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BIRKAT HAMAZON

A Developmental Study

by

Michael B. Herzbrun

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1975 - 5735

Referee, Prof. Jakob J. Petuchowski, Ph.D

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Phina
whose love has made all of my work meaningful.

- 5735

הוא נאם על חן
ואג עליו על כל
בן ירכיב כחמין.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With a deep sense of gratitude, I remember the many people who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. Among them, Rabbi Louis Neimand *lc"cd* opened my first door to Judaic studies; he was the first to show me a love of tradition and a respect for the texts. It was through his guidance that I reached the decision to enter formal rabbinic training. Secondly, with the help and encouragement of Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski *lc"cd* - rabbi and scholar - I have found reward in the study of our traditional liturgy. In his home, which has also been my classroom, I have heard the liturgy speak its unique message. This thesis is the direct result of Dr. Petuchowski's support and understanding.

Finally, I offer a special thanks to my typist, Linda Skopitz, whose skills have made the reproduction of this thesis possible.

DIGEST

The present study is an examination of the Birkat HaMazon, the Grace-after-Meals in the Jewish liturgy. In its present form, the prayer consists of four major blessings: Birkat HaZan, which acknowledges God as Provider; Birkat HaAretz, which stresses the importance of the land; Boneh Yerushalayim, which appeals for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the re-establishing of the Davidic kingdom; and HaTov ve HaMetiv, which emphasizes God's continual goodness and the trust in a salvation dependent upon this goodness. The major thesis in this study is that the entire Birkat HaMazon was the product of a developmental process: the earliest stage may even be called a "prehistory" in which these separate themes embodied in the present Grace were independent unto themselves. Each was probably expressed before God through informally stated "praises" or "supplications", each form clearly varying in harmony with the spontaneous prayers of the people. However, while the thematic roots of these prayers may have originated during the Biblical period, only with the legislative discussions of the Tannaim and the Amoraim could we begin to trace the frame and content of these blessings with any accuracy. For it was during this period that the benedictions were defined and their minimal requirements established.

This study devotes a full chapter to each of the four benedictions in Birkat HaMazon, treating each as an originally independent unit and examining the development and expansion of each from the Talmudic references through the legislation of the major codes. The possible justifications for including each of the benedictions within the Grace have been considered, and the various attempts by commentators to fix the dating of these blessings have been reviewed in this work. A fifth chapter sketches the development of the extant rites surviving in the siddurim - from the earlier nusahim of Amram and Saadia to the more recent Ashkenazic and Sephardic rites in use today. Seven of these rites are presented at the conclusion of the fifth chapter, enabling the reader to witness the development and the comparisons discussed in the body of this thesis.

In drawing conclusions regarding each of the themes and benedictions in Birkat HaMazon, the author has been guided both by the wisdom of the early rabbis and also by the contemporary insights of liturgical scholars such as Louis Finkelstein and Joseph Heinemann. The fact that men inspired by the liturgy have been discussing Birkat HaMazon in the literature for almost two millenia testifies to the richness and importance of this blessing. It is our hope that this thesis will add in its own small way to the reader's appreciation of this dynamic liturgical rite.

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INTRODUCTION

Because food is one of mankind's primary needs, man naturally felt compelled early in his religious development to acknowledge his god as the provider of this food by which his life was sustained. The present study investigates one such thanksgiving prayer which developed within the Jewish tradition: the Birkat HaMazon, or Grace after meals. In its present form, the blessing is a highly specialized liturgical expression incorporating not only a thanksgiving to God for food, but also a benediction in praise of the land, a prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and a concluding section recalling the Jew's perpetual trust in the God of redemption and salvation.

A. Origins: traditional and contemporary perspectives. Birkat HaMazon which elevated the act of eating beyond a physiological necessity, achieved a liturgical status in rabbinic literature given to few other blessings. This high level of respect for the prayer was achieved in part by emphasizing its Biblical origin: ¹

Our rabbis have taught: from where do we know that Birkat HaMazon is /derived/ from the Bible? As it is said (Dt. 8:10), "And thou shall eat and be satisfied and bless...": this refers to Birkat HaZan (the first section of the Grace); "the Lord thy God": [this refers] to the Invitation; "for the Land": to Birkat HaAretz; "the good": to Boneh Yerushalayim, for so it states (Dt. 3:25), "that goodly hill country and Lebanon"; which He hath given thee": to HaTov veHaMetiv.

This passage led commentators to identify the recital of the Grace as one of the positive commandments ordained by the Torah.² Furthermore, by emphasizing that the Grace had been established from Scripture, the rabbis associated it with the Sh'ma and the Amidah. In a passage from the 'Babylonian Talmud,³

...our Mishna declares: "at his meal he says the Grace after but not the Grace before". Quite so; but the reading of the Sh'ma⁴ and the Grace after meals are ordained by the Torah...

Similarly in the Mekhilta:⁵

...And from where do we know that they say "Blessed art Thou O Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob....? As it is said (Ex. 3:15), "And God said moreover unto Moses: thou shalt say unto the children of Israel: the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob /hath sent me unto you/. " And from where do we know that they make a blessing over the food? As it is said (Dt. 8:10), "And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless /the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee/.

The rabbis also stressed the importance of Birkat HaMazon historically. That the rabbis were already aware of an historical development of the Grace is evident from the following:⁶

Rav Nahman said: Moses fixed Birkat HaZan for Israel when the manna descended for them. Joshua instituted Birkat HaAretz when they entered the land /of Canaan/. David and Solomon instituted Boneh Yerushalayim: David instituted "for Israel Thy people and for Jerusalem Thy city", and Solomon instituted "for Thy great and holy Temple". HaTov veHaMetiv was instituted at Yavneh in connection with the slain of Betar, for Rav Matna said: on the day the slain of Betar were allowed burial, there was instituted in Yavneh the benediction

HaTov veHaMetiv: HaTov because the bodies did not decompose; and HaMetiv because they were allowed burial.

Later commentators refined this historical analysis by suggesting that each section of the Grace was subject to its own process of development. In Sefer HaHinukh,⁷

...Ezra and his court established [the blessings]; and even though the rabbis said that Moses instituted Birkat HaZan, Joshua instituted Birkat HaAretz... they only meant with regard to the essence of the idea; but the [specific] formulation of the blessing was set by Ezra and his Bet Din...

It was understood, however, that once these formulations were established, no changes could be introduced:

...and it is unfitting to add or delete from their versions. The one who does make such changes is in error.⁸

This historical treatment of Birkat HaMazon remained the accepted account until the present century. More recently, however, tools of textual criticism have been employed in the study of liturgical texts, and additional clues clarifying the process of development in prayers such as Birkat HaMazon have been discovered in the rabbinic literature itself. This has resulted in a growing understanding and a heightened appreciation of the traditional benedictions. The present study is both a reassessment of the traditional texts from this point of view, and a consideration of the current advances already made in the field vis-a-vis the history

of the Grace. The attempt has been in this thesis to preserve the respect due the traditional approach to Birkat HaMazon by accepting the rabbinic understanding as an important dimension in the development of the blessing.

In writing this thesis, the author has also weighed the contemporary contributions of Finkelstein^{9,10} and his examination of both the Grace and the Amidah. In an effort to reconstruct the earliest forms of these blessings and to establish the period during which these forms were first used, Finkelstein has assumed that 1) an "original" version of each blessing did exist: in cases where the Talmud recorded a blessing, this text was to be preferred as the most reliable indicator of the "earliest form"; and 2) that in comparing several versions of the same blessing, the shorter form would reflect more accurately this "original" version. Consistent with his theoretical position, Finkelstein has proposed the following text to have been the original Birkat HaMazon:¹¹

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who provides food for the whole world in goodness, lovingkindness and mercy. [Blessed art Thou O Lord who provides food for all.]

We thank Thee O Lord our God in that Thou hast given to us as an inheritance a desirable land [to eat from its fruits and to be satisfied from its goodness?] 12
Blessed art Thou O Lord for the land and for the food.

Have mercy O Lord our God upon Israel Thy people
and upon Jerusalem Thy city and upon Zion Thy
holy dwelling place and upon Thy altar and upon
Thy Temple. Blessed art Thou O Lord, Builder
of Jerusalem.

Blessed art Thou O Lord, King of the Universe,
the Good and the One who does good.

In recent years, Finkelstein's assumptions concerning
the development of prayer forms have been seriously
challenged. Highly critical of Finkelstein's "re-
constructed texts", Heinemann¹³ has offered a fresh
approach to the understanding of the liturgy in the
early rabbinic period. Emphasizing the prominent
role of oral tradition, Heinemann discounts the
"original authorship" model in favor of an evolutionary
process in the hands of the general population. He
argues as follows:

Jewish prayers were created originally not by
the Rabbis in their academies, but spontaneously
in the synagogues and prayer assemblies of the
people. Hence, they displayed from the outset
a large variety of forms, styles and patterns,
and only in the course of time did the Rabbis
select some of these as "standard" prayers
which became normative and obligatory for all...
Even then the norms laid down applied only to
the opening and concluding formulas of each
prayer, while the text itself remained "free"
and many different versions continued to exist
side by side. Notwithstanding the views of L.
Finkelstein and others, it is shown that in
fact the basic prayers on the talmudic era
did not have one single authoritative text.¹⁴

It is this insight which has guided the present
author in his analysis of the rabbinic material germane
to the development of Birkat HaMazon. It is therefore,
not a study which will result in an alternate "re-
constructed" text. Rather the thesis is an attempt

to present the variety of factors which may have played a role in the evolution of the Grace.

B. Birkat HaMazon, the altar and the table: the importance of Birkat HaMazon as a thanksgiving prayer may also be understood in terms of man's use of the altar to present his thanksgiving offering to his god:¹⁵

Primitive man brings the first fruit of all that is designed for food to the higher powers, especially to the Supreme Father and Creator God: the firstlings of the fruits which he finds in the primeval forest, of the wild animals which he kills in the chase, of the harvest of his fields, of the yield of his herds, of the intoxicating liquors which he prepares. We find these offerings of first fruits all over the world... The first fruits are offered as a simple expression of reverence, acknowledgement, and gratitude, but the other conception of sacrifice can of course be easily connected with this quite different one.

