Shloyshe Sheorim*, Sore bas Toyvim, quoted in Klirs, et. al., p. 38
[86] Also worth mentioning is the high rate of infant and child mortality, and lack of adequate medical care which were very real issues for these women, who knew how easily—and how early in life—a loved one could pass away.
[87] *Tkhine for Lighting Candles*, "This Tkhine Should be Said Before Making the Candles on Erev Yom Kipper," from *Shloyshe Sheorim*, Sore bas Toyvim, quoted in Klirs, et. al., p. 89, 27.

understood as the desire of the women praying for a world in which death is not the end, the Jewish people are safe, and, ultimately, the hope for a better world.

The tkhines offer various women-centric visions of prayer, whether what women themselves wrote for other women, or what men thought women needed or wanted. Nonetheless, they gave women the opportunity to develop a prayer life that was distinct from men. Women could write tkhines, instruct other women on Jewish practice, and offer them prayers that addressed their anxieties and their hopes. In addition to developing a personal relationship with God, women could also forge personal connections with the matriarchs, or other women from the Bible who could be petitioned to intercede with God on their behalf or whose stories could be compared to theirs and serve as a reminder to God to help and protect her: "Riboyne shel oylem, I pray to You now, just as Ester Hamalke prayed."[88] Tkhines offered the opportunity for women to explore and familiarize themselves with their tradition and to turn oppression—and depression—into spiritual growth. The tkhines give us the opportunity to view the religious world and outlook of women in the times during which they were written: "a world organized very differently from that of the siddur, a world structured by the private events of the woman's domestic life as much as by the communal events of the Jewish calendar."[89] And however much the texts may be difficult for us to access today, the ideas, values, and culture surrounding them should inspire us to understand how we can incorporate the world of prayer into our lives beyond the synagogue, and develop a prayer life that builds deeply personal relationships with God and Jewish tradition.

[88] "When One Blesses the New Moon, One Says This," in the tkhine *Shloyshe Sheorim*, Sore bas Toyvim, quoted in Klirs, et. al., p. 36.
[89]Chava Weissler, "The Traditional Piety of Ashkenazic Women," from Arthur Green *Jewish Spirituality*. (Crossroad, 1997), p. 248.

Conclusion

With the dawning of modernity, when Jews felt the increasing influence of both emancipation and the Enlightenment, Jewish practice, and Judaism's role in people's lives, began to change.[90] Part of this process included rethinking women's roles in the world and within Judaism. By the mid-nineteenth century, with the development of the Reform movement, women in Western and Central Europe, as well as in North America, were granted increased access to the world of the synagogue. After centuries of physical and cultural separation when it came to Jewish practice, women could find spiritual fulfillment within traditionally male Judaism, and, as time went on, even while sitting next to their male counterparts. The new Reform movement began breaking down the barriers separating male Judaism female Judaism, validating women and their traditional modes of practicing Judaism within the synagogue framework. In some ways, Reform liturgy was like the tkhines, in the sense that prayers were recited in the local language rather than Hebrew, and symbols of male religiosity such as tallit, tefillin, and kippah were deemed unnecessary, or even actively discouraged: "the Reformers again validated traditional piety of Jewish women who had long sought to find God without benefit of tefillin or tallit and without benefit of regular participation in daily worship services."[91] At the same time, however, many of the practices through which women were traditionally able to express their spirituality, especially kashrut and niddah, were also dismissed as irrelevant for the modern era, sidelining the major spheres within which women had been able to serve as ritual experts.[92] Within the Reform movement, women's Judaism was somewhat integrated into mainstream practice, but when it could fit within a framework of men's Judaism.

[90] Parush, p. 4. Parush has extensive analyses regarding modernity, and its effect on Jewish women's lives.
[91] Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton, *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook* (Brandeis University Press, 2009), p. 9.
[92] Umansky and Ashton, p. 9.

