

*Mishkan T'filah:*  
**A History and Cultural Analysis of the  
Genesis of the Reform Movement's New  
Prayer Book**

**Carmit Harari**

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**Referee: Rabbi Richard S. Sarason, PhD**

**For Rabbi Sarason and Cantor Shore**  
*my teachers • my mentors • my liturgical allies*

*Thank you for four incredible years*

## Abstract

Since the beginning of the modern era, Jewish worship and worship styles have been adapted to modern culture. Over the years, Reform *siddurim* have reflected the shifting relationship between tradition and innovation; our changing attitudes toward the surrounding culture are reflected in our synagogues and in our prayers. Amid shifting demographics and vastly varied spiritual needs, the Reform movement has just published a brand new *siddur*, embodying what Lawrence A. Hoffman terms “a theology for the internet.” The prayer book reflects trends in Reform worship at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The publication of *Mishkan T’filah*, the movement’s first new prayer book in more than thirty years is among the most exciting and historic events taking place in American Judaism today.

This thesis explores the genesis of this new prayer book, highlighting the cultural context into which this *siddur* was born and specific initiatives in its creation. Chapter One looks at the trend toward personalism in American religion and its expression within Judaism. Chapter Two begins with the decision to replace *Gates of Prayer* and focuses upon the work of the Siddur Discussion Group. Chapter Three surveys the “Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Change” (Lilly /Cummings Study) and its influence upon *Mishkan T’filah*. Chapter Four chronicles the production of *Mishkan T’filah*, beginning with the appointment of editors in 1999 and through to publication in 2007. Chapter Five looks at the final product, and Chapter Six offers an analysis of what the publication of *Mishkan T’filah* says about where we are as a movement.

More than twenty years in the making, *Mishkan T’filah* reflects years of discussion and thought, reflection, and collaboration. Distinct from its predecessors, it points toward a shift in the way in which we conceive of the worship experience. This is the story of how *Mishkan T’filah* came to be.

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## Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: General Trends in American Religion.....	5
Chapter 2: 1975-1985 and Beyond.....	17
Chapter 3: The Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development (The Lilly / Cummings Study).....	29
Chapter 4: 1999-Present.....	53
Chapter 5: 2007: The Finished Product.....	107
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	119
Appendix A Document related to the Siddur Discussion Group.....	127
Appendix B Documents related to the Project on Lay Involvement in Worsrhip and Liturgical Development (The Lilly / Cummings Study).....	129
Appendix C Documents related to the work of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, Congregational testing, and prayer book production.....	142
Bibliography.....	167

## INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of the modern era, Jewish worship and worship styles have been adapted to modern culture. Beginning in Germany in the nineteenth century, Reform *siddurim* from Hamburg and Berlin reflect changes in attitudes toward the secular world. These are, in a sense, the first prayer books of the people, including prayers in the vernacular and modified text, reflective of a modified ideology. These liturgies reflect a delicate balance between tradition and innovation, which their authors attempted to maintain; they represent the overall shift in attitude among German Jews who had been allowed to enter German society and were no longer restricted to the Jewish way of life.

American Jews today are accepted as full members of society. As such, Reform Judaism, based in personal choice and modified ritual, has flourished in this country. To date, the largest movement in North America, the Reform movement also attempts to maintain that same delicate balance between being Jewish and living in the secular world. But shifting demographics and a trend toward personalism begun during the counterculture era, upset an earlier balance, changing the way in which Americans approached the world, and in particular, religion.

By all accounts, America in the 1950's was based in community and civic engagement. National morale was high, and religion was a source of strength and comfort for most Americans. A decade later, however, a radical shift had taken place. The search for spirituality and personal fulfillment had overtaken the baby-boomer generation, and was soon to find expression religiously. In the Jewish world, *havurot* sprang up around the country. Emphasizing movement, folk music, and neo-Hasidic style worship services, these self-governed groups were representative of a rejection of authority and conformity being felt across the nation.

This trend toward individualization continues well into the twenty-first century, and is among the strongest influences upon the North American Reform movement and its worship style. Today, no one theology defines the movement and it can be said that no two Reform Jews are alike. It is within this context that the Central Conference of American Rabbis set out to create its latest prayer book; *Mishkan T'filah*. Published in the fall of 2007, this book was more than twenty years in the making.

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, Professor of Liturgy, Worship and Ritual at the Hebrew Union College, suggests that the new prayer book contains “a theology for the internet.”<sup>1</sup> But all joking aside, it was quite clear to the movement’s leadership that *Gates of Prayer*, published in 1975, no longer met the varying needs of worshippers. Unlike its predecessor, *Mishkan T'filah* has been a collaborative effort from its inception. Emphasizing partnership between lay-leaders and clergy, this volume set out to be a true “prayer book of the people.”

Unofficially, preparation for *Mishkan T'filah* began in 1985 when, based on feedback about the then decade-old *Gates of Prayer*, the CCAR appointed a Siddur Discussion Group, geared toward discussing issues relating to worship. As it was becoming clear that *Gates of Prayer* would have to be replaced, a group member asked about lay input in the process. “The Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development,” also known as the “Lilly / Cummings Study,” was the result. A three-year ethnographic study, the project aided the Conference in gauging the needs and desires of worshippers around the country. Based on the recommendations from the study, the CCAR appointed two co-editors and an Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee to work on the movement’s new liturgy that would finally make its debut eight years later.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, “Re-imagining Jewish Worship,” *CCAR Journal* 49:1 [192] (Winter, 2002) 81

This thesis explores the cultural background of *Mishkan T'filah* and the process by which it came into being. In researching this thesis, I was fortunate to be able to speak with a wide variety of people involved in various ways in the creation of the new Reform prayer book. Rabbi Peter Knobel has been involved in every aspect of the creation of *Mishkan T'filah*, beginning with the Siddur Discussion Group, and ending with the Publication Committee. A former chair of the Liturgy Committee, Rabbi Knobel has been a key figure in the re-imagination of worship in the Reform movement. I interviewed Rabbi Knobel about his experiences throughout the process, and I was fortunate to have had access to his files from 1985 to the present. Rabbi Elyse Frishman, editor of *Mishkan T'filah*, hosted me for Shabbat in her congregation, and spoke with me about her vision and experience creating the prayer book. Rabbi Elliot Stevens, former Associate Vice President and Director of Publications for the CCAR, sent files from the work of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, and provided background regarding details of the project. I also spoke with Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, a former Chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee and a leader in the field of Reform liturgy throughout the last forty years. Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, a member of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, shared with me his take on the *siddur* and his own experiences of the project, and Mr. Daniel Schechter, who served as the impetus for and co-chair of the Lilly / Cummings Study, spoke with me about his idea to involve lay people in the production of a new *siddur*.

Through conversations with these individuals and access to primary documents from all phases of the project, I was able to trace the process whereby *Mishkan T'filah* came into existence. Beginning with the larger social and cultural changes in American society that provided the impetus for contemporary prayer book revision, this thesis will highlight significant initiatives leading toward the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*. Chapter one explores

the cultural shift toward personalism and its expression in Judaism. Chapter Two looks at the reception of the movement's last prayer book – *Gates of Prayer* – and its influence upon the beginnings of *Mishkan T'filah*. Chapter Three investigates results of the Lilly / Cummings study, and their impact upon the contents and layout of the new Reform prayer book, and Chapter Four surveys the work of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, congregational testing of *Mishkan T'filah*, and the eventual publication of the volume. Chapter Five details the layout and content of the final edition, and looks at issues of language and theology, while Chapter Six offers feedback on *Mishkan T'filah* and its reception, and describes what the prayer book says about the current state of the North American Reform movement.

*Mishkan T'filah* comes at a crucial time in the history of the Reform movement. With such a variety of theologies and practices among members, it can seem difficult to see what binds the movement together. The process whereby this prayer book was created address this issue, and the volume's publication speaks to the desire for unity within the movement. Tracing the history of *Mishkan T'filah*, we can better understand the contemporary state of North American Reform Jewish worship and the intentions behind this *siddur*, to appeal to and resonate with as many Reform Jews as possible.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL TRENDS IN AMERICAN RELIGION

A recent trip to the Judaica section of a major bookstore in Cincinnati, Ohio, revealed something quite interesting. Scattered among copies of the JPS *Tanakh* and the *Family Haggadah* were such titles as: *The Secret Life of God: Discovering the Divine Within You*, and *Be Still and Get Going: A Jewish Meditation for Real Life*. Did an employee mistakenly place them on those shelves? This was hardly the case. Rather, the presence of these and other similar titles amongst traditional Jewish texts is indicative of a dominant trend in American religion, a trend from which even Judaism is not immune. That trend is individualism or personalism.

According to sociologist Will Herberg, "The American way of life is individualistic, dynamic, pragmatic. It affirms the supreme value and dignity of the individual, it stresses incessant activity on his part..."<sup>2</sup> This tendency is echoed in a pattern identified by Robert D. Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone*. Describing a decline in civic engagement in America over the past thirty years, Putnam lists a number of factors whose influence has so strongly contributed to the privatization of our lives. He writes:

First, pressures of time and money, including the special pressures on two-career families, contributed measurably to the diminution of our social and community involvement during these years. Second, suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl also played a supporting role. Third, the effect of electronic entertainment - above all, television - in privatizing our leisure time has been substantial. Fourth, and most important, generational change - the slow, steady, and ineluctable replacement of the long civic generation by their less involved children and grandchildren - has been a very powerful factor.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers U P, 1987) 28

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2000) 283

Using social capital theory, namely, the idea "...that social networks have value,"<sup>4</sup> Putnam explores Americans' involvement in various social settings, among them religious institutions and activities. And religion, it seems, follows suit with the trend toward personalism.

"Americans generally hold a respectful attitude toward religion, but they increasingly regard it as a matter of personal choice or preference."<sup>5</sup> More and more, Americans are defining for themselves what their beliefs and practices are and thrusting aside external authority in favor of their own personal experiences. But this hasn't always been the case. A careful examination of the past few decades reveals a profound cultural shift that took place in America during the era of "peace and love" and its impact on both our civil and religious engagements.

The 1960's and 1970's were turbulent decades in America. Young Americans began to rebel against set values and cultural norms established by their parents' generation. In their book *American Mainline Religion*, sociologists Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney describe the period: "Public faith fell upon hard times. Values that had previously been so important – patriotism, conformity, capitalism, hard work, success, and familism – failed to inspire."<sup>6</sup> Organized religion in particular, suffered as a result of this trend toward disestablishment, as Roof and McKinney explain: "Religion manifested itself as 'private virtue' and 'public rhetoric,' but this was symptomatic of the loss of shared norms. Disenchantment with the American way of life both fed upon and gave momentum to a deep-seated quest for personal fulfillment."<sup>7</sup>

...Many Americans sought within their lives greater wholeness and meaning, a new measure of creativity and vitality, and the realization of their 'potential'

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<sup>4</sup> Putnam, 19

<sup>5</sup> Roof and McKinney, 40

<sup>6</sup> Roof and McKinney, 28

<sup>7</sup> Roof and McKinney, 38, 46

personhood. A multifaceted search – material, therapeutic, and spiritual – energized many individuals and groups in the hopes for, and expectations of, a more abundant life.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, “a more expressive individualism of this kind amounts to a massive energizing force in the spiritual realm and the unleashing of energies in many directions.”<sup>9</sup> This expressive individualism is the reason for greater variety on the shelves of the Judaica section at the local bookstore.

In order to fully understand the trend toward individualism and personalism as it is expressed in Judaism, however, we must first further explore religion in America over the past century. As we have seen, the 1960’s proved a crucial turning point in American culture, characterized by a vocal and outright questioning of established authoritative structures. But where religion is concerned, the story begins much earlier.

The roots of modern religious individualism lie deep in the heritage of religious volunteerism. Despite the nation’s early Calvinist heritage, ever since the Second Great Awakening the popular faiths of Americans have been heavily Armenian. The latter’s emphasis on free will, grace, and unlimited hope for conversion of all persons reinforced the value placed upon personal achievement that was dominant in the secular culture. Theology and democratic values meshed in the American experience to create a highly individualistic stance toward religion...<sup>10</sup>

“In the larger perspective of western history, American-style voluntary faith represents a major step in the emancipation of individual believers from the tutelage of organized religious collectivities.”<sup>11</sup> The early twentieth-century historian Henry K. Rowe attributes the trend to the Protestant Reformation:

By eliminating the sacramental system of medieval Catholicism, and thereby emphasizing the believer’s direct relation to God, the individual in Reformation theology was made autonomous and subject to the constraints of conscience. In its

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<sup>8</sup> Roof and McKinney, 47

<sup>9</sup> Roof and McKinney, 48

<sup>9</sup> Roof and McKinney, 43

<sup>11</sup> Roof and McKinney, 44



early phase this notion meant the individual was responsible for his or her relation to God *within* the framework of an institutionalized church; over time the voluntary principle was extended to choosing the framework itself, to deciding as a mature individual what to believe and with whom to associate in the institutional expression of this belief. The American experience further contributed to this democratizing process by according legitimacy to religious choice as a fundamental principle.<sup>12</sup>

As we can see, individualism as it relates to religion in the West already has its roots in the 16th century. However, these roots aren't quite as deep as they might appear to be at first glance. While the factors described above most certainly contributed to the prevalence of the current tendency towards individualism, they were but a mere prelude to what was to come four hundred years later.

America in the 1950's was, by many accounts, a society built on conformity. Significantly different from the decade that would follow it, this decade was characterized by an emphasis on morality, civic participation, and a general sense of purpose. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney describe the period following the conclusion of WWII:

The postwar economic boom, an upwardly mobile population, life in the suburbs, and above all, the cold war ideology had served to create at mid-century an America in which affirmations of solidarity and normative consensus were possible. Many value commitments and behaviors, along with a generalized emphasis on religiosity, were widely shared in the fifties.<sup>13</sup>

The religious climate of the period is of particular significance because it was through religion that so much of what people were feeling was expressed. As Roof and McKinney explain,

In such a climate, churchgoing was an expression of belonging and civic loyalty. Religiosity flourished as a way for individuals and families to identify themselves as Americans, and public piety was very much in evidence as an expression of the nation's core values.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Henry K. Rowe as cited in Roof and McKinney, 45

<sup>13</sup> Roof and McKinney, 46

<sup>14</sup> Roof and McKinney, 46

Demographics tell the same story: "In the 1950's roughly one in every four Americans reported membership in such church-related groups [such as Sunday schools, Bible study groups, and church socials] apart from church membership itself."<sup>15</sup> As is evident from this data, the postwar generation found comfort and support in the organized religious community during the 1950's. But the baby boom that also typified this era would soon prove to be an enormous influence upon the religious and cultural tendencies of the 1960's and beyond. Raised in a heavily devout age, children of the 1950's, often dubbed baby-boomers, came to resent the coercive feeling associated with the authority afforded, among other things, by organized religion. It was this resentment, coupled with prosperity -- which allowed people to start thinking about bigger social issues beyond where their next meal was coming from -- that fueled the counter-culture movement of the 1960's and set into motion irreversible trends in American religion.

Roof and McKinney tell us that the cultural experience of the baby-boomers is of great significance:

They would emerge as "carriers" of a distinct set of cultural orientations which would set them apart. Exposed to experiences unlike those of any previous generation and deeply influenced by a middle-class ethos that had become insecure and unstable, many of the children of the churchgoing sector would rebel against the utilitarian culture as well as the conventional moralisms of the churches. Their break with the traditional values and lifestyles combined with their numbers to make them the "lead generation" of American society.<sup>16</sup>

By sheer quantity alone, this "generation of seekers" as Roof referred to them, outnumbered any other in the country. As teenagers and young adults during the 1960's, their experiences came to define the decade. And though the height of the counterculture movement has long

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<sup>15</sup> Putnam, 70

<sup>16</sup> Roof and McKinney, 60

since ended, its influence remains with us, shaping religious trends into the twenty-first century.

Roof and McKinney further clarify the experience of the baby-boomers:

Their definitions of social reality were influenced by discrepancies in American life, between the ideal and the actual, the way things ought to be and how they are. These discrepancies were so acutely perceived in the generation's formative years that few age-cohorts in recent memory have felt so intensely in the pains and passions of the times. Caught up in the search for fulfillment and commitments transcending middle-class utilitarian values, many were deeply touched by the great causes and tragic events of their era.<sup>17</sup>

Touched by social issues of the 1960's and moved to action based on their beliefs, baby-boomers sought to break free from the titles and social structure they perceived to be limiting to their existence. As Roof and McKinney explain, "the categories of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, and social class were all challenged and discredited as legal and de facto barriers to the pursuit of the self."<sup>18</sup> And seeing as how self-fulfillment was the highest goal, it should come as no surprise that the manner in which social institutions and their functions were viewed changed in accordance with the shift in perception of the self. "The twin aspects of fulfillment – salvation and social justice – gave rise to grater autonomy of the individual and reinforced the view that religious institutions should serve individuals, not vice versa."<sup>19</sup> Additionally, spirituality soon became the means through which self-fulfillment was achieved, or at the very least, sought out. Increasingly, Americans sought to find a deeper, emotional connection to the religious ritual in which they were begrudgingly engaged, in a last, desperate attempt to preserve some semblance of the traditions passed down by their ancestors.

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<sup>17</sup> Roof and McKinney, 61

<sup>18</sup> Roof and McKinney, 49

<sup>19</sup> Roof and McKinney, 50

In the decades that followed, the quest for individual fulfillment that began in the 1960's continued to develop and expand. Young, college graduates were most affected by this tendency, and though into the 1980's many if not most maintained ties to mainstream religious institutions, they nonetheless sought to find personal contentment within the borders of established religion. Stress was placed "...upon wholeness and experience in faith. There was an external authority, but it was to be confirmed in personal experience."<sup>20</sup> And though it may have seemed as if a renewed interest in personal experience might lead to an increase in the rate of church affiliation, a heightened emphasis upon autonomy and choice, coupled with an increase in geographic mobility, created a cultural reality in which institutional membership was consistently tenuous. "Institutional dissent found new legitimacy on the grounds that the participants themselves could best decide if 'their' church was serving them as they wished;"<sup>21</sup> if one didn't feel he was getting what he needed in one house of worship, he could easily transfer to another. Or, as was increasingly becoming the case in North America, one might profess his belief in God, but choose not to affiliate altogether. Religious institutions had their work cut out for them. With so many changes taking place, churches and synagogues had to alter their worship styles in order to accommodate a younger, more educated and sophisticated population, as well as to keep its interest.

Within a Jewish context, the paradigm described above held true as well.

Like Americans generally, many Jews during these years shifted the emphasis of their faith from moralism to aesthetics and devotion. They sought to complement social justice and rationally oriented teachings that appealed to the mind with spiritual and emotive religious experiences that appealed to the

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<sup>20</sup> Roof and McKinney, 49

<sup>21</sup> Roof and McKinney, 50

heart and the soul, incorporating music, dance, mystical teachings, and healing.<sup>22</sup>

And so, beginning in the 1960's, a perceptible shift in practice began emerging among American Jews. No longer attracted to the rationalist and moralist strains in Jewish tradition, they began to explore the works of such thinkers as Gershom Scholem, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Martin Buber. And though, as historian Jonathan Sarna points out, these writings aided in a reconnection with the Jewish spiritual past, "the renewal of traditional spiritual practices...owed a much greater debt to charismatic figures...who ministered to Jewish religious seekers and became, in the process, Jewish spiritual revivalists whose influence spread from the counterculture to the mainstream."<sup>23</sup> Under the influence of such rabbis as Shlomo Carlebach and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, American Jews rediscovered their religion, and perhaps for the first time, found meaning in its rituals. The phenomenon is best summed up by Sarna:

Jewish Renewal, a catchphrase for a range of Jewish experiments aimed at "building community, enhancing spirituality, encouraging lay participation, and instituting gender equality," emerged from the *havura* movement of the 1960's and focuses on the spiritual and experiential elements within Judaism: prayer, meditation, feminism, sexuality, and ecology; it features "dim lights, bare feet, lots of music and silence."<sup>24</sup>

As can be seen, beginning in the 1960's, the shift in approach to Jewish ritual was wholly perceptible in the area of worship. Gone was the era of high-church aesthetics and decorum; a far more tangible, participatory Judaism, as Sarna described replaced it. Drawn to smallish, intimate, self-governing *havurot* and emotionally stirring teachings, many American Jews nationwide found themselves reinventing their Judaism. Seeking meaning, they adopted the Hasidic style of ecstatic worship that emphasized music, dancing and

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<sup>22</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 2004) 345

<sup>23</sup> Sarna, 345

<sup>24</sup> Sarna, 349

storytelling. Searching for significance, they altered their formal services, attempting to make them accessible to any and all.

At first, modifications in worship style were visible only on the fringes. But soon, the tendency toward informality and participation expanded to encompass all major Jewish movements in North America. Jonathan Sarna tells us:

Indeed, synagogues of all kinds added “spiritual dimensions” to their agenda. Moving beyond their prior emphasis on rationalism and the pursuit of social justice, they encouraged congregants to experiment with rituals, to explore Jewish texts, to close their eyes and meditate, to dance, to sing.<sup>25</sup>

In the Reform movement, changes in worship services were perhaps most observable in the spheres of music and liturgy. The addition of supplementary, creative English readings to the service, and later, the introduction of music composed by Debbie Friedman and other folk-and pop-style writers, “...offered seekers, in Friedman’s words, ‘a sense of spiritual contentedness.’”<sup>26</sup> By the early 1970’s, when the movement’s previous prayer book, *Gates of Prayer*, was being developed, some of these trends began to filter into North American worship, and though many were outside the mainstream, they nonetheless had to be taken into account in making the transition from *The Union Prayer Book*. Another important trend that gained strength in the years following the publication of *Gates of Prayer*, namely the publication of synagogue-specific liturgies, will be explored in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Well into the 1990’s, the trend toward individualization and privatization in religion remained potent. Affiliation, in particular, was at a lower rate than had ever been documented among Jews. Intrigued, university professors Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M.

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<sup>25</sup> Sarna, 353

<sup>26</sup> Sarna, 354

Eisen set out to discover the basis for this tendency. In a study entitled "The Jew Within: Self, Community, and Community Among the Variety of Moderately Affiliated," Cohen and Eisen reached a number of important conclusions. Cohen and Eisen went about exploring Jewish affiliation, beginning with a series of working assumptions, two substantive and one methodological:

- "...the discovery and construction of Jewish meaning in America (as of ultimate significance more generally) occurs in the private sphere."
- "...communal loyalties and norms are no longer as powerful in shaping identity as they were even two decades ago."

~~And on methodological:~~

- "If we are to uncover these habits, we have to use a research method capable of taking us inside and beyond the reports of public behavior."<sup>27</sup>

Their findings shed some light upon recent trends in Jewish worship.

In a pamphlet preceding the book-length publication of their report, Cohen and Eisen summarized the results of their study. "The first and most important finding, which emerges from it, is double-edged," they write.

On the one hand, we can state with confidence that the quest for Jewish meaning is extremely important to our subjects, as the search for meaning (analyzed by previous researchers) is important to contemporary Americans more generally. On the other hand, however, the search for meaning is complicated and at times precluded by a variety of factors.<sup>28</sup>

And though "...subjects reported a strong desire to find a sense of direction and ultimate purpose, and the wish to find it largely or entirely in the framework of Jewish practices and beliefs," they "overwhelmingly follow the pattern explained years ago by Robert Bellah and

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<sup>27</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Community, and Commitment Among the Variety of Moderately Affiliated* (Boston, Los Angeles: The Susan & David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, 1998) 3-4

<sup>28</sup> Cohen and Eisen, 5

his co-authors in their *Habits of the Heart*.<sup>29</sup> While so many of the study participants spoke of a desire – even a need – for kinship, community remained a secondary concern to individualism, which continued to be the driving force in the lives of most. “Community and commitment, in fact, are repeatedly redefined and apprehended by our subjects in terms acceptable to sovereign and ever-questioning selves,” Cohen and Eisen report. “Only in those terms is commitment possible and community permitted.”<sup>30</sup> As these findings illustrate, what began with the counterculture movement in the 1960’s is very much alive and well today in North American religion, including in Jewish praxis.

Speculating upon the results of their study, Cohen and Eisen make a statement of particular importance: “We readily draw at least one policy conclusion from this mystifying mélange: Communal interventions aimed at increasing Jewish identification must be correspondingly subtle and multi-faceted if they are to prove adequate to the task at hand.”

<sup>31</sup> Though seemingly insurmountable at first glance, the task proposed here by Cohen and Eisen is, in the opinion of this author, being realized.

Taking into account the revolution in American religion, that we have explored here, the recent publication of the Reform movement’s new prayer book, *Mishkan T’filah*, comes in response to the changes in demographics, worship styles, and beliefs visible in the Reform movement over the past several decades. Throughout the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will explore the process whereby this prayer book came into being, beginning with the realization that the movement would soon need a new *siddur* to replace *Gates of Prayer*, and through to an analysis of the newly-arrived *Mishkan T’filah*, its layout, contents, and reception. An oft-cited adage suggests: “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” In the production

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<sup>29</sup> Cohen and Eisen, 5-6

<sup>30</sup> Cohen and Eisen, 6

<sup>31</sup> Cohen and Eisen, 7



of *Mishkan T'filah*, the North American Reform Movement has, in a sense, done just that.

Through varied trends in worship style and affiliation our congregants called out; through its new *siddur*, *Mishkan T'filah*, the Central Conference of American Rabbis has answered.

## CHAPTER TWO 1975-1985 AND BEYOND

### ▪ The Publication of *Gates of Prayer* and reactions to it

In the fall of 1975, the Reform movement's first new prayer book in over thirty years was published. Entitled *Gates of Prayer*, this *siddur* most certainly signaled that changes were on the horizon -- at least where worship was concerned. Significantly different from its predecessor *The Union Prayer Book*, *Gates of Prayer* reflected shifts in cultural attitudes and, as Rabbi Herbert Bronstein suggested, a move from exclusivity to inclusiveness. Everything about this prayer book was distinctive, yet its reception, although quite positive at first, would indicate that, ultimately, new doesn't always mean improved...at least not in the eyes of North American Reform congregants and their rabbis.

Initially, responses to the newly published volume -- *Gates of Prayer* -- were overwhelmingly favorable. In fact, the only significant negative comment heard with any frequency was that the book was too heavy. Reports of the Liturgy Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), printed each year in the organization's yearbook, painted the picture of a movement-wide worship metamorphosis. "The volume has been received enthusiastically by the representatives of every school of thought within our movement, from the far left to the far right," they reported in 1976. "It has elicited gratifying comments from spokesmen in the wider Jewish community."<sup>32</sup> Two years later Rabbi Stanley Dreyfus, then chair of the Liturgy Committee conveyed: "We estimate that some 550 congregations (representing about 75% of the Reform movement) are now using *GOP*."<sup>33</sup> A year later, the estimated percentage of congregations in the Union using *Gates of*

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<sup>32</sup> A. Standley Dreyfus, "Report of the Liturgy Committee," *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, 86 (1976) 47

<sup>33</sup> Dreyfus, "Report," *Yearbook*, 88 (1978) 39

*Prayer* rose to 85%. With such statistics reported, members of the Executive Board of the CCAR could breath a sigh of relief. *Gates of Prayer* it seems, had been not only accepted, but adopted as the definitive North American Reform liturgy as well. But the honeymoon would soon be over...

Beginning in 1981, only six years after the publication of the prayer book, Liturgy Committee reports begin to paint a very different picture of the book's reception, alluding to its tenuous prospect for longevity. That year, a report distributed by CCAR Executive Secretary Elliot Stevens stated that there was no activity in the sale of liturgical materials. It was further reported that, as a marketing experiment, copies of *Gates of Prayer* were being packaged together with copies of the movement's new High Holiday *machzor*, *Gates of Repentance*, a fact which would seem to indicate a critical effort on the part of the CCAR to sustain dwindling sales of the *siddur*. Additionally, that same year a number of related items came before the Liturgy Committee: First, for the first time since the publication of *Gates of Prayer*, a question regarding the volume's predecessor, the *Union Prayer Book*, was brought forward. "A question was raised as to whether the *Union Prayer Book* should be allowed to go out of print, or should be forced out of print immediately," the report stated. And though "it was decided to defer discussion until such time as present stocks were near depletion," the mere need to raise the issue indicates that *Gates of Prayer* might not have taken hold quite as strongly as was previously assumed. Second, a series of discussions surrounding issues of language began to take shape during this year, discussions that would continue well into the future, and specifically into the process of creating the movement's subsequent *siddur*, *Mishkan T'filah*.

"It was moved to begin a process of emending English texts in other CCAR liturgies along the lines of the revisions of the *Hagaddah*, to delete sexist language," the committee chair reported. "A suggestion was made that the opportunity be used to review the entire text of *Gates of Prayer*, with a view towards reduction of the volume's size, and bettering the flow of services."<sup>34</sup> Already in 1975, when *Gates of Prayer* was initially published, issues of gender neutrality in liturgy, and more specifically in God-language, had been given voice. However, because "the CCAR was in a wretched position economically,"<sup>35</sup> *Gates of Prayer* was published in a hurry. Consequently, there was no time while preparing this *siddur* to entertain such a discussion, nor had the debate become movement-wide quite yet. The issue was raised in preparing *Gates of Repentance*, the new *machzor* for the High Holidays (1978); a gender-neutral version was apparently prepared and rejected for fear that the issue might be too faddish and transient. It was not until somewhere around 1984, when Dr. Lawrence Hoffman addressed attendees at a UAHC Biennial, that the urgency for textual emendation became truly apparent. "There must have been a thousand, two thousand people at that plenum," Rabbi Peter Knobel recalls in a phone interview, "and he basically said that if the CCAR doesn't do something about that and do something about that fast, people would produce their own *siddur*, and there was huge applause. And that was the moment when the CCAR decided to bring out *GOP for Shabbat and Weekdays* which was a gender-inclusive volume."<sup>36</sup> Work on these editions did not begin until the late-1980's however. The aforementioned volume, it should be noted as well, was not produced until 1994, ten years after Dr. Hoffman's call to action, but three paperback volumes of various services (*Shabbat*, weekdays, and assemblies) were published in 1992 and 1993.

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Hoffman, "Report," *Yearbook*, 91 (1981) 46

<sup>35</sup> Dr. A. Stanley Dreyfus, Interview with the Liturgy Project, 8 May, 1996

<sup>36</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

In addition to gendered God-language, another issue brought to the table in 1981 was listed in the report under the title '*Thee and Thou*'. "Herbert Bronstein made an eloquent plea for the retention of somewhat more archaic forms of English in certain instances in Reform liturgy," it was conveyed. "A consensus was achieved that flexibility be granted to the editor to use such forms where appropriate, without binding rules pro or con."<sup>37</sup> And though the issue is not raised again directly, at least within reports during the subsequent decade, its presence here is nonetheless quite noteworthy. The emergence of such concerns points both to a consciousness of the cultural shifts that took place during the preceding decades, as well as the beginnings of an understanding that the movement's six-year-old *siddur* might be flawed. In the excitement over the volume's publication, lost was a sense of perspective in evaluating the finished product. Indeed the book's editor, Rabbi Chaim Stern confessed in 1976 that "the one thing I do regret are certain deletions. I think the book is too short, people. Since there are also a few things that I regret are in, we could have ended up with same number of pages."<sup>38</sup> But it was only Cantor William Sharlin who, in an essay published in the same volume as Stern's, seemed to assess the situation regarding *Gates of Prayer* accurately. "The *Gates of Prayer* as it is will not be with us for a very long period of time," he wrote. "We already are aware of the need for certain changes in its form and content that we may like to project into an inevitable revised edition."<sup>39</sup> By 1981, it was quickly becoming evident that while *Gates of Prayer* met some of the needs of the time, it no longer accurately reflected the mood and social attitudes of American Jews, which were continuously evolving.