In this manner, the Mosaic tradition institutionalized the presentation of first fruits to God in connection with the harvest:

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: command the children of Israel and say unto them [that] My food which is presented unto Me for offerings made by fire, of a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in its due season. (Num. 28:1-2)

Also in the day of the first fruits, when ye bring a new meal offering unto the Lord in your feast of weeks, ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no manner of servile work; but ye shall present a burnt offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord. (Num. 28:26-27a)

Initially these burnt offerings were permitted throughout the land, but as the sacrificial cult centralized in Jerusalem,¹⁶ thanksgiving offerings to

God concentrated around the altar established in the Temple. And it was this altar, from which supplication and thanks were extended to God, which remained in the religious consciousness of the people even during the Exile.

For example, the altar and the rites connected with it were important elements in Ezekiel's vision of a rebuilt Temple: ¹⁷ his description of the altar was "the table that is before the Lord". ¹⁸ The cessation of sacrifice during the Exile was also considered only a temporary condition by Second Isaiah:

Even them will I bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in my house of prayer;
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
Shall be acceptable upon Mine altar;
For My house shall be called a house of
prayer for all peoples. (Is. 56:7)

Indeed the altar was reinstated during the Second Commonwealth ¹⁸ and remained in use during the first century, C.E. ¹⁹ When the altar was ultimately destroyed by the Romans, the rabbis sought a substitute vehicle whereby the people could acknowledge God as their provider, in a way symbolic of the altar. While prayer had become the appropriate replacement for sacrifice, the table was deemed a fitting altar-substitute: ²¹

...it is written, "the altar of wood three cubits high...and He said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord (Ez. 41:22)". The verse opens with "altar" and concludes with "table". R. Johanan and R. Eliezer both say: so long as the Temple stood, the altar used to atone for Israel; but now a man's table atones for him. ²²

In the following Mishna, ²³ the table was again likened to God's altar:

R. Shimon says: if three have eaten at one table and have not spoken upon it matters of Torah, it is as if they had eaten from sacrifices of the dead, as it is said (Is. 28:8), "all tables are full of filthy vomit, without the All-Present (makom)". But if three had eaten at one table and had spoken upon it matters of Torah, it is as if they had eaten at the table of the All-Present, blessed be He, as it is said (Ez. 41:22), "this is the table before the Lord".

The following commentary ²⁴ to the Mishnaic passage testifies to the important role of Birkat HaMazon as understood by the rabbis:

"...matters of Torah": this refers to Birkat HaMazon which they bless at the table and thus fulfil their obligation, for it is considered as if they had spoken upon it matters of Torah /and thereby eaten at the table of the All-Present/.⁷

If the table indeed became as significant a symbol in the daily life of the Jew as the altar had once been, then the Grace which he recited at the conclusion of his meal became his daily thanksgiving offering.

It has been the purpose of these introductory remarks to underscore the centrality of Birkat HaMazon in the religious expression of the Jewish people. However, the prayer also occupied a significant yet more technical place in the liturgical discussions of early rabbinic legislation. It is this dimension of the Grace that will be reviewed at length in the body of this thesis.

CHAPTER I
BIRKAT HAZAN

In the Introduction, we noted a unique characteristic of Birkat HaMazon: that specific justification for its content was found in Torah. Yet there is some confusion as to which part of Dt. 8:10 generated Birkat HaZan itself. In the Babylonian Talmud ¹ the phrase "You shall eat and be sated, and you shall bless..." is the basis for Birkat HaZan while "...the Lord your God..." refers to Birkat HaZimmun, the preceding Invitation to Grace.

On the other hand, the Jerusalem Talmud ² claims the opposite: "...and you shall bless..." is the basis for Birkat HaZimmun while the following words "...the Lord your God..." refer to that which follows the Invitation, i.e. Birkat HaZan. This latter version harmonizes the order of the Invitation followed by the prayers in the Grace with the sequence of Dt. 8:10 itself. Further, this is the version appearing in the Tosephta, ³ in the Tosaphoth, ⁴ in the Mishne Torah, ⁵ and in the Tur. ⁶ We are tempted to understand the Babylonian version in the light of a scribal error, although a possible implication of the difference between the two Talmuds will be discussed below (Section J).

However, in the matter of the Invitation, the Talmud records a second tradition ⁷ in which the basis

for the Zimmun is found in a Psalms verse:

Rabbi [Judah haNasi] said: "You shall eat and be sated, and you shall bless..," this is Birkat HaZan; but the Invitation is from "Magnify the Lord with me.. (Ps. 34:4)."

This statement by Rabbi seems to be emphasizing that a distinction be made between the Invitation and Birkat HaZan. Why any confusion may have occurred in the first place is not specified, although we might understand the problem from an historical reconstruction. The Invitation (Birkat HaZimmun) is already discussed at length in the Mishna,⁸ yet Birkat HaMazon is never mentioned in these passages, nor anywhere else. And while we don't suggest that the Grace was unknown to the Tannaim, its absence in the Mishna suggests that it had not been subjected to legislative control. The Invitation, on the other hand, had probably enjoyed an independent existence in a more formal context, where rabbinic control was established. Such is the hypothesis offered by Alon and explored by Heinemann:⁹ that Birkat HaZimmun came into being in connection with the community meals of the havura-type.¹⁰ These meals were eaten by a quorum of men and according to fixed rules. Heinemann points out that the Zimmun formula was later extended to meals with less than ten people present; and we must assume that, in time, the Invitation was joined to the prayers-after-meals spoken at these smaller gatherings. That some confusion

must have occurred, then, during this process can be seen in a disagreement between Rav Nahman and Rav Sheshet: 11

To what point does the benediction of Zimmun extend? Rav Nahman says: up to the conclusion of "Let us bless, /i.e. to the end of the Invitation/"; Rav Sheshet says: up to the conclusion of HaZan.

If the Zimmun and HaZan could have been considered a single blessing¹² as Rav Sheshet suggests in the following discussion in the Gemara, we can understand the purpose of Rabbi's statement (above), distinguishing the blessings on Biblical grounds.

One obvious observation resulting from this discussion, although one (to my knowledge) not generally emphasized, is that the rabbis gave the first blessing a name: 13

The rabbis taught: this is the arrangement of Birkat HaMazon: the first blessing is Birkat HaZan...

We may assume, then, that 1) it had probably been in the liturgical consciousness of the people in one form or another for some time; 2) it had developed a degree of consistency that could be recognized and identified, even from one locale to the other; and 3) it had apparently met certain requirements by which the rabbis could already give it a legitimate status. It was now in a position to be forged and tempered by the Amoraim, and later re-examined and refined by the

codifiers, reflecting its use by the people. The blessing, like the others in the Grace, was composed of smaller units, and many of these elements were considered in their own right. To understand the further development of Birkat HaZan, we must examine the treatment of each of its sections in the literature.

A. The opening benediction: In a Baraita ¹⁴ quoted by Rav Isaac bar Shmuel bar Marta in the name of Rav,

One is to open each and every blessing with "blessed" and to conclude with "blessed", except the blessings over fruits, commandments [i.e. short blessings], one blessing which is joined immediately to the one preceding it, and the final blessing in the Sh'ma. Some of these open with "blessed" and don't close with "blessed"; others conclude with "blessed" and yet don't commence with "blessed". ¹⁵

The general principle is expressed by Rabbi Judan in the Jerusalem Talmud: ¹⁶

One opens short blessing with "blessed" but does not conclude them with "blessed". One opens long blessings with "blessed" and concludes them with "blessed".

Since, in the same chapter, ¹⁷ Birkat HaZan is characterized as a long blessing joined immediately to the Invitation preceding it, the opening blessing was not necessary. However, when less than three ate together, the Invitation was not used; ¹⁸ Birkat HaZan no longer was a "joined" blessing. At these times, an opening beginning with "blessed" was required. It seems clear that for some time the inclusion of an opening

benediction for Birkat HaZan depended on the number who were eating together. That an opening benediction was eventually "fixed" to Birkat HaZan, regardless of the number of people eating, is attested in the accompanying commentary: ¹⁹

Why does Birkat HaZan open with "blessed"? Behold...if there were /only/ two to eat, there wouldn't be an Invitation and HaZan would have to begin with "blessed". And because sometimes it did open with "blessed", they fixed it with this opening for all time.

At what point point this opening "blessed" became a permanent part of Birkat HaZan is uncertain; yet by the 14th century, its inclusion had become a legislated matter in the Codes. ²⁰

While the sources require that Birkat HaZan open with "blessed", further details of the opening benediction are not given. We know, however, that in all versions available to date, ²¹ the benediction is complete: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the world..." From the discussion that follows, we will conclude that this entire formula was also the product of a developmental process, and that Birkat HaZan may have had a shorter benediction early in its history. Following this discussion, we will examine the specific implications of an early blessing by Benjamin the Shepherd for the opening benediction of Birkat HaZan.

B. 'Atah: The inclusion of 'Atah (You) as an address to God in the second person occurs in an early

Talmudic discussion ²² involving Rav and Shmuel: ²³

Rav said: one needs to say " 'Atah". Shmuel said: one doesn't need to say "Blessed are You", but only "Blessed is the Lord..."

While the reason for the inclusion of 'atah was not specified in the Talmudic passage, the rabbis attempt some explanation in the midrash to Psalms: ²⁴

Rav taught that in making a blessing, a man is required to say "Barukh 'atah Adonai", for a blessing without the Lord's name is no blessing, as it is said, "I have set the Lord always before me." ²⁵

According to this midrash, the word 'atah is subsumed under the requirement to mention the Divine Name. The author of Shibbole HaLeket ²⁶ recognizes a further problem: with the introduction of 'atah, blessings are addressed to God at once in the second and the third persons. Thus,

Rav said, "Blessed are You", and Shmuel said, "Blessed be He". Therefore the rabbis established the blessings according to both of them: "Blessed are You" according to Rav; "... who has sanctified us..." according to Shmuel.