During the 1970s and '80s, once Second-wave feminism became an increasingly widespread political and social force in the United States, American Jewish women sought to expand the calls for equality that they were making to the government and to the public to also include the Jewish community. In addition to demanding social, political, and economic equality from their fellow Americans, these women also turned to their fellow Jews and demanded access to leadership roles and respect for their spiritual lives.[93] This was not the first time Jewish women made these demands; as Paula Nadell writes, debates about women in the pulpit had raged, with more or less intensity, for about a century prior. These discussions also took place during the period of First-wave feminism, which culminated in 1920 with the Constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote, another period when women were making significant advances in the secular world.[94]

The First-wave debates within progressive Jewish communities centered on the seminary, as women began enrolling and then presenting themselves as rabbinical candidates.[95] During the Second-wave fight for equality, American Jewish women sought to create rituals, blessings, and stories that could help them forge connections between their Judaism and their lived experiences.[96] Indeed, some went further, arguing for a complete transformation: "In a Jewish context, we need to transform the way we talk Torah, the way we practice ceremony and ritual, the way we tell and pass on stories, the way we codify laws, the way we organize our communities, and the way we envision sacred mysteries…We cannot be expected to abide by norms we did not help to create."[97] Rosh Chodesh groups were an important part of this phenomenon, giving women the space to create, understand, and reconnect with their Judaism, as well as exploring what women's Judaism could be in their world. Rosh

[93] Umansy and Ashton, p. 21.
[94] Nadell, p. 61.
[95] Nadell, p. 61-62.
[96] Umansky and Ashton, p. 23.
[97] Lynn Gottlieb, *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism* (HarperCollins, 1996), p. 6.

Chodesh provided a framework for these explorations, one that was fundamentally female in character, and could therefore serve as an authentic foundation upon which to build their women-centered Judaism.

While much of the focus was on innovation rather than continuation, elements of women's historical and traditional Judaism could also be found in Rosh Chodesh groups. Just as Eastern European women recited the tkhines could call on the matriarchs for intercession and help with their most intimate issues, twentieth century women in America, and later in Israel, consciously worked to incorporate them, telling their stories and creating modern midrashim about them. Just as women reciting maskilic tkhines reinterpreted the words and intent behind them to bring meaning to their lives, the women in Rosh Chodesh groups worked to creatively reinterpret Jewish characters, prayers, and concepts in ways that would be less patriarchal, and more relevant and meaningful to their lives. And while these groups did not necessarily take advantage of many traditions that once made up the center of Jewish women's practices, they still played an important role in highlighting the basic fact of the existence of women's Judaism.

Yet other, equally important, developments occurred within Judaism around the same time. During the period that Rosh Chodesh groups grew in popularity, women began gaining unprecedented access to areas of Jewish life and practice that were once exclusively reserved for men. This facet of the Jewish feminist revolution probably limited the extent to which Rosh Chodesh groups, and the women's Judaism they represented, could be appreciated for the value and diversity that they had the potential to bring to the Jewish world; there was something rightfully revolutionary and exciting in being granted access to "normative" Judaism in a way that is not the case when it comes to expanding women's Judaism.[98] In 1972 Sally Priesand became the first women to be ordained by the Hebrew Union College-

[98] For a short discussion on the male system and the idea of normativity, see Sered, 87.

Jewish Institute of Religion. The eighties subsequently saw the ordination of the first woman rabbi in the Conservative movement, and the nineties and early twenty-first century saw the development of partnership minyans, offering Orthodox women the ability, albeit limited, to read from the Torah, receive aliyot, and lead services. As women increasingly embraced institutional Judaism, women's Judaism, which is fundamentally unregulated and in many ways relied on having adherents who could not practice men's Judaism, became less visible and less able to affect mainstream Judaism.

Indeed, women found this acceptance by men's Judaism legitimizing. Tova Hartman, who wrote about the founding of Shira Hadasha, the paradigmatic partnership minyan that she founded in Jerusalem in 2002, references the establishment of JOFA (Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance) in 1997, writing that JOFA gave Orthodox women institutional legitimacy.[99] Around the same time, in 1998, Kolech, the first Orthodox Jewish feminist organization in Israel was also founded, another example of the increasing importance of organizational frameworks for the acceptance of women's (historically de-centralized) Judaism.[100] And even Lynn Gottlieb, who called for a revolution, is not immune to the desire to grant her own book a sense of institutional halachic authority, writing: "The comprehensive structure of *She Who Dwells Within* is based on the traditional organization of Jewish codes of law[.]"[101] It is not surprising that when women were offered the opportunity to join, and earn approval from, the formalized institutional world that had once been the domain of Jewish men, and especially the Jewish male elite, many jumped at the chance. This is not a bad thing. Jewish public life takes place in the synagogue. It is a place where Jews can come together and have a communal experience as a people, not in isolation from one another.[102] For the first time, women could be part of that experience.