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<sup>37</sup> Hoffman, "Report," *Yearbook*, 91 (1981) 47

<sup>38</sup> Chaim Stern, "A Critique of *Gates of Prayer*," *Yearbook*, 86 (1976) 123

<sup>39</sup> William Sharlin, "Critique," 125

Materials in the 1982 *CCAR Yearbook* confirmed the shift in social attitudes and attempted to explain its impact upon Reform Jewish worship. Addresses and papers with titles such as: "Change and Authenticity: The Continuum of Jewish Experience," and "Autonomy and Authority: The Dilemma of Reform" appeared, highlighting further areas of concern as the decade proceeded. As Reform Judaism continued to deviate from its classical roots, Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, then Executive Vice President of the CCAR, found himself asking: "Where is our movement heading?"<sup>40</sup>

Worship, of course, was one area significantly impacted by these modifications. The influence of shifting cultural roles and attitudes can be seen most powerfully in the changing responses to *Gates of Prayer*. The year 1985 marked a decade since the prayer book's publication, and though initially it was expected to solve problems encountered in North American Reform Jewish worship, an evaluation of the prayer book after ten years of use revealed that support for the volume had lessened significantly. In the fall issue of the *CCAR Journal*, a section appeared entitled: '*Gates of Prayer*: Ten Years Later – A Symposium.' Here, twelve Reform rabbis were invited by the editor of the *Journal* to offer their feedback on *Gates of Prayer*, addressing such issues as congregant response to the prayer book, theological variety, spiritual elevation, and return to tradition. Each rabbi was posed a series of six questions, and asked to reflect on a decade spent getting to know the volume. Responses ranged in candor from the polite characterizations of *Gates of Prayer* as a "flawed success"<sup>41</sup> and imperfect to blunt criticism: "Whoever would have thought that the CCAR was capable of producing a prayerbook which makes the old *UPB* look good?!"<sup>42</sup> In short, it

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<sup>40</sup> Herbert Bronstein, "Report," *Yearbook*, 92 (1982) 151

<sup>41</sup> Harvey J. Fields, "*Gates of Prayer*: Ten Years Later – A Symposium," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Fall, 1985: 2

<sup>42</sup> Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Ten Years Later," 34

would seem that the honeymoon was over, and a rocky marriage between Reform Jews and *Gates of Prayer* had begun.

Overall, each respondent seems to have touched upon a number of issues: language, translation, variety of services, sheer size of the volume, and ease of use. Complaints were primarily voiced regarding the English in this prayer book, its lack of elegant style [à la *UPB*], and its success in translating from the Hebrew. "...The language of *GOP* is not elegant," writes Rabbi Richard N. Levy, "nor is the new book challenging. I would prefer my *Gates* to be more poetic, more conducive to chanting than reading, more insistent on drawing us back to the original texts, more confrontational in presenting the troubling ideas."<sup>43</sup> Rabbi Simeon J. Maslin concurs. "...There are features of *GOP* that annoy me every time I use it," he writes. "...The CCAR had a golden opportunity to produce a great prayerbook, one that might have become as beloved to our generation and the next as the *UPB* was to the previous generations, and we failed."<sup>44</sup> Most surprising, however, is the review submitted by Rabbi Herbert Bronstein who, less than a decade earlier, had published an essay in the *CCAR Yearbook* extolling the then-newly-published *Gates of Prayer*, which, he argued, preserved three central principles of Reform Judaism: freedom, classicism, and anti-formalism.<sup>45</sup> In 1985, rather than commend the *siddur's* role in the maintenance of Reform continuity, Bronstein launched an assault. "No single clarity of purpose, no shared understanding of what a liturgy is meant to fulfill or even what liturgy or prayer is, unifies this text," he writes. "Nor is there unity in the language of prayer. We often find flattened, diminished style in comparison with the stylistically superior *UPB I*."<sup>46</sup> After a decade of

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<sup>43</sup> Richard N. Levy, "Ten Years Later," 27-28

<sup>44</sup> Simeon J. Maslin, "Ten Years Later," 28

<sup>45</sup> Herbert Bronstein, "Critique," 115

<sup>46</sup> Herbert Bronstein, "Ten Years Later," 17

use, it seemed that, while *Gates of Prayer* was functioning, for many it was only a necessary measure taken in response to the urgent need to replace the *Union Prayer Book*. Perhaps it is Rabbi Harvey J. Fields who summed up the situation best when he wrote:

A decade after the publication of *GOP*, we know its limits. The most we can demand from *GOP* is that it provide us with a score for our sacred appointments for prayer. And the most we can hope for in a new revision, when it comes, is improved lyrics and, possibly, a more compelling and tempting melody.<sup>47</sup>

▪ **The Siddur Discussion Group Chaired by H. Leonard Poller and its Impact on the Genesis of *Mishkan T'filah***

Aware of the changes confronting the North American Reform Jewish community, the Executive Board of the CCAR, in 1985, decided to take action. In response to growing criticism of the *Gates of Prayer* and the emergent reality that this *siddur* no longer met the needs of its consumers, it appointed a group of 32 individuals, Rabbi Elyse Frishman, future editor of *Mishkan T'filah* among them, to consider what a new movement liturgy might look like. The group, dubbed The Siddur Discussion Group, became a sub-committee of the Liturgy Committee of the CCAR, and was chaired by Rabbi H. Leonard Poller, then also chair of the CCAR Liturgy and Publications Committees. "The *siddur* group was in point of fact a reaction to a felt sense that already it was necessary to begin the process of preparing for a new *siddur*," recalls Rabbi Peter Knobel, a member of the group. "There was already a felt need. It was not a hundred percent clear what those needs themselves were and that was part of the mission of the *siddur* group...to evaluate where we were and to ask where we

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<sup>47</sup> Harvey J. Fields, "Ten Years Later," 22



ought to go.”<sup>48</sup> The group “met either annually or twice a year to begin to talk about the various issues connected with the production of a new *siddur*.”<sup>49</sup>

Taking into account much of the feedback expressed in the symposium in the *CCAR Journal*, the Siddur Discussion Group went to work, focusing its attention on issues of language and content in particular.<sup>50</sup> A year later, in 1986, Elliott Stevens reported in the *CCAR Yearbook* that “...sales of *Gates of Prayer* seemed to be diminishing...”<sup>51</sup> and concurrently, the Liturgy Committee announced a new, long-term liturgical project. “The committee welcomed T. Carmi, the Israeli Professor of Hebrew Literature and Poetry who has been engaged by the CCAR to research material and make some selections for consideration for an eventual future liturgy,”<sup>52</sup> writes Herbert Bronstein, then Chair of the Liturgy Committee in his report in the *Yearbook*. Known as The Carmi Project, the venture undertook to find Hebrew poetry appropriate for incorporation into a liturgical volume. Initially engaged “...because of a theory that the history of liturgy had to do with the idea that the same process that produces poetry, produces liturgy,”<sup>53</sup> Carmi began the process of gathering potential pieces. “Carmi described his work in going through material appropriate for the themes in *Shema uvirchoteha* and in the *Amida*,” reports Bronstein, “and how his search for material had produced hundreds of examples, all post-biblical and primarily medieval, which he then sorted by the particular themes in those two sections.”<sup>54</sup> Though “the committee agreed that a conceptual framework for a new prayerbook would be necessary before material could be further culled and interwoven with liturgical

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<sup>48</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>49</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>50</sup> See appendix A for a sample meeting agenda

<sup>51</sup> Bronstein, “Report,” *Yearbook*, 96 (1986) 184

<sup>52</sup> Bronstein, “Report,” *Yearbook*, 96 (1986) 187

<sup>53</sup> Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, personal interview, 2 December, 2007

<sup>54</sup> Bronstein, “Report,” *Yearbook*, 96 (1986) 187

material,"<sup>55</sup> the Carmi Project, begun here, served as an important precursor for the inclusion of Israeli poetry and liturgy in *Mishkan T'filah*.

In the report of the Liturgy Committee in the *CCAR Yearbook* in 1988, Rabbi Poller updated the Conference on the project.

Rabbi Bronstein described the work of a small committee that was beginning to sift through and translate materials that will one day wind up in a new CCAR prayerbook, based on materials supplied by T. Carmi. Questions were raised as to whether the new volume would replace or be an alternate to *Gates of Prayer*; it was agreed to by consensus to defer that question until the project takes more coherent shape.<sup>56</sup>

A year later, "Rabbis Poller and Bronstein... noted that the ultimate form in which the material now in preparation would appear was still undetermined."<sup>57</sup> At this juncture, time was of the essence, and though invested in The Carmi Project, the committee also realized it would have to produce something sooner rather than later. As such, in 1990,

the committee voted to pursue two options simultaneously: the development of a new *Siddur*, under the co-chairmanship of Herbert Bronstein, using the Carmi material as a basis but building the new *Siddur* from the ground up; and development of an interim Shabbat prayerbook, using gender-neutral liturgies for immediate development while the new *Siddur* is pending. The motion approved was made by Rabbi Bronstein, and called for the interim volume to be a modest production with two services for *Kabbalat Shabbat*, a festival service, with two daily evening and morning services (this was later modified by the Executive Board, when considering the proposal, to exclude daily and festival services).<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, despite what had been anticipated, the Carmi Project fizzled. "It never ended up where we thought it would," recalls Rabbi Knobel. "Carmi did end up identifying poetry and we had a group of people translating that poetry but it didn't work

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<sup>55</sup> Bronstein, "Report," *Yearbook*, 96 (1986) 187

<sup>56</sup> H. Leonard Poller, "Report," *Yearbook*, 98 (1988) 136

<sup>57</sup> Poller, "Report," *Yearbook*, 99 (1989) 201

<sup>58</sup> Poller, "Report," *Yearbook*, 100 (1990) 135

out in the way we would have hoped.”<sup>59</sup> Rabbi Bronstein, too, chose to resign his post as editor of the new siddur for personal reasons.<sup>60</sup> The Carmi Project does not appear in the reports of the Liturgy Committee in the *CCAR Yearbook* past 1990.

But the Carmi Project was not the sole component of the Siddur Discussion Group. “...One of the aspects of that was for us to deliver to each other learned papers and to set the groundwork for what would be a new *siddur*,”<sup>61</sup> recalls Rabbi Knobel. The papers dealt with various issues related to the preparation of a new prayer book such as prayer language, gender-neutrality, and theology. In 1992, a number of those papers appeared in the summer issue of the *CCAR Journal* as part of a piece entitled: ‘Symposium: Preparing a New *Siddur*.’ By this point in time, it had become obvious that *Gates of Prayer* was in some sense outdated; it no longer reflected the beliefs of its users. Cultural shifts begun in the 1960’s continued, and this in turn influenced attitudes as they related to worship. Notwithstanding feedback on *Gates of Prayer* provided in 1985, it was first and foremost the changing face of the North American Reform Jewish community that drove the work of the Siddur Discussion Group, namely feminism (now many women were rabbis), the increasing number of Jews by choice, and more interest in spirituality. In an introduction to the papers published in the *CCAR Journal*, H. Leonard Poller contextualized the work of the Liturgy Committee:

We have begun to work toward the realization of a principal long term objective: a *siddur* for the twenty-first century that would at once express the ideals that have sustained our people through the centuries, while taking account of the ever-shifting perspectives of Jews and Jewish life in the modern world. We are very much aware of the need to agree on some patterns of thought and expression that will bring our forthcoming liturgies into line with the variety of theological views in our movement – a challenge

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<sup>59</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>60</sup> Bronstein, 2 December, 2007

<sup>61</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

we must face up to very soon. As the Liturgy Committee feels itself under no time pressure to publish a new *siddur*, we plan for our future liturgies to benefit from the carefully considered expertise and opinions of a wide range of professionals, specialists, and interested worshippers.<sup>62</sup>

With these considerations in mind, readers were treated to a sample of the work produced by the Siddur Discussion Group.

"The Feminist Critique of Language," by Rabbi Donna Berman, argued that "...language is often confused with reality itself. Therefore we must be careful in how we use it and discerning in how we understand it..."<sup>63</sup> Metaphor is often too narrow, she tells us, and gender-neutral language is unacceptable in the eyes of feminists because "inclusiveness can happen only by naming God/ess in female as well as male metaphors."<sup>64</sup> In a paper entitled "Religious Language for a New Millennium" Dr. Edward Graham also speaks of the importance of language. He identifies a need to recognize the power of figurative language and incorporate more of it into our liturgy, and concludes that unless bigger issues relating to language are addressed, whatever liturgy is ultimately produced, it will either be rejected or accepted, only begrudgingly so.

In "The Dramaturgy of Reform Worship," Rabbi David A. Katz explores the similarities between a theatre production and a worship service, suggesting ways in which to expand the active role of worshippers in a service. "Our prayer service...should encourage the public expression of relationships,"<sup>65</sup> he writes, and goes on to suggest that congregants can do much more than just sit and stand. "We must realize that imagination is necessary in order to worship, and that we must utilize every strategy we know to unleash the power of

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<sup>62</sup> H. Leonard Poller, "Symposium: Preparing a New *Siddur*," *Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Summer, 1992: 2

<sup>63</sup> Rabbi Donna Berman, "The Feminist Critique of Language," *Journal*, 1992: 6

<sup>64</sup> Berman, "Feminist Critique," 9

<sup>65</sup> Rabbi David Katz, "The Dramaturgy of Reform Worship," *Journal*, 1992: 28

the mind and the longings of the heart.”<sup>66</sup> Each of these papers, initially presented in the Siddur Discussion Group, was published in the *CCAR Journal*, as a part of the process leading toward the creation of a new *siddur*. The papers highlight just a few of the fundamental issues that were being explored by the Liturgy Committee.

In 1994, an update on the work of the Siddur Discussion Group appeared in the *CCAR Yearbook*. “It was agreed that decisions on publishing a new *siddur* would not be made until the research -- This is the Lilly / Cummings project research, called the “Siddur Project of the Liturgy Committee” above. The project was approved at the 1993 CCAR convention -- had been completed, with the hope that the *Siddur* Group could meet in about a year.” It is unclear [to me] whether this meeting ever actually took place. Dates noted in *Mishkan T’filah* suggest that formal work of the Siddur Discussion Group came to an end already in 1993, and as I was unable to see many notes from the meetings of this sub-committee, I am only able to speculate as to the nature of discussions that took place and decisions that were made. Still, despite the lack of resources, at least one thing is apparent with regard to the project and its significance to the development of *Mishkan T’filah*. The work begun by the Siddur Discussion Group was extraordinarily important in beginning to determine what was needed in a prayer book for the twenty-first century. The concerns raised within the context of this sub-committee drew attention to the necessity for something beyond mere revision of *Gates of Prayer*. The work of the Siddur Discussion Group, in some sense, paved the way for future endeavors in the process of creating *Mishkan T’filah*, most notably, The Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development, also known as, The Lilly / Cummings Study.

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<sup>66</sup> Katz, “Dramaturgy,” 31

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT ON LAY INVOLVEMENT IN WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENT (THE LILLY / CUMMINGS STUDY)

In 1993, Daniel Schechter was wondering about the development of prayer books. A publisher in the health field nearing retirement, Schechter came to a realization: "One doesn't produce a product that is geared toward interaction without testing."<sup>67</sup> Curious about this realization, particularly as it related to liturgy, he approached his friend Jim Wind, a Lutheran Minister and PhD who was on the staff of the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics. From Wind, Schechter received the names of Christian clergy – relatively few because he didn't want to over-exaggerate the situation -- whom he could contact to find out if they were thinking about the same issue. A number of them responded, suggesting that Schechter might be on to something. It was only when Wind called and asked how his project was going that Schechter made the connection between his curiosity and the Reform movement's project to create a new prayer book. What began as one man's inquisitiveness wound up as one of the most crucial steps in the development of *Mishkan T'filah*.

A congregant at Beth Emet: The Free Synagogue in Evanston, Illinois, Dan Schechter was an active leader in the Reform Movement. Having served on both the Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and as chair of the UAHC Joint Commission on Worship, he had demonstrated a great interest in and commitment to liturgy and its development. By the time Schechter received Jim Wind's phone call, Wind was working for the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis, Indiana, which had a vested interest in faith-related studies. Schechter's musings and the Lilly Endowment seemed like a perfect

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<sup>67</sup> Schechter, 14 October, 2007

match; there was no time to waste getting started on the project. That evening, Schechter called his rabbi, Peter Knobel, who was serving as Chair of the Liturgy Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the two met for breakfast the next morning.

Rabbi Peter Knobel recalls the process:

About ten years after the publication of *Gates of Prayer* there was something that was established that was called the Siddur Group under the leadership of Rabbi H. Leonard Poller, z”l, who was chair of the [CCAR] Liturgy Committee. It was a group of rabbis, with one or two cantors and one layperson who presented learned papers to each other over several years about what a new siddur ought to look at... Dan Schechter, the one layperson in the group, came up with a strange idea. He said, ‘Gee, we ought to know what’s going on in congregations with respect to worship, and if we’re going to create a new siddur, we ought to take into consideration the Jew in the pew.’<sup>68</sup>

“He was concerned that we were sort of just talking to each other.”<sup>69</sup>

Knobel responded enthusiastically to Schechter’s idea to find out what congregants wanted in worship and contacted Rabbi Joseph Glazer, then Executive Vice-President of the CCAR. Glazer, too, supported Schechter’s vision, and he encouraged Knobel and Schechter to travel to the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis. Schechter’s presentation about the way we study the development of books was received favorably, and he and Knobel left the Lilly Endowment with an invitation to prepare a grant proposal. Ultimately, the Lilly Endowment provided a grant, and Knobel and Schechter went to work with Glazer in order to figure out how Schechter’s ideas could be implemented in conjunction with a new *siddur*. “Joe was in many ways, as he was in so much else, the impetus for lots of things that happened in the CCAR,” recalls Knobel. “And it was already clear to Joe that we had to

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<sup>68</sup> Rabbi Peter S. Knobel, Distance Learning Class Session on the Development of *Mishkan T’filah*, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH, Focused Learning Session, August 28, 2006

<sup>69</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

prepare for what was going to succeed *Gates of Prayer*.”<sup>70</sup> Their collaboration proved fruitful, and out of Schechter’s initial idea was born “The Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development.”

Out of Jim Wind’s suggestion that the project ought to have some “Jewish money” in it, Knobel and Schechter approached the Nathan Cummings Foundation where they met with Rabbi Rachel Cowen. Impressed by the pair’s presentation, the Foundation awarded Knobel and Schechter a grant. With financial backing in place, and the CCAR’s blessings, lay leader Daniel Schechter and Rabbi Peter Knobel were now ready to embark upon a three-year journey that would ultimately influence the future of worship in the Reform movement in the twenty-first century. The project informally called “The Lilly / Cummings Study” was now officially underway.

Initially, there were no denominational goals set for the study. Rather, investigation of trends in the development of liturgy spanned a spectrum of faith traditions. “The exploration of faith and worship was at the core of our work,”<sup>71</sup> explains Schechter. And to that end, leading figures in the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish communities, who were writing their own prayer books, were consulted, to get a sense of the process they had undergone. Results of those consultations were overwhelmingly clear: “Regardless of religious tradition, each group with which we met has faced challenges of changing demographics, new understandings of gender language, as well as generational and regional differences in a range of issues,” Schechter details. The Reform movement was no exception to the rule. In 1997, Daniel Schechter addressed the CCAR saying: “Spiritually and intellectually Judaism is in a period of transition...few people join congregations for

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<sup>70</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>71</sup> Daniel S. Schechter, Text of his Presentation for the Symposium on “The Role of Laity in the Development of Liturgy and Liturgical Change” at the Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Miami, Florida, June 22, 1997



strictly ideological reasons.” As attendance at services dwindled, it was becoming increasingly clear that, among other reasons, lack of fulfillment in worship played a significant role in congregants’ decision to stay home or go elsewhere on a Friday evening.

In order to explore the issue further,<sup>72</sup> as part of a larger project on the role of laity in liturgical change and renewal, the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1994 commissioned an ethnographic study of congregants’ worship experience in representative member congregations of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.<sup>73</sup> The purpose of the study was two-fold: to discover how contemporary Reform Jews in North America value their worship; and to devise and test a method for involving lay people in the process of appraising and renewing liturgy.<sup>72</sup> The services of Dr. Robert Rotenberg, a professor of cultural anthropology at De Paul University in Chicago, were retained in order to produce and analyze the results of a self-study of congregational worship.

In a document detailing the process of the study, the following description appeared:

A self-study is a conversation among a group of congregants about their worship experiences individually and collectively. Decisions about what is important to say about the worship experience lie entirely within the group. The group decides how the conversation proceeds and how it is presented in a final report. The self-study allows the group to decide what they want worship to achieve and to discover whether that is, in fact, what is happening.<sup>73</sup>

The concept was simple: Bring together a group of 8-12 individuals “...representative of the congregation.”<sup>74</sup> This meant that each self-study team was to be composed of adult members of the congregation whose ages, genders, length of membership in the congregation, Hebrew literacy, and attendance at weekly Shabbat services differed from one

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<sup>72</sup> Summary Report of the Research Components of the Project on the Role of Laity in Liturgical Change and Renewal, Project on the Role of Laity in Liturgical Change and Renewal, Central Conference of American Rabbis, September, 1996: 2

<sup>73</sup> Summary of Procedures for Self-Study of Congregational Worship, 1

<sup>74</sup> Summary, “Self study,” 1

another. The hope was that diversity among team members would most accurately represent the viewpoints of the largest segment of the congregation.

Once established, each team was charged with a task: Attend three consecutive Shabbat evening services, and write about your experiences in a worship diary.<sup>75</sup> Each team-member was given a form to complete including the date of the service attended and a series of questions and themes for discussion. "What were you feeling at the beginning of the service tonight?" "How did participating in the service make you feel?" "Did the service work for you?" Participants were asked to contemplate their personal worship experiences through an examination of themes such as prayer, prayer book, music, movement, community, and God, and to reflect upon their experience of the service in writing.

At the end of the three weeks the teams met several times for discussion and to write reports characterizing and appraising their experience in congregational worship. The individual diaries and group reports were submitted to the researcher, who also visited seven of the congregations, observing worship services and conducting discussions with self-study teams.<sup>76</sup>

Though straightforward, this process proved to be both the fulfillment of Schechter's vision, involving lay people in the process of creating a new prayer book, and a useful tool in determining contemporary trends in worship.

Prior to this initiative, Reform Jewish prayer books were created within a "rabbinical vacuum," so to speak. First published in 1975, *Gates of Prayer* was a product of a single editor, Chaim Stern, responding to the directions of the CCAR Liturgy Committee alone. Its contents represented, at least to some degree, a learned analysis of its predecessor, *The Union Prayer Book*, and reactions to its flaws. And though already ten years after its publication *Gates of Prayer* had evoked similar critical responses from the rabbinate, an older, wiser,

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<sup>75</sup> See appendix B for forms and related documents

<sup>76</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 2

Central Conference chose to take its time in the creation of a new prayer book. The Lilly Endowment knew that the CCAR was serious when the Conference indicated that it would hold up preparation of the *siddur* until the study was complete and its findings were taken under advisement, recalls Schechter. And though the report Rotenberg ultimately presented proved more comprehensive than had initially been anticipated and necessitated refinement<sup>77</sup>, the value of the study having taken place and its results having been considered is quite telling. "This is a time of great creativity in liturgy and music in the Reform movement,"<sup>78</sup> stated the summary report of the project in 1996. From the very beginning it was evident that the genesis of this prayer book could not be approached like that of its predecessors. Culture was changing and researchers recognized that, "...in many respects worship in the congregation is markedly different. There is more overt congregational involvement in worship."<sup>79</sup>

In a letter dated April 29, 1994, Rabbi Peter Knobel and Daniel Schechter addressed rabbis and congregational presidents, extending a formal invitation to participate in the self-study. "We are writing to every member congregation of the Union of [American] Hebrew Congregations in North America through their rabbis and presidents to enlist as much participation in this project as possible," they wrote. "We want to 'take a snapshot' of contemporary worship in all of it[s] variety." The letter went on to detail the process of the self-study, and added one important plea: "The future of the Reform movement depends on increasing the number of members committed to supporting our congregations. Providing worship experiences that are meaningful to the broadest range of congregants can be an important part of building that commitment." Through these words Knobel and Schechter

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<sup>77</sup> Schechter, 14 October, 2007

<sup>78</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 2

<sup>79</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 3

reiterated their commitment both to the study and to the centrality of its role in preparing a new Reform *siddur*. And their dedication to and enthusiasm for the project was echoed nationwide when forty-seven UAHC congregations signed up to participate in the self-study of congregational worship.

Over the course of two years, congregations all over North America engaged the self-study on worship. In a detailed report submitted to Knobel and Schechter at the end of the process, Dr. Robert Rotenberg painted this picture: "When these Reform Jews described their expectations of worship, they spoke of participating in a community, hoping to find renewal of spirit through ritual, music, and intellectual engagement with Torah."<sup>80</sup> Rotenberg's analysis revealed a large number of consistent responses from participants, as well as a wide variety of opinions expressed with respect to specific prayers, rituals, and trends. Beginning with the state of mind in which people enter the synagogue, Rotenberg explores every aspect of the Reform worship experience. What follows is a generalized summary of his findings.

The worshipping community must be reconstituted at each service, and making the transition from the demands of everyday living to the renewing experience of Shabbat worship is far from automatic... How the transition is managed affects the quality of their [the study participants'] worship.<sup>81</sup>

It is significant that the first concern Rotenberg notes with regard to worship appears even before the service has formally begun. Worship encompasses so much more than the words people utter while gathered together in the sanctuary, and if among its purposes is to create a transcendent emotional experience, then worship must begin by setting a tone. "In their diaries study participants described their feelings as they arrived at the synagogue. Overwhelmingly, they reported being rushed, preoccupied with business or family concerns,

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<sup>80</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 2

<sup>81</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 3

or tired.”<sup>82</sup> People’s hectic day-to-day lives, centered in the secular world, leave them little time to breathe. Congregants come to Shabbat services hoping to recharge and reconnect, and the atmosphere in the building can make or break the entire experience for them.

“Many remarked on the need for a welcoming atmosphere at the synagogue and an opportunity to greet one another before entering the sanctuary,”<sup>83</sup> writes Rotenberg. And as can be seen through their diary entries, in addition to a warm atmosphere, community is a second crucial factor in the study-participants’ experience of worship.

Dr. Rotenberg describes the study participants:

These were persons who wanted through Shabbat worship consciously to link themselves to the Jewish people... They wanted to be part of a worshipping community that affirmed and celebrated Jewish ethical precepts and studied them as a guide to daily living for individuals and for the group.<sup>84</sup>

From of old, Judaism, and, in particular, Jewish worship, has been centered around community. One need not interact with another person in order to pour out the longings of one’s soul. But we do not live out our lives in isolation, and in the moments of our greatest triumphs or tragedies, we depend upon our communities for empathy and support. The experience of Shabbat worship extends far beyond prayer; particularly for those who attend synagogue regularly, community is a fundamental element of the worship experience that keeps them coming back. For those who attend services less frequently, motivations to attend include “...seeking ‘healing,’ and a desire to educate children in their Jewish heritage.”<sup>85</sup>

Of course, the focus of worship is prayer, and to this end, a congregation’s choice of *siddur* and the manner in which it is used become fundamental to the creation of a

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<sup>82</sup> Summary, “Research Components,” 3

<sup>83</sup> Summary, “Research Components,” 3

<sup>84</sup> Summary, “Research Components,” 6

<sup>85</sup> Summary, “Research Components,” 6

meaningful worship experience. Unfortunately, regarding *Gates of Prayer*, responses were not always so favorable. Rotenberg found that

...According to the self-study teams' diaries and reports, many who come to services cannot find transliterations of prayers or songs and do not understand how the prayerbook is arranged, the typographical cues, or the differences among the services.<sup>86</sup>

Interestingly, however, the overwhelming majority of congregants who participated in this study expressed a desire for continued use of Hebrew in the service. This desire comes in spite of the fact that "...almost half of the participants reported little or no ability to read Hebrew."<sup>87</sup> It seems that "reading Hebrew prayers together is perceived as essential in the creation of the Jewish worshipping community."<sup>88</sup> But, as Dr. Rotenberg also discovered, understanding what is being said was also important to study participants. Further discussions on the topics of translation and transliteration, as well as their placement in the *siddur*, became central foci as preparation of *Mishkan T'filah* got underway. With an increased use of Hebrew in worship services nationwide, these issues remain at the core of Reform Jews' dialogue surrounding the topic of worship.

Despite a professed emotional attachment to Hebrew, prayer in English remained important to the overall experience of worship. "The interpretive passage in the English version of the 'Aleinu' prayer in *Gates of Prayer* beginning 'May the time not be distant, O Lord,' was consistently cited by participants as an inspiring use of English prayer language."<sup>89</sup> Of course, difficulties relating to the language, literary style, and affect of English passages in the prayer book remained, as did frustration surrounding the use of masculine God-

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<sup>86</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 7

<sup>87</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 8

<sup>88</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 8

<sup>89</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 10

language. Entries in participants' worship diaries revealed that "responsive readings worked the least well..." and that in the mid 1990's, there was more need than ever to address the issue of gender-neutral God-language in the context of Reform prayer.

But gender-neutral God-language was only the beginning.

Guidelines for participants suggested that they reflect on their personal "spiritual" experience and whether "God was present" in the worship experience that they were writing about in their worship diaries. Their responses indicate that gender language issues are only a part of many Reform Jews' theological difficulties. These were people struggling with what they found in their prayerbooks.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore,

a common theme in another group of comments quoted in the research report is the difficulty or impossibility of having the "experience of God" during the prayer service, but of finding a "sense of God's presence" out-of-doors in settings of natural beauty, or of finding "spirituality" in science-based contemplation of the 'whole of creation.'<sup>91</sup>

As these results would seem to indicate, the theological struggles of Reform Jewish congregants in the mid-1990's ran deep. With one foot in the secular world and the other in the Jewish one, worshippers were also torn between the rationalism espoused historically by Reform Judaism and the desire for a prayer experience in which their spirits were truly moved and they could genuinely feel the presence of God. As worship diaries were submitted, it became increasingly clear that current worship trends were doing little to meet the needs of congregants who struggled with their personal theologies. The God they sought out – or in some cases, intentionally discounted -- did not exist in the pages of the *Gates of Prayer*, and a radical shift in the movement's approach to worship would have to occur if Reform Jewish congregants' desires were to be met. Absent from Dr. Rotenberg's report, however, is any indication of the study participants' background in Jewish theology

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<sup>90</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 11

<sup>91</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 11

and philosophy. Diary entries speak only to the needs and desires of each individual, outside the context of both his or her community, as well as the context of greater Jewish belief. In analyzing these responses in particular, it is important then to remember that they can be indicative solely of the worshippers' *feelings* regarding their experiences of prayer.

As the previous categories mentioned here would indicate, worshippers were searching for something more than they were getting. Many struggled with the language of the prayer book, and seemed to have difficulty with its scripted nature. Worship diary entries reveal that, for most, the time allotted for silent meditation in a typical service did not suffice. Most felt that while Hebrew prayers and English readings could be meaningful, they still needed a time when they could commune with the Divine one-on-one. Silence allowed them time with their individual thoughts and feelings. Study participants seemed to agree, for the most part, that three minutes of silence, at best, was not enough time to meet their needs. Again, we see in these responses a clear illustration of the move toward privatization and personalization in worship.

Though study results might seem to have indicated general dissatisfaction with worship experiences, another area explored in the study, namely "augmentation of the prayerbook", reveals that rabbis were not completely blind to the need for change. "The worship diaries note that some rabbis include additional texts, usually in the form of photocopied passages distributed to congregants as they enter the sanctuary...these materials may add immediacy and relevance to worship."<sup>92</sup> Already in the mid-1980's, many rabbis expressed their frustrations with *Gates of Prayer*. Its numerous service choices, though varied in theme and content, lacked the capacity to move congregants, due in part to their language and imagery. But until a successor was produced, it became necessary to supplement services

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<sup>92</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 14



in the *siddur* if worship was to remain vital and meaningful. Twenty years later, this style of worship translated into what we find in *Mishkan T'filah*.

Another area explored by the study was that of Torah and the rituals associated with it. Survey respondents overwhelmingly pointed to both the centrality and value of Torah in their lives, and spoke of the rituals surrounding its reading, the *hakafah* for example, as being community-building as well as lessening the distance between the *bima* and the congregation. "The Reform Jews who participated in this study wanted more from services than a symbolic encounter with tradition; they valued the intellectual challenges of Torah and sermon... They commented on the relevance of Torah study to their lives."<sup>93</sup> Often based on the weekly Torah portion, sermons were closely linked to Torah in the minds of many congregants. Study participants viewed them as a great intellectual tool that aided listeners in the application of the lessons of Torah to their modern lives. Furthermore, congregants regarded the sermon as a vehicle for "...teaching about Jewish thought and ritual practices..."<sup>94</sup> Even if its contents addressed contemporary issues, it seems that ultimately the lessons of Torah were echoed in the rabbi's address. Most respondents seemed pleased with the trend toward heightened congregational participation in Torah reading, as in other parts of the service. By taking ownership of the ritual, they could build a personal relationship with the tradition embodied in the letters on the parchment.