The same problem was also addressed by Abudurham: ²⁷

And the reason that they fixed the benedictions in both the second and third persons is that the Holy One Blessed Be He is both revealed and hidden: revealed in his deeds and hidden in his Godliness..."

The problem of " 'atah " in benedictions which are followed invariably by an address to God in the third person has also been examined in the recent literature. ²⁸

Heinemann, for example, begins with a consideration of Spanier's theory which proposed that the word 'atah was introduced late into the opening benediction formula at a time when it would have been no longer possible to change the third person elements. While agreeing with Spanier that the original pattern of the opening benedictions didn't include the word 'atah, Heinemann raises chronological objections to Spanier's theory. The pattern "Blessed are You..." followed by the third person reference to God is already attested in the early literature.²⁹ Furthermore, regarding the differing views of Rav and Shmuel, Heinemann writes,

"...one can in no way deduce that only [during the first generation of Amoraim] was the word 'atah entered into the formula of the official benediction. Certainly it was an acceptable norm to say 'atah much earlier than this; yet there were also those who were accustomed to use, on the side of the normative pattern, the formula "Blessed is God..." without 'atah; and thereby the division between Rav and Shmuel was whether or not to require the use of the normative version, and it alone." (p. 53-54)

For our purposes, it is noteworthy that the word 'atah does not appear in the versions of a blessing by Benjamin the Shepherd, to be discussed below. Since his was understood as an acceptable alternate in the literature to Birkat HaZan, it is possible, at least for HaZan, that a benediction without the word 'atah remained a theoretically valid benediction.

C. O Lord, our God: A reference to the Divine

Name, in order to render a benediction valid, had been required probably by the beginning of the 3rd century: ³⁰

Rav said: every blessing in which there is no reference to the Divine Name is ³¹not considered a valid blessing...

Again, what form this reverence was to take was not specified. Nevertheless the identification of the Divine Name with the Tetragrammaton was already normative in the Mishna:

...And they further ordained that one should greet his fellow by mentioning the name of God, as it is said, "And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'Y-H-W-H be with you'; and they answered him, 'may Y-H-W-H bless you' (Ruth 2:4)... ³²

...In the Temple they uttered the Name as it was written, but in the provinces they pronounced it by its substitute word. ³³

...And these are they who have no share in the world to come: he that says there is no resurrection...Abba Saul says, also he who utters the Divine Name according to its letters...³⁴

In the Tosephta, ³⁵ however, the following schema suggests that reference to the Deity had not been limited to the Tetragrammaton in the benediction formulas:

A Tanna taught: He who begins a blessing with "Y-H" ³⁶ and concludes it with "Y-H" - behold, he is one of the average men; he who begins with "EL" and ends with "EL" - behold, he is a boor; he who begins with "Y-H" and ends with "EL" - behold, this is the way of the heretic.

By recognizing that the text attempts to suppress the use of "EL" by associating it with the heretics,

Finkelstein ³⁷ explains the eventual disappearance of the term from opening benediction formulas. We are left with the following question, then: at what point in the development of the liturgical berakha did the word Eloheynu (Our God) enter the benediction: Finkelstein again suggests ³⁸ that Eloheynu, in conjunction with the Tetragrammaton, was very early. It was later abandoned with the Tetragrammaton, only to be reintroduced during Akiba's generation. He finds support in the following passage: ³⁹

Rabbi Tarfon says: /This is the text for the Ge'ullah:/ "He that redeemed us and redeemed our fathers..."; Rabbi Akiba adds: "...therefore O Lord our God and God of our fathers, bring us peace... Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who has redeemed Israel."

The phrase "O Lord, our God" is not used by Akiba, however, either in the opening or closing benediction. Nor does Finkelstein present real evidence for the use of this phrase prior to Akiba. We thus must ask whether the word Eloheynu may not have been fixed in the opening benediction formula at a much later date than Rav's remark (Ber 40b). In his work on Birkat HaMazon, ⁴⁰ Finkelstein concludes that the original form of Birkat HaZan read, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, the one who feeds all the world with goodness, grace, and lovingkindness," (see Introduction). Even recognizing now that a search for "the original form" is pointless, we still question the

validity of Finkelstein's including the phrase "O Lord, our God" in the earliest development of Birkat HaZan.

D. Melekh Ha'Olam: The dating of the apposition Melekh Ha'Olam in the opening benediction has been studied extensively in recent literature. Weiss,⁴¹ for example, recognized a semantic development of the word 'olam from its early Biblical meaning "forever"⁴² to its later rendering "the world".⁴³ Translating Melekh Ha'olam as "King of the world" according to the later sense of the word, Weiss posited that this phrase may have been coined in benedictions as an anti-Gnostic polemical term. Yet this thesis is speculative in that Weiss was unable to date the inclusion of the phrase into the benediction formulas with external evidence. In response to Weiss' article, Heinemann⁴⁴ reasons that it was inserted later, in protest against Roman Emperor-worship. He notes that the phrase Melekh Ha'olam does not appear in the Amidah which underwent its final "editing" in Yavneh shortly after the destruction of the Temple. Heinemann suggests then that the formula was probably not introduced before the early second century C.E., at a time when the malkhiyyoth, also in protest against Roman Emperor-worship, were inserted into the New Year Amidah.

A third view is offered by Roth⁴⁵ who proposed that the phrase Melekh Ha'olam was introduced by the first

century Zealots, possibly after the fall of Jerusalem.

Fundamental among the Zealots was their doctrine that the Jews had no sovereign other than God alone, and that the recognition of any earthly ruler...was therefore a cardinal sin. Would it not have been natural for them to introduce this conception into the most common prayer formula...? (173)

Roth suggests that when the Zealots were absorbed by the Pharasee majority, certain of their doctrines may have been absorbed with them. A century and a half later, this "tradition" was preserved in the Talmudic text, ⁴⁶ although by then its interpretation may have been more "transcendental than non-political". (?)

Perhaps the most extensive review of Melekh Ha'olam was conducted by Wiesenberg. His two articles ^{47, 48} offer the reader an excellent review both of benediction formulas in general in Talmudic literature, and also of the phrase Melekh Ha'olam as it is distributed in the primary source material. But beyond that, he also argues for a later inclusion of Melekh Ha'olam into the benediction formula (during the Gaonic or Saboraic periods), challenging the theses proposed by Weiss, Roth, and Heinemann. Refuting their arguments, Wiesenberg writes,

It appears to me that there is no warrant for either of these...assumptions. The liturgical Melekh Ha'olam may well denote "the Eternal King". The ruling by Rabbi Yohanan on malkhuth was originally thought to concern other phrases denoting Divine kingship, of which there are a great many in the Jewish liturgy, whilst the introduction

of the term Melekh Ha'olam as statutory part of the opening berakhah formula dates from an age much later than Rav's and R. Yohanan's..." 49

Wiesenberg first must demonstrate that the early Talmudic decision to include malkhuth in all blessings did not mean Melekh Ha'olam but simply meant that some reference to God's "kingship" had to be mentioned in some way, somewhere in the body of each prayer. His first argument, then, is built on his interpretation of a statement by Rabbi Yohanan:

That is quite right—that according to Rav, who claims that a benediction which does not contain the Divine Name is no benediction. But what about Rabbi Yohanan who says that no blessing can be considered a valid blessing unless it contains a reference to the Divine Kingdom?...⁵⁰

And again,

Rav said: no blessing without the mention of the Divine Name is a valid blessing; Rabbi Yohanan said: no blessing without "kingship" can be considered a valid blessing...⁵¹

Wiesenberg offers a two-fold interpretation for these texts: 1. Rabbi Yohanan may feel that the word "melekh" or "ha-melekh" by itself would be sufficient to satisfy the malkhuth requirements.⁵² Furthermore, a number of sources^{53, 54, 55, 56} interpolated Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing (see below) to include the word "malkhah,"⁵⁷ satisfying Rabbi Yohanan's requirement.

2. Since Rabbi Yohanan is referring to all blessings ("kol berakhah") in his statement, by inference, the blessings which are joined to the ones preceding them must also be included in this ruling. ⁵⁸ And since these "joined blessings" have no opening benediction, ⁵⁹ Wiesenbergs reasons that malkhut, especially in these cases, just refers to a mention of "kingship" within the text proper or in the closing benediction of the blessing. For support, he submits that an acknowledgement of kingship occurs in almost all ⁶⁰ "joined" blessings. Further, he notes that in the Tosephta, ⁶¹ Judah haNasi requires a reference to kingship in "True and enduring....," a "joined" blessing without an opening benediction following the Sh'ma. Further evidence is found in the Avoth blessing of the Amidah. Although it contains no apparent reference to kingship, the Tosaphists ⁶² explain that kingship is to be understood in the phrase "God of Abraham".

In considering this argument, it should be noted that fourteen of the nineteen blessings in the Amidah do contain the root "m-l-kh" in the text. Heinemann however, rejects this evidence on two counts: ⁶³ 1) He reads "malkhuth" with the Tosaphot ⁶⁴ who assume that Rabbi Yohanan is speaking about Melekh Ha'olam in the opening benediction formula; ⁶⁵ and 2) he notes that while Wiesenbergs can find a large number of blessings

in the Amidah containing the root "m-l-kh" among current rites, this "eclectic" approach is inappropriate. It would be more valid to examine the number of references to kingship in any single early rite. Such a review would show substantially fewer references to kingship in the individual blessings. Furthermore, to explain the greater occurrence in today's versions, he answers that the root "m-l-kh" in the body of the blessings has been added much later, in the form of embellishments.