[99] Hartman, p. xi.
[100] Kolech, www.kolech.org.il/he/about-us.html.
[101] Gottlieb, p. 10.
[102] Thank you to Rabbi Professor Doctor Dalia Marx for her notes about this.

This new Jewish reality for women, however, began to shape a narrative of what had come before. An early feminist critique of Judaism asserted that because women were excluded from public religious roles, they were effectively excluded from all of religious life.[103] This idea, that public religious life equals "all religious life," coupled with the image of women as "the Jew who wasn't there" underscored the extent to which women's increased religious visibility and the progress they were making as laypeople and clergy, was seen not as women gaining access to *additional* ways of expressing their religiosity, but as finally being permitted to practice *the* Judaism. Rather than expanding their religious opportunities, women's increased access to men's Judaism served to normalize male religious structures. Indeed, even as the Reform movement in the United States has moved towards embracing some elements of traditionalism, it is the traditional world of male Judaism that is increasingly emphasized, including the encouragement to wear a kippah and tallit, and the increasing number of prayers in Hebrew in synagogues outside of Israel. And as men's Judaism became more normalized, women were increasingly incentivized to abandon their traditions in order to take part in mainstream religion.[104] More troublingly, this was widely seen as replacing "nothing" with "something."

The previous two chapters have attempted to prompt a rethinking of women's Judaism, discussing and describing the ways in which women have expressed their spirituality from the Bible until the modern era. Women's historical absence from the public aspects of communal life required them to find other avenues for religious expression—for example, praying on the bus while men pray in the synagogue. The fact that women's Judaism and Jewish observance was more spontaneous, informal, and did not require institutional oversight made it different, not wrong, and valuable on its own merits.

[103] Chava Weissler, "Women's Studies and Women's Prayers: Reconstructing the Religious History of Ashkenazic Women" (*Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1995) p. 31. Additionally, some feminists blamed Judaism for the existence of male patriarchal religion more generally.
[104] Sered, p. 133.

It would not be too much of a stretch to say that until the modern era there were two Judaisms. Men's Judaism was formalized, ritually prescribed, communal, and public, while women's Judaism was informal, individualized, flexible, and private. But just as the exclusively male realm of the synagogue and various time-bound commandments were eventually opened to women, women's Judaism should become a legitimate and viable option for men seeking different ways to express their religiosity.

Incorporating women's Judaism into Jewish practice for men and women can include actual practices. Some were mentioned in previous chapters, including lighting candles, preparing specific foods for holidays, and sanctifying the domestic space. Although the tkhines are not perfect, in that they do not fit seamlessly into modern life, they are a way of approaching prayer and spirituality that calls upon God to be present in an immediate way, and in the most mundane and private details of their lives.[105] They were often written in small and portable books and pamphlets that could be easily taken wherever the woman went.[106] And they often incorporated the matriarchs and other women from the Bible. It would be exciting if prayer for both men and women could extend beyond the synagogue, requiring only a desire to be in connection with God. For there to be moments of "I" language in which it is possible to pour out one's heart, in addition to the liturgical "we."

Rosh Chodesh groups can also provide tools for enriching Jewish practice, beyond the creation of the groups themselves. Using the framework of Rosh Chodesh groups, Jews could establish circles that are devoted to learning, or to conversations about relevant topics from a Jewish perspective: exploring lesser-known Jewish figures, discussing the body and bodily autonomy, and engaging in tkhine-style informal prayer—or informal prayer that is not based on a text at all, but solely on the individual's spiritual, material, or physical needs at that moment. These conversations and the connections that can be forged under the context of women's Judaism have the potential to enrich the

[105] Weissler, "Voices from the Heart: Women's Devotional Prayers," p. 542.
[106] Klirs, et. al., p. 5.

lives of practitioners, and make Judaism something that is present and relevant in daily life, without necessarily having to submit to the dictates of halacha. This is a Jewish world in which women can go to synagogue services and put on a tallit and tefillin, while their husbands remain at home with their tkhine pamphlets, which they can recite whenever the children, or the pets, or life, gives him a moment to breathe. And the next day the man can go to the synagogue while his wife stays at home, or the two can go together or stay home together. It is an acknowledgement of the importance of traditionally male Judaism, while asserting the value of traditionally women's Judaism and its legitimate place within mainstream Judaism.