While worship diary entries revealed frustrations in any number of areas, one topic in particular, however, seemed to attract a bit more "negative" attention than others. A substantial number of survey respondents voiced concerns over the changing nature of synagogue worship, and advocated for the need to maintain a distinctly Reform Jewish

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<sup>93</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 15

<sup>94</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 15

identity. These congregants responded most intensely to the addition of ritual garb, such as *kippot* and *tallitot*, and the inclusion of more body movement in prayer, i.e. bowing and swaying. For generations, in the interest of both upholding decorum and blending into the surrounding Christian environment, Reform Jewish worship was devoid of anything deemed “too Jewish.” Congregants raised in the classical Reform tradition seemed to see the addition of these elements as a threat to what they knew to be an authentic expression of Judaism. As one study participant put it: “Are we hearing that our own traditions in Reform are not good enough for us anymore? ‘Orthodox’ is better, not just a personal option?”<sup>95</sup> For years, the classical style of worship defined the Reform movement. The desire to reclaim tradition, illustrated here through this congregant’s concerns, is congruent with trends described in the first chapter of this thesis. With the emergence of *havurot* and similar groups that rose out of the counter-culture movement, new emphasis was placed upon spirituality and the derivation of personal meaning out of ritual. What little ritual was being practiced in the synagogue was not enough to satisfy those who hungered for more and, as a result, Reform Jews, among others, saw an unprecedented return to tradition. But what some might have thought to be a passing trend remained, and ultimately redefined the movement. Concerns like the one expressed in this worship diary highlight the tension that exists today among congregants of different generations.

Another area of concern for congregants was the minimization of disruptions to worship.

...Uncomfortable physical circumstances, congregants entering or leaving the sanctuary at inappropriate times, miscued or distracting movements of congregants moving to and from the *bimah*, distracting movements on the

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<sup>95</sup> Summary, “Research Components,” 15

*bimah* by the rabbi or cantor, and halting performances by congregants who read Torah or Torah blessings,<sup>96</sup>

were all described as upsetting the mood of the service, and breaking congregants' concentration. "They objected to being rushed...they wanted time to attend to the meaning of what they were reciting in prayer."<sup>97</sup> And study results indicate that respondents looked to the rabbi to help both set the tone of the service as well as to maintain it. It seems as though most worshippers truly valued their worship experiences and that they felt the service could genuinely be a time for connection with the Divine. These congregants sought a balanced encounter, one that simultaneously engaged them in communal prayer, while facilitating personal interaction with God.

Though in almost every area mentioned thus far survey participants differed from one another in their opinions, there is one matter upon which nearly all were in agreement: music. "Almost every participant spoke of the power of music in worship. This was true whether the congregation was invited to sing or expected to listen..."<sup>98</sup> Since the great organ debates of the nineteenth century, music has played an integral role in Reform Jewish worship. Still, due to both time and budgetary constraints, music was far from being the focus of this study. Documentation tracing different stages of the study tells us that Knobel and Schechter hoped to use leftover grant money to further examine the use of music in worship and to promote musical creativity. However, this hope did not ultimately come to fruition. Rabbi Knobel recalls the situation:

The Lilly Endowment asked us to return the leftover money. There were some significant bookkeeping problems both here and at the CCAR that didn't please the Lilly Endowment in some sense and I was extremely frugal in spending the money so I ended up with money left over which in

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<sup>96</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 17

<sup>97</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 17

<sup>98</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 17

retrospect turns out to have been an error. But I was hoping to reserve some of that money for doing some of the things we still thought needed to be done, but Lilly was not enamored with our administration, I would say. And so when we asked for permission to utilize that money, they asked us to return it. I mean no money was stolen, or anything like that, I'm not suggesting that. They just didn't like the fact that I had budget lines which I didn't necessarily spend or I over-expended a particular budget line and under-expended another budget line and the bookkeeping was inconsistent because it wasn't handled correctly.<sup>99</sup>

Nonetheless, it seems Knobel and Schecter were on the right track. Music has continued to play a central role in discussions surrounding the quality of worship, and has continued to develop as a field unto itself. Study results confirm that in general congregants very much welcomed the introduction of new music into worship, so long as it was done in a thoughtful and learner-friendly manner.

Last, the study addressed the issue of involving laity in liturgical renewal. As seen through the eyes of study participants, the opportunity to experience worship as they did in the context of this study was revealing.

The commitment to worship with the congregation for three consecutive weeks – an unusual experience for many – opened their eyes to the possibilities in regular worship. They reported some understanding of the structure of the service and the meaning of the prayers and rituals enriched their worship.<sup>100</sup>

For many, this was the first time they had been asked to examine the worship service and to offer their own feedback. And almost all participants agreed that the use of the worship diary technique was invaluable.

Putting it down in writing, thinking about it made me more aware of the service and the flow of the ritual and the order of the ritual [with] more of a critical eye. I became more involved in the service itself, really sensing what part moved me in one way and [what] moved me in another way.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>100</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 18

<sup>101</sup> Summary, "Research Components," 19

For the CCAR, this experience was also unprecedented. Never before had the Liturgy Committee of the Conference sought out the opinions of congregants' so early and so extensively in the process of developing a new prayer book. As participants' responses seem to indicate, this move proved tremendously successful. Asking worshippers for their opinions empowered them to closely examine their experiences of prayer, beyond their likes and dislikes.

From the CCAR's perspective, it simply made sense. With the progression of time came evolution in practice. Between the publication of *Gates of Prayer* in 1975 and the commencement of this study, minority groups who had previously been denied access to ritual practices such as Torah reading were able to begin taking an active part in worship-related rites. Additionally, as their quest for personal meaning persisted, Reform Jews became more actively involved in *every* element of the worship service. The traditional Jewish model of *sh'li'ach tzibbur* was replaced by the 'do-it-yourself' philosophy of the *Jewish Catalog*. It was no longer enough to hear a sermon and glean wisdom from it, but rather, one had to try one's own hand at delivering a *d'var Torah*, in an attempt to gain the utmost value out of the experience. And so, since so many congregants had become so involved in worship, it was only logical that the CCAR Liturgy Committee take into account their opinions on the subject before producing the next movement-wide liturgy, as Daniel Schechter had suggested. If the then-unnamed *Mishkan T'filah* was to be functional, then it only made sense that the end product be reflective of its users' needs.

It was with all of these considerations in mind that the Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development (The Lilly / Cummings Study) came together. Over the course of two years, forty-seven congregations across the country participated in the self-study, providing their thoughts and suggestions for the improvement of worship. As is

evident from the responses gathered, the creation of *meaningful* worship is by no means a simple task. Though limited in scope, the opinions gathered nonetheless reflected a diverse cross-section of Reform worshipers. Final reports provided by each self-study team were analyzed, in conjunction with significant supplementary data. In a class session on the development of *Mishkan T'filah*, Rabbi Knobel details other parts of the study:

We commissioned studies on feminist language. We began a program for the training of worship leaders because one of the things we discovered was that what made for a successful worship service was whether or not the people leading the worship service were credible or not, whether you believe they were praying or not, whether they move along or not. So we began to say that if you were going to create a new *siddur*, you also had to train *sh'lichei tziyyon*. This was also at the period when healing services were of great importance...we commissioned Anita Diamant to do a study on healing services. There was a desire to create an electronic *siddur* and so we did a major study on worship and technology. That still has not been implemented. We then commissioned Rachel Shabbat [Beit-Halachmi] to do an examination of the theologies within Reform Judaism. We then gathered about two hundred Reform prayer books from across the country and Rabbi Shira Milgrom analyzed those two hundred prayer books. We then also conducted interviews with the regional directors of the URJ [then the UAHJ] to talk about the importance of the question of a single *siddur*.<sup>102</sup>

General issues surrounding the publication were also explored. "We then interviewed most of the leading Protestant liturgical scholars who were writing new prayer books to see what was happening there," Knobel remembers. "Then we met with ICELL, the International Commission of English Language Liturgy for the [Catholic] Church, and those were the areas that we generally looked at."<sup>103</sup> Daniel Schechter also makes note of the importance of language. In an interview, he spoke about the special attention the Catholic Editorial Committee paid to liturgical language. "Nothing goes out without the Committee

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<sup>102</sup> Knobel, Rabbi Peter S., Distance learning class session on the development of *Mishkan T'filah*, Hebrew Union College --Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH, Focus Learning Session, August, 2006

<sup>103</sup> Knobel, "Distance Learning," August, 2006

reading it out loud,”<sup>104</sup> he noted. This practice, he explained, is key in the development of any liturgy that is to be prayed aloud. Words must sound pleasing and authentic if they are to fulfill their function, moving those who utter them, stirring their souls. Indeed, this practice was considered in choosing English language readings and prayers for *Mishkan T’filah*.

“On September 8, 1994, the oversight committee to the CCAR project on ‘Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal’ met to hear a report by Rabbi Peter S. Knobel, project chair, and Daniel S. Schechter, co-chair.”<sup>105</sup> There, Knobel and Schechter offered updates on each of the areas incorporated in the project, including, among others, the congregational self-study, computer technology and its implication for the production of liturgy, and the training of congregants in worship. But what is perhaps most noteworthy in this report is a statement spelling out the limitations of the project. “The project is intended to inform the CCAR, but it has been understood from the outset that while the Conference would take seriously the project report and its recommendations, the CCAR is not bound to accept the recommendations.”<sup>106</sup> Although the Executive Board of the CCAR ultimately approved and adopted the recommendations of the project, it is of great interest to learn that this outcome was never, nor was it intended to be, a foregone conclusion. It is fascinating to imagine what the new prayer book might have looked like had Knobel and Schechter’s recommendations not been formally adopted. As then-chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee, Knobel was particularly active in every aspect of the process of the development of the new *siddur*. His vision and forethought would have likely been

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<sup>104</sup> Schechter, 14 October, 2007

<sup>105</sup> Report of Rabbi Peter S. Knobel & Daniel S. Schechter to the Oversight Committee to the CCAR on “Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal”

<sup>106</sup> Report, “Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal”

perceptible even had the study been deemed interesting, but less than useful. Ultimately, however, the results of this study deeply influenced so much of what *Mishkan T'filah* came to be, and it is to the credit of the Conference that it chose both to support the study, as well as to formally adopt its recommendations and make use of them in the development and publication of this *siddur*.

Throughout the course of the study, much was discovered about Reform worship in the late twentieth century. Based on all the information gathered, Knobel and Schechter formulated a list of their recommendations for a new prayer book, which they felt ought to reflect where the movement was at and where it was going. It became clear that the Reform movement had no one dominant theology and that issues of language, format, and content, were absolutely essential to the creation of a long-lasting, meaningful *siddur*. The following is a summary of those recommendations, adopted by the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in March of 1998, one year after the completion of The Lilly / Cummings Study:<sup>107</sup>

1) *Need for a common prayer book for the Reform movement*

- The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) should publish a new prayer book to replace *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book* (1975).
- A single *siddur* is a necessity to maintain a sense of movement identity.
- The new prayer book should respond to the needs of worshippers so that it will have an adequate life to make it worth purchasing.

2) *General recommendations on content*

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<sup>107</sup> See appendix B for a complete copy of the recommendations



- The CCAR should plan to include more than one service, but not follow the anthology model of the present prayer book.<sup>108</sup>
- The language of the service must strive for inclusivity and address the diversity of worshippers.
- The CCAR should consider feminism as an important lens through which plans for the new *siddur* should be examined. Women's experiences and voices must be included in the text.
- The CCAR should consider [for inclusion] elements of the traditional *siddur* which Reform has dropped.

### 3) *Recommendations on Hebrew prayer*

- The CCAR should engage in a serious discussion about whether any particular Hebrew text is privileged.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of new Hebrew prayers. Poetry – especially Hebrew and Yiddish poetry..... should be included.
- Transliteration should be included in proximity to the Hebrew to make it easy to use.

### 4) *Recommendations on English prayer*

- The new CCAR prayer book should offer a faithful translation of the Hebrew into beautiful English.
- The CCAR prayer book should offer English “interpretive translations,” and they should clearly be marked as such.

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<sup>108</sup> To summarize the discussion and to indicated the majority view of those assembled, the Siddur Group and Liturgy Committee passed the following motion: The services in the new Siddur include four models: 1) As traditional a service as possible within the Reform context 2) A service which provides continuity with our Reform heritage as does service V in GOP which carries over material from the Union Prayer Book 3) A service in contemporary idiom which interpolates the main elements of the liturgy 4) Creative liturgy regularly produced to be down-loaded from the CCAR which can be mass-produced in congregations.

- The CCAR should invite submissions of individual prayers and / or services from as many sources as possible.

5) *Recommendation on prayer book form and design*

- The new CCAR prayer book should look and feel like a sacred text.
- The new prayer book should reflect congregants' preference for a service with as little page skipping as possible so that one section flows into the next.
- The rubrics should provide a 'road map' that clarifies the structure of the service.

6) *Recommendations on the process for development of a new CCAR prayer book*

- The Liturgy Committee should collect and provide initial screening of materials as well as develop basic parameters for what should be included and what should be excluded.
- A special editorial committee should be appointed and chaired by the Liturgy Committee chair.
- Testing of the new CCAR prayer book and each of its services should take place in a number of congregations selected with diversity in mind.
- The material being tested should be in a substantially finished form.
- A participant-observer should conduct focus groups.
- The CCAR should make use of the worship journal technique in its testing of the prayer book in development.

7) *Recommendations to the CCAR as a publisher of liturgical materials*

- The CCAR should take a leadership position in developing electronic liturgical material at a time when desktop publishing software permits every congregation and

every rabbi and cantor to become a publisher. Purchasing the *siddur* would be linked to an electronic subscription service.

- The CCAR should create a liturgical clearinghouse; it should make editable and non-editable texts available on disk and develop a subscription service for new materials.
- The CCAR should make its electronic liturgical materials compatible with commercial software packages rather than attempt to develop its own software.
- The CCAR should consider producing alongside a new prayer book a CD ROM version and additional materials for periodic special use and congregational customizing.
- In order to respond to the special needs of congregations, rabbis, or the movement, the CCAR in consultation with the Joint Commission on Religious Living, [should] provide a "Liturgist On Line" under the supervision of the Director of Publications and the chair of the Liturgy Committee.
- The CCAR should consider various paradigms for including healing prayers in communal worship.
- The CCAR should consider publications of a book of resource materials and guidelines for congregational healing services.

#### 8) *Synagogue Music*

- The project makes no recommendation on music because it was not part of the study's mandate. However, in virtually every project activity, music was identified as an integral part of worship as a gateway to prayer. Congregants need to be educated to expect that the music repertoire will grow and change. Congregants need to be educated about how to understand and assess new music. It is desirable that the CCAR, the American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Hebrew Union College-Jewish

Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), and the CCAR-UAHC Joint Commission on Religious Living and the CCAR-UAHC-ACC Joint Commission on Synagogue Music take a fresh look at the relationship of music to worship.

9) *Worship competence*

- The CCAR, in cooperation with the UAHC, ACC and HUC-JIR, should give a high priority to developing the worship competence and confidence of congregants.
- The CCAR, UAHC and HUC-JIR should stimulate the development of learners' *minyanim* in congregations.
- The role of the congregant as worship leader should be developed. A series of instructional aids for congregants should be prepared.
- The CCAR should develop continuing education for rabbis on the role of the *sheliach/at tzibbur*.

Covering nearly a dozen key issues associated with Reform Jewish worship in the late twentieth century, this catalog of recommendations to the CCAR represents the culmination of three years of intensive examination. With the congregational self-study at its core, "The Project on Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development" painted a portrait of American Judaism at the dawn of a new era, and served as a vital tool for the creation of a vision for a new, movement-wide prayer book. As the results of this study demonstrate, the North American Reform movement is truly multi-vocal. No one theology, one way of life, or one set of values defines *all* members, and as a result it was concluded that the movement's liturgy not only ought to reflect the diversity among its members, but speak to that diversity as well.

In 1998, with recommendations for the creation of a new prayer book in place, the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis felt confident that it now

better understood the needs of Reform Jews across the nation. By the following year, the Conference was ready to proceed with preparations for a new *siddur*. And so, in 1999, the CCAR went about finding leadership to head up the process. This would be the first step of what would turn out to be a much longer journey than expected.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 1999-2007

#### ▪ The Selection of Editors

In 1998, following the publication of results from the Lilly / Cummings Study and the recommendations presented to and approved by the CCAR Executive Board, the next phase of preparation for the new *siddur* was ready to begin. With the blessings of the Conference, it was time to appoint an editor for the new prayer book. Given his extensive involvement with the CCAR Liturgy Committee and his leadership role in the Lilly / Cummings study, one might have assumed Rabbi Peter Knobel should and would best have served in this capacity. Yet surprisingly, he was never even a candidate. In a phone interview last fall, I asked Rabbi Knobel if he had ever considered the position:

My own thought was that I was already too old. Not in terms of my physical abilities to do it, but I really believed that this prayer book had to be basically constructed for the generation that was coming up behind my generation, and I was much too influenced by the issues that grew up in the immediate post-WWII period, the 1967 war, the establishment of Holocaust theology; that I was too much into a mindset of experiences that would not necessarily speak to young people. So I made a very deliberate decision that I wanted to remain deeply involved and have some influence on what happened but it was really important that we look to some young people, who would be able to be the creative talent behind it.<sup>109</sup>

A forward-thinking leader, long involved in the process of re-imagining worship, Knobel was among those aware of the project's sheer size and magnitude. Additionally, having grown sensitive to the need for balance between female and male perspectives on the project, the Conference initially envisioned and sought out a two-editor team, composed of one man and one woman. Rabbi Knobel recalled the process the CCAR used to go about choosing that team:

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<sup>109</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

...We set up a special, let us say, editor search committee and we asked for submissions from those people who wanted to be considered for editor. We looked at those submissions, first of all blind, in other words we didn't know whose they were. We wanted not to be influenced in one way or another by the name...we ultimately settled on the notion that Rabbi Frishman and Rabbi Abrams had a vision of how to move forward.<sup>110</sup>

"In December 1998 the CCAR Board approved the appointment of two prayer book co-editors: Rabbi Elyse Frishman (Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Barnet Temple, Franklin Lakes, NJ) and Dr. Judith Abrams of Houston, TX, who is rabbi of Maqom: An On-line School for Adult Talmud Study," reported *Reform Judaism* magazine, in a summer, 1999 article. And "what vision do the editors bring to the new prayer book?" the article goes on to ask:

Rabbi Frishman, who has worked extensively in an editorial capacity for other CCAR publications, comes to her new role profoundly committed to the power of liturgy as an instrument for building community among Reform Jews. "I'd love to see a prayer book that is accessible to any age and any level of Jewish literacy," she says. "Such a prayer book will have to be both sophisticated and inclusive."<sup>111</sup>

Already from their submission, it was evident that Rabbis Frishman and Abrams had some very different ideas. Composed by Rabbi Frishman, their submission detailed the vision she shared with Rabbi Abrams. I asked Rabbi Frishman to elaborate on that submission in an interview in 2007:

We were asked to submit a proposal describing what we thought the direction of the new siddur should be and why, and why we were qualified to do that. ...In my submission what I was trying to suggest was a new paradigm. I wanted us to really think outside the box and propose a way of thinking about a prayer book that allowed everyone to be present and not the week that you...came happened to hit the theme you were interested in. What I submitted were examples of page spreads where there was, over the course of the two pages a privileged text, which is essentially your traditional

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<sup>110</sup> Knobel, 8 October, 2007

<sup>111</sup> Rabbi Janet Marder, "Praying As One: In Search of a Unifying Prayer Book for a Movement that Agrees on Little Else than the Merits of Religious Diversity," *Reform Judaism* Summer 1999: 24-29

Reform Jewish text with Hebrew, transliteration, and English, and then alternative pieces...that were interpretations of those prayers. And I included in that original draft an adult version and a kid version...because I felt strongly that kids worship different[ly] than adults and so there were different styles of pieces.<sup>112</sup>

Rabbis Frishman and Abrams' more creative approach caught the eyes of the search committee. Though the movement's leadership might have imagined its new prayer book as a direct descendant of *Gates of Prayer*, this original submission caused them to redirect their vision.<sup>113</sup> "...Everyone was really thinking about son of *Gates of Prayer*," Rabbi Frishman recalled. "And I was like, 'no; we're talking about something radically different.' The primary need is not just new language. It's recognizing that we need one service."<sup>114</sup>

Reflecting on what drew her to the project, Rabbi Frishman added: "I had a very ongoing and strong sense of the need of our liturgy to be a response to our personal and communal crises and challenges in addition to clearly linking us to our heritage, our people, and of course to God."<sup>115</sup> But it seems that this wasn't the only reason she was attracted to the project; for Rabbi Frishman, working with Rabbi Abrams was also a draw. "The project brought us together," she told me.

...I thought about who I'd like to work with, and Judith Abrams already had a reputation as someone who was a true Talmud scholar and also creative in terms of ritual. I'd met her briefly in other settings but we'd never worked together and I described what I thought we could do together and she was very engaged by the idea and we agreed to co-submit.<sup>116</sup>

In 1999, Rabbi Judith Abrams spoke with *Reform Judaism* magazine about her new position:

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<sup>112</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, Telephone Interview, 19 December, 2007

<sup>113</sup> See appendix C for sample page layout

<sup>114</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>115</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>116</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007



Dr. Abrams, a scholar, author, and Talmud teacher, sees her editorial role as “making sure that, no matter what we do, it will have an authentic, living link to the Jewish tradition and a real grounding in Jewish texts.” Recognizing the diversity within our movement, as well as the passionate responses engendered by liturgical change, Dr. Abrams points to the Talmud as a model. “The great thing about the Talmud,” she says, “is that you can have a lot of different opinions on the same page. I’d like to aim for something similar in our new prayer book. My hope is that we can produce a book that will encompass the bell curve of Reform belief and practice, so that the vast majority of people can find something of value in it.”<sup>117</sup>

Selected from among a number of submissions, the proposal put forward by Rabbis Frishman and Abrams soon came to represent the future of North American Reform Jewish worship. And though the Conference’s initial vision of an editorial team composed of one man and one woman remained an ideal, it was nonetheless decided that since the submission selected already included an editorial team, the addition of a third person might upset the balance. Coming from two different backgrounds, each possessing her own set of skills, Rabbis Frishman and Abrams came together to form a tremendous editorial partnership.

In December of 2007, Rabbi Frishman reflected upon the decision to hire two women and how she felt that her gender impacted her work as editor. “...There’s no question in my mind that gender heavily influenced this in the most positive sense,” she told me.

In the very beginning when they were working on who would do it, I think they very much wanted to have a woman involved. I think that they were looking initially for co-editors and they wanted at least one of them to be female. And I think both because politically it was the right thing to do, and because...in our *siddur* discussion group we did a lot of studying of feminist texts. I think that the men that were engaged very early on were serious about bringing [women] to the table. You know Peter Knobel in particular, really felt it was critical for everyone to really understand the impact of feminism on everything that we were doing. So even for people who might not have gotten that in a complete way just because of their age, their generation, their own personal biases, there was, I think, a universal

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<sup>117</sup> Marder, “Praying as One,” 28

understanding that it made sense to have a woman engaged at the very top as a co-editor. I think they were surprised when it was two women selected. But I think it's possible I was shielded from that feedback. It's also possible that I didn't care, [be]cause I wouldn't have cared. And as I said, I think it's been a very strong collaborative process.<sup>118</sup>

Their vision established, in the winter of 1999, Rabbis Frishman and Abrams eagerly began work on the project, a movement-wide *siddur*, soon to be named *Mishkan T'filah*.

#### ▪ The CCAR Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee

One of the features that distinguishes *Mishkan T'filah* from its predecessors is its emphasis upon broad collaboration. From its inception, this *siddur* represented cooperation among lay leaders, clergy, and congregants. So it should come as no surprise that a committee of close to twenty individuals was engaged as the Conference worked toward the production of this prayer book. In this respect, however, *Mishkan T'filah* actually followed in the path of its predecessors; an interview with the editor of the movement's previous *siddur*, *Gates of Prayer*, revealed that Chaim Stern was actually the first person to be identified by that title on the cover page of the prayer book, although others essentially had served in this capacity for the several versions of *Union Prayer Book*. Additionally, by April of 1999, close to four months after work on the new *siddur* had begun, the magnitude of the task was becoming exceedingly obvious. And though both editors were quite capable, in order for the volume to be produced within a reasonable timeframe, it became necessary to appoint a committee to help tackle the workload.

Under the chairmanship of Rabbi Peter Knobel, the Ad-Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee was charged with the task of bringing Rabbis Frishman and Abrams' vision to life. Through discussion and suggestion, the committee, which met approximately twice

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<sup>118</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007

annually, looked at sample materials presented by the book's editors and provided thoughtful feedback as to their merit.

Initially, among the members of the committee were: Rabbi William Cutter, Professor of Hebrew Literature at HUC, Los Angeles; Rabbi Daniel Freclander of the UAHC; Cantors Jeffrey Klepper and Benjie Ellen Schiller, and Mr. George Markley, a lay representative of UAHC. Diverse in its make-up, the committee symbolized the true spirit of partnership. Well-versed in various aspects of worship, members of the committee worked together in order to accomplish the goals set before them.

Rabbi Elliot Stevens, former Associate Vice President and Director of Publications for the CCAR, described the original intent of the committee:

Knowing that a siddur is the central expression of a people in worship, it's one of the most important -- aside from Torah -- one of the most important documents -- we knew from the beginning we wanted to have a diverse input if we were going to write a book for the movement in a different way than previous prayer books had been written. Previous prayer books had been written by one person or a very, very small committee. In the case of *Gates of Prayer* it was Chaim Stern and Stanley Dreyfus. They had endless, endless hours of meetings and they essentially wrote the prayer book together...and, in effect, would thrust that prayer book onto a movement which usually receives it well, and they were fine prayer books, but they didn't reflect from the ground up what people were in need of, what their expectations, what their perspectives were, hence the need for a three-year research project, the Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change Project. The Editorial Committee was designed to be as inclusive and demographically diverse as the movement. And so, everyone who was on that editorial committee was chosen for a particular perspective...I think the original intent was not to be an advisory committee. The original intent was to be a committee that would deal with a whole agenda of issues as they came up, and as they were presented by the editors -- at that time, Judy Abrams and Elyse Frishman. But it quickly became apparent that such a large and diverse group, holding such a spectrum of opinions, really couldn't serve as anything more than an advisory committee. So that in the end, Elyse would present various ideas or challenges or concepts, and we would have learned discussions. Judy Abrams prepared a number of learned monographs, scholarly monographs citing talmudic texts to present points of view on *mechayeh metim*, for example,

or others, *k'dushah*. And so we would discuss these and the committee would sometimes be able to achieve a consensus, and sometimes not, on issues.<sup>119</sup>

Additionally, Rabbi Stevens added that the Committee

...was designed to meet twice a year as a full group, of course each meeting would cost \$5,000 or \$7,500, bringing in all these people from around the country, and Yehoram Mazor from Israel. But in the end, I think because of scheduling and other difficulties, and because the role of the committee changed to be more of an advisory and reading committee and commenting committee, by and large, they met once a year. And given rabbis' schedules, it could sometimes take four to six months just to come up with a date when most people could get together.<sup>120</sup>

The model described above represents a departure from the way in which books were produced in the CCAR until not too much earlier. As Rabbi Stevens told me,

...Until sometime in the 1980's, a committee would decide to do a book and would commission somebody to write the book and that person would then work on a manuscript and bring it back to the committee. Let's say the Family Life Committee, or the Jewish Practices Committee, or the Inter-religious Committee, would ask a rabbi to do something and a colleague would make a manuscript, and a year or two later bring it back to the committee and discover that the membership of the committee had changed, and sometimes the views would be radically different, and in a couple of very unfortunate cases, an author would be very frustrated or angry that the work, the direction was completely changed...or the committee had completely lost interest in a project. And we decided to create a different model because you can't keep going back to a board or a committee when the membership on that committee keeps changing, and expect you can get anyplace as an author. And we were having difficulty attracting authors for projects. So we hit upon the idea (I say we – it was essentially my idea) that, for each particular project, for each publishing project, there would be an editorial committee that would be created that would be unique to that project. And the membership on that editorial committee would not change, but would see the project through, right to the end, and moreover, have the authority to make decisions. And so a Board, or a parent, committee, let's say the Reform Jewish Practices Committee or the Liturgy Committee, once an editorial committee was created, an editorial committee might receive the views of a Family Life Committee or a Liturgy Committee, and was obligated to take those opinions seriously, but had the authority to make decisions, and not be overruled by the parent committee, which in this case would have been the Liturgy Committee. And even the Board could only present a point

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<sup>119</sup> Rabbi Elliot Stevens, Telephone Interview, 5 February, 2008

<sup>120</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

of view, but could not overrule an editorial decision or an artistic decision, a known decision of an editorial committee.<sup>121</sup>

Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, appointed as a member of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee just shortly after its first meeting, spoke with me about his experiences of the group. His descriptions reflect the shift in the committee's purpose described above by Rabbi Stevens.

Well, we were an advisory committee, which essentially means that they would bring ideas to us and we would react to those ideas. Sometimes those ideas were in the form of a particular specific manifestation, a particular specific prayer, but more often than not, it was on more along conceptual or philosophical issues. One of the things I will tell you is this committee was really extraordinary in the way that it functioned. We would meet a couple of times a year. We would go through a bunch of ideas. We came really from across the ideological spectrum. There was tremendous respect and give and take. I would characterize the tone as the very best of what colleagues joined together can do in the tone and substance of the conversation. We had conversations, we had votes, but ultimately the book was the editors' to do.<sup>122</sup>

Once assembled, in the summer of 1999, the committee's first task was to create a model service for testing "in the field", so to speak. That model would, in the space of a little over a year, become known as the Monterey draft. Piloted at the June, 2001 CCAR convention in Monterey, CA, and a month later at the ACC convention in Washington, DC, this service would represent a very controversial, first prototype for what was to become *Mishkan T'filah*. But the road to Monterey was long in the spring of 1999, when the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee first set forth on its journey.

On April 9<sup>th</sup> of that year, a letter went out on behalf of Rabbis Richard N. Levy and Paul J. Menitoff, then President and Executive Vice President of the Conference respectively, informing committee members of their new appointment. "We are delighted to inform you that at its March meeting, the CCAR Executive Board confirmed your

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<sup>121</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

<sup>122</sup> Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, Personal Interview, 4 February, 2008

appointment to the Ad Hoc Editorial Committee on the New *Siddur*," it began. "The Conference's success is to a large measure determined by the effectiveness of its committees and commissions. We are grateful for your support."<sup>123</sup>

Including the new *siddur*'s editors, the initial committee was comprised of sixteen individuals. Thirteen rabbis -- four of them serving in an ex-officio capacity -- two cantors, and one lay representative came together under the able chairmanship of Rabbi Peter Knobel. Having recently chaired the Project on Lay Involvement in the Development of Liturgy, otherwise known as the Lilly / Cummings Study, and having both sat on the Siddur Discussion Group more than a decade earlier and chaired the Conference's Liturgy Committee, Rabbi Knobel was well suited for such a position. In addition to experience, he brought with him not only an interest in, but also a passion for, liturgy and liturgical development.

Correspondence seems to indicate that in addition to these individuals there was some discussion about the inclusion of a younger colleague on the committee. Multiple letters and notes arrived from one new rabbi, ordained in 1998, expressing her interest in the project and her desire to work on the editorial committee. Another letter, authored by Rabbi Richard Levy, endorsed another potential candidate for the position, a young man who had served as an intern under Rabbi Levy's guidance, and who, Levy thought, would make an excellent addition to the committee. Neither of these names, however, appears on the list of committee members in the final edition of *Mishkan T'filah*, nor do the names of Rachel Adler and Anita Diamant, who were considered for addition to the committee early in the process. Others, however, were more fortunate. As time went on, a number of

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<sup>123</sup> Rabbi Richard N. Levy & Rabbi Paul J. Menitoff, Letter to Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 9 April, 1999

individuals were added to the committee, their assistance having been requested in the completion of *Mishkan T'filah*.