Wiesenberg's second argument for the later insertion of Melekh Ha'olam into the benediction formulas is based on his translation of the word ha'olam as "forever" in several Mishnaic passages.⁶⁶ He reasons that if this were the meaning of ha'olam in the early rabbinic period, then the phrase "King of the world" must have come into the liturgy later, when "olam" had acquired the meaning "world". But even Wiesenberg had realized that there are instances where 'olam means "world" even in the Biblical period.⁶⁷ Secondly, the number of texts he produces from the Mishna is very limited and could by no means be considered representative. But most importantly, Wiesenberg's logic is simply unsound. Even if 'olam could mean "forever" in certain instances, this does not rule out the alternate meaning "world" in other places. Such, in fact, may well

have been the understanding of the term as employed in the benediction formulas, even at an early date. Finally, even reading Melekh Ha'olam as "King forever" with Wiesenberg, we are not precluded from assuming this understanding in an early benediction formula.

Having reviewed the options for the dating of this last phrase in the benediction formula, we have thus examined each element in the opening benediction for Birkat HaZan. We may now consider Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing and its implications for the requirements in HaZan.

E. Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing: The Talmud records a discussion ⁶⁸ of a benediction by Benjamin the Shepherd that was accepted by Rav:

Benjamin the Shepherd doubled (wrapped) a loaf and said, "Blessed be the Master of this bread." Rav said that he had fulfilled his obligation. But hasn't Rav laid down that any benediction in which God's name is not mentioned is no benediction? [We must suppose] that he said, "Blessed be the All-Merciful, the Master of this bread." But we require three blessings [in the Grace]. What did Rav mean by saying that he had fulfilled his obligation? He had fulfilled his obligation of the first blessing.

We must understand, then, that the Gemara accepts the benediction(s) as a substitute for HaZan, even given the following conditions: ⁶⁹

- a) the berakhah begins with "Blessed"; however,
- b) the word " 'atah " does not appear in either version;

- c) the normal Tetragrammaton, the term satisfying the requirement of "mentioning God's name" does not occur, (although the words "the All-Merciful" are accepted later as a substitute; ⁷⁰
- d) there is no mention of kingship;
- e) it is a short blessing, which has no closing formula, by definition.

But this entire Talmudic passage is rather curious. It is cited in the Gemara to M. Ber. 6.2 which discusses the short blessings (those with no closing benediction) recited before eating fruits. The Mishna considers each blessing in the following way:

- a) the type of food to be eaten is identified;
- b) the blessing is suggested;
- c) the decision is given: the blessing either "does fulfil" or "does not fulfil" one's obligation.

The account of the shepherd's blessing is identical in structure:

- a) he doubled (wrapped) the loaf;
- b) he recited the blessing;
- c) Rav makes the decision: he fulfils his obligation.

It seems reasonable to assume then, that Rav knew of this blessing as a short blessing to be recited before partaking of the loaf, ⁷¹ and he accepted its validity only in this light. That Rav considered this blessing

as a substitute for Birkat HaMazon (after a meal), or even Birkat HaZan, is indeed questionable! Yet there is a further reason to doubt that this benediction was originally intended as a substitute for Birkat HaZan: for not only does the editor present a variant (edited?) text of the blessing to satisfy Rav's own requirement that all blessings mention God's name. Even the decision by Rav itself is extrapolated, satisfying the editor's own objection that the Grace requires three separate blessings. In both examples, the editor has presented a textual modification which this writer feels may be anachronistic and not to have originated with Rav. But of course the later literature had to reflect the understanding in the Gemara, that Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing was in fact an acceptable substitute for Birkat HaZan. Yet by the time the blessing reached the Tur, ⁷² its text had been altered again to include a mention of kingship:

...and if one hadn't said Birkat HaZan but had said in its place, "Blessed be the All-Merciful One, the King, the Master of this bread," he would have fulfilled his obligation to say Birkat HaZan.

And in the 13th century, ⁷³ it had become necessary to "seal" this blessing too with a closing "Blessed". We are led to believe then, that early in the history of Birkat HaZan, "'atah", the Tetragrammaton and mention of kingship may not have been necessary conditions in the benediction of Birkat HaZan. A benediction of some

kind beginning with "Blessed" was required, but decisions regarding other elements of the benediction were as yet not binding. Only later did the element of kingship become essential; and finally the closing benediction was legislated, providing the shepherd's blessing with the elements required in Birkat HaZan proper. It is to the closing benediction of Birkat HaZan then we now turn.

F. The closing benediction: In discussing the proper form of the blessings to precede and follow the reading of the Sh'ma, the Mishna states the following principle: ⁷⁴

Where [the rabbis] order to say a long benediction, it is not permissible to say a short one;
[where they order] to say a short benediction, it is not permissible to say a long one.
[Where they order] to "seal" a benediction, it is not permissible not to "seal"; [where they order] not to "seal", it is not permissible to "seal".

Furthermore, it will be recalled that a short blessing is one which does not contain a concluding benediction beginning with "Blessed". Given that Birkat HaZan has been identified as a long blessing, it would follow that a closing benediction would be required, and that without the closing benediction, the blessing would be invalid.

Yet we recognized above that the version of Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing, acceptable to Rav, contained no closing benediction: i.e., it was a short

blessing. Accepting this form, by implication, would have defined Birkat HaZan as a short blessing. Not until the 13th century was an objection raised: ⁷⁵ Rashba, basing his argument on the definition of a "long" blessing, wrote,

...he does not fulfil his obligation unless he opens with a benediction and concludes with a benediction, in that the first blessing in Birkat HaMazon is a "long" blessing; therefore, it is necessary that one will say, "Blessed be the All-Merciful, the Master of this bread. Blessed be the All-Merciful who gives food to all."

Thus while neither the Tur ⁷⁶ nor the Shulhan Aruh ⁷⁷ reject the shepherd's blessing in its short form, the commentary Magen Avraham ⁷⁸ to the Shulhan Aruh suggests that the following version of Benjamin's blessing is acceptable, and only after the fact:

"Blessed be the All-Merciful, the Master, the King of the world (!) who gives this bread, and through his abundant goodness, we have neither lacked - nor will we lack - fat of the wheat. ⁷⁹ Blessed be All-Merciful, the One who gives food to all in its time..."

On the whole, however, this argument in development may have been rather academic. For in all 35 rites examined by Finkelstein, ⁸⁰ not one excluded the concluding benediction. While Rav's acceptance of Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing was understood by the rabbis as theoretical acceptance of the "short" form, the population, as recorded in the liturgy, never

translated it into practice.

Having concluded our examination of the benediction formulas vis-à-vis Birkat HaZan, we now review the remaining elements of the blessing discussed in the literature.

G. The One who feeds: While the halakhic material applies the appellative HaZan ("the One who feeds") to the first blessing, there is little in the legal literature explaining the use of the term. There is a reference, however, in the Midrash which refers to this attribute of God more specifically: ⁸¹

A king of flesh and blood who is standing in [the midst of] war is unable to feed or replenish supplies for his soldiers; but the Holy One Blessed Be He is not of this kind: rather, "the Lord is a Man of War (Ex. 15:3)" in that he wages war in Egypt; "The Lord is his name" in that He feeds and provides for all the inhabitants of the earth, as it is said, "... and hath delivered us from our adversaries... Who giveth bread to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever," (Ps. 136:24-25)...

H. Blessed be the One who satisfies the hungry, Blessed be the One who gives water to the thirsty..." While this phrase does occur rarely in a few existing rites, ⁸² it never appears as a requirement in the literature. On the contrary, in the Codes ⁸³ it is considered an unacceptable addition:

There are those who add and say, "Blessed be the One who satisfies the hungry, Blessed be the One who gives water to the thirsty, Blessed art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the world, etc. ..."; and this is not to be said, for it is not part of the formula of the blessing; and those who "add" [to the regular benediction] are to be reprimanded.

It is reasonable to assume that the negative sanction with regard to this verse was in response to its use by the Karaites. And since the words "There are those who add and say..." refers not only to the Karaites but to Jews themselves who had included the verse in their Grace, this is one example of the rabbis attempting to eliminate an otherwise acceptable reference to God in order to distinguish between Jewish and sectarian practices. Nevertheless, the tradition of saying "Blessed be the One who satisfies hunger, etc...." was not totally suppressed. Note the following commentary⁸⁴ accompanying the ruling above:

In Mordecai at the end of Berakhot it is written under Sefer Pardes that when one blesses alone /and therefore no invitation is used/, he shouldn't say it. /So/ it seems from his words that when one says Birkat HaZimmun (Invitation), he does say it; and in Or Hayyim it is written that /even/ the one who blesses by himself says it; /but/ the rabbis say not to say it at all.

Apparently those who continued to use the verse in the Grace still disagreed over whether or not one should say the verse when blessing without the Invitation. The confusion seems to be based on the placement of the verse itself, between the Invitation and the opening benediction to Birkat HaZan. If the verse were an integral part of Birkat HaZimmun, then it would not, of course, be recited if less than three were eating together. If, however, the verse were considered, instead, part of the opening benediction - or at least joined to

it - it would be permissible even without the Invitation. This appears to be the understanding in the Tur, inasmuch as it insists that "[the verse] is not part of the formula of Birkat HaZan" and therefore, should not be "added" to it.

I. Ps. 136:25 and the word imanu (with us): The only occurrences of the word imanu suffixed to Ps. 136:25 in Birkat HaZan are in a genizah fragment reproduced by Finkelstein⁸⁵ and later in the Mahzor Vitri.⁸⁶ Notably, imanu is not discussed in this context by the Talmud; neither is it included in the siddurim of Amram Gaon or Saadia Gaon; Maimonides likewise omitted imanu (as well as Ps. 136:25). Yet the practice of including the word was not unknown to the commentators:⁸⁷

...The Rosh used to say, "...for his loving-kindness endures forever (Ps. 136:25b)," and he didn't say "with us" because his lovingkindness is not with all living beings.