This is essential work. The erasure of women's religious lives and practices is wrong, both from an ideological standpoint and a religious one. Ideologically, it makes no sense that egalitarianism implies an expectation, stated or otherwise, that women are to completely change their historical and traditional practices, clothing, and way of being within the synagogue while the men are expected to, at most, understand that the person sitting next to them might be female. Both men and women have to undergo various processes of understanding what their Judaism will look like in relation to each other in the twenty-first century, but it is clear that women in egalitarian spaces take on much of that work, while men are assumed to be spiritually fine as long as they continue practicing the way they have for centuries. In advancing the idea, whether explicitly or implicitly, that there is a particular form of Judaism that everyone should strive to participate in, we risk disconnecting from—or forgetting altogether—the elements of Judaism that, for centuries, made Judaism meaningful for half the population. We narrow, rather than widen, what is Jewishly acceptable. As Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky writes about the disconnect between Judaism and women's experiences: "I do not want to spend

Sabbath at synagogue and give birth in a coven."[107] There is a reason she feels that there is a divide between what Judaism is able to offer her as a Sabbath-observer, and what it can offer her as a woman.

The potential of what could be if we allow men's Judaism and women's Judaism to coexist is nicely illustrated in a midrash about the sun and the moon after creation. The midrash seeks to explain the discrepancy between the verse that describes the sun and the moon as "שני המאורות הגדולים" and another that describes them as "המאור הגדול ו...המאור הקטן:"

> רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי: כתיב "ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים" וכתיב "את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן (בראשית א, טז)." אמרה ירח לפני הקב"ה, רבש"ע אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד? אמר לה לכי ומעטי את עצמך. אמרה לפניו, רבש"ע הואיל ואמרתי לפניך דבר הגון אמעיט את עצמי?! אמר לה, לכי ומשול ביום ובלילה. אמרה ליה, מאי רבותיה דשרגא בטיהרא מאי אהני?! אמר לה, זיל לימנו בך ישראל ימים ושנים. אמרה ליה, יומא נמי אי אפשר דלא מנו ביה תקופותא! דכתיב "והיו לאותות ולמועדים ולימים ושנים" (בראשית א, יד). זיל ליקרו צדיקי בשמיך: יעקב הקטן (עמוס ז, ב), שמואל הקטן, דוד הקטן (שמואל א יז, יד). חזייה דלא קא מיתבא דעתה. אמר הקב"ה הביאו כפרה עלי שמיעטתי את הירח, והיינו דאמר ר"ש בן לקיש מה נשתנה שעיר של ראש חדש שנאמר בו "לה'"(במדבר כח, יא), אמר הקב"ה שעיר זה יהא כפרה על שמיעטתי את הירח.[108]

It is a poignant story, one in which an ideal state of equality is broken by God. God attempts to comfort the moon in her reduced prominence, but ultimately is left with regret. It is easy to understand this midrash as a metaphor for men and women in Judaism; indeed, the Zohar explicitly compares the sun to men, and the moon to women.[109] Isaiah, however, promises that this inequality between the sun and the moon will not last forever: " וְהָיָה אוֹר־הַלְּבָנָה כְּאוֹר הַחַמָּה וְאוֹר הַחַמָּה יִהְיֶה שִׁבְעָתַיִם כְּאוֹר שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים."[110] We should not have to wait until the messianic era for the light of the moon and the light of the sun to be equal to each other once again. As Hartman writes: "At its best, the religious spirit is supple, searching and fluid, and impossible to monopolize or contain. It holds the potential to resist

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[107] Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, *Motherprayer: The Pregnant Woman's Spiritual Companion* (Riverhead Books, 1996), p. xvii.

[108] חולין ס:

[109] Special thanks to Rabbi Shlomo Fox for this information.