Those individuals selected to serve on the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee brought to the table many years of experience in a variety of fields. Some were experts in the field of liturgy, while others bore years of practice in the discipline of publishing. Some had a background in layout and graphic design, and still others were professional musicians. Together, this team represented the best resources the Conference and the movement had to offer.

I asked committee member Rabbi Lewis Kamrass if he could elaborate as to how he became involved with the project.

I suspect that I probably...was selected because -- I don't know this, it's just my guess -- I probably represented several demographics for them. I represented the Midwest; other than Peter Knobel, there were no other rabbis from the Midwest, everybody was from the coasts. I represented probably the South- there was no-one from the South and I was born and raised in Georgia. I suspect they probably looked at me as someone from Classical Reform or left of center of Reform, having been raised in a Classical Reform congregation, and I would characterize Wise Temple, and the Midwest in general, as left of center in the observance spectrum. And I joke that I probably got the redheaded rabbi demographic too. So I don't really know...but I also would surmise that we had just a year or two before put out our congregational prayer book, and so...among the other demographic issues I would guess that they probably knew that I had done some serious work in liturgy.<sup>124</sup>

A first meeting of the committee took place in early June of 1999, for which an ambitious agenda was set. Editors Elyse Frishman and Judith Abrams addressed the team by way of introduction to the project. Rabbi Frishman urged the committee to "remain as open as we can"<sup>125</sup> while still pushing the envelope, and encouraged a balance between comfort and challenge. But, perhaps most importantly, she raised the question of the role of

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<sup>124</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

<sup>125</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, notes from Editorial Committee meeting, 2-3 June, 1999

the Editorial Committee, seemingly in an attempt to establish the group's mission and vision from the onset. For her part, Rabbi Abrams focused her remarks on the notion of change. As she saw it, "Reform means change," and "when we limit choice, we limit [the] ability to be Reform Jews."<sup>126</sup> Together, both editors presented a collective vision for the movement's new liturgy that would come to change the way in which North American Reform Jewish worship was understood.

Items on this first meeting's agenda included a review of the recommendations approved by the CCAR Executive Board, in addition to discussions, as suggested by Rabbi Frishman, regarding the relationship of the committee to the editors and to the Conference's Liturgy Committee. The notion of inclusion played an important role both with regard to the prayer book itself as well as with the membership of the committee. A question on the agenda plainly asks: "Who is missing from the table?"<sup>127</sup> And the question of the inclusion of laity in the process had already also been put forward as an important point for discussion. Additionally, some practical discussion was to begin here regarding the book's layout and size, weight, and content.

It seems only logical that, at this early stage of the process, larger, overarching matters such as the collection and evaluation of materials for inclusion in the prayer book would be discussed. What is perhaps more surprising, then, is the presence of a number of more detailed topics for thought, two of them being of particular note. First, a series of ideologically-driven questions appeared on the agenda: Should we include the blessing *mechayeh hametim* in the *Amidah*, or anything related to the theme of messianism for that matter? What about *birkat haminim* in the *t'filah*? Should we consider the inclusion of the

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<sup>126</sup> Rabbi Judith Abrams, notes from Editorial Committee meeting, 2-3 June, 1999

<sup>127</sup> Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee meeting agenda, 2-3 June, 1999



second paragraph of the *Sh'ma*, which had been excised from all previous CCAR liturgies? Second, the issue of gendered language was also raised. Questions that endured throughout much of the editorial process were already being raised at this early phase of the project.

Another important issue, present from the committee's first meeting on, was that of technology and worship. An important paper produced as a part of the Lilly / Cummings Study highlighted the growing centrality of technological advance and its potential for enhancing the worship experience. Up for discussion at this meeting were the plausibility of a CD-ROM version of the prayer book produced in addition to the print edition, as well as internet posting of the book's contents. It was also suggested that the Internet might be a useful medium for the reception of comments throughout the process. One note of particular interest is hand-written on a copy of the meeting's agenda, across from the section dealing with technology. It reads: "video Game." In a phone interview, Rabbi Elliot Stevens, former Associate Executive Vice President and Director of Publications for the CCAR explained the note:

I believe I know what the reference is...When the research was done, the Lilly / Cummings research...one of the things that came out was the need to have liturgy available in electronic form, whether on website or on CD-ROM--I think at that time it was more on CD-ROM. And one of the things that we imagined what form this might take was an interactive CD-ROM. There are various games for Passover, and Chanukah... games where you have interactivity. One of the things we imagined, for example, was that you could highlight a piece of text and then hear how that text might be chanted in the Sephardic tradition, or in some other tradition, and tropes that might have been used. Or look at commentaries on the text and see where did the text arrive from, sort of like what *My People's Prayer Book* is doing, the Larry Hoffman series, but be able to do that in an interactive way. So it would not have been a video game, but...I think the thinking was it would feel a little bit like a game, you'd be able to learn about the background, different liturgical traditions, and the music, etc. by playing with a CD-ROM. And that was one of those things that was long talked about but never developed. I think it's still a neat idea, but it's very expensive to produce those things.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

Perhaps most importantly, at this first meeting, a timeline was put forth, projecting a finished prayer book within five years. This table appeared among notes of the meeting:

1999-2000	2001	[2002]	[2003]	[2004]
	2 years	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
		Testing	Complete Man	Book
Plug into UAHC	Worship Kallot	→	→	Into Book Techniques/technology

Created in 1999, this timeline would be the first of many such documents. Due to factors beyond the committee's control, the final printing of *Mishkan T'filah* was delayed, ultimately almost four years beyond this initial projection. Originally, a five-year timeline for the book's production was envisioned.<sup>129</sup> Even in retrospect, this initial five-year goal seems reasonable. As can be seen in the table above, the preliminary plan included cooperation with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and promotion of the new prayer book as well as study in the area of liturgy through the multiple summer study *kallot*, or retreats, then being sponsored by the Union. The plan wasn't solely to create a new *siddur*, but to alter the way in which North American Reform Jews thought about and practiced worship. It was also a way to "harness enthusiasm"<sup>130</sup> for a new prayer book, a subject already on the minds of the committee's leadership in 1999. It was with these goals in mind that the committee began its work.

Another note on this agenda suggests "Boston 2001", a reference to the 2001 UAHC Biennial, scheduled to take place in Boston, December 5-9. In a letter dated December 11, 2001 Rabbi Frishman confirmed that the draft was in fact not only used for worship at the

<sup>129</sup> See appendix C for a Siddur publication time line, illustrating some of the Committee's work

<sup>130</sup> Meeting notes, 2-3 June, 1999

convention, but was also formally discussed among delegates. But it would seem that a decision was then made to pilot the book with clergy members first. It is interesting to note that already committee members were aware of the need not only for congregants but for clergy members to re-imagine worship. Partially as a result of the Lilly / Cummings study, it became clear that for worship to be successful, some changes to its current practice would be necessary. First, leaders needed to make the service less frontal and more participatory in nature. Second, the typical sermon delivered on a Friday evening ought to be replaced with another type of learning. Last, music in the context of the worship experience was to be reconsidered, presumably in order to promote the more participatory model envisioned at this early stage of the process. With all of these considerations in view, it seems only natural that members of the clergy would be approached with the book before congregants. As messengers to the community, their support for the project was crucial if this new *siddur* was to succeed.

For her part, Rabbi Judith Abrams brought to the project her passion for and interest in both Midrash and rabbinic text. In the early phases of the project, Rabbi Abrams was charged with writing a number of essays, detailing the background of a number of liturgical rubrics, and providing practical reasons for their inclusion in the new *siddur*. Additionally, Rabbi Abrams began creating a number of sample pages, which detailed a layout similar to the one proposed by Rabbi Frishman.<sup>131</sup> What distinguishes Rabbi Abrams' layout, however, is her approach to the text, namely that of *P'shat*, *Remez*, *D'rash*, and *Sod* (*PaRDeS*), a more mystical style of interpretation. Rabbi Abrams' contributions to the project are particularly visible in the Monterey draft, specifically in the more spiritually-

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<sup>131</sup> See appendix C

oriented *kavanot* found on each page, as well as artistic representations of sayings and biblical verses scattered among the liturgical rubrics.

As they made their way toward Monterey, committee members had occasion to meet face to face once again, this time just six months prior to the CCAR convention. This gathering allowed committee members the opportunity to vote on issues submitted for consideration. By a margin of one vote and four votes, respectively, the committee voted to include the second and third paragraphs of the *Sh'ma*, as they had at that point appeared in previous sketches. Additionally, consensus was reached regarding the need to keep parameters surrounding translation loose, rather than literal, with the caveat that the editors should, nonetheless, attempt to stay as close as possible to the original meaning of the text so as not to step outside the realm of translation and into something completely different. The committee was in agreement that possibilities for the inclusion of responsive readings should be explored avoiding the set formula familiar from *Gates of Prayer*, and that there was a need for more feminine language in the *siddur*.

Two other incidents of note occurred during this meeting. First, despite every attempt to define the committee's mission from the onset, the task at hand became a bit confusing. Cited in notes from the meeting is a plea of sorts: "We must know what we stand for. [We] need an editorial statement of what we're trying to do."<sup>132</sup> In response, Larry Hoffman suggested: "We need a series of powerful one-paragraph statements -- talking points -- dealing with our beliefs on important issues, as declarative guiding principles of this prayer book. At first, these would be guiding principles for our committee."<sup>133</sup> A "mission statement" subsequently appeared in conjunction with draft editions of *Mishkan T'filah*, in an

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<sup>132</sup> Siddur Editorial Committee, Record of Actions and Decisions, and some Discussion, 24-25 January, 2001

<sup>133</sup> Record of Actions, 24-25 January, 2001

attempt to best explain the forces driving such a significant metamorphosis in North American Reform Jewish worship. In addition, Rabbi Frishman set forth her statement of principles during the course of this meeting, clarifying her vision for the prayer book.

Second, concern was already beginning to be expressed regarding the transition from *Gates of Prayer* to *Mishkan T'filah*. In particular, there was some fear that those asked to evaluate the book might be unable to do so properly, as “thoughtful comments depend on training in how to use and how to evaluate... The philosophical underpinnings must also be conveyed in order to fairly evaluate.”<sup>134</sup> In this vein Rabbi Frishman suggested: “A tape or video could be provided showing successful worship to help those asked to evaluate it.”<sup>135</sup>

In a 2007 interview, I asked Rabbi Frishman if she thought that the vision of the *siddur* and its function had been or would be filtered down to those who weren't privy to it from the onset, or if she thought it could be clarified.

Well, anyone who wants to read the introduction to the book will find that. There are plenty of articles that have been written. The deeper question is does it matter? In other words, kind of like a piece of art, its meaning should be evident. If you need to have someone stand there and explain to you everything that's going on in the painting, you may come away, you know, feeling a new connection to the painting and a certain joy in it. But frankly, great art doesn't require that. You're going to have a visceral reaction to it and you're going to respond to it, and you're going to be engaged by it. Same way if liturgically or theologically we've found a way to make certain that everyone's voice is represented somewhere in the course of each rubric or module of prayer, then it's self evident that people are going to walk away as you acknowledged at the beginning, feeling included. If we've accomplished that, then we're in a good place. The filtering out of it is much more an intellectual exercise than an experience of the book.<sup>136</sup>

To the best of my knowledge no such tape or video of instructions has ever been created in order to aid in gaining a fuller understanding of the book and its purpose, though

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<sup>134</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, Record of Actions 24-25 January, 2001

<sup>135</sup> Frishman, Record of Actions, 24-25 January, 2001

<sup>136</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

numerous articles authored by Rabbi Frishman, among others, attempt to inform the worshipper of the book's unique character and how to transition into its use. Still, it remains questionable just how many congregants might actually be aware of the existence of such resources, despite their availability to the public through the URJ website. Additional early efforts included a teleconference with Rabbi Frishman for rabbis and cantors, held in the fall of 2002, in order to aid in the book's introduction, and a sheet containing basic information on its contents and suggested use, included with the piloting drafts. Still, though Rabbi Frishman's analogy to a great work of art certainly stands, one can't help but wonder if the movement might not have benefited from a more regimented transition, including a video or similar resource that spelled out the new prayer book's intentions and functions in no uncertain terms by way of introduction to its use. Case in point: the piloting of a prototype for a service for *Mishkan T'filah* at the 2001 CCAR Convention in Monterey.

▪ **The Prototype Service for *Mishkan T'filah*: Monterey, 2001**

By June of 2001, a prototype for one of the services for the new prayer book, already known as *Mishkan T'filah*, was ready to be unveiled. Its premier performance was to take place at the June, 2001 CCAR convention, followed by an encore at the July convention of the American Conference of Cantors (ACC) in Washington, DC. Testing with clergy was a deliberate decision. I asked Rabbi Elliot Stevens to reflect on that choice:

...As I recall the committee...had already gone through four or five different schemes in laying out, where Elyse essentially would take Scotch tape and cut and paste on these 11x17 sheets. It got to a point before Monterey where we realized a convention is coming up, why don't we see if we can get some feedback on where we are because at that point, the whole idea of worship on two-page spreads, the flow of the service, had not yet been tried out. We thought that this would be a way, by sharing it with people who knew how to conduct a worship service and were familiar with the liturgy, to get some initial feedback in an informal way...<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

Already present in this early draft were a number of the elements that came to characterize the final *siddur*: the two-page spread for each prayer, interpretive English alternatives to the standard Reform Hebrew versions, and graphic designs of the texts. But this service was unique; it was an attempt at the “fourth model” suggested in the recommendations to the CCAR Executive Board just one year earlier. This was the “out of the box” service.

Of particular interest in this first formal draft is the inclusion of *kavannot*. At the top right-hand corner of each two-page spread, there is a phrase or saying intended to assist the worshipper in attaining focus before he or she begins a new prayer. In the introduction to the draft, they are described as follows: “The *Kavanna* is a spiritual punctuation mark: think about what you are entering, and be there.”<sup>138</sup> Also of note in this draft is the use of graphics in the layout.<sup>139</sup> Absent from any later draft, like the *kavannot*, circular and canopy-like arcs adorn each page of the prayer book. We learn in the introduction to the draft that the graphics “either highlight an aspect of the prayer or suggest a mood or interpretation.”<sup>140</sup> And while the concept was most certainly an interesting one, the sheer number and variety of graphics was deemed overwhelming in feedback from the convention, and was therefore significantly altered in subsequent editions of the *siddur*.

The Monterey draft was everything an “out of the box” service is meant to be: provocative, different, and new. But with innovation there comes a price. Feedback regarding the volume provided by both rabbis and cantors was brutally honest. Ranging

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<sup>138</sup> Introduction to Monterey Draft of *Mishkan T'filah*, June, 2001

<sup>139</sup> See appendix C

<sup>140</sup> “Some Ideas and Suggestions that will Assist In Understanding and Using the New Siddur,” Monterey Draft, June, 2001

from intrigue to sheer disgust, it expressed overall dissatisfaction with the fruit of Rabbi Frishman's, Rabbi Abrams', and the Editorial Committee's labors. Though supportive of the editors' efforts, the feedback suggests that, in this case, the product did not suit the consumer.

When asked to respond to the book's design and layout, one rabbi stated: "Interesting design (although I think it will become dated/kitschy quickly)." And a colleague concurred: "It is something new and interesting, but if it is the only style it will get old quickly." One cantor tried to be constructive: "The design needs to be more straightforward. Creative design is fine--look at the Talmud: the original text wrap." But perhaps it is one of her colleagues who put it best when she said: "I found it very difficult to follow -- as a professional I was surprised at how confused I was." A negative reaction to the large amount of white space on each page even led one rabbi to quip: "Knowing NFTY, there will soon be a resolution urging the CCAR to not *waste* paper." As these responses indicate, many rabbis and cantors felt ambivalence toward this first effort. In retrospect, however, such a reaction is not so surprising. A look at this draft's timeline reveals that the committee never actually saw the design prior to the conference. Rabbi Stevens recounts the situation:

...As I recall, Elyse compiled that Monterey service just hours before the absolute final ultimate deadline for actually getting it out there...She compiled it, and we pressed it into print at the extreme and utter last moment, in crisis mode, trying to get it together for the convention, so it didn't have...any opportunity for review by the committee, the committee did not see it before it went to the convention. I think it was a factor throughout many parts of the process...the piloting editions, and the convention editions were subject to that, and the results came out fine in the end, but that was a reality of how the project proceeded.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008



As is evident in Rabbi Stevens' words, the experience of preparing for Monterey is illustrative of just how much pressure was placed upon those involved with the project.

Still, at Monterey, there were those who welcomed the change. "I thought it was great," raved one cantor. "I was not in the mood to sing, *too tired*, and I enjoyed the extra readings. I found they were easy to read and they were written well." And commenting on the graphics, one of the rabbis noted: "I liked the  $\cap$ 's. They made me feel sheltered like under my *chupah*. And I like the spaces."

One piece of feedback, in particular, became a common trope, repeated by numerous worshippers: the layout is difficult and / or confusing. This was of particular concern, as many pointed out, because such a layout, though not without graphic merit, could prove a real problem for anyone with learning challenges. "I am concerned about the design," wrote one rabbi. "Anyone with a learning difference (which would be 30-40% of our congregants) might find this layout very difficult to navigate." Another rabbi wondered how a person with dyslexia might cope with the design. This point is of particular interest because in all the records of meetings of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, and in conversations with Rabbis Knobel and Frishman, never once does it seem that the issue of learning challenges ever came into play in considering the book's design. Considering how "in tune" the leadership was with so much of what was going on in North American Reform congregations, it is surprising that such an important consideration seems to have been overlooked.

Also of interest was another oft-repeated observation regarding the juvenile impression some of the graphics and *kavannot* created. "Older congregants will think it a joke with words along borders of pages," remarked one cantor, while a rabbi noted: "Format reminds me of NFTY or camp service. Don't like it for adults." One cantor even went so

far as to say: “The *siddur* looks like a kid’s book. Although it’s beautiful, and although I appreciate it to some extent and like some of the poetry, I would feel embarrassed to have this as my movement’s prayer book.” Another cantor questioned the Conference’s choice of designer. “I’m not sure the designer knows how to design according to normal, typographical rules which would help eyeflow across a page. The designer should read ‘Design for the Non-Designer’ by Robin Williams. Seriously.” Given Rabbi Frishman’s particular attention to the issue of adult vs. children’s worship in her submission to the search committee, it would seem that the issue had not only been considered, but also explored. Obviously, something had been missed when the layout presented in Monterey was chosen.

As one might imagine, despite support and encouragement – even from those who weren’t yet in love with the volume – such honest feedback could be quite jarring. Yet Rabbi Frishman maintained a positive approach:

The feedback is the lifeline, it’s what you rely upon to know what to do next. The challenge of any feedback, any time that you’re doing work that’s visionary, you expect pushback. But the question is how do you apply that? And I think that we relied upon the feedback to help us gauge what we could do better but at the same time believing in our vision, not capitulating to the fear of change, to people that we felt were nay-sayers...there were things that we could learn and improve, but we weren’t going to reject the vision.<sup>142</sup>

Such a constructive approach served Rabbi Frishman well in handling the less-than-wonderful comments Rabbi Abrams, the committee, and she received, as the prototype service for *Mishkan T’filah* was unveiled. Little did she know, however, how much such an attitude would help to prepare her for what was to come next. In the fall of 2001, only a few months after Monterey, Rabbi Judith Abrams resigned as co-editor of the movement’s new prayer book due to illness. I asked Rabbi Frishman to reflect on the manner in which Rabbi

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<sup>142</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

Abrams' departure influenced the continuation of her own work as well as that of the committee:

Rabbi Abrams' greatest influence was steering our thinking about a reclaiming and a redefining of traditional practice. So, for example, I think it's her influence that caused us to include *mechayei meitim*. She reframed it for us...she brought in the talmudic texts that helped us to see it as metaphor, not as literal resurrection. She worked hard to try and convince us to include the middle paragraph of the *Shema*. And while she didn't succeed, I often wonder if she had stayed with the process whether she might have convinced us because she was very compelling. But once she left, others of us weren't as convinced and our own sense of ethical sense about it caused us to feel deeply that we didn't want to include it. But she really, in a variety of realms, brought us to reflect deeply on liturgies or prayers that had not been in our Reform *siddur*.<sup>143</sup>

And was Rabbi Frishman's role as editor redefined as a result of Rabbi Abrams' resignation?

No, because Rabbi Abrams rarely participated physically in our meetings. Her health was never strong throughout the entire experience and when we would gather in New York, she would participate by phone and that's a very different level of presence. So what she offered us was what she wrote -- she essentially wrote a book, I mean when you look at the amount of the material she generated. She wrote a variety of articles on different aspects of the liturgy that we then studied and discussed and wrestled with while she was on the phone.<sup>144</sup>

And so it was, in the fall of 2001, that Rabbi Elyse Frishman became the sole editor of the movement's new liturgy. A poignant letter addressed to the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee is testament to the grace with which she handled this unforeseen transition:

October 23, 2001

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone is faring well; it's been a difficult season. [The reference, of course, is to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center a month earlier.] With all the grief and loss we have had to manage, I am deeply grateful for the wisdom of our tradition and the strength of our community.

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<sup>143</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>144</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

With Judith's recent resignation, I want you to be aware of our plans. After our last committee meeting in August, subsequent phone conversations with Judith, Peter, Marty [Weiner, then CCAR President], and I led to an agreement that we would develop three services for the new *siddur*. One would be based on GOP, a second on traditional liturgy, and a third, Breaking the Mold, drawn from the Monterey manuscript. Judith took on the task of developing materials during the Holiday season, since she would have the time.

Included are Judith's first, rough drafts of the GOP-based and traditional service, (plus a creative "feminist" service whose contents might be utilized in one of the others.) You are invited to review them for content and direction, and offer your responses in writing to me.

As Peter indicated in his e-mail, a smaller sub-committee will be meeting in December to review and edit these manuscripts, including the revised "breaking the mold;" we will seriously consider your response at that meeting, so please submit them to me before December 10.

Prior to our full committee meeting in late January/early February, we will send you for review and discussion a complete Shabbat morning service for each of the three types (GOP, traditional, breaking the mold.) Assuming approval with only minor emendations, the material would then go to Yori Yanover for design. During the spring, I (with the sub-committee's support) will complete the basic material for the *siddur* (weekday and Shabbat), excepting Festivals. Piloting could also commence. At our mid-summer meeting, to be scheduled, we would review the manuscripts, and evaluate Yori's design. Theoretically, after the summer meeting, Yori could begin designing the remaining services.

This is an ambitious but plausible schedule. We have met and experienced enough to understand the direction of the project. This revised structure should help guide the project well.

Again, please direct any specific comments about the enclosed material to me before December 10<sup>th</sup>. *It is a rough unedited draft.* Please consider most seriously the style, tone, and direction of each. Especially helpful are comments about what should or should not be included in each major service type.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support and dedication. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,

Elyse<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, letter to the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 23 October, 2001

With a number of issues still unresolved--prayer leadership, individual vs. communal needs, expectations from Reform worship, as well as text and music issues--<sup>146</sup> Rabbi Frishman and the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee pressed on. Despite changes in the committee's structure caused by Rabbi Abrams' departure, much work still remained. In December of that year, a second draft of *Mishkan T'filah* was unveiled at the UAHC Biennial in Boston, MA. Some editing had taken place since the June premiere of the controversial Monterey draft,<sup>147</sup> and feedback at the Biennial convention reflected a more positive attitude toward the volume. "All went well, and the feedback has been resoundingly positive," wrote Rabbi Frishman in a letter to various members of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee.

Colleagues from last summer's convention who were not supportive of our direction, and experienced this new draft, responded favorably. We emphasized that this is not a final product. We offered the image of traveling up a mountain; we are halfway there. Skepticism has been replaced with anticipation.<sup>148</sup>

The letter goes on to detail upcoming meetings for the committee and to set a concrete timeline for the next stage of the project. "Our goal is to push through and resolve enough, so that I can complete significant work for our January 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. I will chair the meeting, but look to each of you for the leadership you bring."<sup>149</sup> Re-energized by the Boston Biennial, in late 2001, the newly reconstituted Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee set forth upon the next phase in their journey: a draft for congregational testing.

- **First Draft for Congregational Testing, 2002**
  - **Congregational Feedback, 2002-03**

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<sup>146</sup> Rabbi Daniel H. Freeland, Director of Program, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *Unresolved Issues of Reform Worship c.2001*

<sup>147</sup> See appendix C

<sup>148</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, Letter to select members of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 11 December, 2001

<sup>149</sup> Frishman, 11 December, 2001

A new year brings new promise. Despite some less-than-enthusiastic feedback received from rabbis and cantors at the CCAR and ACC conventions respectively, there were high hopes that reactions from lay people would be different. With their sights set toward the future, the committee began 2002 preparing to pilot a draft of *Mishkan T'filah* with congregants. On January 9, 2002, Rabbi Elliot Stevens sent a letter to the members of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee:

Dear Colleagues

In anticipation of our meeting by conference call on Wednesday, February 6, ...I am enclosing some documents to help with our discussion.

The primary item on our agenda is to take a first look at the financial implications of our transition to a new *siddur* – sales prospects; what to do with *Gates of Prayer* and its derivatives; how to handle the process of making announcements; soliciting advance orders and deposits for the new *Siddur*, etc. Our goal will be to make recommendations to the Committee on Budget and Finance and, after, to the Board of Trustees at our meeting in May.

Included with Rabbi Stevens' letter were two documents of great import: the first, a background summary for the publication of this new *siddur* detailing the CCAR's history as a publisher of liturgies, criticism of *Gates of Prayer*, the work of the Siddur Discussion Group, results of The Lilly / Cummings Study, and the decision to produce *Mishkan T'filah*. A publication timeline followed, which noted that congregational testing was to take place within the year. A complete draft of the prayer book was to be circulated to the Conference's membership for review by the winter of 2003, and a voting draft was soon to follow in order to meet a publication goal of 2004. Congruent with the initial timeline proposed at the Editorial Committee's first meeting in June of 1999, this timeline still placed publication five years from the beginning of the project.

Also hinted at toward the end of this document were the financial implications of such a project. As stated in Rabbi Stevens' letter, such a journey, though extraordinarily

exciting, was not without risk. If *Mishkan T'filah* was not accepted, the Conference might suffer tremendous financial loss. Billed as an unprecedented endowment opportunity, the Conference announced its desire for "...\$100,000 to fund the development and publication of the new *Siddur*."<sup>150</sup>

In addition to seeking endowment, the CCAR also began planning the sale of its soon-to-be-published prayer book. In May of 2002, a mock-up of a prospectus announcing the publication of *Mishkan T'filah* was revised. Included in this document were suggested prices for the volume: \$25.00 hardcover, \$125 leather-bound; and incentives for purchase in the form of discounts: 20% for congregational orders of 10 copies or more. Advance orders were encouraged, and would be taken beginning immediately. Congregations placing orders before January 1, 2003, would receive a 40% discount, and those by January 1, 2004, a 30% one. In addition, all orders of 100 books or more, paid in full by January 1, 2004, were entitled to a customized dedication page. By offering these package deals, the CCAR hoped that most congregations would be motivated or further motivated to pre-order the volume. And pre-orders were at this point essential; the Conference was counting on them in order to be able to publish the prayer book. Beginning in the summer of 2002, this information appeared on the CCAR website.

In the meantime, a short-term solution was instituted. The Conference could save money if it charged piloting congregations for the drafts they would be using. Rabbi Stevens recalled the concept:

The piloting was self-funding. One of the ideas that I had, was...the idea of selling piloting books to congregations, beyond the six weeks [then envisioned as the trial period for eliciting feedback], so that they could experience them, ultimately leading to several hundred congregations using over a hundred thousand soft-cover books as a way of priming the market.

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<sup>150</sup> Background Summary for New Reform *Siddur*, 2002

[This] was a way of raising some funds while the CCAR was on this hiatus between having announced that *Gates of Prayer* was going to be ending its reign so the sales began to fall off. So while the Conference was in this gap between...prayer book income for one book and the next, the piloting project over the course of a couple of years, several years, three years I think, brought in additional funds.<sup>151</sup>

Another dimension of the piloting process involved the exposure the *siddur* received prior to its publication. As Rabbi Stevens told me:

All told, many, many thousands of copies were used. There's an upside and a downside to that. The upside is that everybody knows there's a new prayer book coming; nobody's surprised to hear there's going to be a new prayer book. Everybody knows about it. The downside is that what you are showing to a lot of different people is not the final manuscript, it's not set in a beautiful way, it's not fully designed, it's not on nice paper, it's badly bound.<sup>152</sup>

Still, despite the potential for misunderstanding, it is difficult to imagine the construction of *Mishkan T'filah* without the piloting program. Given this prayer book's commitment to partnership between clergy and lay leaders, input from congregants was crucial to the creation of a final product that truly reflected the movement and its current state. In this respect, among others, the piloting program was a win-win situation.

Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee turned its attention toward the task of congregational testing of the prayer book's latest draft. Distinct from its predecessor, the first pilot draft of *Mishkan T'filah* sent to congregations arrived in three separate volumes - one for *Shabbat* evening, another for *Shabbat* morning, and a third for weekday prayers (most congregations received only the first two).<sup>153</sup> Gone were the graphics and *kavanot* that graced each two-page spread in Monterey, replaced by a simple black frame that surrounded the liturgy. At the margins were toolbar-style menus, meant to aid in finding one's place in

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<sup>151</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

<sup>152</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

<sup>153</sup> See appendix C



the service, and below each frame were citations and comments, intended to enhance the worship experience by providing further “food for thought.”

By the middle of 2002, a form letter was distributed to rabbis across the country whose congregations would be participating in the pilot testing. Based on the testing procedure used during the Lilly / Cummings Study, it described the process whereby worship teams would be appointed to give feedback to the CCAR.

This fall, our congregation has been approved as a field-testing site for *Mishkan T'filah*, the new Reform *Siddur* under development by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. We will be using draft materials from the new prayer book for eight weeks, beginning in mid-October. As a field testing site, we will be appointing a small but representative group who will be committed to attending at least 75% of services held with the test materials. Our intention is that the group will include one or two members who do not regularly attend services. This group will be completing survey forms provided by the CCAR, which will be returned to the CCAR for use by the editorial committee.

If you are interested in participating in the survey/reporting group, please contact Rabbi \_\_\_\_\_, who is coordinating our congregation's participation in this project.

Also noted in this form letter was a scheduled publication date: spring, 2005. For the first time since the editorial committee began its work on the *siddur*, the scheduled date of publication was delayed. It is more than likely that with the feedback received from rabbis and cantors in the summer of 2001 that necessitated major revisions, Rabbi Abrams' departure, and congregational testing set to begin only in mid-October of 2002, it simply became unreasonable if not impossible to meet a publication deadline set for one year earlier. Additionally, as Rabbi Elliot Stevens told me, delays came in all shapes and sizes:

I know there was a lot of frustration all the way around as things began to back up. Sometimes projections were made, the book will be out by November, the book will be out by March, and then simply because of the complexity of the project, not because anyone was at fault, but simply because the project turned out to be far more complex... You know, if somebody points out that in the Hebrew typesetting program a *meteg* throws off the adjacent vowel, so you have to go through the entire thing, a lot of

that is hand operation. And the impact of delays, again not as a matter of fault, but just the complexity of designing pages in a unique way, coupled with editorial changes that were continuous, led to significant delays and frustrations. Sometimes the...publishing team would spend hours and hours and hours discussing how to translate a particular passage. First they would translate it, and it would take a long, long, long time to get a translation that they wanted, then they would send it to Bill Cutter and he would say no, this isn't poetic, and he would make it more poetic, but then it would no longer be faithful to the original. And then somebody would say, you know, in a traditional siddur, Larry Hoffman would say in so and so's siddur, let's take a look at the *hashkivenu*, there's an additional line which Reform prayer books have been leaving out all these years, and there's really no theological reason why we shouldn't restore that line. [The reference is to additional wording in *Seder Rav Amram* that in fact does not occur in most of the medieval rites.] So, we would restore the line and one of the cantors would say, what are you doing? We've been singing it a certain way all these years and now you put that extra line of Hebrew in there and it's going to be un-singable...round after round of decision making. And we had issues with authors who refused to let their work be tampered with. ...And we would do a little paraphrase or even set it on the page a little different way to accommodate the space and the author would say absolutely not, you can't tamper with my work, or they would charge an absolute fortune, hundred and hundreds and hundreds of dollars for one little passage, so we would have to find something else to fit in at the last moment. And these things just happened. At the same time, Elyse or Peter or Larry or Bernard or somebody on that publishing team [in 2005-2006], somebody would go to Japan for a month, Elaine Zecher would go abroad, Elyse wouldn't be available, Peter would have five funerals for a week, Bernard Mehlman's wife died, Larry Hoffman's daughter was sick, he got sick, and you have delays. And so, you have a lot of frustration all the way around. And so things just unfolded like that in ways that cannot be adequately controlled.<sup>154</sup>

Though deadlines were in part an issue, reflecting on the book's editorial process,

Rabbi Frishman remains proud that integrity was maintained throughout.