On the other hand, in Shibbole HaLeket,⁸⁸ we read what appears to be a midrashic justification for the insertion of imanu:

There are those who explain in "Arve Pesachim" that God sits in the heights of the world and apportions food to all his creatures from the horns of the wild oxen to the eggs of the fleas, "for his lovingkindness endures forever imanu (with us)..."

The difference between these texts is based on the connotative understanding of the word imanu. In the Tur, it is read with a particularistic thrust, and probably

considered inappropriate therefore, in Birkat HaZan with its universalistic appeal. However, the second text, reading a universal intent into the word, would see no trouble with the inclusion of imanu in Birkat HaZan on these grounds. Regardless, the strong opposition to the word was sufficient. Its inclusion which was first seen in a Palestinian rite was never accepted in any of the Babylonian versions, even though Ps. 136:25 remains in some form in almost all rites ⁸⁹ since the 16th century.

J. food has never failed us: In Birkat HaZan, the commentators discuss only one point of grammar.⁹⁰ Of concern is the root h-s-r which means "to lack" in the pa'al ⁹¹ construction and "to give less" in the pi'el construction. The commentators suggest only that requires for the purposes of grammatical consistency.

It would seem that the alternate ways to "point" the root h-s-r have little or no consequence. No decisions are rendered in the commentaries, and in fact the root itself is not mentioned in the text of the Codes. We note, ⁹² however, that the use of h-s-r in the pa'al emphasizes the bread which, because of God's goodness (l,slcl) was not lacking ⁹³ - nor will be lacking - for us. This is the version found in most of the rites today. On the other hand, the use of h-s-r in the pi'el emphasizes God who, in his goodness, has not given us - nor will He give us - less bread (than we need). This

version is found in the Palestinian genizah fragments as well as in the current Yemenite versions. This rather subtle difference may imply a more general intent of Birkat HaZan itself. Is it a blessing of the food provided by God, or is it a recognition of God who provides the food? In response to this speculation, we may shed some light on the use of the verse, "You shall eat and be sated and bless the Lord your God...(Dt. 8:10)".

As the Babylonian Talmud explained, Birkat HaZan was generated by the phrase, "You shall eat and be sated and you shall bless....," while the Jerusalem Talmud explained that Birkat HaZan was generated by "...the Lord your God..." Could it be that in early Palestine, it was considered improper to emphasize the food more than the God who produced the food, whereas in Babylonia, there was a greater emphasis on the food in the blessing, while the major emphasis on God was recited in the Invitation generated by "...the Lord your God..."? ⁹⁴

K. Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest every living thing with favor (Ps. 145:16): The emergence of this verse into Birkat HaZan is a late phenomenon if we consider that its inclusion wasn't discussed even in the Codes. The first to comment on this verse was the author of the Kolbo.⁹⁵ His position is also quoted in Karo's comment to the Tur ⁹⁶ in which the Kolbo's position is rejected:

It is written in the Kolbo that there are those who say that one shouldn't say, "as it is written, Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest every living thing with favor"; rather one should just sign "Blessed art Thou who feedest all," without any other verse. And the reason that the Kolbo feels so is that he would ask how can we bring a verse that David said and include it among the words of Moses? But this doesn't have to be the case.

Karo is not convinced of the caution against anachronistic inserts and may in fact be echoing the decision of Maimonides ⁹⁷ to include the verse in his version. And indeed the verse remains in all available Sephardic rites since the 14th century. ⁹⁸ Further, we find that while the verse appeared first in one of the geniza manuscripts ⁹⁹ and is reproduced later in the Mahzor Vitri, the verse is absent in the siddurim of both Amram Gaon and Saadia Gaon. One may speculate that the rabbis also dropped this verse in opposition to the Karaite practice of structuring the whole Grace from Biblical passages, many of them from the book of Psalms. Saadia, for example, was an ardent polemicist in the battle against the Karaites, ¹⁰⁰ and eliminating Ps. 145:16 would have been an appropriate and consistent statement in the creation of his own siddur.

CHAPTER II

BIRKAT HaARETZ

The literature refers to the second blessing in Birkat HaMazon consistently as Birkat HaAretz:¹

The rabbis taught: this is the order of the Grace:...the second [blessing] is Birkat HaAretz...

Further, there is clear agreement² that the blessing is generated by that part of the verse Dt. 8:10, "...and bless the Lord thy God for the good land..." Nevertheless, the Gemara does not record the actual text of the blessing: as in our review of Birkat HaZan, we must assume either that 1) an "essential" Birkat HaAretz was already well established in the liturgy; or 2) Birkat HaAretz was being recited in a number of forms and variations prior to its consideration in the Talmud. As we examine the discussions of the rabbis, we will incline toward the latter: that theirs was an attempt to unify the existing versions by legislating basic patterns and - in some instances - certain of the words themselves.

Because there is no opening benediction in Birkat HaAretz (see end of this chapter), we begin our review by examining the "thanksgiving" legislation.

A. Thanksgiving: The requirement that "thanksgiving be a part of Birkat HaAretz was established in

the following Baraitha ³ and supported in the later literature:

R. Abba says: one must mention thanksgiving in [Birkat HaAretz] at the beginning and at the conclusion; and he who shortens [the Grace] must not omit more than one of them, for whoever omits more than one of them is to be reprimanded.

The commentators agreed with R. Abba, but they were more rigid in the application of his ruling. For example, Maimonides, ⁴ although he quotes the preceding Baraitha, does not include the option to eliminate one of the "thanksgivings". The Tur ⁵ likewise, omits this part of the Baraitha in its legislation. And by the time the Shulhan Aruh was written, the regulation regarding "thanksgiving" was not mentioned - presumably because "thanksgiving" had finally become established in the liturgy as an unalterable element in Birkat HaAretz. ⁶

We have seen in the previous chapter that the rabbis often left unspecified the actual wording of a concept required in a blessing. We have assumed that these early authorities accepted some degree of variation in the expression of such concepts; and yet we know that a term such as "thanksgiving" must have been generally understood to refer to a specific liturgical idea or existing pattern. An examination of the early literature shows that while the Talmud doesn't give us a specific text for the expression of "thanksgiving" in Birkat HaAretz, the term "thanksgiving" is already known in the Mishna: ⁷

R. Nehunia b. Hakanah used to offer up a short blessing on his entering into the house of study, and on his leaving. They said to him, "what is the intention of this prayer?" He replied to them, "upon my entering I pray that no mishap occur through me, and upon my leaving, I offer up thanksgiving for my lot".

In the discussion following in the Gemara,⁸
the text is provided for this "thanksgiving":

..."I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those that sit in the House of Study and that Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit on street corners; for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah, and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward, and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of a future world and they run to the pit of destruction."

And again in the Mishna:⁹

He who enters a town should pray twice: once on his coming in and once on his going forth. Ben Azzai says, four times: twice on his coming in and twice on his going forth, offering thanksgiving for what is past and making supplication for what is still to come.

Here too, the Gemara¹⁰ suggests the textual reference for the "thanksgiving":

Having left, he says: I give thanks before Thee, O Lord my God, for that Thou has caused me to depart from this town in peace; and as Thou has caused me to depart in peace, conduct me also in peace, uphold me in peace, direct my steps in peace, and deliver me from every enemy and ambush by the way.

In the context of heretical practices, the Mishna¹¹
declares,

If a man said, "Good men shall bless Thee" - this is the way of heresy; if he said, "To a bird's nest do Thy mercies extend (Dt. 22:7)," or "May Thy name be remembered for the good," or "We give thanks; we give thanks," they put him to silence.

And as part of the function of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, ¹²

...the High Priest came to read... Then he used to roll up the scroll of the Law...thereupon he pronounced eight benedictions: for the Torah, for the Temple Service, for the Thanksgiving, for the Forgiveness of sin, for the Temple separately, and for the Israelites themselves, and for the priests separately, and for the rest, a prayer.

It is evident that the term "thanksgiving" had also become associated with a specific blessing in the Amidah as understood in the following Mishna: ¹³

...the havdala [must be mentioned in] "Who graciously grants understanding", (the fourth blessing). R. Akiba says: it should be said as a fourth blessing by itself. R. Eliezar says: [it should be said in] the "Thanksgiving".

These passages indicate that 1) by the Tannaitic period, "thanksgiving" was already an established concept in the liturgy and that it was represented by a particular blessing in the public worship of the Temple and the synagogue. And for those specific examples in which a thanksgiving prayer was required but was not well known, the Gemara supplies an appropriate text; 2) in almost every example, a "thanksgiving" is recited upon concluding an event, whether it be leaving a city,

exiting from the house of study, concluding the Torah reading and public worship, or ushering out the Sabbath.

With the above inferences in mind, we suggest that when R. Abba ordained a "thanksgiving" in Birkat HaAretz without specifying a text, 1) he could assume an existing liturgical formula upon which the text of this "thanksgiving" would be modelled; and 2) he was aware that "thanksgiving" was often associated with a concluding event. Recognizing that the end of a meal was the conclusion of an equally significant (sanctified) event also, R. Abba was selecting the "thanksgiving" as an appropriate pattern for Birkat HaAretz.

A further understanding of "thanksgiving" in the early development of Birkat HaAretz may be obtained from a comparison of Birkat HaAretz with the received Thanksgiving blessing of the Amidah:

<u>Birkat HaAretz</u>	Thanksgiving in <u>Amidah</u>
Begins with root <u>Y-D-H</u> ;	Begins with root <u>Y-D-H</u> ;
Opening words (<u>nodeh lecha</u>) appear in body of Thanksgiving in <u>Amidah</u> ;	Opening word (<u>modim</u>) appears in body of <u>Birkat HaAretz</u> ;
Deity referred to as O Lord, our God;	Deity referred to as O Lord, our God;
Incorporates special <u>Purim</u> and <u>Hanuka</u> inserts;	Incorporates special <u>Purim</u> and <u>Hanuka</u> inserts;

concluding texts:

"...and for everything
O Lord our God, we thank
You and bless You;

may Thy name be blessed in
the mouth of all living
beings, always and forever.