[110] ישעיהו ל:כ"ו

and/or transcend patriarchal power and structure. The religious spirit cannot be boiled down to a set of doctrines or practices; it is more than the sum of its commitments and beliefs. It is constituted by a lived experience of a dense network of relationships—with community, with history, with liturgy, and with God."[111] When we are able to truly appreciate the beauty and value of women's Judaism and men's Judaism, we will have succeeded in creating a Judaism that is not only truly egalitarian and progressive, but also one whose can light shine within a better world.

[111] Hartman, p. 2.

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סידור תחנות לראש חודש

לא לשימוש בבית כנסת

הֲוָיָת נִשְׁמָתִי פִּתְחִי פִּי הַתִּירִי לְשׁוֹנִי וְאֲהַלֵּלֵךְ

This is a prototype of a tkhine pamphlet for the modern era. It is intended to incorporate women's forms of prayer and practice into contemporary Jewish life for women and for men. As a text based on women's Judaism, it is structured around Rosh Chodesh, in order to give a calendrical and emotional context for the recitation of these prayers. But as a text based on women's Judaism, the ways in which these texts can be used is highly individual. They can be used on particular months, or they can be recited during the moments in which they seem most relevant to the reader. Many of these prayers are written by women, but all can speak to the spiritual needs of an individual. Each month has an overarching theme; there are texts that might be relevant for multiple months, or that can be recited before activities undertaken by a Rosh Chodesh group (for example, the tkhine for giving charity and the tkhine for making candles). The relatively limited selection produced here is also to encourage readers to engage in the creative process of forming their own prayers. The only halacha is that this pamphlet not be used in a synagogue, or any other formal setting.

My hope is that one day when I ride the bus, I will see Reform men and women take out their booklets of prayers, and that women's traditions of infusing mundane moments with spiritual meaning will live on in our movement.

חשבן-"מר חשון," חודש של שקט אחרי החגים

כסלו-חודש של אור

טבת-חודש של חורף

שבט-חודש של מודעות לטבע ואיכות הסביבה

אדר-"משנכנס אדר, מרבין בשמחה"

ניסן-חודש של חירות

אייר-ספירת העומר

סיוון-חודש של מתן תורה

תמוז-התחלת תקופת האבל

אב-חודש של אבל, חודש של אהבה

אלול-הסתכלות על השנה שעברה, התכוננות לשנה החדשה

עורי עורי דבורה עורי עורי דברי שיר (שופטים ה׳ : י״ב)

״אָז יָשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עֲלִי בְאֵר עֱנוּ לָהּ״ (במדבר כ״א י״ז)

״עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה״ (שמות ט״ו ב׳)

כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יָהּ הַלְלוּיָהּ (תהלים ק״נ ו׳)

איוב י"ב: ז'-י':

וְאוּלָם שְׁאַל־נָא בְּהֵמוֹת וְתֹרֶךָּ
וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיַגֶּד־לָךְ:
אוֹ שְׂיַח לָאָרֶץ וְתֹרֶךָּ
וְיִסַּפְּרוּ לְךָ דְּגֵי הַיָּם:
מִי לֹא־יָדַע בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה כִּי יַד־יְהוָה עָשְׂתָה זֹּאת:
אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חָי וְרוּחַ כָּל־בְּשַׂר־אִישׁ:

למדני אלוה-י

לאה גולדברג

למדני אלוה-י
ברך והתפלל
על סוד עלה קמל
על נוגה פרי בשל
על החירות הזאת
לנשום לחוש לראות
לדעת לייחל להיכשל

למד את שפתותי
ברכה ושיר הלל
בהתחדש זמנך
עם בוקר ועם ליל
בהתחדש זמנך
עם בוקר ועם ליל