It's so funny, in all those things that I recall about the process, as you mention it, I think to myself, oh my God yeah, we had this deadline, we had this deadline, we had this deadline, but I don't think that it informed our work significantly. I think the greatest issue with this deadline was that we needed to get this book out for financial reasons and ...of course there were [UAHC/URJ] Biennial deadlines and various things that would drive getting something produced, but at the same time I feel that along the way there was

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<sup>154</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

such an incredible commitment to the process and I don't think any of that time was wasted, it was just an extraordinary collaboration.<sup>155</sup>

A desire to produce a final product of exceptional quality drove the committee's work. Their willingness to delay publication by a year echoes the Conference's willingness to hold off beginning the production process until the results of the Lilly / Cummings study were available. And though time and money were of the essence, Rabbi Frishman and her team chose to hold off publication until congregational feedback was received and could be accurately evaluated and applied.

But concern for quality seems not to have been the only motivation for delaying the book's production. In a file labeled 'New Siddur, June 2002, mss,' an undated anonymous note tells another story. "Is the testing / piloting being rushed?" asks the author. "...We are sending out a draft for review / discussion before we have asked our Conference membership to make their submissions." Furthermore, the note's author, who was obviously in the know, seemed to feel strongly that in June of 2002, drafts for piloting were far from complete. "Why we're not ready – *at all*," the note goes on to say, "1. English translations need work (style, etc.) 2. Alternative readings – left sides 3. Commentaries 4. Hebrew text." But, in the big picture, it seems that this author's opinion may not have mattered. Despite legitimate concern for the draft's readiness, there was only so much time the Conference could delay the next step in the editorial process without heightening anxiety over the book's ultimate publication.

And so, in October of 2002, drafts of *Mishkan T'filah* for *Shabbat* and weekday worship were distributed to congregations for testing. A letter dated October 10<sup>th</sup> detailed the process for rabbis:

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<sup>155</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

Dear Colleague,

We are delighted that you will have an opportunity to worship with draft materials from our new Reform siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*.

The program of congregational piloting runs from the first week of November through the middle of February, during which worshippers in each congregation's survey group will be attending at least six services, evening and morning, before they complete a detailed survey instrument.

Accordingly, we have prepared a one-sheet form that we hope you will print and distribute in connection with your worship from *Mishkan T'filah*, then collect and return to the CCAR office...

It is our hope that this new approach will meet the diversity of worship style in our movement.

Rabbi Peter Knobel,  
Chair, Editorial Committee

Rabbi Elyse Frishman,  
Editor

In addition to the letter, a one-sheet introduction to the prayer book was offered, explaining how the design and content of *Mishkan T'filah* were different from those of previous Reform movement *siddurim*.<sup>156</sup>

An undated letter, addressed to worshippers at congregational test sites, encouraged the completion of a survey form, which would present the Editorial Committee with a layperson's perspective. "Your input is valuable to the Editorial Committee," it stated. "However, please complete only one form, regardless of the number of times these materials are used in your congregation at the end of the testing process."<sup>157</sup> Forethought saved committee members from having to sift through literally tens of thousands of forms, but it also created a system that provided the most accurate picture of congregants' reactions to the new *siddur*. With only one chance to offer feedback, congregants were forced to take into account, as a whole, all the occasions on which they had used the prayer book rather

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<sup>156</sup> See appendix C

<sup>157</sup> *Mishkan T'filah*, The New Reform Prayer Book: A Worshipper's Survey, Fall, 2002

than responding to each individual worship experience on its own. A more complete picture likely represented reactions to the book more accurately.

Two things draw attention in this letter. First, a scheduled date of publication is listed as September 2004. Since previous documentation had noted a delay of a year to that date, it is unfortunate that the previous date was placed atop this letter in error, potentially misleading congregants. However, as Rabbi Stevens assured me, regarding delays in production, “the Conference was very open; it had to be. Customers were asking all the time. I can’t imagine anything other than a transparency frustration, but sharing it in as open a way as possible.”<sup>158</sup> Second, Rabbis Knobel and Frishman reveal that, in fact, this *siddur* might only have two or three service models, a change even from the letter Rabbi Frishman sent members of the Editorial Committee a year earlier. “Since the format as described provides great flexibility,” they write, “the committee posits that this selection will suffice, and keep the finished *Siddur* to a manageable size, currently assumed to be around 448 pages.”<sup>159</sup>

Initially, based on recommendations to its Executive Board made in 1998, the CCAR hoped to advance the paradigm of four services in its new *siddur*. Presumably because of a lack of time, and perhaps as a result of the feedback received on the Monterey draft, the number of service models predicted to be included was decreasing. Although in her letter to the Editorial Committee in the fall of 2001, Rabbi Frishman notes the Feminist service as having been dropped, by the time congregational testing began, it would seem that even echoes of the “out of the box” model, presented in Monterey, were barely perceptible. Instead, concern continued to be voiced regarding Rabbi Frishman’s two-page spread

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<sup>158</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

<sup>159</sup> Rabbi Peter Knobel & Rabbi Elyse Frishman, *Mishkan T’filah- The New Reform Prayer Book: A Worshipper’s Survey*, cover letter, fall 2002

design, and its usability. And in what may have been one of the savviest political moves in this process, a number of rabbis began threatening to boycott the book unless a linear service was included. And though in its final form, *Mishkan T'filah* includes only two service models, among them the linear service, Rabbi Frishman feels strongly that in truth, no more than one was needed. "I think the only lack of buy-in was the fear of this page-spread and that's what led to the inclusion of a linear service which I personally think will be obsolete in four years," she told me. "It's a waste of paper in my opinion."<sup>160</sup>

Within the context of the worshipper's survey,<sup>161</sup> congregants were asked to react to the overall design and scheme of the book, use of transliteration, liturgical usage, material to be included, opening and size of the *siddur*, and to add their own comments. On a scale of 1-7, worshippers were asked to indicate how they felt about each of the issues at hand, 1 being "strongly negative", 4 being "neutral", and 7 being "strongly positive."<sup>162</sup> This seems like a reasonable start, but the Conference seemed to feel that a page-and-a-half-long survey, the majority of which involved circling numbers, might limit people's responses. In order to more accurately gauge lay-leaders' reactions to the draft, a series of close to thirty open-ended questions was also issued to those congregants and clergy members participating in the testing process.

Over two hundred surveys were returned providing answers to the open-ended questions. The breakdown of respondents is quite telling: more than half were of the baby-boomer generation, and female respondents outnumbered males by eleven percent. Almost sixty percent of non-clergy had served in a leadership position, and the vast majority were proud *shul* attendees. Once touted by Larry Hoffman as "a prayer book for the internet

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<sup>160</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>161</sup> See appendix C for survey and concurrent CCAR siddur survey sent to rabbis

<sup>162</sup> Worshipper's Survey, Fall 2002

generation,” ironically, it seems that most of those providing feedback on this *siddur* were once-removed from the technological era. Given the uneven breakdown of respondents, one is left to wonder if this data isn’t a bit skewed. It seems to call into question the intended audience of this *siddur* and the validity of responses provided.

Still, as had been hoped, feedback provided by these respondents about their worship experience with *Mishkan T’filah* was more positive. In contrast with their clerical counterparts, lay leaders overwhelmingly answered that, given some time to become familiar with the volume, it would meet their needs as worshippers.<sup>163</sup> Those congregants who had had occasion to lead worship from the book felt the service seemed to flow well, and most appreciated the literal translation and transliteration provided in the volume, an improvement from *Gates of Prayer*. Ironically, though most felt strongly that transliteration should be offered for every Hebrew passage, only adults over 65 years of age admitted to making use of that transliteration, in numbers greater than those who did not.

With rare exception, responses reflected satisfaction with the draft they had used. Although most appeared to be based in personal opinion rather than detailed knowledge of liturgical rubrics,<sup>164</sup> the great majority of responses reflected more satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the congregational-testing edition of the new *siddur*. For Rabbi Frishman and others on the Editorial Committee, this feedback was a welcome reaction. After a rocky start in Monterey, it finally seemed as though *Mishkan T’filah* was beginning to take shape. Rabbi Frishman believes that congregational testing was a crucial step on the way to publication, and feels strongly that it was, without a doubt, the congregants’ open-minded

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<sup>163</sup> *Mishkan T’filah*, cross tabulation tables, open-ended questions, 10 March, 2003

<sup>164</sup> See responses to question 23, wherein respondents felt neutral with regard to the inclusion of a fuller *p’sukei d’zimra* in the opening section of the morning service. No other question in this survey elicited a neutral response, suggesting that worshippers simply did not know what *p’sukei d’zimra* were, or what *Shabbat* morning worship had looked like prior to this expansion.

attitude that allowed them to accept change in a manner that had not been achieved among clergy. Looking back, Rabbi Frishman admitted:

I think what held the project up more than anything else were rabbis: that we are the most resistant to change and we all think we know the best way to do it. Our laity were so sensitive to how this book would be utilized, and were open to it. And while they might object to this prayer or that prayer, they were broad enough to understand what the possibilities of the book could offer, so that their support really moved this along. If this book had only been a product of the rabbis of the movement, I don't think it ever would have been published.<sup>165</sup>

Feedback from congregational testing provided a much-needed boost. Assured that they were on the right track, the Committee could now continue work on the *siddur*. Though they concurred that using the *siddur* was in fact confusing at first, congregants were open, overall, to the new format and contents of *Miskan T'filah*. With modifications made from the Monterey draft now in place, the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee could set its sights toward publication.

Between June of 1999 and December of 2004, the entirety of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee worked tirelessly on issues relating to the format, content, language, and design of the prayer book. A projected timeline in December of 2002 reflected a new publication date of March 2005. In July 2003, the committee's membership was split into task forces, each responsible for an aspect of the *siddur*. Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller chaired the music task force, whose responsibilities included the listing of "musical texts for inclusion at the end of the book" as well as the selection of "portions of longer Hebrew passages, such as psalms, which might be stressed for music treatment within the design of the body of the book."<sup>166</sup> Rabbi Richard Sarason was invited to prepare an educational commentary for the linear service. Rabbis Martin Weiner and Daniel Frelander comprised

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<sup>165</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>166</sup> Siddur Project Task Forces and Freelance Professionals, As of July 1, 2003



the table of contents task force, whose goal was “to propose a well-defined table of contents for the entire volume, including supplementary, thematic, meditative, or liturgical material outside of regular rubrics,”<sup>167</sup> and a task force on contents, co-chaired by Rabbis Lawrence Englander and Lewis Kamrass, was charged with the tasks of collecting material for *Shabbat* and daily services and the identification of “liturgical, poetic, and meditative material for inclusion within both existing services and for use in the complementary service.”<sup>168</sup> Rabbi Richard Levy, who had authored/edited several prayer books while serving as the director of UCLA Hillel, was asked to draft the Festival services. Rabbi Steven Bob, of Congregation Etz Chayim in Lombard, IL, had submitted a creative liturgy for Holocaust Remembrance Day. His submission would become the basis of the liturgy for *Yom HaSho’ah* ultimately included in the final edition of the prayer book. Finally, Rabbis Karen Kedar and Kinneret Shiryon were appointed to draft a liturgy for *Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha’Atzma’ut*. This division of labor made the best use of the Committee’s resources and the Conference’s assets.

A draft *Shabbat* liturgy was produced for the November, 2003 URJ Biennial in Minneapolis, MN, and a weekday edition followed shortly thereafter, generated for the June, 2004 CCAR annual convention in Toronto.<sup>169</sup> The first of these drafts adopted a physical shape similar to that of the final edition of *Mishkan T’filah*; it was taller and a bit narrower. But by the 2004 CCAR convention draft, the page size of 7 1/4” x 9 1/2”, ultimately selected for the final *siddur*, was already established. What distinguished these draft editions of the prayer book from previous ones, though, was mostly related to layout and content. Gone were the black frames that graced the pages of the previous year’s congregational piloting

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<sup>167</sup> Task Forces, July 1, 2003

<sup>168</sup> Task Forces, July 1, 2003

<sup>169</sup> See appendix C

drafts, and though content would still differ, the basic structure of what would eventually become *Mishkan T'filah* was now visible. Font choices and print size remained an issue in these drafts; they would not be fully resolved until a year later. Additionally, the *Shabbat* edition, produced for the URJ Biennial, was particularly memorable for one of its typos. The *Sh'ma* read: *Shema Yisrael Adonai elohainu Adonai*; the word *echad* had fallen out mechanically when the biblical Tetragrammaton was restored in place of the rabbinic double-*yod* as representation of the Divine Name. Still, despite imperfections, these drafts helped people to imagine what the final edition of *Mishkan T'filah* might look like.

In 2004, in an attempt to answer the question of whether the “immediate availability of editable texts on line would help eventual sales of the hardbound book or hurt them,” the Committee entertained a proposal titled *Liturgical Publishing on the Internet*, for presentation to the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Five years after its appearance at the first committee meeting, and ten years after it was raised as an issue in the Lilly / Cummings study, the question of internet publication still lingered. This proposal suggested two methods for the more immediate dissemination of liturgy. The first was a CD-ROM or website which would include all the Hebrew texts in *Mishkan T'filah*, fully transliterated, as well as all English texts included in the prayer book to which the CCAR held the copyright or had secured the right to use. All texts would be fully editable, thus allowing individual congregations to pick and choose which texts best suited their needs. The second method proposed was that of a creative liturgy exchange “where services and rituals will be available by subscription.”<sup>170</sup> Both approaches, presuming they were successful, seemed to provide the best of both worlds. Congregations could begin to use liturgy that would eventually be included in the Siddur and could tailor it to fit their needs. Additionally, use of the Internet

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<sup>170</sup> *Liturgical Publishing on the Internet*, Draft Proposal for the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Created 20 May, 2003, Revised, 23 August, 2004

would place the Conference at the cutting edge of technological advance, incorporating the latest and best tools in order to reach the largest audience possible. And with the exception of the hefty price tag associated with the CD-ROM, presumably to protect the Conference from a financial standpoint, this proposal seemed only to bolster the promise of *Mishkan T'filah's* success. Unfortunately, due to the amount of time and energy expended in order to create the book, neither suggestion proposed here ever came to fruition. Still, Rabbi Knobel remains an advocate for the incorporation of technology into the worship experience and, though no longer linked directly to the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*, it is my opinion that such proposals may yet see the light of day.

An e-mail sent in February of 2004 aimed to update the committee on design issues just prior to their next meeting, scheduled for March 2-3.

Dear Committee Members,

Elliot and Elyse met with our designer Neil [Waldman] and Nos [Barry Nostradamus Sher], our typographer, to rethink the design based on input from members of the committee and others. We explored several possibilities and reached a wonderful solution. We want you to know what our priorities were, and why we rejected or accepted certain options.

Priorities:

- 1) The overall aesthetic and accessibility of the page spread was the primary concern.
- 2) Retaining the content of the margins, although its placement was completely open to exploration.
- 3) Reducing the size of the page to make it physically manageable.

We resolved a page size of 7 1/4" x 9 1/2".

We explored several fonts for both Hebrew and English. The choice for English is the Adobe Garamond – very clear and legible. We decided to remain with the David Hebrew font since it is both beautiful and very legible, and works well with the Adobe Garamond.

In order for design work to recommence, having been on hold since October, we ask that you review these new spreads and convey your approval by e-mail to Elliot...by Tuesday February 24. Our hope is not to wait until our March meeting.

As can be seen from this message, the work of the Siddur Editorial Committee was both valuable and crucial to getting the book produced.

At the March 2004 meeting of the committee, a number of decisions were made in order to move the process of production forward. After hearing reports from the task forces, the committee tackled a number of questions, the most critical to address being, “What needs to happen so that the *siddur* manuscript can be circulated to CCAR and ACC members<sup>171</sup> on August 1, 2004?”<sup>172</sup> Now close to five years in the making, *Mishkan T’filah* was nearing publication. One can only imagine that after countless hours of toil, the committee was quite eager to finally realize the fruits of its labor. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, it seemed only logical that every effort be made to meet previously established deadlines as closely as possible. By the end of two days of discussion, it was resolved, among other things, that a Hebrew stylist be engaged, the number of Psalms in *P’sukei D’zimra* and the full texts of *Kabbalat Shabbat* be cut down, commentary be reviewed by laypeople for comprehension and interest, and a presentation be made to the Commission on Worship, Music and Religious Living. April 15, 2004 was set as a deadline for a number of projects decided upon at the meeting, and though a number of issues remained unresolved, the use of *Pirkei Avot* for example, and the ending of the *Amidah*, there was little time to waste.

Throughout much of 2004 it was still assumed that the book would be published in time for the Union’s 2005 Biennial, to be held in November in Houston, TX.

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<sup>171</sup> See appendix C for draft mission statement enclosed with the manuscripts

<sup>172</sup> Ad Hoc Editorial Committee on *Mishkan T’filah*, Meeting Agenda, 3-4 March, 2004

As stated by Rabbi Elliot Stevens in a July 2004 e-mail to the committee, a projected timeline included:

...The October 1 distribution of the first full draft Siddur to our membership (making copies available as well to members of the ACC) for their detailed review and critique. Our plan is to revise the draft per the comments of our colleagues and decisions made at the meeting in December, and distribute a voting copy to our members by the end of March so as to make publication possible by the Biennial in November.<sup>173</sup>

But by the time of the December 2004 committee meeting, it was fairly clear that this publication date would not be met. With a draft of the prayer book for comment in the hands of all CCAR members, an e-mail sent to the committee on November 10, 2004 came with a plea:

As you know, some material was not ready in time for the bound book, but is posted as a special website, at [ccarnet.org/shaliach](http://ccarnet.org/shaliach). Since our colleagues will probably not be devoting as much effort to the on-line material, we are asking you, as a member of the editorial committee, if you would pay particular attention to the festival morning service and the other liturgies posted there; this material is all new, even to the committee, and needs our review.<sup>174</sup>

Feedback solicited from the Conference began to filter in, and by the committee's last meeting, the situation was becoming clear. Many respondents seemed to feel that the *siddur* was truly an accomplishment and an asset to the movement. However, without question, the volume was simply too heavy. Complaints regarding size, confusing layout, and the book's theological and literary approach still remained. As one rabbi put it: "Any *siddur* that requires a section on 'How To Use It' already raises red flags for me. Hasn't the

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<sup>173</sup> Rabbi Elliot Stevens, E-mail to the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 29 July, 2004

<sup>174</sup> Rabbi Elliot Stevens, E-mail the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 10 November, 2004

*siddur* always been the most familiar, functional text for any ordinary Jew?<sup>175</sup> Still, despite constructive and sometimes not-so-constructive criticism, the committee pressed on as members prepared to meet one final time in New York, at the CCAR offices.

On December 7, 2004, just days before attending their final meeting, Rabbi Stevens sent an e-mail to members of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee. An attached agenda<sup>176</sup> reveals that the team's last efforts were to be numerous: a review of global issues, structural and design issues, the linear service, linguistic choices, Festival liturgies, and content were all to be addressed. Undoubtedly, much work still remained prior to publication, and as such, arrangements had to be made in order to ensure the *Siddur's* timely printing.

Clearly, too much work remains for any one person to accomplish alone. [Then- President of the CCAR] Janet Marder, in consultation with Paul Menitoff, has therefore appointed a *Siddur* Publication Team, chaired by Peter Knobel, to see the project through to its conclusion, based on the decisions and guidance of our Editorial Committee's upcoming meeting. This team will include, aside from Peter, Elaine Zecher, Larry Hoffman, Bernard Mehlman, and me; Elyse Frishman and Paul Menitoff will serve *ex officio*.<sup>177</sup>

I asked Rabbi Frishman about the nature of the work of the Publishing Team:

... There were those colleagues who felt that the book did not speak to a certain generation and wanted a different kind of language in the book, a different voice. And [they] felt very uncomfortable with certain authors, poets that had been strongly represented in previous versions. ... So this Publications Committee brought in a very strong voice that I think emphasized a different kind of language. I don't think this person brought anything bad in, but I think that there were pieces that were rejected, that were lost. The politics of it were that we knew that the CCAR was having some financial difficulty but no one knew the extent of the problem. And I think that what happened was that the person or the people in the know were frightened that certain rabbis wouldn't purchase this book. And they

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<sup>175</sup> Responding to the draft edition of *Mishkan T'filah*, CCAR and ACC members' comments, November/December 2004

<sup>176</sup> See appendix C

<sup>177</sup> Rabbi Elliot Stevens, E-mail to the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 7 December, 2004

wanted to give a different credibility to it by bringing in certain people whose imprimatur would make them feel more comfortable. So in the end, perhaps the two most important things that happened, I think, that when this publications group was formed it was very contentious, but over time it became completely uncontentious. Because initially there was a struggle about what should be included, why or why not; one of the individuals had no experience with the larger group, and there was just a lot of question of what should be done and who was this book for. But in the end, it was a group that worked together seamlessly. And as the group got to know one another, like all groups that are doing serious work, there was a deepening understanding for, again, the community we're looking to and there was a lot of appropriate compromise on what should come in and what should go out.<sup>178</sup>

As Rabbi Frishman described it, this committee ultimately had the final say on what material would actually be contained in the final version of *Mishkan T'filah*, and what material would not. "The Siddur Publishing Team worked prodigiously to respond to the many comments submitted during the review process."<sup>179</sup> But with only six members, the Publishing Team would have a difficult time meeting its deadlines if it did not enlist some help. And so, in February of 2005, Rabbi Knobel addressed a letter to various members of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

To be able to have a draft for the '05 Biennial and a voting copy to the CCAR membership ASAP to be able to publish in early 2006, [the Publishing Team] wants to constitute you and \_\_\_\_\_ as a team to work specifically on the \_\_\_\_\_ service in this volume. This would include reviewing textual suggestions made by our colleagues and making decisions that might include finding new material for passages that need to be deleted. Your mandate would not, however, include substantial rewrite or theological or literary reorientation of these texts in a way that goes beyond comments made by our colleagues.

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<sup>178</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

<sup>179</sup> Acknowledgements to *Mishkan T'filah*, New York, NY: (CCAR Press: 2007) xiii

A deadline of March 15, 2005 was set for each team to complete its work, and on February 9, a follow-up e-mail was sent out by Rabbi Stevens:

We now have 4 teams working on this book:

- 1) Peter (chair), Bernard Mehlman, Elaine Zecher, Larry Hoffman  
General Parameters  
Shabbat I  
Weekday Services  
*Seder K'ri'at HaTorah*- Shabbat and weekday
- 2) Rick Sarason and Lewis Kamrass  
Shabbat II- Morning and Evening
- 3) Lawrence Englander and Sheldon Marder  
Festival Services
- 4) Yoel Kahn and Marty Weiner  
Other occasions of public worship

We would like to have this work completed by March 15 as the overall book manuscript deadline is April 1 and we really cannot afford to push this back.

Deadlines looming and time ticking away, each team began its work on its appointed section to get a manuscript sent to print in time for a Houston Biennial draft for November 2005.

Optimistic, in September 2005, Rabbi Knobel addressed the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee one last time:

In working on the manuscript we have tried to be faithful to the decisions of the Editorial Committee and critiques of our colleagues. I hope when you see the manuscript you will feel as proud as I do to be associated with it. It is now in the process of being prepared for the printer. The weekday and *Shabbat* services will be in the Biennial edition. As soon as that is complete the rest of the manuscript will be typeset and made available for a vote. We expect by Shavuot the book will be in [the] hands of our congregants for worship.

You have my personal appreciation and that of the CCAR for your years of devotion to the project.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Rabbi Peter Knobel, E-mail to the Ad-Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee, 15 September, 2005



Together, the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee and the Publishing Team worked tirelessly to create the 2005 draft of *Mishkan T'filah* premiered at the Biennial in Houston. Its production, one can only imagine, was a much-welcomed second-to-last step on the long road to publication. But the end of the road was only just in sight, and more work would remain before a triumphant blessing of *Shehecheyanu* could be recited.

- **URJ Biennial Draft, 2005**

In September 2005, in anticipation of the printing of the 2005 Biennial draft, Rabbi Peter Knobel wrote an e-mail addressing the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee:

Dear Friends,

I am sorry that we have had almost no communication since our meeting in January. As you know we have decided that a small group (Elaine Zecher, Larry Hoffman, Bernard Mehlman and I) would work on the manuscript with Elyse to prepare it for the Biennial and for a final vote of the CCAR. Along the way we solicited the help of a number of you to go over parts of the manuscript. I am deeply grateful to Lewis Kamrass, Rick Sarason, Larry Englander, Yoel Kahn, Marty Weiner, Jeff Klepper, Bill Cutter, and Richard Levy for all taking on specific tasks and submitting their work on a very tight deadline.

Elaine, Larry and Bernard have been amazing to work with. We owe them a real debt of gratitude. Elliot Stevens and Debbie Smilow have been tireless in shepherding the project. My respect and admiration for them increases on a daily basis. Elyse's creative genius, graciousness and devotion are exemplary and while many have worked on this volume, *Mishkan T'filah* is a reflection of her vision of what is required for the renewal and strengthening of Reform worship.

In working on the manuscript we have tried to be faithful to the decisions of the Editorial Committee and the critiques of our colleagues. I hope when you see the manuscript you will feel as proud as I do to be associated with it. It is now in the process of being prepared for the printer. The weekday and Shabbat services will be in the Biennial edition. As soon as that is complete the rest of the manuscript will be typeset and made available for a vote. We expect by Shavuot the book will be in [the] hands of congregants for worship.

You all have my personal appreciation and that of the CCAR for your years of devotion to the project. I hope that we will be able to have a final

gathering as a *siyyum* to celebrate our accomplishments. I wish all of you a spiritually inspiring Elul and a deeply meaningful Yamim Noraim.

If you have any comments or concerns please be in touch with me.

As is evident from his words to the Committee, Rabbi Knobel seemed optimistic in September 2005. Everything was more or less in place for the Biennial draft. With a newly-set projection of publication sometime in early summer 2006, things were looking good -- that is, except for the financial situation of the Conference. As has been previously mentioned, the production process for *Mishkan T'filah* experienced a number of delays throughout. One critical delay came when the Conference was forced to replace the prayer book's designer mid-process. Rabbi Elliot Stevens recalls the situation:

The early designer of the book was fired, the Conference swallowed a huge loss, and a new designer had to be found. We probably lost a year or more just in that process because so much of the book had to be re-keyboarded and reset. Design issues [also take time]: you have bright ideas but, if you have a design, you want to set a prayer like the *k'dusha* on a two-page spread but it's a little too long and it spills over to the next page and ruins everything, you can't do that. That affects the editorial side, page after page, after page.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the self-funding nature of the piloting program two years earlier, the financial loss incurred as a result of the change in designers was tremendous. Heading into the 2005 Biennial, already a year behind its initial publication schedule, the Conference once again found itself desperately seeking funding. Their prayers were answered in the form of a million-dollar endowment, provided by a generous lay-leader, Bob Rapaport. As Rabbi Stevens told me,

...My recollection is he may have put a couple of hundred thousand down as a down payment and...he was going to be scheduling [the rest of] it over the course of five payments, as I recall: the first one on signing his commitment,

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<sup>181</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

and then subsequent payments tied to publication, the second printing, and other dates along the way.<sup>182</sup>

And indeed, one distinguishing feature of the draft of *Mishkan T'filah* produced for the 2005 URJ Biennial in Houston is the inclusion of a dedication page proclaiming that the printing of this prayer book was made possible through the generosity of Bob and Coby Rapaport. This dedication page would subsequently appear in the final editions of the book printed in 2007, a reminder of the importance of the Rapaports' donation in making the dream of *Mishkan T'filah* a reality.

In addition to the dedication page and some graphic design changes (including the use of blue ink as a highlighter), the most dramatic change in the draft produced for the 2005 Biennial was the cover graphic. The Hebrew words *Mishkan T'filah*, with flames extending upward out of the letter *lamed*, have since become a familiar image in the minds of North American Reform worshippers. Few if any remember that previous drafts of the prayer book contained only the *siddur's* name, in a less than visually stimulating design. The graphic premiered on the cover of the 2005 Biennial edition, however, provided a much-needed boost to the book's design; its creative page layout was now echoed in its cover art.

Still, where the design of the prayer book is concerned, little else changed between 2004 and 2005. Both the book's final size and typefaces had been established by June 2004, and the book's basic layout remained the same.

Consistency may have ultimately worked to the Conference's advantage as it premiered the 2005 Biennial draft of *Mishkan T'filah* in Houston.<sup>183</sup> Since congregants and clergy alike had experienced something quite similar to the edition produced in 2005, there

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<sup>182</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

<sup>183</sup> See appendix C

was little need for mental and spiritual preparation prior to revealing the latest edition. Rather, if anything, the changes from drafts produced in 2003 and 2004 reflected a positive move where the prayer book was concerned. It was evident that feedback received both from clergy and lay-leaders had been taken seriously and, in many cases, incorporated into the volume. Changes in content indicated that much thoughtful reflection had gone into production of the volume, and modifications made to the font and print size reveal an awareness of the need for a liturgy that is clear and easy to read. Though I am unaware of any formal feedback on the 2005 Biennial draft, I can only imagine that in comparison with previous editions of the book, this volume won favor among most Biennial participants.

Another feature unique to the 2005 Biennial draft of *Mishkan T'filah* was the fact that, unlike the draft *Shabbat* service produced for the 2003 Biennial in Minneapolis, this draft contained both *Shabbat* and weekday service options. Editor Elyse Frishman walked the congregation through an orientation of sorts to the book, explaining that few page numbers would be announced and that English prayers would be read in unison. For those who had tested the book during congregational piloting, its use here allowed for an opportunity to see what had changed. For those who had yet to experience the volume, worship from *Mishkan T'filah* in this setting proved a powerful introduction. Additionally, the presentation and use of this latest draft of the prayer book at the Biennial helped to secure its place as the movement's next *siddur*. All around considered a success, the 2005 Biennial edition of *Mishkan T'filah* was the closest of all the drafts to the book's final published version.

In early 2006, a voting draft was sent electronically to the membership of the CCAR in anticipation of a June, 2006 publication. (The draft was accessible on a password-protected area of the CCAR website). It was anticipated that this vote would be simple, and overwhelmingly in favor of publication. It is worth noting, however, that changes in content

remained a part of the process until its very final stages. Rabbi Elliot Stevens of the CCAR recalled one such particular instance, related to the voting draft:

When the voting manuscript was done, and sent out for a vote of the membership, it was supposed to be a straight up or down, postcard vote. At that point Stanley Dreyfus...called and was very upset. He spoke to me at great length and with great passion. He said to me: 'This manuscript is very, very unbalanced. You have all of these neo-Chassidic type of writers but you're missing some of the very early voices of the Reform liturgical tradition- Cohon, and Lauterbach, and Lily Montagu,' and he ran off a string of names. He said 'this is a very unbalanced book...You're unbalanced in theology, it's unbalanced in its literary style, and you really can't publish a book like this that pretends to cover a broader section.' And one of the earlier things that the Siddur publishing team did was to realize that he was absolutely right. Stanley went so far as to include a very thick sheaf of proposed inclusions, covering a very broad spectrum, and that became part of...some of the weekly meetings of the publishing team. That's to show you that even towards the very end part of the process, new liturgies were being solicited and written or compiled and submitted and in some cases included in the book.<sup>184</sup>

Changes in content continued to filter in. Still, the Publication Committee worked tirelessly, incorporating feedback from their colleagues and doing everything in their power to meet a publication deadline of summer 2006. The journey toward a new movement prayer book continued. And though close to meeting their goal, the Publication Committee was only able to produce a final manuscript in time for a fall, 2006 distribution. The final copy was sent off to the printer in mid-July, 2006.