(Dt. 8:10)

Blessed art Thou, O Lord,
for the land and for the food."

"...and for all these

may Thy name be blessed,
raised and exalted,
our King, always and forever.

-

Blessed art Thou, O Lord,
whose name is All-good, and
unto whom it is becoming
to give thanks." ¹⁵

It is equally important, nonetheless, to recognize that the blessings have little shared substantive content. For while the version in the Amidah expresses thanksgiving for God's attribute of eternal guardianship, the source of hope and lovingkindness, Birkat HaAretz is much more specific: it mentions the Land, the Exodus, the "covenant", Torah, and the instruction in life, as well as the food already recalled in Birkat HaZan. These comparisons would suggest, then, that while the content of the two blessings did not originate for the same reasons, their similar structures reflect some unifying element. Thus, if we can assume from the evidence in the Mishna that the "thanksgiving" of the Temple ritual - later preserved in the Amidah ¹⁷ - was established some time before the legislation of Birkat HaAretz, then R. Abba's statement - more than an attempt to fix the general content of Birkat HaAretz itself - appears to be a deliberate move to establish a recognizable structure using the Thanksgiving from the Temple service as a model.

We now return to the actual wording of the term "thanksgiving" in the present blessing. Rashi ¹⁶ was among the earliest to clarify which phrases in the text of Birkat HaAretz, already well established by his time, ¹⁸ were to be identified with the term "thanksgiving". He explained that the opening verse began, "We thank Thee", ¹⁹ "O Lord our God," while the closing verse read, "...and for all these, O Lord our God, we thank Thee." Note however, that the "thanksgiving mentioned at the end" never became a part of the closing benediction (cf. Amidah!). Later, the Tur ²⁰ took issue with the version which Rashi favored for the opening "thanksgiving": specifically, while Rashi wrote no-de-lecha to express "We (will)-thank-Thee," ²¹ the Tur considers a more common form:

And R. Meir of Rothenburg ²² used to say, "We (will)-thank-Thee (no-de-lecha)," and not "We (will)-thank Thee (nodeh lecha)," the implication of this construction being "we-thank you, i.e. some human being." But such is not the customary practice. And moreover, there is a verse (Ps. 79:13), "We will thank Thee (nodeh lecha) forever; we will tell of Thy praise to all generations." ²³

And regarding the wording of the second "thanksgiving", the Tur ²⁴ extends a further explanation and limitation:

R. Abba says: one needs to mention "thanksgiving" in Birkat HaAretz at the beginning and at the conclusion; that is, one says, "...and for all this we thank Thee..." And there is no need to precede the closing benediction with the phrase "...and we thank Thee, Selah, in truth for the land and for the food"; for if this

[were added], there would be three [“thanks-givings”]; and just as one is not to reduce [the number of thanksgivings], so it is not permissible to add [to the number of thanksgivings].

Sirkes²⁵ comments on the clause considered an unacceptable addition by the Tur:

...and it appears that those who did [add the clause] reasoned that “at the beginning and at the conclusion” implied the real conclusion (i.e. literally) just as the real beginning [is so intended]; whereas “and for all this we thank Thee...” is in the middle (i.e. the body of the blessing). Thus [they reason that “...and we thank Thee, Selah, etc...” should precede the closing benediction] just as the essence of any opening benediction should be joined to the closing benediction.

[But R. Abba] reasoned that since the essence of the blessing was “for the land” and not “thanksgiving”, then the essence of the opening clause is “...that Thou gave to our fathers a desirable, good, and ample land...,” which is also [repeated with the words] “...for the good land which He has given you (Dt. 8:10),” and joined to the closing benediction.

With the available literature before us, it is difficult to understand the source of the unaccepted verse quoted in the Tur. This addition which the Tur rejected does not occur in any of the rites provided by Finkelstein. And while Sirkes' comment is plausible, his argument is based on defining the essence of Birkat HaAretz rather than on the Tur's objection to adding to the number of thanksgivings. Sirkes himself recognizes that his assumptions are hypothetical: indeed he wrote more than two centuries after the Tur was compiled, and his insights into the issues raised were speculative, at best. We can only suggest that Jacob b. Asher's concern over the issue of “thanksgiving” was as he

himself explained in the Tur: that R. Abba's statement in the Gemara regarding the number of thanksgivings was to be taken literally. And we might guess that his citing the particular clause "we thank Thee, Selah, etc..." was in response to a local, short-lived custom which he had experienced first-hand.

B. A desirable, good, and ample land: There was circumscribed legislation governing specific wording of the content of Birkat HaAretz as early as the beginning of the second century, C.E. ²⁶

There is a teaching: R. Eliezer says: whoever does not say, "a desirable, good and ample land" in Birkat HaAretz ...has not fulfilled his obligation.

This ruling is carried in the Mishne Torah, ²⁷ in the Tur, ²⁸ and is assumed in the Shulhan Aruh. ²⁹ Nevertheless, an explanation for R. Eliezer's choice of adjectives is not supplied. We might, however, speculate that these adjectives had become strongly associated with "the land". For example, the Bible attests to the following:

Jer. 3:19: ...how would I put thee among the sons and give thee a desirable land..?

Zach. 7:14: ...thus the land was desolate after them...for they laid the desirable land desolate...

Ps.106:24: ...moreover they scorned the desirable land, they believed not his word...

Dt. 4:21: Now the Lord...swore that I should not go over the Jordan and that I should not go into that good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Dt. 8:10: ...and bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He has given you...

Ex. 3:8: ...to bring them up out of that land unto a good and ample land, a land flowing with milk and honey...

Ich.4:40: ...and they found fat and good pasture, and the land was ample and quiet...

A further basis for understanding R. Eliezer's choice of adjectives may have been supplied by Weill³⁰ who recognized that "the good and ample land" was a common liturgical formula in the time of Josephus. And third, concerning the word "desirable", Sirkes³¹ had the following to say:

And the explanation of R. Benjamin is written in Shibbole HaLeKet:³² since Joshua saw that Moses, our teacher - may he rest in peace, desired to enter Israel and pray there and also the ancient fathers desired to enter there and be buried there, since he merited entering there, [Joshua] established "the desirable land" in Birkat HaAretz.

Finally, in Finkelstein's attempt to reconstruct an original Birkat HaAretz,³³ he suggested that "the good and ample land" was a rival formula to which R. Eleizer objected:

R. Eliezer's statement requiring the use of the formula "a desirable, good and ample land" naturally (!) arouses speculation as to the rival formula to which he objected. As R. Eliezer is not known as an innovator, it is likely that he merely expressed preference for one form over another current form. The form objected to probably was "a good and ample land".

While we agree with Finkelstein that R. Eliezer may have been choosing among rival formulas, we wonder whether R. Eliezer really "objected" to the words "good"

and "ample", given that in the Baraita mentioned above, he called for their inclusion. Thus we find it curious that in his own reconstruction of Birkat HaAretz, Finkelstein excludes both "good" and "ample", leaving "desirable" as the sole adjective describing the land.

While the rabbis could not always agree as to whether they were legislating the actual wording of a blessing or simply the ideas contained therein (see below, "Covenant and Torah"), in the case of R. Eliezer's decree, the very words "a desirable, good and ample land" became secured in the liturgy without deviation. For in all 35 rites presented by Finkelstein, the order and wording of this phrase remains constant and varied throughout.

C. Covenant and Torah: The following passage appears in the Jerusalem Talmud: ³⁴

R. Abba b. Aha in the name of Rabbi: if one didn't mention the covenant in Birkat HaAretz, ...he must begin again.

And in the same chapter, ³⁵

R. Simon in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: ...whoever doesn't mention "Torah" in Birkat HaAretz [must begin again], as it is said, "...and he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took the labor of the peoples in possession." [To what end?] "That they might keep His statutes and observe His laws," (Ps. 105:44-45). ³⁶

Similar requirements are found in the Babylonian Talmud: ³⁷

Nahum the Elder says one must mention "covenant" in Birkat HaAretz. R. Jose says he must mention "Torah" therein.

R. Abba ³⁸ says...whoever does not include a reference to "covenant" and "torah" in Birkat HaAretz...has not fulfilled his obligation. This supports the teaching of R. Elai quoting R. Jacob b. Aha in the name of the rabbis: ³⁸ whoever omits the reference to "covenant" and "Torah" in Birkat HaAretz...has not fulfilled his obligation. ³⁹

Furthermore the order in which "covenant" and "Torah" must appear in Birkat HaAretz is also designated: ⁴⁰

Plema says: he must refer to "covenant" before "Torah", since [Torah] was given in a three-fold pact, but "covenant" was given in a thirteen-fold pact.

These passages demonstrate clear agreement among the Palestinian authorities regarding the inclusion of "covenant" and "Torah". Nevertheless, these terms had not yet been firmly established in Babylonia as a required element of the blessing. The Gemara ⁴¹ records a discussion between R. Zera and Rav Hisda in which the latter reported a personal incident:

When I visited the house of the Exilarch and said the Grace after meals, Rav Sheshet stretched his neck over me [in astonishment]...because I made no reference to "covenant", "Torah", or "kingship". And why did you not mention them? In accordance with the statement of Rav Hananel ⁴² in the name of Rav: "If one has not referred to "covenant", "Torah", and "kingship", he has [still] fulfilled his obligation: "covenant", because it does not apply to women; "Torah", and "kingship", because they apply neither to women or to slaves.

And while the Gemara records astonishment that Rav Hisda would follow a minority position, it is

nevertheless clear that this was the dominant position among Babylonian authorities: that the inclusion of "covenant" and "Torah" in Birkat HaAretz was not (yet) a liturgical requirement.