לבל יהי יומי
עליי כתמול שלשום
לבל יהי עליי
יומי הרגל
יומי הרגל

מעין שמונה עשרה לשכינה/ דליה שחם

הַוָּיָת נִשְׁמָתִי פִּתְחִי פִּי הַתִּירִי לְשׁוֹנִי וְאֲהַלֵּלֵךְ

Druck

אִמִּי

הַגִּבּוֹרָה

הַקְּדוֹשָׁה

חַנֵּנִי שִׂכְלִי בְּדַעַת וּבִינָה

אַמְּצִינִי אֵל חֵיק תְּשׁוּבָתֵךְ

מַלְּאִי לִבִּי סְלִיחָה

רְאִי בְעָנְיִי, רִיבִי רִיבִי, מִמֵּיצָרִים גַּאֲלִינִי

רַפְּאִי אֶת נַפְשִׁי אֶת גּוּפִי אֶת אָהוּבַיי אֶת בָּנוֹת וּבְנֵי מִינִי

בָּרְכִי אֶת אַדְמָתֵךְ וְאֶת פִּרְיָהּ

קַבְּצִי אֱלֹיהָ אֶת נִידָחַיִךְ בְּאַהֲבָה

הַשְׁלִיטִי מִשְׁפָּט צִדְקֵךְ

לְהַכְנִיעַ כָּל רֶשַׁע וְזָדוֹן

עִטְפִי בְּרַחֲמַיִךְ אֶת הַזְּכוּת וְהַצַּדִּיקוֹת

לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכֹּנָה עִמָּךְ בְּבֵיתֵךְ לַבֶּטַח

הוֹשִׁיעִי נָא

שְׁמְעִי נָא

קַבְּלִי נָא

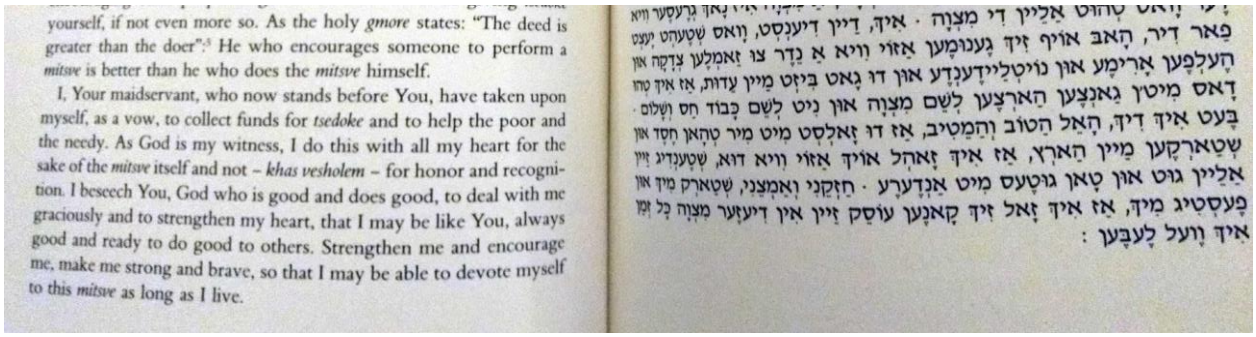
וְשׁוּבִי לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים

תּוֹדָה
שָׁלוֹם

Dayenu:

It is our own labor that must give birth to freedom. In every generation we stand with those who first gave birth to freedom. So let us bring Dayenu into the present…We have a vision, we take it to heart, and we work hard to make it happen. What miracles and accomplishments would be sufficient (Dayenu) in today's world for us to be truly satisfied?

תחינה לנתינת צדקה:



yourself, if not even more so. As the holy *gmore* states: "The deed is greater than the doer".[5] He who encourages someone to perform a *mitsve* is better than he who does the *mitsve* himself.

I, Your maidservant, who now stands before You, have taken upon myself, as a vow, to collect funds for *tsedoke* and to help the poor and the needy. As God is my witness, I do this with all my heart for the sake of the *mitsve* itself and not – *khas vesholem* – for honor and recognition. I beseech You, God who is good and does good, to deal with me graciously and to strengthen my heart, that I may be like You, always good and ready to do good to others. Strengthen me and encourage me, make me strong and brave, so that I may be able to devote myself to this *mitsve* as long as I live.

ג'נין ווסברג על פי Talking to God, נעמי לוי:

יש בכחי לבחר את הדרך בה אקבל את הנקרה בדרכי.

מי יתן שלא אירא.