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<sup>184</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008,

Rabbi Stevens is mistaken regarding the date here. The conversation with Stanley Dreyfus took place after the CCAR comment draft was issued in late 2004. Rabbis Sarason and Kamrass received the packet for consideration while revising the linear Shabbat services. Readings such as the one by Lily Montagu already appear in the 2005 Biennial draft of *Mishkan T'filah*.

▪ *Mishkan T'filah: Producing the Final Product, 2006-2007*

It was in October, 2006 that the print run encountered a number of technical problems. A letter dated October 23 was sent to the Conference's membership detailing the situation:

Dear Friends,

We write this letter with many conflicting emotions. Regrettably, there will be a delay in delivery of our siddur, Mishkan T'filah. While it is only a delay in order to maintain our high standards of print quality, we know that some of you have planned special occasions for introducing and dedicating the prayer book in the immediate future.

What has happened?

This past week, Mishkan T'filah came off the press ready for shipment. Our initial excitement quickly dissipated when we saw that almost 100,000 copies of the printed books were far below the expected quality.

We felt we had no choice but to stop the printer from shipping the books until they meet our high standards. The Steering Committee, along with the chairs of the editorial and publishing committees and the book's editor, quickly gathered to remedy the situation. All of us agreed that we will produce a book that we will be proud to use. Nothing less is acceptable. We all agree that the tangible printed volume must be as beautiful, as fine, and as lasting as the liturgy it conveys.

What we are doing?

A response team to immediately redress this situation has been created by the Steering Committee. The team will be lead by Lance Sussman (newly appointed chair of the Publications Committee), with the help of Peter Knobel (chair of the Editorial Committee). The response team will work with an expert in the field of book print production. Together, they will determine whether we should continue with the present printing company presuming its ability to rectify the problem. They will also look for a publishing project director to see this process through and to oversee a second printing (which is necessary given the overwhelming number of orders for the siddur).

We wish that we could tell you when the printing will be properly completed, but it is too early to make any predictions let alone promises. However, we are committed to regularly sharing with you the status of the production

process.

All of us look forward to the time when our new prayer book will be complete, and we will be able to celebrate with full hearts the beautiful liturgy and the beautiful volume which will be Mishkan T'filah.

Shalom uvracha,

Rabbi Harry K. Danziger  
President

Rabbi Steven A. Fox  
Executive Vice-President<sup>185</sup>

One can only imagine the disappointment such a letter must have brought. Having waited now close to seven years to realize the dream of a new prayer book, clergy and congregants alike felt frustration as the timeline for the production of this *siddur* was once again stretched to accommodate unforeseen circumstances. Still, as this letter indicates, the Publishing Committee and CCAR leadership remained both optimistic that the problem could be resolved relatively soon, and steadfast in their opinion that a commitment to quality far outweighed the need for immediate publication. Echoing Rabbi Frishman's commitment to quality throughout the editorial process, executives at the Conference maintained that only a book of the highest physical quality would be acceptable. Outlining a plan to tackle the problem, the letter seemed to indicate that the Conference, though greatly disappointed, had the situation under control.

A letter one month later thanked the Conference membership for an outpouring of support and offered further details of the problems encountered at press time:

The most significant problem with the first printing is gusseting (or wrinkling) in the pages of the book. The printing company's owner has acknowledged that the majority of the signatures of the book have this defect. Other possible print production issues occurred in the printing, gathering, sewing and binding of the book including streaking (black or blue lines) on the customized dedication pages, ink density, and an unknown coating on the covers of the book which appeared after they were stamped.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Rabbi Harry K. Danziger and Rabbi Steven A. Fox, Letter to CCAR Membership, 23 October, 2006

<sup>186</sup> Danziger and Fox, Letter to CCAR, 20 November, 2006

Again, reassurance was offered that the Conference was doing all that it could to rectify the situation.

During our recent meeting with the owner of the print company, we reviewed the known problems and his proposed steps towards repair. Among other things, the printer told us that he retained his own experts (including one we met) to review the signatures, replaced the mechanical folder on his press, made personnel changes in the plant, and will contact the cover manufacturer to determine the source of the cover film.<sup>187</sup>

But the question of a publication date still loomed.

It is still too soon to make any promises as to a shipping date for the *Siddur*.

The printer (current or new) will prepare a production schedule for the book. Even if the current printer can rectify the problems, it is very unlikely that the book will be delivered during 2006. Should we need to select a new printer, additional time will be needed which will definitely extend the process into next year. As soon as we accept a viable production schedule, we will share with you the projected dates.

We will continue to provide you with updates, and we encourage you to ask any questions you may have or to provide us with feedback.<sup>188</sup>

The Conference continued to work out print issues while eager congregations awaited the book's distribution with baited breath.

In January of 2007, a third letter was sent the CCAR membership, providing another update as to the progress of publication of *Mishkan T'filah*:

Dear Friends,

This letter is to provide you with the most current information available to us regarding the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*.

We have identified and solved the issues which caused the *siddur's* delay. While resolution of the printing, management, legal, and business matters has taken longer than we would have liked, we are now writing a contract with Rose Printing encompassing the solutions to these issues to proceed as

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<sup>187</sup> Danzinger and Fox, Letter to CCAR, 20 November, 2006

<sup>188</sup> Danzinger and Fox, Letter to CCAR, 20 November, 2006



quickly as possible.

We remain deeply grateful for your patience and understanding during this very difficult situation. We especially appreciate all of the volunteer assistance received from so many of you, including those of you in the publishing business...

#### Our Next Steps: Recommendations Approved by CCAR Steering Committee

The Site Team recommended that the CCAR move forward to accomplish the first printing of the *siddur* with Rose Printing under certain parameters. That recommendation has been approved unanimously by the Response Team and the CCAR Steering Committee.

The experts and legal counsel are now moving forward with Rose Printing to confirm in writing all the recommended parameters. This will include specific technical protocols to correct printing and production problems and to ensure quality controls going forward. Such procedures include pre-production test runs of paper and ink, and production procedures such as frequent verifiable monitoring and overnight delivery of samples as printed. The writing will also confirm Rose Printing's commitment to "make things right" at its expense, with minimal additional cost to the CCAR.

Once all agreements are confirmed in writing, Rose Printing will provide us with a written production schedule. The schedule will calculate time for the receipt of new paper, test sampling, oversight by our experts and the actual production of the book. As reported to both the CCAR Board and to the URJ Board, our production experts have cautioned us to take the time to ensure that the printing of the *siddur* meets our quality standards. Rushing production will produce a lower quality book, which is simply not acceptable to any of us.

With your continued support, *Mishkan T'filah* will indeed be a *siddur* by the entire Reform community for all Reform Jews.<sup>189</sup>

Unquestionably, by this point in the process, the pressure was on. CCAR leadership was faced with a tough situation as it sent off its third letter, attempting to explain why once again the book's arrival had been delayed. But the Conference was not yet out of the woods. For close to five months, no updates were made available. But just when the movement might have given up hope, a letter in May of 2007 provided a much-needed ray of light.

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<sup>189</sup> Danzinger and. Fox, Letter to CCAR, January 25, 2007

“We are pleased to inform you that we are now in the final steps towards publication of *Mishkan T’filah*,” it opened. “Your support, patience and suggestions have provided valuable help along this process.” Furthermore, the letter’s authors reflected on the book’s production:

The road from the discovery of printing defects to a new contract has been longer and bumpier than anyone could have anticipated. However, design and printing are complex processes, with many technical, legal and financial decisions along the way. We have learned much on this journey that will also ensure the quality timeliness of future CCAR publications.

Like you, we eagerly look forward to the arrival of *Mishkan T’filah* at our places of worship and the beginning of a new era in the Reform Movement’s religious life.<sup>190</sup>

A letter just two months later confirmed the hope expressed in the previous correspondence. “The presses are rolling!” it eagerly began. “We are pleased to report to you that *Mishkan T’filah* is moving toward final production-the presses began to roll at Rose Printing late last week. Looking forward, Rose Printing still projects an 8-10 week production schedule.”<sup>191</sup> This letter continued to explain the breakdown of printing: transliterated weekday and Festival editions first, followed by *Shabbat* editions, non-transliterated editions, and finally, a complete *siddur* with transliteration. Based on the arrival of material for the cover of the prayer book, projected to be July 24<sup>th</sup>, bindery dates would become available. Additionally, the letter reminded the Conference membership that those orders containing personalized dedication pages would be printed first and shipped directly to congregations. Finally, almost three years past its initial projected date of publication, *Mishkan T’filah* was actually becoming a reality.

In October of 2007, the prayer book so long anticipated made its way into the hands

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<sup>190</sup> Rabbi Peter S. Knobel and Rabbi Steven A. Fox, Letter to CCAR, May 16, 2007

<sup>191</sup> Rabbi Peter S. Knobel and Rabbi Steven A. Fox, Letter to CCAR Membership, 19 July, 2007

of congregants at last. Indeed, as expressed by Rabbis Knobel and Fox of the CCAR, the road toward this moment was long and perhaps even included a few unexpected twists and turns. Still, as congregations nationwide began receiving shipments of *Mishkan T'filah*, and dedication services began being held around the country, it was easy to put the challenges along the way behind them and to focus on the thrill of the moment. A well-deserved blessing of *shehecheyanu* could finally be recited as *Mishkan T'filah* made its congregational debut.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 2007: THE FINISHED PRODUCT

In October of 2007, *Mishkan T'filah* was introduced in congregations nationwide. More than twenty years in the making, this volume was truly a tremendous accomplishment for all those involved in its production. But with so much study and discussion surrounding the creation of this *siddur*, one might wonder what was ultimately included and what ended up on the cutting room floor. An exploration of four key areas of *Mishkan T'filah* provides a sense of the Publication Committee's intentions at the end of a long editorial process.

- **Layout**

Already in 1981, Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, a former Chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee and a central figure in the development of Reform liturgies, including *Mishkan T'filah*, suggested that the linear format commonly used in prayer books might need to be refined. As Rabbi Elliot Stevens told me:

The idea of having a two-page spread, I think it needs to be said that it originated in 1981 with Herbert Bronstein, in Glencoe, IL, not with Elyse. She may have reinvented it, and I'm not sure she was aware of the work Herb Bronstein had done before but he was the one who in ... January of 1981 wrote a letter outlining the need for a new prayer book and essentially outlining his thoughts on what a new siddur should look like and developing a scheme for prayers set on two-page spreads.<sup>192</sup>

Demonstrating great forethought, Rabbi Bronstein was already imagining the future of North American Reform Jewish worship just six years after the movement's most recent prayer book had been published. It seems that he was already attune to the need for something more than a themed, linear service. For his part, Rabbi Bronstein points to a booklet on the *Sh'ma* and its blessings produced in the late 1970's by Rabbi Robert Kahn,

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<sup>192</sup> Stevens, 5 February, 2008

then chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee, as the paradigm for the two-page spread.<sup>193</sup> In this respect, Rabbis Bronstein and Frishman shared a common vision: the need to both include and reinterpret traditional parameters for the purpose of an enhanced worship experience. In December of 2007, I spoke with Rabbi Frishman about the unique layout of *Mishkan T'filah*:

...When the opportunity came to be involved in the creation of a new siddur, I had already been thinking about what paradigm shift I'd like to see in a new prayer book, and I came up with a model which is very close to what we have now... The key here was, I said to the group, 'Let's assume that we can meet all these needs in the course of one service,' and instead of thinking of it as again lots of different services in a prayer book, let us work on just one and figure out a way to do that.<sup>194</sup>

And figure out a way they did. By June of 2001 when the Monterey draft was unveiled, it was clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that *Mishkan T'filah* was not just another prayer book in the "*Gates of*" series. The two-page spread which has come to characterize *Mishkan T'filah*, survived into the final edition of the book, in the format premiered at the 2005 URJ Biennial in Houston.

At the right and left-hand margins of each two-page spread, are tool-bar style menus, one in Hebrew the other in transliteration. Their function is to aid the worshipper in identifying his or her location in the service. On the right-hand page, a Hebrew prayer lies parallel with its transliteration. Below it, a reasonably faithful translation delineates the Hebrew prayer's literal meaning. On the left-hand page are found interpretive readings, based on the theme of the Hebrew prayer on the opposite page. Both the faithful translation and the interpretive readings conclude with a Hebrew and English *chatima*, which serves as a sign to turn the page.

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<sup>193</sup> Bronstein, 2 December, 2007

<sup>194</sup> Frishman, 19 December, 2007

Of note in the layout of *Mishkan T'filah*, however, is the inclusion additionally of a linear service, both for *Shabbat* evening and morning. Given the emphasis placed on the move from this linear model, its appearance in final edition of the prayer book might seem a bit confusing. I asked Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, a member of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee who worked on the linear model, for his thoughts on its inclusion in the final edition of the prayer book:

I didn't have a need for a linear service. We had been involved with our congregational prayer book which is right side-left side, three options on the left side. And we had made that transition in our congregation very easily. Now, they're numbered, they're a little easier to find, but I took it on as a task because I was asked to do it... I will say to you that I think it will serve probably some very valuable functions, not altogether unintended, but that wasn't probably the original cause for it, it might have been politically motivated – you know there are congregations who just won't use it... What are some of those functions? I think it will serve very well with expanded liturgical commentary and notes. What the room on that page allows for, Service One doesn't allow for, a great teaching, educational [tool], and I think there will be congregations that will want to use it, even if they're perfectly comfortable with number one just because of those notes. I think that the service will be easier in certain settings – Elyse would disagree with this -- I think it will be easier for a congregation of guests or a bat mitzvah service... Look, I know that Elyse was probably pretty disappointed in Service Two because it was an option that flew in the face of her, I would guess primary, hope for the book which was the non-linear, the multiple options on the page. But I don't see it as ultimately detracting from that. There will be some congregations that will start there, but I'm quite confident that they will find themselves flirting with, and ultimately moving to, [service] number one... it'll be a great transition. There'll be congregations who are in [service] number one but who will like [service] number two as just some new liturgy, as something fresh, a change of pace, who will like the notes.<sup>195</sup>

As stated earlier, Rabbi Frishman remains fervent in her belief that the linear model is unnecessary, and will become obsolete in just a few years' time. And though the inclusion of a linear model may have been based in fear of the two-page spread, as Rabbi Frishman

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<sup>195</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

suggested, it is quite possible, as Rabbi Kamrass points out, that utilization of one service model may lead to engagement with the other. As differences in content do exist between the two services, the presence of the linear service in *Mishkan T'filah* may actually enhance the variety of liturgical texts available, providing more nourishment for the starving soul. A black frame that surrounds the liturgical texts on each page demarcates linear sections of the prayer book.

A final detail of the layout of *Mishkan T'filah* is the use of color on each page. Previous movement prayer books had all been printed in black ink on white paper solely. The use of colored ink had been entertained as a possibility from early on in the process, but had been dismissed due to high cost. In a 2007 interview, Rabbi Frishman reflected on the consideration of colored ink:

From the very beginning we had wondered about the use of color in the book and had been informed that that really wasn't possible, it was too expensive. And finally, close to the end, Larry [Hoffman] said 'Look, it would make so much sense if we could use color.' And we went and investigated it, and the cost was so minimal it was a no-brainer that we were going to use color.<sup>196</sup>

Ultimately, the layout of *Mishkan T'filah* is quite pleasing to the eye. Gone are the extreme graphics and uniquely shaped texts that graced the pages of the 2001 Monterey draft. But the substance of the prayer book remains. The addition of blue colored ink, used to denote the beginning words of a text, offer an added dimension to the book. The choice of fonts creates an air of sophistication; large amounts of white space on most pages ensure that the *siddur* isn't nearly as dense as its predecessor. They may even inadvertently condone the notion that prayer isn't limited to the words printed on the page. In short, the

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<sup>196</sup>Frishman, 19 December 2007

movement set out to create a text that felt sacred. In the opinion of this author, the layout of *Mishkan T'filah* achieves just that.

#### ▪ Language

Language choices for the texts of the *siddur* became a matter of the utmost importance. As Rabbi Frishman recalled:

Early on, for example, we talked about using language that we call...sacred English, thees and thous, and we tried to include some of that material and we realized that it was just jarring, you know, it didn't resonate with any of the other material on the page, so we stopped doing that. We took prayers from [the] *Union Prayer Book* like 'Grant Us Peace' but we recognized that the totality of that language...had to be changed anyway, it had to be gender-neutralized. There are different aspects of it - the cadence might be a little different...there needed to be rhythm that kind of resonated throughout the entire book.<sup>197</sup>

Already during the work of the Siddur Discussion Group in the mid-1980's, the issue of liturgical language began to be explored, and as a part of the Lilly / Cummings Study, work was done in cooperation with ICELL, the International Commission of English Language Liturgy for the [Catholic] Church, in order to better understand how liturgical language could be crafted. Much care and effort was placed upon creating English prayers that resonated theologically with the worshipper, but also possessed a poetic feel.

It is unclear, however, whether the text was read aloud with every draft as had been recommended by ICELL. Additionally, despite the Committee's best efforts, inconsistency in the quality of English readings selected for inclusion in *Mishkan T'filah* do plague the final edition of the book.

In the Hebrew, linguistic choices were a bit more difficult to make. Many such decisions are directly linked to the content of specific prayers, and an alteration to its

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<sup>197</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007



language might throw off not only the worshipper's focus and ability to follow the text, but might also bring about serious theological ramifications. Great care was taken to avoid extraneous changes to the established Reform text of prayers, and the result is a Hebrew that is not altogether unfamiliar. The occasional modification does tend to catch one by surprise, but on the whole, the text reads and flows as does any Reform liturgy. The inclusion of poetry and interpretive English readings in the *siddur*, balances between tradition and innovation.

#### ▪ Gender Neutrality

The issue of linguistic preference, particularly as it relates to epithets for God, was an integral part of the process of creating *Mishkan T'filah*. By 1975, when *Gates of Prayer* was published, the question of gender-neutral God language was beginning to surface. In the mid-1980's, the Siddur Study Group chaired by H. Leonard Poller explored the feminist critique of language, and by the mid-1990's when gender-neutral prayer language became an absolute requirement, *Gates of Prayer* and *Gates of Repentance* were re-issued in a gender-neutral editions. By the time *Mishkan T'filah* was even being considered, gender-neutral language, and God-language in particular, might have seemed like a foregone conclusion. Yet, as drafts of the prayer book reveal, gender-neutrality only goes so far.

One place where the need for gender-neutrality played itself out was in the case of the inclusion of female images in the prayer book. Beginning already in the mid-1990's *siddurim* printed in the Reform movement included the names of the matriarchs in the *Amidah*. The final edition of *Mishkan T'filah*, in addition to all its predecessors, did just this. As can be found in the 1994 edition of *Gates of Prayer*, Miriam's name is added alongside that of her brother Moses in the text of *Mi Chamocha*, highlighting the role that she played in the Exodus from Egypt, and in particular, as Midrash teaches, in offering praise before God in

song. An innovation in *Mishkan T'filah*, Miriam's name is also mentioned in a second verse of the song *Eliyahu HaNavi*, Elijah the Prophet, included among prayers for *Havdallah*. Here, Miriam is depicted as Elijah's counterpart, a female prophetess whose name is invoked at the end of each week in request of redemption. Furthermore, passages throughout the prayer book that traditionally invoke the God of our forefathers, *Elohei Avoteinu*, now read *Elohei Avoteinu V'imotenu*, the God our forefathers and foremothers. This had become standard in North American Reform *siddurim* beginning with the 1994 edition of *Gates of Prayer*.

By its very nature, gender-neutrality implies that no masculine images of God be present in the book. Masculine images would imply that God is in fact of the masculine gender, which is, by default, superior to the female one. In the case of God-language, however, and particularly in the Hebrew, such a task is almost insurmountable to achieve. Initial discussions suggested a model based in parity; some God names would be written in the male, while others, in the female. But, as Rabbi Frishman recalled, "we talked about what it really meant to have feminist prayer. Were we really willing to refer to God as She? No, we were not."<sup>198</sup> While the model had worked well for authors like Marcia Falk, who invoked *Yah* and the *Sh'china* in the feminine form in her *Book of Blessings*, it seems as though mainstream Reform liturgy was not quite ready to make that leap.

The result is an interesting combination of totally gender-neutral God language in the English, and a gendered but nonetheless non-traditional Hebrew. Gone are the pictures of kings and lords, replaced by less troublesome images like those of creator or parent. And though these words remain masculine in their gender as they appear in the Hebrew, they are nevertheless evocative of, if possible, a less clearly male image. Additionally, as Rabbi Frishman points out:

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<sup>198</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007

If anything, there ended up only being two places in the Hebrew text where we changed the God language, though we experimented in other places initially. But we recognize that we couldn't radically change the Hebrew because it's so gender bound. But we changed from *malkeinu* to *shomreinu*, and *Avinu* to *yotzreinu*; we were trying to open those texts up a little bit in *Hashkivenu* and *Sim Shalom*.<sup>199</sup>

An attempt to meet the needs of contemporary worshippers, who cannot fathom a patriarchal liturgical language, resulted in the combination described above.

For those who understand Hebrew, the compromise seems odd at best, and ludicrous at worst. Yet the necessity to express the female voices so long neglected in our tradition was not only addressed here but was also resolved.

- **Religious Thought**

Gender-neutrality, particularly as it related to God-language, was only part of the story as Rabbi Frishman expressed to me in a phone interview.

I want to emphasize something. I think that there are two language pieces that always trouble me. One is 'gender-neutral' and the other is 'traditional'...in terms of their application to liturgy and what the Reform movement is about. I don't think that we strove in *Mishkan T'filah* to be gender-neutral. I think we strove to open up our sense of God as much as possible. And one of the conversations we had was, how do we choose to reference God in English? In third person or second person? So we had a lot of conversations about transcendent vs. personal God...it's not that we were gender-neutral so much as [that] we didn't want to limit our awareness. And once we rejected using feminine pronouns for God, we had to reject masculine pronouns. But we thought of other names that were evocative. I think the fact that *Gates of Gray*, that people's initial reaction was let's make our prayer book gender-neutral, people had a very unsophisticated understanding. They thought it was a 'p.c.' conversation: we can't make God masculine, rather than saying this is not about that. It's about how do we open up our sense of God to be so much more than gender-linked language makes it to be?<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007

<sup>200</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007

As is evident from her statements, Rabbi Frishman envisioned a *siddur* that approached God in a very different way than had been prevalent in North American Reform Jewish worship. Consistent with her desire to push the limits of traditional worship paradigms, Rabbi Frishman's aspiration of expanding our understanding of God was most certainly achieved through the inclusion of various unconventional epithets.

The question of theology also played a role in determining the content of *Mishkan T'filah*. A number of examples illustrate the dilemma. The first of these is the longstanding issue of modifying of the traditional *chatima* of the *G'vurot* blessing in the *Amidah*, *mechayeih hameitim* ("who resurrects the dead"). "[Samuel Adler's 1860 revision of] Leo Mertzbacher's prayer book for Temple Emanuel, New York (1855) substitutes the phrase *mechayeih hakol* ("who gives life to all things"); this is later taken up by Chaim Stern in *Gates of Prayer*.<sup>201</sup> With *Mishkan T'filah*, the decision was not quite so simple. Rabbi Lewis Kamrass recalled the discussions surrounding the issue:

The *hakol* and *metim* [issue], people were *bugging* about that [at Monterey]...and mostly not positive from what I can gather...And it was a great debate, a great debate. And not just a bunch of people sitting around the room, we spent real time on it. One of the things we did, we spent real time, we studied it, we studied the whole notion of resurrection and the metaphor idea, we really talked about what early Reform liturgists did, and subsequent Reform liturgists did. Initially, Larry Hoffman was not on the committee, and actually it was during those conversations that I said "Why don't we get Larry in on this committee? Because he was very much there at [the beginning of] *Gates of Prayer*." And besides the fact that he's Larry and he brings in expertise, and we also brought in Rick [Sarason] about that point, but I said, "He also has the historical memory of having been at some of these discussions, it might have come up in the early seventies...for *Gates of Prayer*."<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Rabbi Richard Sarason, PhD, "To Rise from the Dead?: *Mishkan T'filah* and a Reform Liturgical Conundrum," written for 'Ten Minutes of Torah' ([www.urj.org/torah/ten](http://www.urj.org/torah/ten)), February, 2006

<sup>202</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008. Rabbi Sarason was actually brought into the Editorial Committee after the 2002 draft version had already been circulated

Second, the second paragraph of the *sh'ma* was also briefly considered for inclusion in *Mishkan T'filah*. While it had been omitted from previous Reform liturgies as a result of its troubling theology of mechanistic reward and punishment, Rabbi Abrams urged the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee to view the paragraph through the lens of metaphor. Though the inclusion of both *mechayeih hametim* as the sole option and the second paragraph of the *sh'ma* was entertained throughout the editorial process, ultimately both were rejected. Rabbi Lewis Kamrass suggests a reason for their rejection:

...I think that people really came at it from, why are we putting in this extra prayer surrounding the *v'abanta*? Why are we doing these things? And we spent a lot of time talking about how would that be for a rabbi in the congregation that doesn't do something, how would he explain it when his congregant came up and said, "What is this and why don't we do it?" How do you explain the parenthesis *metim* if you're always doing *hakol*?<sup>203</sup>

In his comment, Rabbi Kamrass makes mention of the solution adopted regarding the issue of *mechayeih hametim*. While most found the notion of resurrection too troublesome to stomach, unable to remove it from its literal context, others embraced Rabbi Abrams' metaphorical take on the issue, and felt that the option to recite those words ought to exist. It was therefore resolved that the primary text in *Mishkan T'filah* would be *mechayeih hakol*, but that the word *hametim* would appear in parenthesis following it. Rabbi Kamrass revealed his dissatisfaction with this resolution, stating: "I think that was a compromise and, at that, a very inelegant solution."<sup>204</sup>

With regard to the second paragraph of the *Sh'ma*, the solution adopted by the Siddur Editorial Committee seems less troublesome. Despite much discussion surrounding the potential for the paragraph to be read as metaphor, its inclusion in the final edition of

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<sup>203</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

<sup>204</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

*Mishkan T'filah* was rejected outright because its content was deemed to stand in opposition to Reform theology. Instead, an interpretive English version of the paragraph, written by Rabbi Richard Levy, can be found across from *v'ahavtah*, marking the place where another paragraph once was.

As can be seen through the aforementioned examples, much care and consideration went into producing *Mishkan T'filah*. Its layout, language and content reflect much respect for feedback received throughout the process. In response to complaints that the book was too heavy, *Mishkan T'filah* was printed in two editions: a full *siddur*, including Shabbat, weekday, and Festival liturgies, and a two-volume set, one for Shabbat, and another for weekdays and Festivals. In addition, one further detail led to another split: transliteration. Rabbi Lewis Kamrass recalls the debate:

When we put in the transliteration, and that was a *bloody* battle, *bloody* battle and I've got the scars *all* over me to prove it, again we [members of the Siddur Editorial Committee] were always respectful and everything else, but there was a *large*, not on the committee - on the committee we were pretty okay with the transliteration - but there's a large group of rabbis, mostly [in] Chicago, who are anti-transliteration, and they're die-hards, they're fanatics about it. And ultimately that decision about producing a separate version without the transliteration came from them, not through our committee, to the Executive Board, late in the game...But there were many of us who talked about [how] transliteration in our own prayer book changed...I had people after we put out our own prayer book [at Wise Temple] for a year and a half coming up to me like in tears at the end of a service, in tears, telling me, "It's the first time in my life I really felt like I could fully participate." And, you know, we were bringing this kind of response and the question was how much? I mean do you have to transliterate a prayer in Hebrew that you're never going to read anyway? ...These were all things that we talked about.<sup>205</sup>

In addition to separate Shabbat and weekday/Festival editions of the book, a full *siddur* without transliteration was also published.

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<sup>205</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

A final feature that sets *Mishkan T'filah* apart from its predecessors is its multi-vocal presentation style. Texts with various theologies were juxtaposed on the same two-page spread with the hope that such a variety of points of view would ensure that each worshipper could find him or herself reflected somewhere in the liturgy. I asked Rabbi Lewis Kamrass if he felt that *Mishkan T'filah* was an attempt to please everyone:

I would say, absolutely. I don't think it's a terrible thing. The goal was to produce a movement prayer book. It is far less monolithic, and therefore far less possible to have one prayer book that will respond to everybody's needs. So the point of this prayer book was to provide enough options so that people could recognize something of themselves and their place in it, and be challenged by maybe some things they didn't recognize, and to ignore things that they just simply couldn't countenance. And we probably did a good job of making nobody really, really thrilled with everything, and everybody able to see a little of themselves in it. So, you know, when you say did we try to make everybody happy it doesn't sound like a very noble approach. But I would say, I think that was our mandate; not to make everyone happy, but to create in an environment of a movement that's so widespread that you begin to wonder what really is the unifying principle...something that would work for the most number of congregations.<sup>206</sup>

If Rabbi Kamrass is correct, then it seems the Editorial Committee did its job. But did they meet their goals? As Rabbi Frishman told me in an interview in 2007:

I guess the question is what do you consider to be success? ...*Gates of Prayer* was produced in a time when it was really a question of rabbis sitting around together, writing liturgies, and putting a book together and getting it out. This book [*Mishkan T'filah*] arrived in a very different environment, one that recognized clearly the relationship between a *siddur* and a worshipping community, as a tool in worship, and understanding how it might be utilized. We had the experience from *Gates of Prayer*, of its taking ten years to assimilate into the market. ...In a sense, we've done that already. Our whole process of piloting this book has already brought it into many, many congregations -- there's a buy in for this book that's so different, and in a lot of ways, this book is much more radical because it requires a different level of preparation and even of delivery. So, the very nature of how this came about, I think even additionally the strong relationship between the respect for laity and their responses [is very different].<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Kamrass, 4 February, 2008

<sup>207</sup> Frishman, 19 December 2007

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

### ▪ The Reception of *Mishkan T'filah*

"Fans of the book say its beauty lies in the multitude of options. But some critics consider the book a giant step in the wrong direction."<sup>208</sup> Reactions to *Mishkan T'filah*, as it was finally published in October 2007, were as varied as the volume's theological options.

The new prayer book expected to be adopted by at least 300 of 900 congregations across the nation in the next several months, symbolizes the myriad definitions of what it means to be part of the nation's largest and most liberal movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It also highlights disagreements about the direction of Reform Judaism, founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a more rational approach to the faith.<sup>209</sup>

The book's architects insist that this is "a prayer book of the people," but, as one reviewer stated:

...on the very issue for which the *siddur* presents so many options, [Rabbi Elyse] Frishman admits that lay people "seem not to care significantly," while "clergy care a great deal." And in this way, for all the distance traveled from the *Union Prayer Book*, the current one retains a strong family resemblance to its predecessor as well...despite the emphasis on the virtue of "many voices," a voice has been supplied, and it is very much a clerical one.<sup>210</sup>

Reviews such as the aforementioned one might seem harsh, but the fact remains that some feedback, including that of Reform rabbis, has been less than complementary.

"Reforming the prayer book robs us of an opportunity to be meaning-makers in our encounter with one of the classic texts of Jewish life," claimed Rabbi Leon A. Morris of the Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning at Temple Emanu-El in New York City. "Does

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<sup>208</sup> Manya A. Brachear, "Prayer book ignites debate: New edition blurs distinction between Jews, critics charge," *Chicagotribune.com*, 28 October, 2007  
[www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-prayerbook\\_bd28oct28,0,7947341.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-prayerbook_bd28oct28,0,7947341.story)

<sup>209</sup> Brachear, "Debate," 28 October, 2007

<sup>210</sup> William Kolbrener, "At Prayer—Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur Reviewed," *Commentary*, January, 2008



our prayer book really need to be consistent with our theology?”<sup>211</sup> Rabbi Michael Sternfeld of Chicago Sinai Congregation, who is on the other side of the theological spectrum from Rabbi Morris, responded to the book: “I’m sorry it’s happening this way...I give [the editors] an A for effort. They know their stuff. But I think their mind-set is to make the Reform movement as much like Conservative Judaism as we can.”<sup>212</sup>

Still, not everyone shares these critical opinions.