Even as late as the 13th century, the matter of "covenant" and "Torah" was not fully resolved. For example, Rashba ⁴³ wrote,

"Rav said neither 'covenant' nor 'Torah' [needs to be included]: 'covenant' because women are exempt; and 'Torah' because women and slaves are exempt...": That is to say that since two [separate] versions were not established, men were also not required to say "covenant" and "Torah". And RABaD ^{43a} raised a difficulty: if so, then "the land" should also not be required, since the land was not given to slaves...But it stands to reason that this is not a difficulty, since "covenant" and "Torah" are not words ordained by the Torah; therefore, the sages could establish one form for the men, one for the women and one for the slaves; but since Torah (Dt. 8:10) requires a blessing to be made for "the land", the one form [a desirable, good and ample land] was required for all; and the reason is also that everyone benefits from the inheritance of the land and is sated from its goodness and bounty...

In the codes, ⁴⁴ however, the legislation no longer considers the option to omit "covenant" and "Torah". Rather by that time a difference of opinion regarding the actual wording of "covenant" and "Torah" had developed:

"Plemon says: he must refer to "covenant" before "Torah", i.e. "...for Your covenant which You sealed in our flesh and for Your Torah which You have taught us..." And some are accustomed to say, "...in that You gave as an inheritance to our fathers a desirable,

good and ample land, "covenant", "Torah", life and sustenance, etc." And my revered father the ROSH, may he rest in peace, would say instead, "...in that You gave as an inheritance to our fathers a desirable, good and ample land, and in that You brought us out of Egypt..."; for afterwards, he says, "...for Your covenant which You sealed in our flesh and for Your Torah which You have taught us..."

The disagreement expressed in the Tur concerns the interpretation of the Talmudic passage requiring the mention of "covenant" and "Torah": must these words appear in the blessing precisely as they do in the Gemara, or is grammatical variation permissible? ⁴⁶ The authoritative position of Karo ⁴⁷ favors grammatical variation, and the literal transference of "covenant" and "Torah" from Talmud is rejected. Yet a review of the rites presented by Finkelstein discloses that tradition is at times its own interpreter of the halakha. On one hand, the earlier practice of including the words "covenant" and "Torah" as they appear in the Talmud is observed in the Palestinian as well as in other texts. Amram, however, strikes a compromise when he speaks of "...Your covenant..." but simply of "...Torah..." as in the Gemara. And it is Saadia's version which the Tur reproduces as the inferior (alternate) form.

Predictably, legislation alone could not overturn what had become established, de facto, in the liturgy. Rather than extract what had been recited for centuries, then, many of the rites dating from the 15th century

combined the two formulas, sometimes creating an obvious redundancy in an already expanded blessing:

...for the desirable, good and ample land, "covenant" and "Torah", life and sustenance; and in that You brought us out of Egypt and redeemed us from the house of bondage; and for Your covenant which you sealed in our flesh and for Your Torah, the Torah of Moses our teacher, which You taught us; and for the laws of Your will which you announced to us... (Persian rite)

D. Closing benediction ("Blessed art Thou, O Lord, for the land and for the food."): In his discussion of this closing benediction, Heinemann⁴⁸ proposes the following:

It is known that exceptional forms generally reveal to us traces of earlier patterns that later disappeared. An exceptional form such as this is the closing benediction of Birkat HaAretz.

Indirect support for Heinemann's assumption regarding the age of the benediction is found in a passage from the Gemara:⁴⁹

It has just been stated: Rabbi says, "we should not conclude [a blessing] with two [items in the closing benediction]"; Levi⁵⁰ quoted against Rabbi: "...for the land and for the food" [is an example of an acceptable closing benediction concluding with two]. [But this simply means for] the land which yields food... What is the reason we don't conclude with two? Because we must not perform commandments in bundles (i.e., we need a separate benediction for each religious act).

This seems to be one of those occasions in which the argument proposed and accepted by the editor of the Gemara is less than convincing. For Hebrew syntax simply will not bear the interpretation "...for the

land which yields food". And yet the formula "...for the land and for the food" was a tradition too well established to be changed as late as the Amoraic period. Further, the fact that Levi could use this benediction in an attempt to refute a principle by Rabbi attests to the strength this benediction had acquired with age. In fact, neither the Talmud ⁵¹ nor later commentary would supplant the formula with a rival tradition grammatically and halakhically more acceptable:

...and whoever who concludes, "Blessed be the One who gives lands as a heritage", in Birkat HaAretz...behold he is a boor.

This ruling in the name of R. Abba is quoted directly in the Tur ⁵² and explained by Karo:

...and we mentioned above that the reason [we conclude with "...for the land and for the food"] is that "...who gives lands as a heritage" belongs also to the rest of the peoples since He gave them lands, while we need to bless for the inheritance of Israel alone.

We have noted that none of the literature is concerned with the initial development of this unique closing benediction. Lacking historical support, we might only guess, then, that Birkat HaAretz developed strictly as a blessing for the good land received from God through the vehicle of His covenant. Later when the blessing was incorporated into the meal ritual, the element of food may have been added to the text and closing benediction. Beyond this hypothesis, however, we recognize that the pattern of this closing benediction

was yet another alternative to the grammatical form later considered normative. And by granting this, we eliminate the problem of having to subsume it under R. Abba's dictum mentioned above.

We conclude our discussion of Birkat HaAretz with a consideration of the opening benediction formula.

E. The question of an opening benediction: We have seen in our discussion of Birkat HaZan that "joined" blessings requires no opening benediction:

One is to open each and every blessing with "blessed" and to conclude with "blessed", except the blessings over fruits, commandments, one blessing which is joined immediately to the one preceding it, and the final blessing in the Sh'ma. Some of these open with "blessed" and don't close with "blessed"; joined blessings/ conclude with "blessed" yet don't commence with "blessed". 53

And since the classification of Birkat HaAretz as a joined blessing is already assumed in the Amoraic period, 54

...Why shouldn't Birkat HaAretz contain a reference to Kingship?/ Because it is a blessing which is joined to the one preceding it....

the omission of an opening benediction is justified on these grounds. Nevertheless, the Tosaphists consider the exceptional condition in which even "joined" blessings require an opening "blessed" when preceded by a short blessing: 55

...but the blessing "...Who creates man..." (which follows the short blessing "...concerning washing the hands" in the morning service) needs to open with "blessed"; for if it didn't open in this manner, it would appear that the

whole thing (i.e., both blessings) was really one! ...and this is also the case with havdalah which opens with "blessed" even though it is joined to the blessing "...Creator of the lights of the fire", so that it wouldn't appear to be part of the same blessing.

Thus, a "joined" blessing may open with "blessed" if it is preceded by a blessing which shares with it a part of its content and which has no concluding benediction. In this light, we remember that Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing was an acceptable substitute for Birkat HaZan and that it remained a short blessing until the 13th century (see Ch. I). If Benjamin's blessing were used, then, Birkat HaAretz would have required an opening benediction to distinguish it from the short blessing preceding it, especially given that both mention food.

Admittedly, the "search" for an opening benediction to Birkat HaAretz any later than the Tannaitic period is academic. We have no text nor existing rite in which Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing serves as the first blessing in Birkat HaMazon; and, as far as we know, Birkat HaAretz was never joined to any blessing other than Birkat HaZan. Furthermore, in the Tur,⁵⁶ the matter regarding an opening benediction was settled:

...the second blessing is Birkat HaAretz...and it doesn't begin with "blessed"...according to the rule governing a blessing "joined" to the one preceding it.

What we have formulated, then, is a principle on condition: if Birkat HaAretz had followed Benjamin's

blessing prior to the 13th century, it would have required an opening "blessed". The status however, that Birkat HaAretz was a "joined" blessing prior to the Tannaitic period has been questioned even in the tradition, ⁵⁷ (see Introduction for the "historical" development). So too a more recent argument for the initial independence of Birkat HaAretz was proposed by Karl. ⁵⁸ He assumes that Dt. 8:10 originally generated only Birkat HaZan: the verse did not require a blessing for the land, since "...and you shall bless God [when you are] within the land which He gave you" was the sense of the passage. Arguing that a Biblical verse is not used as a proof text for two separate commandments, Karl suggests that a different sect at a later period (but prior to 70 C.E.) used Dt. 8:10 to justify a blessing of its own for the land.

But is the possibility, that Birkat HaAretz was at one time independent, an indication that it began with an opening benediction? A few considerations would allow such an hypothesis:

- 1) The Mishna ⁵⁹ already assumes that (all) blessings are in-formed with a minimal structure:

In the morning, two blessings are said before [the Sh'ma] and one after; and in the evening, two blessings are said before and two after, the one long and the other short; where the long is prescribed the short is not permissible; where the short is prescribed, the long is not permissible. [Where it is prescribed] to seal,

it is not permissible not to seal; [where it is prescribed] not to seal, it is not permissible to seal.

Furthermore, since most examples of independent blessings in Mishna Berakot begin with "blessed", ⁶⁰ an opening benediction for Birkat HaAretz is not inconceivable.

2) While almost all of the rites reproduced by Finkelstein begin with the words "We thank Thee...", there are a few exceptions ⁶¹ which begin "For our land..." or "For our inheritance..." This pattern may be what remains of an ancient version beginning "blessed...for the land..."

Furthermore, this pattern corresponds to the unusual grammatical characteristic of the closing benediction discussed by Heinemann, (see note #48). The similarity to "Blessed art Thou O Lord for the land and for the food" testifies to the plausibility of such a grammatical form in the opening benediction also.

3) A Birkat HaAretz that included no opening "thanksgiving" (still acceptable to R. Abba: see above) probably opened with some rival formula - possibly "blessed..."

Nevertheless, there are contraindications that Birkat HaAretz ever began with a formalized opening benediction:

1) The ruling that all blessings begin with "blessed" (see Ch. I) is nevertheless Amoraic. And while this pattern was undoubtably the acceptable form before Rav's statement, the existence of exceptional opening formulas was certainly implied. Birkat HaAretz may easily have begun with one of these other patterns.

2) And finally, R. Abba's opinion that a "thanksgiving" be mentioned at the beginning and at the conclusion of Birkat HaAretz may have been descriptive of the already established versions beginning "We thank Thee". By the time he had legislated the "thanksgiving", of course, Birkat HaAretz was already a joined blessing, so it cannot be argued that he was legislating for the replacement of "blessed".