אנא, הסר ממני מרורות

ומי יתן שערי יובילני

לאבה, לחכמה, לחמלה

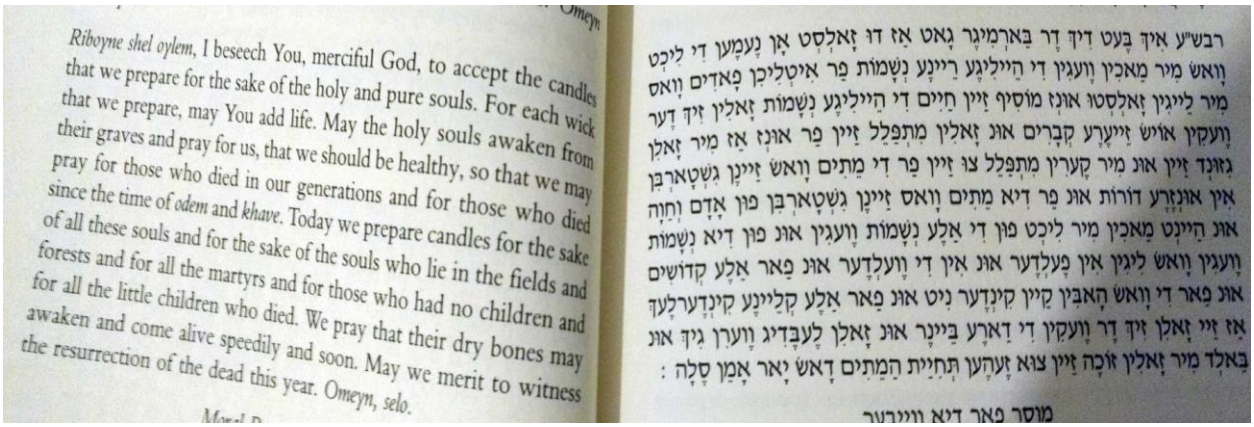
ואליך,

אמן

תחינה לפני עשיית נרות בערב יום כיפור

שלושה שערים

שרה בת טובים:



Riboyne shel oylem, I beseech You, merciful God, to accept the candles that we prepare for the sake of the holy and pure souls. For each wick that we prepare, may You add life. May the holy souls awaken from their graves and pray for us, that we should be healthy, so that we may pray for those who died in our generations and for those who died since the time of *odem* and *khave*. Today we prepare candles for the sake of all these souls and for the sake of the souls who lie in the fields and forests and for all the martyrs and for those who had no children and for all the little children who died. We pray that their dry bones may awaken and come alive speedily and soon. May we merit to witness the resurrection of the dead this year. *Omeyn, selo.*

תחינה אמהות, סעריל ראפפורט:

אויך דיא נשמות פון מיינע קרובים בעט איך דיך ליבער גאט דער דא לייכט אויף דער ערד אונ דיא לייט וואש וואונן אויף דער ערד. דער לייכט דיין שכינה אונ זאלסט זאגן צוא דעם מלאך וואס איז (ממונה) איבער זייא צו דר גרינגערין פון זייא דעם משפט אינ זייא זאלין גפינן איטליכר זיין רואונג אונ זאלן זיין בשלום אונ זייא זאלן גיין פון איין מדרגה צו דר אנדרע מדרגה אונטער דיא פליגל פון דיא כרובים אמן כן יהי רצון:

I beseech you, dear God, shed your light upon the souls of relatives and upon all the people who live on the earth. May the Shekhina shine forth, and may you tell the angel who is appointed over them to lighten their sentence, and may they find their resting place and be at peace, and may they rise continually from one level of heaven to another under the wings of the kerubim. Omeyn, keyn yehi ratson.

קדיש יתום:

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא / .ועונים :אמן/
בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ, וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:
הקהל עונה אמן ומצטרף לאמירת המשפט הבא :
יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא .
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל ,שְׁמֵהּ דְּקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא / ועונים :בְּרִיךְ הוּא /
לְעֵילָא (בעשרת ימי תשובה :וּלְעֵילָא מִכָּל) מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא, דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא. וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן / : ועונים :אמן /
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן/ :ועונים :אמן /

עוֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם/ בעשרת ימי תשובה :השלום/ בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן :

תלמוד בבלי, ברכות, י"ז.:

עולמך תראה בחייך

ואחריתך לחיי העולם הבא

ותקותך לדור דורים

לבך יהגה תבונה

פיך ידבר חכמות

ולשונך ירחיש רננות

עפעפיך יישירו נגדך

עיניך יאירו במאור תורה

ופניך יזהירו כזוהר הרקיע

שפתותיך יביעו דעת

וכליותיך תעלוזנה מישרים

ופעמיך ירוצו לשמוע דברי עתיק יומין