Rabbi Karyn Kedar of B’nai Jehoshua-Beth Elohim in Glenview [IL] commends the new prayer book for stretching the mind “to think in new ways and new metaphors for the divine,” as she believes every prayer book should. She sees it as a presentation of Jewish liturgy through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century lens... Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus of B’nai Yehuda Beth Sholom in Homewood [IL] praises the traditional twist. She and others point out that the book stays faithful to the Reform principles that support interfaith marriages, equality of women, same-sex unions and “Jews by choice.”<sup>213</sup>

Since it was more than twenty years in the making, much excitement surrounded the ultimate publication of *Mishkan T’filah*. Critics of the volume have existed every step along the way, but as was stated in an article in *The Wall Street Journal* in November 2007, “If ‘Mishkan T’filah’ is accepted as the standard prayer text in the movement’s 900 congregations, it could affect how more than a quarter of American Jews pray.”<sup>214</sup> An article in the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* points out that the first print run produced close to one hundred fifty thousand volumes and, that being the case, it might be fair to state that numbers speak louder than words.

“The siddur is an ongoing composition of the Jewish people not to be fixed in stone,” states Rabbi Elyse Frishman, editor of *Mishkan T’filah*. “The idea that we will come

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<sup>211</sup> Leon A. Morris, “Op-Ed: A Reform rabbi argues against his movement’s tradition of altering the traditional siddur,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, New York: 2 October, 2007.

<sup>212</sup> Brachear, “Debate,” 28 October, 2007

<sup>213</sup> Brachear, “Debate,” 28 October, 2007

<sup>214</sup> Ben Harris, “People of the Book(s),” *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 2 November, 2007  
[http://online.wsj.com/article\\_email\\_article\\_print/SB119396938729580093-1MyQAxmDE...](http://online.wsj.com/article_email_article_print/SB119396938729580093-1MyQAxmDE...)

to pray as if our text is classical is simply not true. We have 200 years of experience to prove that; the strong majority of American Jews have worshiped from Reform siddurim, as well as Conservative and Reconstructionist. They consider *our* siddurim normative."<sup>215</sup> If Rabbi Frishman is correct, then the Reform movement's latest prayer book has a bright future. And with almost half of URJ member congregations having ordered the *siddur*, it has the potential for tremendous impact upon North American Reform Jewish worship.

For their part, congregants are rarely, if ever, given the opportunity to express their opinions in print. IWorship, an e-mail listserv for congregational ritual committee members on the subject of prayer and everything related, provides an opportunity for lay-leaders to share their thoughts regarding the volume. Responding to queries from group members, they offered their own thoughts on the movement's new *siddur*. One group-member said:

What I like about the forthcoming Mishkan T'filah is that there is no responsive reading. It eliminates the divide between the bimah and the congregation. Anyone can choose to join in or not. This, in my opinion, is the best equalizer in the trend toward egalitarian worship. We've taken care of the content by gender-neutralizing G-d and human beings and by adding the names of the matriarchs to the Amidah. Now we've eliminated the us-and-them back-and-forth reading (except, of course the Bar'chu and Kedushah).

A number responded to concerns raised over splintering within the movement:

While my knowledge of Mishkan T'filah is limited, my current understanding is that the flexible approach used is to some extent intended to accommodate the growing desire for local adaptations to services. If the adaptations or local sidurim is being driven by broader congregational involvement and not solely rabbinic preference, this could well be viewed as a positive movement,

said one lay leader. Another offered: "There is a lot to be said for a movement being unified by its siddur -- so I'd like to see as many of our congregations as possible getting with the

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<sup>215</sup> Rabbi Elyse Frishman, "Op-Ed: Reform Liturgy must ring true," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Franklin Lakes, N.J.: 2 October, 2007

program.”<sup>216</sup>

Based on the evidence at hand, *Mishkan T'filah* appears to have been received warmly overall. Premiered before the movement as a whole at the 2007 Biennial in San Diego, participants were treated to their own copies of the book that had already become a household name in contemporary Reform worship. Though a number of wrinkles remained, overall reactions seemed favorable. The book's successful use at *Shabbat* worship during the convention is evidence for its acceptance as the “official liturgy” of the movement. And even if not one hundred percent satisfied, it seems that most worshippers appreciated and admired efforts of the Editorial Committee. In fact, if pushed to do so, I would venture to guess that even the harshest of critics could find one or two positive things to say about *Mishkan T'filah*. If nothing else, the publication process has caused North American Reform Jews to reconsider worship, its purpose, and the revision of traditional liturgy; that alone may have been worth all the trials and tribulations along the way.

Only time will tell if *Mishkan T'filah* will ultimately win favor among Reform worshippers. In the meantime, the volume's adoption by congregations nationwide provides a once- or twice- in a lifetime opportunity. Typically, *siddurim* last for a generation, perhaps even less. Therefore, this occasion provides the perfect setting for the creation of dedication services and rituals surrounding the adoption of the prayer book. Children and adults alike will always remember the night the new prayer book was made “official” at their synagogue, and the fact that the *Mishkan T'filah* section of the URJ Website allows congregations to share rituals created surrounding the prayer book's dedication, adds to the sense of community encouraged by the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*. On this particular occasion, all Reform Jews can share in this significant moment in the movement's history, and in the

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<sup>216</sup> Excerpts from e-mail messages, Iworship listserv, Fall, 2007

emotion surrounding this true accomplishment. The number of congregations that have already taken the opportunity to mark this moment in time with a special ceremony or service suggests that *Mishkan T'filah* has not only been accepted, but celebrated as well.

#### ▪ Author's Evaluation of the Prayer Book

When I chose to make *Mishkan T'filah* the subject of my rabbinic thesis, I held strong opinions with regard to its layout and contents. As I have to come to learn in the course of my work, however, many of my opinions came from a lack of understanding about the book's intentions. I knew only what I saw on the page: choppy Hebrew, incomprehensible interpretive English readings, and a layout that I, who considered myself liturgically competent, had difficulty navigating. To be perfectly frank, I felt absolutely no connection to the volume, and was embarrassed at what I saw presented on its pages.

Prior to the publication of *Mishkan T'filah*, I'm not sure I was even aware that prayer books had introductions, let alone had I read one. In this respect, I lacked a certain guidance regarding the prayer book, and I believe that this lack of orientation significantly impacted my reaction to it. Despite Rabbi Frishman's claims that the book had been adequately framed, I, nonetheless, remain unconvinced. I feel strongly that, short of a clergy member turning his or her congregants' attention to the book's introduction and providing the articles so thoughtfully written and published on the URJ website, the typical Reform worshipper would remain blissfully ignorant of anything beyond what he or she saw on the printed page. And, having read feedback from rabbis and cantors throughout the process, I'm not sure that they were aware of these pieces' existence either.

I still struggle with aspects of *Mishkan T'filah*. I cannot, despite multiple explanations, accept certain alterations that were made to the Hebrew. I do not think that decisions to include variants of prayer with mystical tendencies were wise, nor do I

appreciate the inclusion of so many different theologies that my head sometimes feels like it is spinning. As a self-professed Reform Jew, I still struggle to find my own voice among the plethora of expressions provided. I'm not sure that *Mishkan T'filah* represents me. But I support it.

Over the course of my work on this thesis, I have come to understand that one need not examine each and every detail of the book in order to gain an understanding of the whole, but rather, if details are to be inspected, they can only be understood in the context of the entire volume. Despite a self-professed desire to represent a multiplicity of theologies and worship styles I believe that *Mishkan T'filah* represents an attempt at the unification of a much-divided movement. It represents a snapshot in time, a portrait of Reform Judaism in the early twenty-first century. I applaud the thoughtful efforts of the editorial and publications teams who challenged the movement to re-imagine [Reform] worship by providing a brand new layout and a new way of thinking. I need not agree with each and every detail of the book's construction in order to support the effort. And I do support it, enthusiastically. I believe that the movement is better for having created *Mishkan T'filah* – even if a bit bruised by the process.

- ***Mishkan T'filah's* Potential for Success**

Already, close to half the member congregations of the Union for Reform Judaism have adopted the movement's new prayer book. A first print run was recently completed (as of this writing in February, 2008), and a second has already been planned. Demand for copies of *Mishkan T'filah* remains high, and though it is sure to taper at a point in the future yet to be determined, an increasingly knowledgeable and interested laity may yet be responsible for sustaining the prayer book's sales through individual orders placed for personal use outside the congregation.

As Rabbi Frishman herself has stated, it is difficult to gauge success as it depends on how one defines the word. Still, it seems that *Mishkan T'filah* is indeed finding a dwelling place in Reform congregations nationwide. People seem open to the liturgical modifications that this volume provides, and are willing to embrace a new approach to worship that might in fact prove more meaningful and moving for them. Keeping all of these factors in mind, I would venture to say that, not only is *Mishkan T'filah* already a success, but it will continue to be so for at least ten or more years to come. Though I recognize that every book has a shelf life, I believe that, at least for the moment, the publication of *Mishkan T'filah* has successfully re-energized Reform Jewish worship in North America.

- **What Does the Publication of *Mishkan T'filah* Say About Where the Reform Movement Is Currently?**

During the course of this work, I have begun to understand why the production of a new movement-wide liturgy was not only desirable but vital. We live in a time when, as Rabbis Frishman, Knobel, Hoffman and others have willingly admitted, no one theology defines Reform Judaism. Had the Central Conference of American Rabbis not decided to publish a movement-wide prayer book, I am not sure that our leadership would have been able to sustain a meaningful worship experience for North American Reform Jews. We have become so divided in our movement these days that it is can be easy to forget what it is that we have in common. For its part, liturgy is a human construction. As such, it is a limited means for conveying our hearts' deepest desires, our thanks to God, and our connections to other Jews throughout the world. In this sense liturgy is also quite time-bound, and if a prayer no longer speaks to us, there is little reason to retain it as is. But it is only as long as we are willing to recognize the limitations of our liturgy that it can serve us and serve us well.

The publication of *Mishkan T'filah* speaks volumes as to the current state of North American Reform Jewry. Despite the adoption of a movement-wide set of guiding principles in 1999, variation in belief and practice among Reform Jews continues to grow. With such a prospect, the future of the movement might seem questionable. And though it may prove challenging to meet the ever-expanding needs of Reform Jewish worshippers nationwide, *Mishkan T'filah* may prove the antidote. Perhaps its focus on community and inclusion will provide a much-needed dose of unity to the movement. The publication of this latest Reform liturgy might just be proof of the vitality of North American Reform Judaism.

# **Appendix A:**

**Agenda from a meeting of the Siddur Discussion Group**



**SIDDUR GROUP AGENDA  
TUESDAY JULY 29, 1997**

**10:00 -12:00 Introduction**

**Chair Leonard Poller (15 mins)**

**Project Directors Daniel Schechter and Peter Knobel (45 mins)**

**11:00-12:30 Discussion**

**Prayer book in Post Print Era -The Impact of Computer, Localism, Role of Central Conference of American Rabbis as Publisher.**

**12:30-1:30 Lunch**

**1:30-2:30 Content in a Non-Ideological Age On What Basis does a text or prayer included or excluded.  
e.g. Resurrection of the dead, second and third paragraphs of Shema, Angels,  
Messiah, etc.**

**2:30- 3:30 CCAR's Role in Issues of Worship in contrast to Liturgy Congregational Training, Worship  
leader Preparation etc.**

**3:30-4:00 Break**

**4:00- 6:00 Feminism Inclusivity Klal Yisrael: God Language Berachot Formula Matbeia Tefillah**

**6:00-6:45 Mincha Maariv**

**Dinner on Your Own**

**Wednesday July 30, 1997**

**9:00-9:30 Shacharit**

**9:30- 1200 Issues of Process: Composing and Testing a New Siddur. Role of Lay People Specialists and  
Non specialists Editor/Author vs Anonymous Committee of Experts**

**12:00-1:00 Lunch**

**1:00- 2:00 Translation, Transliteration Hebrew**

**2:00-4:00 Next Steps Colloquium In Cincinnati Nov 10-11 Meeting In December 9-10**

# **Appendix B:**

## **Worship Diary Form**

**Themes for Discussion [in worship diary entries]**

**Recommendations of the Project on “Lay Involvement  
in Worship and Liturgical Development” Adopted by  
the [CCAR] Executive Board, March, 1998**

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## WORSHIP DIARY FORM

This diary is for the Shabbat Worship Service on \_\_\_\_\_.

What were you feeling at the beginning of the service tonight?

How did participating in the service make you feel? Did the service work for you?

(Discuss the themes of prayer, prayerbook, music, movement, sanctuary, rhythm, Torah study, your life, community and God, if you can do so. Use the other side if necessary. Consider the legibility of your handwriting.)

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## **THEMES FOR DISCUSSION\***

### **Prayer**

Prayer is the principal activity of the worship service. Through prayer we attempt to fulfill our spiritual needs, to feel the presence of a community, and to experience the presence of the Deity. Prayer that does all of these things may be hard to accomplish. Think about your praying tonight. Were there some prayers or some moments within prayers that made you feel or think in an extraordinary way?

### **Prayerbook**

The prayerbook is the script that enables the congregation to pray together. By repeating the same prayers each Friday night, the order of the service brings the random flow of personal and world events into an orderly pattern. It is the comfort of this pattern that we take with us from the service each week. Think about the words you spoke, either in Hebrew or English. (Consider transliteration, translations, poetry, language referring to God, order of prayers, etc.) Was there something about the text that enhanced or hindered your experience tonight?

### **Music**

Music supports our efforts to pray with rhythms that are predictable and melodies that mimic our emotions. Music gives a sense of structure to the service and helps us understand how we should feel at different points. By giving this message to everyone at once, music helps us form a community that virtually "feels together." Did you have a favorite melody or piece of music at the service tonight? Were there times when you felt the music working to shape your emotions?

### **Movement**

There is movement during the service, even though most people never leave the space around their seats. There is at least sitting and standing, although the traditions of Reform Jewish worship place less importance on moving the body during services than other Jewish traditions. Movement, like music, supports prayer. How we move helps us express how we feel. Sitting and concentrating, standing and swaying, respectfully bowing toward the Ark may get our bodies into the worship process. Did the movement come easily to you, or were you struggling to make it fit your feelings? How did the movement of others (either those around you or on the bimah) fit with how you were moving and feeling?

### **Sanctuary**

Prayer takes place in a sanctuary in which the positions of people are predetermined. Did you feel that you were too close or too far away from other congregants or the bimah? At different points in the service, where do you look? When do you close your eyes? What parts of the sanctuary do you look at while you say the prayers? Do you wish you could change some part of the sanctuary layout?

### **Rhythm**

The rhythm of the worship service changes, depending on the mood of different parts of the service. No two services have exactly the same rhythm. Sometimes recent events in the community, the presence of families marking special occasions or an impending holiday will influence the rhythm of the service. How do you describe the rhythm of the service tonight? Did the rhythm of the service fit your mood?

### **Torah Study**

Torah reading may be a significant part of the worship service. A commentary on the Torah portion or a sermon by the rabbi is usual. This part of the service is addressed to us as individuals and as a community. It offers an opportunity for intellectual reflection. How did you respond to the Torah reading and sermon tonight? Did you find a connection between these messages and your life?

### **Your Life**

When we are praying, we may discover an order to our lives that we were not aware of before beginning to worship. What were you thinking about during the silent meditation? Try to remember all of the times tonight when you thought about the events that happened to you during the week. While thinking about these events, did you come to any new understandings? Were there times in the service when you were reminded of other times in your life when you felt especially spiritual?

### **Community**

We worship as a congregation. The ritual of saying prayers together, experiencing the rhythm and music together, moving together in a shared space, sharing the same emotions...all of this together is different from solitary prayer. You may know very little about the lives of the other congregants, about their families, their work, their joys and sorrows. Still, at the end of the service you knew that you had shared an extraordinary experience together. Did you feel close to the other congregants tonight?

## God

It may be difficult to discuss the presence of God in our worship, or to identify the ways in which we envision God. We cannot precisely capture in language our experience of the Divine, but when worship is effective, God is present for the worshipper. Was God present in your worship tonight? Is God ever present for you?

\* The characterizations of these themes have been drawn in part from Lawrence A. Hoffman, The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only (Washington, D. C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988).

**Recommendations of the Project on  
"Lay Involvement in Worship and Liturgical Development,"  
Adopted by the Executive Board, March, 1998**

**1. Need for a common prayer book for the Reform movement.**

(A) The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) should publish a new prayer book to replace Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book (1975). A single *siddur* is a necessity to maintain a sense of movement identity. Continuity with the Reform past as well as the Jewish past in general is important. Community building is also important, and the community extends beyond the individual congregation. In addition, with the rarest exception, only a denominational body with the resources to do so will create quality liturgy.

(B) The new prayer book should respond to the needs of worshippers so that it will have an adequate life to make it worth purchasing.

**2. General recommendations on content.**

(A) In developing the new prayer book the CCAR should plan to include more than one service, but not follow the anthology model of the present prayer book. The CCAR should consider inclusion of a limited number of services, perhaps with one as close to the traditional siddur as is possible within Reform; a second, distinctly different from the first service; and a third, a service which provides a balance between "tradition" and creativity, and as a fourth service to be either in the siddur or a separate volume "teaching service" with an elaborate commentary.<sup>1</sup> (Please read the footnote and note particularly the resolution which summarizes a long discussion.) This service should be produced in cooperation with the UAHC, HUC-JIR the ACC and CCAR Liturgy committee.<sup>2</sup>

(B) The new CCAR prayer book should avoid "theme" services, because most congregants fail to recognize the thematic messages as such, and because theme services may fragment the congregation and not be relevant to all congregants. Multivocality is crucial to an effective congregational liturgy.

(C) Based on the knowledge that people come to synagogue to experience a sense of community, the language of the service must strive for inclusivity and address the diversity of worshippers including gays and lesbians, Jews by choice, differently abled. The participation of children should be envisioned without making the service child-centered.

(D) The CCAR should consider feminism as an important lens through which plans for the new siddur should be examined. Women's experiences and voices must be included in the text. God language is a reflection of theology. How we image God will depend in part

on whose voices are included in the text. Feminism itself is multivocal and the feminist critique goes well beyond the issue of God language.

(E) The CCAR should take note of the greater appreciation now being given to the traditional texts and should consider, for example, the paragraphs of the Sh'ma which have been deleted in GOP, resurrection of the dead, and other elements of the traditional siddur which Reform has dropped. The conference as a whole must be engaged in this process. Consideration should be given to the possibility of alternatives within the same prayer (e.g. mechayyei hakol next to mechayyei metim).

(F) The new CCAR prayer book should offer significant opportunity for personal private and silent meditation, {preferably without musical background}. Silence facilitates private meaning in a communal setting.

### 3. Recommendations on Hebrew prayer.

(A) The CCAR should engage in a serious discussion about whether any particular Hebrew text is privileged. In the sense that there are certain texts so sacred that cannot be changed, e.g., Shema, the liturgical proof texts for kedusha, etc.

(B) Consideration should be given to the creation of new Hebrew prayers for the prayer book.

(C) Poetry -- especially Hebrew and Yiddish poetry that lends itself to English versions -- should be included in the new CCAR prayer book.

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Transliteration, as an invitation to inclusiveness should be included in the new CCAR prayer book. Careful consideration should be given to the amount of transliteration and its placement on the page. Transliteration should be in proximity to the Hebrew to make it easy to use. Placing transliteration at the back of the book would be unsatisfactory

### 4. Recommendations on English prayer.

#### Privileged English

(A) The new CCAR prayer book should offer a faithful translation of the Hebrew into beautiful English. Translation should tell the worshipper what the Hebrew means, connect the worshipper with the historic language of prayer and study, and hopefully facilitate the learning of Hebrew. Help people to pray (The placement of translation on the page and its use in worship requires considerable experimentation. It is clear that whether the English is meant to be prayed, congregants see the prayer book as vehicle for increasing their Hebrew knowledge.)

(B) The CCAR should commission a group of translators (not necessarily CCAR members) to provide high quality translation of Hebrew materials that are being considered for inclusion in the new prayer book. It should also draw Israeli colleagues into a consultative role to the liturgical development in North America.



(C) The new CCAR prayer book should offer English "interpretive translations," and they should clearly be marked as such.

(D) The most gifted writers available should be invited to create new English prayers for the new CCAR prayer book. There is a huge talent pool in our movement and in world wide Jewry. The CCAR should invite submissions of individual prayers and/or services from as many sources as possible.

(E) The new CCAR prayer book should pay special attention to the fact that the written text is intended to be performed orally and heard, not just read. English in the new CCAR prayer book should flow and should be capable of being sung even if there is no intention to set it to music.

#### 5. Recommendation on prayer book form and design.

The new CCAR prayer book should look and feel like a sacred text. It should be beautiful. It should be easily readable with adequate white space. Typeface selection is crucial. Attention should be paid to page breaks so that the sheliach/at tzipbur will be able to easily conduct the service. The new prayer book should reflect congregants' preference for a service with as little page skipping as possible so that one section flows into the next without the interruption of instructions. The rubrics should provide a "road map" that clarifies the structure of the service.

#### 6. Recommendations on the process for development of a new CCAR prayer book.

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(A) The CCAR should hold a national colloquium to discuss the findings of the project and the recommendations for a new siddur.

(B) In meeting its responsibility for oversight in the development of the new CCAR prayer book, the Liturgy Committee should collect and provide initial screening of materials as well as develop the basic parameters for what should be included and what should be excluded.

(C) The CCAR, in developing the new prayer book, should call upon not only rabbis and cantors, but also on the immense talent which is found in the Reform movement. For example, there are congregants who are accomplished graphic designers, translators, and language specialists.

(D) When materials for the new CCAR prayer book have been submitted and accepted, a special editorial committee should be appointed and chaired by the Liturgy Committee chair. It might include a liturgist, a Hebrew language specialist, an English language specialist, a cantor, a congregational rabbi who is a talented shaliach/at tzipbur, a worshipping congregant, the CCAR Director of Publishing, and the chair of the Siddur Group. The editorial committee should directly oversee the final product, subject it to formal testing, and recommend its approval by the Liturgy Committee.

(E) Testing of the new CCAR prayer book and each of its services should take place in a number of congregations selected with diversity in mind. The period of testing needs to be sufficiently protracted to serve as a good indicator of whether the service is likely to be successful. The material being tested should be in a substantially finished form, both from an editorial and graphic perspective. A participant-observer should conduct focus groups.

(F) The CCAR should make use of the worship journal technique in its testing of the prayer book in development. Its use by the project was reported as non-threatening by rabbis and congregants. The worship journal technique is an empowering tool. It gives congregations a team approach to worship evaluation and change. Building a team approach is ultimately crucial. Only if rabbis, cantors and congregants understand themselves as having an equal stake in the worship system, will they develop more effective worship. (The CCAR and UAHC Joint Commission on Religious Living should promote the use of the worship journal technique as a means for congregations to evaluate their worship experience independent of a new prayer book.)

#### 7. Recommendations to the CCAR as a publisher of liturgical materials.

(A) The CCAR should rethink its role as a publisher in an electronic age. The CCAR should take a leadership position in developing electronic liturgical materials at a time when desktop publishing software permits every congregation and every rabbi and cantor to become a publisher. Purchasing the siddur could be linked to an electronic subscription service.

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(B) The CCAR should create a liturgical clearinghouse to share experimental liturgies and allow for their field-testing. Further, it should make editable and non-editable texts available on disk and develop a subscription service for new materials, including those for special occasions

(C) The CCAR should examine carefully what if any are the limits to the canon on which one may draw for liturgical texts. (It should develop guidelines to be shared with the members of the conference and with the Reform movement.

(D) The CCAR should make its electronic liturgical materials compatible with commercial software packages rather than attempt to develop its own software.

(E) The CCAR should consider producing alongside a new prayer book a CD ROM version and additional materials for periodic special use and congregational customizing.

(F) In order to respond, to the special needs of congregations (dedication of a new building or major anniversary), rabbis (e.g. new life cycle ritual) or the movement (e.g., Rabin assassination, etc.), the CCAR in consultation with the Joint Commission on Religious Living should provide a "Liturgist On Line" under the supervision of the director of publications and the chair of the liturgy committee.

(G) The CCAR should consider various paradigms for including healing prayers in communal worship.

(H) The CCAR should consider publication of a book of resource materials and guidelines for congregational healing services. (The project developed a loose leaf binder of more than 500 pages of material which should serve as a basis for such a source book.)

## 8. Synagogue Music

The CCAR should examine how the prayer book can link prayer text with music. The project makes no recommendation on music because it was not part of the study's mandate. However, in virtually every project activity, music was identified as an integral part of worship and as a gateway to prayer. Congregants need to be educated to expect that the music repertoire will grow and change. Congregants need to be educated about how to understand and assess new music. It is desirable that the CCAR, the American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), and the CCAR-UAHC Joint Commissions on Religious Living and the CCAR-UAHC ACC Joint Commission on Synagogue Music take a fresh look at the relationship of music to worship.

## 9. Worship competence.

(A) The CCAR, in cooperation with the UAHC, ACC and HUC-JIR, should give a high priority to developing the worship competence and confidence of congregants.

Congregants report enhanced worship experiences when they understand the content and structure of the service and have the skills to participate fully. They report feeling competent in other aspects of their lives, but not in the synagogue. An opportunity exists for the development of instructional materials about the service.

(B) The CCAR, UAHC and HUC-JIR should stimulate the development of learners' minyanim in congregations.

## 10. The role of the sheliach/at tzipbur.

(A) The role of the congregant as a worship leader should be developed by a joint effort of the CCAR, ACC, UAHC and HUC-JIR. This is seen as enhancing rather than diminishing the role of the rabbi and cantor. A series of instructional aids for congregants should be prepared.

(B) The CCAR should develop continuing education for rabbis on the role of the sheliach/at tzipbur.

A full siddur is envisioned including weekday, Shabbat, Shelosh Regalim, Yom ha-Atzmaut, Yom Ha-Shoah, Tisha be-Av, Purim, Hanukkah, etc. The Liturgy Committee should draw up a table of contents. Worship with children present should be included without making the service pediatric. The inclusion of home rituals should be considered.

In every service sources should be noted on the page. This particular recommendation engendered a great deal of discussion. There was concern that the limited number of services would not provide sufficient variety. The project observed a growing tendency in congregations to use a single service. While our study did indicate that some individuals like variety to avoid boredom, merely changing the text of the service on a frequent basis was not sufficient to create inspiring worship. A memorized or nearly memorized service was reported as most desirable. We suggest that in developing the new siddur the Liturgy Committee begin with these limited options and in the process of development and testing can determine if they are sufficient. In GOP each service had a theme. Congregants in the project were unable on their own to identify the theme and when the theme was described congregants understood why they felt included or excluded in a particular service. The liturgy ought to "speak" in a language which can be "heard" in a variety of ways. Theme services are often experienced as preachy and limited. The list is not meant to be exhaustive but illustrative. The choice of language is crucial to avoid unintended or unnecessary hurt. The need for inclusivity should not be understood as mere political correctness nor should it prevent the editors from being faithful to Jewish norms and ideals. Feminist considerations go beyond "add women and mix." In the siddur form as well as content must reflect our desire to address God and one another in an inclusive manner. The project envisions that all services will be gender inclusive but that at least one service will be radically different in form. The details will be worked out during the creative and testing phase. It is important to respect the liturgical history of the Reform Movement. However, many of the ideological considerations that caused us to excise certain sections of the liturgy are no longer applicable. As part of the preparation for the new siddur the Liturgy Committee should undertake a thorough review of the traditional liturgy and make recommendations for inclusion. The CCAR membership at convention or through the mail should have the opportunity to comment on and approve or disapprove of changes in long held positions. The need for alternatives on the same page should be explored to allow for diversity. The research has shown that congregants desire opportunities for silent prayer and/or meditation. Texts that facilitate the person and private prayer are important. While music is crucial to a moving worship service and there should be opportunities to listen as well as sing, silence is also a powerful spiritual tool. As part of any program of worship training people will have to be prepared for silence. The work of Marcia Falk is an example of a serious attempt to provide new Hebrew as well as new English. Debbie Friedman combined English and Hebrew in her *Mishebeirach* which seems to have given it special power. The importance of creativity in Hebrew cannot be underestimated. A frequently heard criticism of our current siddurim is lack of poetry or poetic prose. The use of imagery, metaphor, etc., conveys more than information. The goal must be to touch the heart and allow the worshipper to enter into the mystery, beauty and majesty of the Divine. The word 'versions' is deliberate. The English must carry the power of the original without necessarily slavishly following it. See, however, the recommendation on faithful English translation below 4A.

New print technology may aid the creators of the siddur to place transliteration in a usable position on the page. The meeting of the Siddur Group and the Liturgy Committee produced many different views. It was suggested that the CCAR Board should take no action on transliteration until it receives the report of the its Hebrew Literacy Taskforce.

It was suggested that the CCAR apply for a grant to study how transliteration enhances or inhibits the learning of Hebrew. Some members of the group were concerned that our decision in this matter would have historic consequences. It should be noted that a new interlinear Orthodox siddur with transliteration was recently published. Transliteration has many implications and must be carefully assessed. English in proximity to Hebrew is understood by congregants to be translation. In many instances that is the case but sometimes the English is a thematic rendition of the Hebrew or a substitute for the Hebrew. The repeatedly expressed desire of congregants to use the English in the prayer book as a vehicle for enhancing their own Hebrew translation skill is significant. In no sense should the creators of the new siddur be limited to literal translations but the needs and desires of congregants ought to be accommodated. One experimental prayer book created for the project put the "faithful" translation in the margin when there was no intention of using it as prayer. Translation is an art. Knowing Hebrew well is not sufficient. Liturgical translation requires more than linguistic skills. There was some difference of opinion on this issue in the Siddur Group and Liturgy Committee meeting. However, the project's research indicated that congregants desire clear indication when the Hebrew and English diverge significantly. While the CCAR would maintain overall control, poets and writers could be commissioned or invited to submit versions of prayer or services and/or original creations. There is a growing desire to chant English as well as Hebrew. If the English can be sung, then it will be more likely to read well aloud. Great texts will also encourage musical creativity. The Lilly Endowment has been asked to allow the remaining funds from their grant to be used for that purpose. The Siddur Group will serve as an advisors. They will see materials as developed and will be represented by their chair Rabbi H. Leonard Poller, on the Liturgy Committee and on the editorial committee. It will consult by correspondence and/or conference call. The Siddur Group will meet if necessary at the request of the chair of Liturgy Committee in consultation with CCAR president, executive vice president, director of publications and Siddur Group chair. The new siddur will require the appointment an editor with the possibility of a co-editor. Without an editor the project will founder. As with all congregational prayer books, the adoption of the final manuscript will require a vote of the CCAR membership. The form of the Worship Journal and the questions to be addressed should be reviewed and evaluated before the technique is formally introduced. This may have implications for the printed form of the siddur. For example, some have suggested an open format like loose leaf and others suggest a pocket in the back cover. While this may conflict with an earlier suggestion that the siddur be printed as 'sacred' text, the possibility of more than one format should be carefully explored from both ideological and economic perspectives. This is an important ideological question. Which texts, if any, drawn from non-Jewish spiritual traditions should be included in a new prayer book? May they be included in the main body of the text or only in a section of special reading? Are they available only for private devotion or for public reading as well? The CCAR should vigorously defend its copyright. The Siddur Group and the Liturgy Committee recommend that this section be understood as merely illustrative. The CCAR is must examine how liturgy can address the compelling needs of congregants. Those present speculated that healing service might be only a fad and were concerned about the creation of unique services which isolated congregants from the remainder of the community. The project explored models for the creation of healing services and recommends that healing

is an important dimension which must be included in worship. The question of special needs services requires further study and testing. While the project did not deal with the issue in depth, congregants reported frequently that music made a difference in the quality of worship. Congregants especially appreciate participatory music. An ongoing concern is the role of art music. However, it is important to note that many of today's worshippers are those who were nurtured on more informal styles of music. Diversity of style and aesthetic tasks needs to be assessed. Music presents its own unique challenges and must be investigated in its own right. Congregants as worship leaders ought to be more than substitutes for rabbis. Restoration of the rabbi as teacher/darshan rather than sheliach/at tziibur should be explored. Continuing education in this area is essential to worship change and renewal. It is an area which is likely to meet significant resistance. On the other hand, the desire and need for continuing education should not be viewed as blaming the clergy for the problems of worship.

— Notes —

<sup>1</sup> In every service sources should be noted on the page. This particular recommendation engendered a great deal of discussion. There was concern that the limited number of services would not provide sufficient variety. The project observed a growing tendency in congregations to use a single service. While our study did indicate that some individuals like variety to avoid boredom, merely changing the text of the service on a frequent basis was not sufficient to create inspiring worship. A memorized or nearly memorized service was reported as most desirable. We suggest that in developing the new siddur the Liturgy Committee begin with these limited options and in the process of development and testing can determine if they are sufficient.

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<sup>2</sup> To summarize the discussion and to indicate the majority view of those assembled, the Siddur Group and Liturgy committee passed the following motion. The services in the new Siddur include four modes: 1) As traditional a service as possible within the Reform context 2) A service which provides continuity with our Reform heritage as does service V in GOP which carries over material from the Union Prayer book. 3) A service in contemporary idiom which interpolates the main elements of the liturgy. 4) Creative liturgy regularly produced to be down-loaded from the CCAR which can be mass-produced in congregations.

# Appendix C:

Siddur Publication Time Line November, 2000

Early prototype of the page layout for *Mishkan T'filah*

Rabbi Judith Abrams' layout of the *Sh'ma* page

*Sh'ma* page layout, Monterey Draft, June 2001

*Sh'ma* page layout, Boston Biennial Draft,  
December 2001

*Sh'ma* page layout, Congregational Testing Draft for Shabbat Evening,  
October, 2002

*Sh'ma* page layout, Congregational Testing Draft for Weekdays,  
October, 2002

*Sh'ma* page layout, Draft for Shabbat Worship, Minneapolis Biennial, 2003

*Sh'ma* page layout, Draft for Weekday Worship, CCAR Convention,  
June, 2004

*Sh'ma* page layout, Houston Biennial Draft,  
November, 2005

*Sh'ma* page layout, *Mishkan T'filah* Final Edition,  
October, 2007

*Mishkan T'filah*: A worshipper's Survey, October, 2002

*Ma Nishtanah Ha-Siddur Hazeh....how is This Prayer Book Different?*  
Distinguishing features of *Mishkan T'filah*, October, 2002

CCAR Siddur Survey, Fall, 2002

Agenda for the Last Meeting of the Ad Hoc Siddur Editorial Committee,  
December, 2004

*Mishkan T'filah* Draft Mission Statement, 2004

## SIDDUR PUBLICATION TIME LINE

Draft as of November 6, 2000

January, 2001	Complete draft weekday morning service
January 24-25, '01	Committee meets to consider draft service
March, 2001	Complete draft of weekday evening service
May, 2001	Complete draft of Shabbat, evening and morning
July, 2001	Complete draft of festival services, evening and morning
September, 2001	Complete draft manuscript, all liturgies including alternate readings, meditations, prayers, commentaries
October, 2001	Full manuscript, designed, ready for field testing.
December, 2001	Test services at Biennial, then at congregations
March, 2002	Committee meets to consider feedback from field-testing
May, 2002	Revised draft completed, based on field-test feedback.
September 1, '02	Circulate complete revised manuscript to all members of CCAR for comments
January, 2003	Committee meets for 2 days to consider members' comments and suggestions
June, 2003	Second revised draft completed for mailing to members for vote of approval.
September, 2003	Final manuscript enters process of final design, typography, proofreading, etc.
March, 2004	Printer receives book.

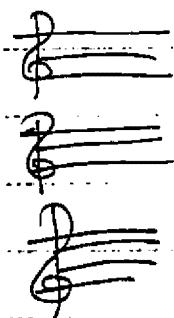


Meditations

Texts

Attribution

Music



Graphica

ברוך אתה יהוה

Hebrew

Hebrew

Blessed are You

Eng

Eng

Attribution

Translation (here or in one of side bars)

Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Merciful is One!

Blessed be the Name whose Glory, Creation, is eternal and infinite!

# אֶחָד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

## One

*Alef*, the first letter, number one, ONE. Its shape, a vav embraced by two yods. The bridge between heaven and earth. Oneness: the blending of the divine in heaven and earth. The Holy One infuses all, that which is seen and that which is only intuited.

"God was in this place, and I, I did not know."

## Merciful One

*Exodus 2:25*

*And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew...*

A parable: a poor person asks a wealthy one to fulfill his needs, because the wealthy one can. But the wealthy one must fully empathize with the poor person. When he does, how could he not respond? So, too, in this situation: Israel is in trouble, shouting to the Blessed One to have mercy. Yet, in God's world, there is no strife or despair. How can the God-that-is-above understand the-trouble-that-is-below? Prayer links the worlds, brings knowledge, and draws the Holy One to empathy and merciful response.

Listening makes our God Merciful.

Adonai Eloheinu.

—Kedushat Levi, Parshat Shemot

## Our God

אחד one = thirteen

אהבה love = thirteen

oneness

intimacy, love

bring us to

יהוה God's Name = twenty-six

# שִׁמְעַיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Sh'-ma Yis-ra-eil: A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad!

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Ba-ruch sheim k'-vod mal'-chu-to l'-o-lam va-ed!

# שִׁמְעַיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה

## Eternal

## Israel

*Genesis 32:25-31*

Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until dawn...

Then he said, Let me go...But he answered, I will not let you go unless you bless me. Said the other, What is your name? He replied, Jacob. Said he, No longer will your name be Jacob, but *Israel*, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have endured...

So Jacob named the place Penuel, meaning, I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved.

*Genesis 33:10*

And Jacob said (to Esau), If you would do me this favor, accept from me this gift; for to see your face is like seeing the face of God, and you have received me favorably.

## Listen

Close your eyes and listen listen to your God

You can hear it from the top of the highest hill or from the valley below It can come from the edge of the universe it can come from within your soul

close your eyes and listen  
—Doug Cotler

Why cover the eyes?

Why cover the eyes?  
פֹרֵשׁ אֶת שְׁמַע Poreis et Shema  
make a canopy with the Shema  
Let us know in our most inner vision  
that God shields and protects and nurtures  
El Shaddai, Almighty One

אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד  
Sh-ma Yis-ra-eil: A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad!

In a whisper:

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד  
Ba-ruch sheim k-vod mal-chu-to l'o-lam va-ed!

Close your eyes and listen - listen to your God

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה

You can hear it  
from the top of  
the highest hill  
or from the valley below  
It can come from  
the edge of the universe  
it can come from  
within your soul

close your eyes  
and listen יִי/י

Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.  
Blessed be God's glorious kingdom forever and ever.  
Hear O Israel, the Merciful is our God, the Merciful is One.  
Blessed be the name whose glorious reign is forever and ever.

Make a canopy with the Shema:

Why cover the eyes?

Forc'is et Sh'ma yav' net om

like the stars of heaven  
the shelter of the sukkah  
the embrace of a lover's arms

הַשְׁמָע  
כַּנּוּפָה  
אֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם

Close your eyes and listen

Close your eyes  
and listen

שְׁמַע  
יִשְׂרָאֵל  
יְהוָה

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְחִיד

Sh'ma Yisra-el: Adonai Elo-hemnu, Adonai Echad!

Listen, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Baruch atem kvod m'chido le-olam va-ed!

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever!

Vayomer Adonai  
L'ma-an tizk'ru  
Emet V'yatzio  
Mi Chemoche

**אלהינו יהוה אחד**

**ON HIGH, I am Unity,  
But below, I am the multiple...  
On high, I am God,  
In the stream, I am the prayer.**

On high, I am Unity,  
But below, I am the multiple.  
From the stream gazes back at me  
My likeness, repeating.

On high, I am the truth  
But in the deep, illusion.  
From the stream looks up to me  
The broken image of my intended mission.

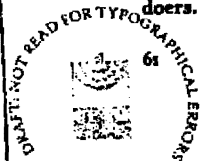
Above, I am wrapped in Silence,  
In the deep, I sing and chant.  
On high, I am God,  
In the stream, I am the prayer.  
*Adapted from Leah Goldberg*

Shneur Zalman of Liadi, taught that nothing exists but God. God is not only the basis for reality, God is the only reality. God is all there is. Creation is continuously brought into being through the divine word. If our eyes could truly see reality, we would see no material reality at all, but instead behold God's continuous utterance of Hebrew letters, the real matrix of all being.

The **שמע** Shema refers to the heavenly realm, and **ברוך שם כבוד מלכותך עד עולם** Baruch Shem to our realm. When we offer this prayer, we seek to unify the higher and lower realms, to make this world resemble the one on high. And to bring unity into our everyday lives, we live as holy Torah-seekers and doers.

*Adapted from Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen*

Adapted from Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen



**שמע ישראל יהוה**

שמע ישראל... Shema Yisrael... Deuteronomy 6:4  
ברוך שם כבוד Baruch shem k'vod... Mishna Yoma 3:8.

The second line of the Shema interrupts the biblical passage, which continues with נֶאֱמַר וְהָאֵלֹהִים אֶחָד V'ahavta et... The origin of Baruch shem is rabbinic.

The enlarged **ב** ayin at the end of **שְׁמָה** Shema and the enlarged **ד** dalet at the end of **אֶחָד** (one) are combined to spell **יד** eid, witness. When we recite the Shema, we bear witness to the Oneness of God.

The **daleth** is enlarged so we do not mistake it for a **reish**, which would render **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** as **אֲחֵינוּ** (other). (Hear O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is *another*). God infuses all creation; and equally, God is beyond all we know. The wholeness of God includes what we may discern and that which is beyond us. But God is One.

The **Y**ayin is enlarged lest we read **קִיּוּן** shin-mem-alef, "maybe" - we need to be firm, not tentative, in seeking to make God sovereign over our lives.

Several customs might bring *נוף* *havanna* to the reciting of the Shema. Some close their eyes and concentrate deeply. Some form a *ו* *shin* with the right hand, to represent God's Name (*יְיָ Shaddai*, Almighty, or *יְיָ שְׁכִינָה* *Shechina*, God's Presence), and place that *ו* *shin* over their eyes, suggesting perhaps the third eye of wisdom (God's vision within us).

The second line of the *shema*, which is not from Torah, is whispered. Perhaps this is to keep it distinct from words of Torah. Others teach that Jacob whispered these words to his sons on his deathbed. Others still, that the first line, *שמע ישראל*, *Shema Yisrael*, is a public proclamation, while *ברוך שם* *Baruch shem* is private. *שמע* *Shema* declares God's Oneness; yet that oneness is abstract, so each individual must consider his/her own link to God through creation, and acknowledge that, saying: *ברוך שם* *Baruch shem*...

ברוך  
 יום  
 ארבעת ימים  
 שבע  
 וארבעת  
 ימים עם שבע  
 ושבע  
 ואמר יי  
 למען תזכיר  
 אמת ויציב  
 יהי סגור





ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto le-olam va-ed

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever!

שמע ישראל יי אלהינו יי אחד

Sh'ma Yisra-el Adonai Elo-heinu, Adonai Echad

Listen, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One!

**אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:**

**Sh'ma Yisrael**

**zechdut ha-adam**

achdut elohit.

**Baruch shalom achdut**

**l'olam va-ed.**

שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל

אחדות האדם

אֶחָדוֹת אֱלֹהִית.

ברוך שלום אחדות

לעולם נעֵד.

**Hear O Israel: human unity is unity divine.**

Blessed is the wholeness of unity forever and ever.

Alvin Reines

**Shneur Zalman of Liadi taught that nothing exists but God.**

God is not only the basis for reality, God is the only reality. God is all there is.

Creation is continuously brought into being through the divine word.

If our eyes could truly see reality, we would see no material reality at all,

but instead behold God's continuous utterance of Hebrew letters,

the real matrix of all being.

The **שְׁמָה** *Shema* refers to the heavenly realm, and **בְּרַךְ שֵׁם** *Baruch Shem* to our realm.

When we offer this prayer, we seek to unify the higher and lower realms, to make this

world resemble the one on high. And to bring unity into our everyday lives, we live as

**holy Torah-seekers and doers.**

Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen

שִׁמְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל *Shima Yisrael . . . (Deuteronomy 6:4)*

ברוך שם כבוד *Baruch shem kivod* . . . (Mishna Yoma 3:8)

The second line of the *Shema* interrupts the biblical passage, which continues with *את* (אהבת *V'ahavta et . . .*). The origin of *Baruch shem* is rabbinic.

The enlarged **Y ayin** at the end of **וְיָשִׁיבָהּ** *Shema* and the enlarged **T dalet** at the end of **וְיִשְׁחַדּוּ** *echad* (one) are combined to spell **עֵיד** *eid* (witness). When we recite the *Shema*, we bear witness to the Oneness of God.

The **Y** daleth is enlarged so we do not mistake it for a **Y** resh, which would render **YHWH echud** as **YHWH acheir** (other). ("Hear O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is *another*.") God infuses all creation; and equally, God is beyond all we know. The wholeness of God includes what we may discern and that which is beyond us. But God is One.

The *Yayin* is enlarged lest we read **שׁינ־מֶמ־אֵלֶף** *shin-mem-alef*, “maybe” — we need to be firm, not tentative, making God sovereign over our lives.

Several customs might bring **קַוְנָה** *kavanah* to the reciting of the *Shema*. Some close their eyes and concentrate deeply. Some form a **ש** *shin* with the right hand, to represent God's Name — **יְיָ** *Shaddai* (Almighty) or **יְיָ** *Shechinah* (God's Presence) — and place that *shin* over their eyes, suggesting perhaps the third eye of wisdom (God's vision within us).

The second line of the שמע *Shema*, which is not from Torah, is whispered. Perhaps this is to keep it distinct from words of Torah. Others teach that Jacob whispered these words to his sons on his deathbed. Others still, that the first line, ישראל שמע *Shema Yisrael*, is a public proclamation, while ברךך שם *Baruch shem* is private. שמע *Shema* declares God's Oneness; yet that oneness is abstract, so each individual must consider his/her own link to God through creation, and acknowledge that, saying: ברךך שם *Baruch shem* . . .



שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

The enlarged *v avin* at the end of שמע *shma* (hear) and the enlarged *T dalet* at the end of אחד

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד!

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad!

Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

שמע ישראל *Shma Yisrael*... Hear, O Israel... Deuteronomy 6:4

אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

The enlarged *ayin* at the end of שְׁמַע *Shma* (Hear) and the enlarged *T dalet* at the end of אֶחָד

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד!

Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל *Shma Yisrael* . . . Hear, O Israel . . . Deuteronomy 6:4

# MISHKAN T'FILLAH

The New Reform Prayer Book

## A Worshipper's Survey

Scheduled publication: Spring, 2005

Dear Worshipper,

The prayer book you are holding is an early draft of a worship service under consideration for publication in the new Reform Siddur, *Mishkan T'fillah*. As a participant in worship at a congregational test site, we encourage you to complete this survey instrument following the completion of the eight pilot-test services, returning it per the instructions announced at your congregation for the collection of completed surveys. Your input is valuable to the Editorial Committee. However, Please complete only one form, at the end of the testing process, regardless of the number of times these materials are used in your congregation.

Briefly described, the design of *Mishkan T'fillah* sets most prayers as two-page spreads. Generally speaking, material "within the box" is liturgical, with commentary, usage notes and other supplementary material across the bottom of the page. The right-hand page contains the primary, traditional liturgy, transliterated, with a faithful, egalitarian, contemporary translation. The left-hand page contains additional prayers, readings, and meditations based on the liturgical theme but reflective of different theological points of view or styles of worship. Additional texts, sometimes as graphic devices arrayed around the page, can also be used liturgically, or simply indicate rubric headings. "Stage directions" are absent, or kept to a minimum to maximize usage possibilities or permit local variations in usage. Finally, the Editorial Committee intends the Siddur to contain two (or at most three) services for Erev Shabbat; one (or at most two) services for Shabbat morning, and one service for weekday evenings and mornings, and for festivals or other special occasions – since the format as described provides great flexibility, the committee posits that this selection will suffice, and keep the finished Siddur to a manageable size, currently assumed to be around 448 pages.

Thank you for your participation.

Rabbi Peter Knobel, Chair  
Editorial Committee

Rabbi Elyse Frishman,  
Editor

This survey consists of two parts. In Part I, please respond to the questions below by circling the appropriate number. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 indicates "strongly agree," while 5 indicates "strongly disagree." A response of 3 indicates neutrality. Part II contains a series of open-ended questions. Please respond to these as concisely but clearly as possible, either typing in your responses or writing legibly.

Completed surveys are to be submitted to and collated by the chair of your congregation's piloting project, who will submit a report on the data in Part I and a summary of responses from Part II back to the CCAR by February 1, 2003.

## PART I – AGREE/DISAGREE

<u>Ease of Usage and Appearance</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>—————→</u>				<u>Disagree</u>
I am <u>comfortable with</u> the new format. <u>The new format is easy to follow.</u> (Or, <u>The new format is easy to use.</u> )	1	2	3	4	5	
I found my place on the page without difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5	
Transliteration was easy to use.	1	2	3	4	5	
Transliteration should only be provided for <u>key passages.</u> (Key passages should be defined.)	1	2	3	4	5	
Transliteration should be in a smaller font.	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>Hebrew font and size are appropriate.</u> <u>The type of font used for Hebrew is appropriate.</u> <u>The size of the font used for Hebrew is appropriate.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>English font and size are appropriate.</u> <u>The type of font used for English is appropriate.</u> <u>The size of the font used for English is appropriate.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>The aesthetic quality of the page is good.</u> <u>I like the aesthetic quality of the page.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>Stage Directions ["stand," "sit," etc.] should be omitted from the printed page.</u> <u>Stage Directions ("stand," "sit," etc.) should be omitted from the text.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	

I would prefer a larger selection of alternate (left-page) material, even at the risk of overcrowding a page.

1 2 3 4 5

### Inspirational Quality of Material

Contents in margin are helpful.

1 2 3 4 5

*I think the margin contents are helpful.*

*I think the liturgies on the left-hand page are meaningful.*

1 2 3 4 5

*I think the liturgies on the left-hand page are sufficiently diverse.*

1 2 3 4 5

Kavannat are relevant and helpful.

1 2 3 4 5

*Kavannat are relevant.*

*Kavannat are helpful.*

(Will all reviewers know what is meant by Kavannat? Should this be defined?)

*The commentaries are helpful.*

1 2 3 4 5

### Liturgical Usage

I am comfortable with inclusion of the three paragraphs following the "Sh'ma" (pages xx-xx).

1 2 3 4 5

*I like the inclusion of the three paragraphs following the "Sh'ma" (pages xx-xx)*

I am comfortable with the setting for the first two paragraphs of the T'fillah (pages xx-xx).

1 2 3 4 5

*The first two paragraphs of the T'fillah (pages xx-xx) are appropriately placed in the liturgy.*

(Is this something about which the average reviewer is qualified to judge?)

The opening section of the morning service, P'sukei D'zimra, is too long.

1 2 3 4 5

(pages xx-xx)

(Is this a concern of the committee?

What if some think that it is too short or just right? Answers to this question will

not determine too short or just right,  
only if it is too long.)

#### Material To Be Included

Include "Pirkei Ayot" (*Savings of the  
Father*) and other meditative material.

1 2 3 4 5

Include a section of modern poetry or prose  
on the themes of liturgy, worship or  
spirituality.

1 2 3 4 5

Festival services and observances (e.g.,  
Yom Ha'atzma'ut) should be complete  
services in order to avoid page flipping,  
despite the duplication of specific sections  
*found elsewhere in the prayer book.*

1 2 3 4 5

#### Opening and Size

The Siddur should be published Hebrew-  
opening only.

1 2 3 4 5

*The prayer book should be published  
Hebrew opening only.*

CCAR should publish a *lightweight*,  
smaller "travel" edition.

1 2 3 4 5

I am comfortable with the planned size of  
9" tall by 7 1/4" wide for the new Siddur.

1 2 3 4 5

*I like the planned size (9" x 7") of the new  
prayer book.*

## **PART II – OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

Please react to the liturgical changes from *Gates of Prayer* or your congregation's current prayer book. Please name your congregation's current prayer book and discuss your reaction to the liturgical changes as compared to your current prayer book.

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What additional comments do you have about page design and the organization of material?

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Please comment on your reactions to any specific liturgies in the following sections, being sure to identify the section about which you are commenting.

- a. Opening Material to, but excluding, the *Bar'chu* (Include page numbers)

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- b. *Bar'chu* through the *Mi Chamocha* and up to, but excluding, the *Amida* [*T'fillah*] portion of the service (Include page numbers)

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- c. *Amida/T'fillah* including *K'dushah* (Include page numbers)

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- d. Torah ritual (Include page numbers)

---

---

e. *Aleinu* through conclusion of the service. (Include page numbers)

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What material in this draft service would you exclude from this book? (Is the lay reviewer qualified to judge this?)

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What additional material would you suggest for inclusion in this book? (Is the lay reviewer qualified to judge this?)

---

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Will this new prayer book meet your needs as a worshipper? Why or why not?

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Any additional comments?

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*Thank you for your participation!*

## ***Ma Nishtanah Ha-Siddur HazeH.... How is This Prayer Book Different?***

### **What distinguishes the design of Mishkan T'filah?**

- Most prayers are set as a two-page spread; each page spread has a frame, and material within the frame is liturgical.
- The right hand side includes the primary, traditional liturgy, transliterated, with a faithful, egalitarian, contemporary translation.
- The left hand side contains alternative choices to the primary prayer, including poetry, readings and meditations. They are based on the theme of the primary prayer, but reflect different theological points of view.
- Layouts of these prayers allows for diverse worship styles. For example, rather than using italics to distinguish "congregation" from "leader," the worship leader will guide participation. Layout might allow for responsive reading without insisting on it.
- Below the frame, commentary is found at the base of many pages.
- To the sides of the frame, margin contents include an order of prayer, and occasional stage directions.
- Stage directions are kept to a minimum, to allow for worship diversity.
- Headings guide the beginning of a new section of prayer, or offer a *kavanna*.
- 

### **What distinguishes the content of Mishkan T'filah?**

- Alternative prayers within the page-spread reflect different theological views.
- New prayers are included, such as the middle paragraphs of *Shema*, with alternative prayer passages.
- There is a revision of the first two prayers in the *T'filah* section, the *Avot v'Imahot* and the *Gevurot*.
- Alternative names for God broaden awareness of God.

## CCAR SIDDUR SURVEY

### Instructions for Completing the Survey

This survey consists of two parts.

In **Part I**, you will find five, numbered circles at the end of most questions. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 indicates "strongly agree," 2 indicates "agree," while 4 indicates "disagree," and 5 indicates "strongly disagree." A response of 3 indicates "neutrality." Please respond to the questions by filling in the appropriate circle using a pencil or black or blue ink pen. For example:

#### SAMPLE

- ☐ 1 = STRONGLY AGREE
- ☒ 2 = AGREE
- ☐ 3 = NEUTRAL
- ☐ 4 = DISAGREE
- ☐ 5 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

**Part II** contains a series of open-ended questions. Please respond to these as concisely but clearly as possible, either typing in your responses or writing legibly. If additional space is needed, please attach your extra page with a paper clip, not a staple.

Completed surveys are to be submitted to and collected by the chair of your congregation's piloting project, who will mail all surveys to CCAR Siddur Survey, The Research Network, 1318 N. Monroe ST., Suite G, Tallahassee, FL 32303.

### Siddur Page Numbers for Items Referenced in the Survey

In certain questions, you are asked to evaluate specific sections of the Siddur. To ensure that there is no question as to the section, page numbers are included in the table below.

Question #	Item Referenced in Survey	Erev Shabbat Siddur	Shabbat Morning Siddur
Part 1-Q21	"three paragraphs following the <i>Sh'ma</i> "	p. 30-p. 37	p. 62-p. 69
Part 1-Q22	"the first two paragraphs of the <i>Tefila</i> "	p. 48-p. 51	p. 76-p. 79
Part 1-Q23	" <i>P'sukei D'zimra</i> "	N.A.	p. 28-p. 51
Part 2-3a	"Opening material to the <i>Bar'chu</i> "	p. 2-p. 11	p. 2-p. 51
Part 2-3b	" <i>Bar'chu</i> through the <i>Mi Chamocha</i> and up to the <i>Tefila</i> "	p. 20-p. 45	p. 52-p. 73
Part 2-3c	" <i>Tefila</i> through <i>Tefilat Ha Lev</i> "	p. 46-p. 63	p. 74-p. 91
Part 2-3d	"Torah ritual"	p. 64-p. 79	p. 92-p. 107
Part 2-3e	" <i>Aleinu</i> through conclusion of the service"	p. 80-p. 85	p. 108-p. 113

## CCAR SIDDUR SURVEY: PART 1

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1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral  
4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

1 2 3 4 5

Use of usage and appearance

1. The new format is easy to use..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I found my place on the page without difficulty..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. Transliteration was easy to use..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. Transliteration was useful..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I used transliteration..... ☐ 1 YES ☐ 2 NO
6. Transliteration should only be provided for some passages..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. Transliteration should be in a smaller font..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. The type of font used for Hebrew is easy to read..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
9. The size of font used for Hebrew is easy to read..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
10. The type of font used for English is easy to read..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
11. The size of font used for English is easy to read..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
12. I like the aesthetic quality of the page..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
13. Worship cues ("stand," "sit," etc.) should be included in the text..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
14. I would prefer a larger selection of alternate (left-page) material, even at the risk of overcrowding a page..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Inspirational quality of material

15. I think the margin contents are helpful..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
16. I think the liturgies on the left-hand page are meaningful..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
17. I think the liturgies on the left-hand page are sufficiently diverse..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
18. Kavanot are relevant..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
19. Kavanot are helpful..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
20. Commentaries are helpful..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Liturgical usage

21. I like the inclusion of the three paragraphs following the Sh'ma..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
22. I like the inclusion in the first two paragraphs of the Tefila..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
23. I like the inclusion of a fuller P'sukei D'zimra in the opening section of the morning service..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Material to be included (even if it makes the book heavier)

24. Include Pirkei Avot (Sayings of the Sages) and other meditative material.. ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
25. Include a section of modern poetry or prose on the themes of liturgy, worship or spirituality..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
26. Festival services and observances (e.g., Sukkot, Pesach, etc.) should be complete services in order to avoid page flipping, despite the duplication of specific sections found elsewhere in the prayer book..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Binding and size

27. The prayer book should be published Hebrew opening only..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
28. CCAR should publish a lightweight, smaller, "travel" edition..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
29. I like the planned size (9" x7") of the new prayer book..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Demographics

- D1. I am..... ☐ 1. a lay member of the committee ☐ 2. a rabbi ☐ 3. a cantor
- D2. Gender ..... ☐ 1. male ☐ 2. female
- D3. Age.. ☐ 1. under 25 years ☐ 2. 25-44 years ☐ 3. 45 to 64 years ☐ 4. 65 years or more
- D4. My congregation size is \_\_\_\_\_ family units.

☐ 1. up to 300 ☐ 2. 301-599 ☐ 3. 600-999 ☐ 4. 1000+ ☐ 5. Hillel member, not cong.

By respondents, please continue with the questions D5, D6 and D7.

- D5. Are you currently or have you ever been on the board of trustees or an officer or committee chair of the congregation/Hillel or one of its auxiliaries? ☐ 1. YES ☐ 2. NO
- D6. In a typical year, how often do you attend Shabbat services (Friday PM or Saturday AM)?
- ☐ 1. less than 10 times ☐ 2. 10 to 20 times ☐ 3. more than 20 times
- D7. Can you read prayer book Hebrew (comprehension is not necessary)?

☐ 1. YES ☐ 2. NO

## CCAR SUDDUR SURVEY: PART 2

Please name your congregation's current prayer book and discuss your reaction to the liturgical changes as compared to your current prayer book.

What additional comments do you have about page design and the organization of material?

Please comment on your reactions to any specific liturgies in the following sections, being sure to identify the section about which you are commenting.

a. Opening material to the *Bar'chu*.

b. *Bar'chu* through the *Mi Chamocha* and up to the *Tefila* portion of the service.

c. *Teflia* through *Tefilat Ha Lev*

d. Torah ritual

e. *Aleinu* through conclusion of the service

4. What material in this draft service would you exclude from this book?

5. What additional material would you suggest for inclusion in this book? Where should it go?

6. Will this new prayer book meet your needs as a worshipper? Why or why not?

7. What was the experience for any non-clergy worship leader (adult or youth), who led the service?

8. Any additional comments?

*Thank you for your participation!*

# ISSUES FOR THE SIDDUR EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

December 15-16, 2004

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15

- 11:00 a.m.      **Introductory Remarks** (Peter Knobel, Elyse Frishman)  
Setting forth a process for completing the Siddur  
**Review global issues and agenda for meeting**
- 11:30 a.m.      Some structural and design issues:  
a) **One or two volumes, and contents proposal for each (15 min)**  
b) **Side bar rubric headings: retain? (10 min)**  
c) **Subtitle of book (30 min)**  
d) **Transliteration and non-transliterated versions (25 min)**
- 12:45 p.m.      LUNCH
- 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.      **1:30pm Translation in linear service – faithful or creative? (20 min)**  
**(show revised layout)**  
  
**1:50pm Linear service: commentary (20 min)**  
**2:10pm Location of source citations (30 min)**  
**2:45pm Table of contents – sequence of services (15 min)**  
**3:00pm Design of responsive readings (20 min)**  
**3:30pm Psalms: how many; additional material? (20 min)**
- 4:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.      BREAK  
  
**4:20pm *M'chayei meitim* (15 min)**  
**4:35pm *Nisim b'chol yom* (20 min)**  
**4:55pm Addition of universal "*kol yoshvei tevel*" (15 min)**  
**5:10pm Order of matriarchs; inclusion of Bilhah and Zilpah (15 min)**  
**5:25pm *Doroteinu*? (15 min)**  
**5:40pm *El* vs *Av* (15 min)**  
**5:55pm *Chatima* translation: same on page spread?**  
***Chatima* formula: same translation thru book? (20 min)**  
**6:15pm Issues Raised by Members of the Committee (open discussion)**  
**7:00pm Adjourn for evening**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16

8:00 a.m.

Worship and Torah Reading

9:00 a.m.

**Review of Wednesday's decisions and further discussion on issues raised by members of the committee (open discussion)**

**9:45am** Discussion of materials posted on the web site but not in the bound book:

- a) Festival services: direction?
- b) Yom Hashoah: // Purim or Chanuka?
- c) Yom Ha-atzma-ut
- d) In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering: too long?

12:45 p.m.

Lunch (might need to be a working lunch)

1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Text issues:**Location of *Chatzi Kaddish*

Inclusion of full Haftarah blessings

*Alef-Bet* page as opportunities for teachingDouble-page commentary after the *Sh'ma*

Table of Torah and Haftarah readings

*Kamatz katan*, accents for *Sh'va na* and accented syllables in transliterations

## MISHKAN T'FILAH – DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT

**Draft enclosure to be distributed with the manuscript to members of CCAR and ACC:**

The CCAR is sometimes asked – as happened this year at a couple of regional kallot – for the rationale for a new Siddur. Is there a Siddur Mission Statement that clearly summarizes why the CCAR has embarked on such an ambitious project at this time? While no formal statement has been adopted, the following is meant to serve as a response to those questions.

*Mishkan T'filah* is a complete Siddur, including services for Shabbat, weekdays and festivals, as well as other occasions of public worship (e.g., Purim, Chanukah, Yom Ha-atzma-ut, Yom Hashoah, etc.), and a very broad selection of songs and texts for musical rendition.

*Mishkan T'filah* reflects the growing diversity in our Movement, without having to resort to thematic services so reflective of *Gates of Prayer*. By providing theologically and stylistically diverse prayers, as alternative readings and meditations, within the context of each service, the individual worshipper can find his/her place with the service, making for a deeper, more meaningful worship experience. This notion led to the paradigm shift of designing the book with facing pages of core liturgical material and thematically appropriate supplementary readings, although linear-style services (with a new Reform commentary) will also be provided for Shabbat worship.

*Mishkan T'filah* is meant to be accessible. Liturgies and other readings are in contemporary, gender-inclusive English, in language that is poetic, engaging and compelling. Translations are elegant and faithful. The Hebrew is fully transliterated (a separate edition with no transliteration is also being prepared).

*Mishkan T'filah* recognizes the growing theological spectrum in Reform Judaism, and evolving forms of worship. The study of theological issues has led the editorial committee to renewed study of some traditional texts that earlier Reform rejected, to consider whether to include them anew.

*Mishkan T'filah* is cognizant of our tradition, and preserves beloved passages from both *Gates of Prayer* and the *Union Prayer Book*.

*Mishkan T'filah's* mission of inclusiveness has led to the most ambitious piloting program to which a Siddur text has been subjected, with more than 300 congregations, plus Hillel organizations and numerous conventions, regional conferences and kallot using cumulatively some 30,000 copies for piloting purposes, beginning more than 2 years prior to publication.



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