CHAPTER III

BONEH YERUSHALAYIM (Builder of Jerusalem)

The third blessing in Birkat HaMazon is most often called Boneh Yerushalayim,¹ although it is also referred to as "consolation"² (see below, p. 61). As with other blessings in the Grace, tradition suggests that Boneh Yerushalayim was conceived in antiquity:³

Rabbi says..."the good" (in the phrase "...for the good land which He gave thee" /Dt. 8:10b/): this is Boneh Yerushalayim; and thus Scripture says, "...that goodly hill country and the Lebanon" (Dt. 3:25).

Nevertheless, the content of at least part of the text of the blessing as received by the rabbis required a later dating:⁴

Rav Nahman said...David and Solomon instituted Boneh Yerushalayim: David instituted "for Israel Thy people and for Jerusalem Thy city," and Solomon instituted "for Thy great and holy Temple".

Thus even though the blessing may actually have become part of the liturgy during the period of the Second Temple, a tradition fixing the blessing during the Davidic dynasty was not inconsistent with the content of the prayer. The destruction of the Second Temple, however, forced the radical alteration of rabbinic theology and demanded a liturgical response to this change. The prayers could no longer assume

that Israel possessed the land nor ruled in the context of political autonomy. Hope for an immediate political reversal had all but disappeared, while a new liturgical expression for Divine intervention spread among the people. We can only wonder that Rav Nahman did not incorporate this new dimension of Boneh Yerushalayim in his dating of the prayer historically: perhaps a call for the restoration of Jerusalem and the return of the Davidic dynasty was too new an element to be considered a permanent part of this ancient prayer. The commentators, on the other hand, could account for the development of Boneh Yerushalayim beyond the period of dispersion. For example, Rashba ⁵ wrote,

...the formula is that which the rabbis fixed, for certainly before the conquest of the land and the building of Jerusalem they wouldn't have used the version that they used after the conquest and the building. So too, we don't use the same formula that David and Solomon fixed - for we make supplication for the return of the kingdom and for rebuilding the Temple; and they would pray that the kingdom and the Temple be established and the control of the land be continued. ⁶

Similarly, the Rosh ⁷ and the Tur recognized that neither David nor Solomon could have been responsible for the supplications implied in the following phrases:

...and bring about the return of the kingdom of the House of David to its place speedily and in our days; and rebuild Jerusalem soon and bring us up in her midst...⁸

...sustain us, nourish us and relieve us quickly from our troubles... let us not be in need of the gifts of mortal man in Thy holy, mighty,

and awesome name we have trusted; may Elijah and Thine anointed the son of David come in our lifetime and bring about the return of the kingdom of the House of David to its place; rule Thou over us, for it is Thou alone...⁹

Thus the following analysis occurs in the Tur:¹⁰

And this doesn't mean to say that they didn't recite [the entire Birkat HaMazon] until David and Solomon came; for the Biblical verse required all [three] of them; rather, they established the formula according to that which good was added to Israel. For certainly, before the conquest and the building of the land, they didn't [use the formula] as after the conquest and the building - in the same way that we don't [use the same] formula which David and Solomon established...

That is to say, the rabbis were most willing to admit a textual development and conceptual change in the text of Boneh Yerushalayim, traditionally ordained directly from the Torah.

A more recent investigation by Finkelstein¹¹ reflects a contemporary attempt to reconstruct the earliest version of this blessing and to fix its original date. Based on his earlier work¹² with the Amidah, Finkelstein hypothesized that the prayer for Jerusalem was composed during the period in which the Maccabees were struggling to regain control of the Temple and the Altar from foreign domination. His hypothesis assumes the following:

1) that the term "O Lord our God", which occurs also in Boneh Yerushalayim, was not used in prayers composed during the first century of the Christian era.

The prayer therefore, must have been the product of an earlier period (see above, Ch. II). Finkelstein implies that the prayer could not have been a new liturgical response to the Roman persecution and destruction. While he is probably correct in assigning an earlier date the beginnings of this blessing, the argument itself which he presents is weak, for it is by all means conceivable that the prayer developed independently of the phrase "O Lord our God" which could have been incorporated later. ¹³

2) Finkelstein also assumes that a prayer for Jerusalem could not have developed among the people prior to the Maccabean revolt, since "at no time before the opening of that era was the Temple in any real danger of destruction", (loc. cit., p. 220). This rather astounding assertion not only ignores the destruction of the First Temple and the resulting Exile, but also the passionate reactions of the people given to prophetic expression:

Sing O heavens and be joyful O earth
And break forth into singing, O mountains;
For the Lord hath comforted (n-h-m) His people
and hath compassion (n-h-m) upon His afflicted.
But Zion said: the Lord hath forsaken me,
and the Lord hath forgotten me.
Can a woman forget her sucking child
that she should not have compassion on the son
of her womb?
Yea, these may forget,
yet will not I forget thee.
Behold I have graven thee upon the palm
of My hands;
thy walls are continually before Me.
(Is. 49:13-16)

Break forth into joy, sing together
Ye waste places of Jerusalem;
for the Lord hath comforted (n-h-m) his people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.

(Is. 52:9)

And with the words of the Psalmist, ¹⁴

Arise O Lord unto Thy resting-place;
Thou and the Ark of Thy strength.
For Thy servant David's sake,
turn not away the face of Thine annointed.
For the Lord hath chosen Zion,
He hath desired it for His habitation:
This is My resting place forever;
here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

- (Ps. 132:8, 10, 13-14)

Early reactions to the destruction are also recorded in
the Book of Lamentations:

Her filthiness was in her skirts,
She was not mindful of her end;
Therefore has she come down wonderfully,
she has no comforter (n-h-m).
Behold O Lord my affliction...

(Lam. 1:9) ¹⁵

What shall I take to witness before thee?
What shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?
What shall I equal to thee, that I may
comfort (n-h-m) thee, O virgin daughter of Zion?

(Lam. 2:13)

These and other Biblical passages ¹⁶ bear witness
that a longing for a lost Jerusalem under God's rule
had already entered the people's historical awareness
long before the Maccabean age. It is hard to imagine
then that some prayer for Jerusalem was not already a
liturgical option even as the Temple stood. In this
light, we may now consider more convincing evidence
gathered by Heinemann. ¹⁷ His assertion, that there

existed many and various versions of the same blessing from antiquity to at least the days of the Amoraim, is most vividly demonstrated in the distribution of prayers for Jerusalem throughout the early liturgy. In a compendium to his chapter on the development of prayers and the problem of the "original text", ¹⁸ Heinemann presents seventeen prayers for Jerusalem from a cross section of the liturgy, as well as twenty-six variants of the closing benediction. Heinemann emphasizes, contrary to Finkelstein, the liturgical idea which found its expression on differing occasions in one of a number of variant forms. That is, a "different and unique text" for Jerusalem was not composed for each possible event; rather, a plea for Jerusalem, more importantly the liturgical demonstration toward Zion and for God's rule, could be verbalized spontaneously with the aid of traditional phrases already fluent in the mouths of the people:

...consider for example, the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim. This blessing...appears in our prayer ritual in no less than four different places: in the Amidah, in Birkat HaMazon, in Birkat HaHaftara and in Birkat HaHatanim... The basis of our current version in Birkat HaMazon can be identified with the version used in the Palestinian Amidah (or Egyptian) and that in Saadia's siddur. We are thus entitled to say that particular and different versions were not established a priori for each opportunity in which it was required to say Boneh Yerushalayim... Thus it emerges that if in the versions of the prayers today there are found in the Amidah and in Birkat HaMazon two differing versions for this one blessing, neither dependent upon the other..., this is

only because they were preserved for us from among the many versions that were abundant in antiquity... /and/ these versions of the blessing for Jerusalem that were in different prayers were interchangeable one with the other, since in principle they were nothing other than different versions of the same blessing (loc. cit., p. 35).

If we accept Heinemann's premise, we must regard Finkelstein's "original dating" with caution. Rather we are compelled to accept at least the spirit of the Talmudic tradition ascribing the origins of Boneh Yerushalayim to a much earlier period.

Finally, regarding the dating of Boneh Yerushalayim, the question of its inclusion into Birkat HaMazon may be raised. The Gemara gives us little guidance in this matter, since the blessing's place as the third prayer in the Grace is already long assumed.¹⁹ We might suggest however, that as the dining table assumed the symbolic representation of the Altar no longer available to the people, a plea for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple became a fitting addition to the supplications recited after meals. Partial support for this suggestion is a unique expansion of Boneh Yerushalayim in the Mahzor Romania²⁰ published by Finkelstein:

...and even though we have eaten and drunk
[our fill], we have not forgotten the destruction
of Thy great and holy Temple and the remnant
of those scattered in our exile; /therefore/
may Thou not forget (abandon) us forever either
as it is said, "...if I forget thee, O
Jerusalem, let my right hand forget /her

cunning⁷; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not; if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy (Ps. 137:5-6)" And it is said, "the Lord doth build up Jerusalem⁷, He gathers together the dispersed of Israel, (Ps. 147:2)".

This addition, also parallel to part of the Shabbat insertion of the Palestinian rite, ²¹ is the only liturgical text we have available to reflect this link between the table and the destruction. Nevertheless, we are inclined to see in this version traces of the earlier theology which may have prompted the inclusion of this blessing in Birkat HaMazon.

A. The kingdom of the House of David: The Gemara's demand for the phrase "the kingdom of the House of David" is quoted in the same Baraitha by R. Abba noted above (ch. II).

Rabbi Abba says: ...everyone who doesn't say "covenant" and "Torah" in Birkat HaAretz and "the kingdom of the House of David" in Boneh Yerushalayim has not fulfilled his obligation. And this supports the opinion of R. Eliya, for it is said: R. Eliya in the name of R. Jacob b. Aha in the name of our rabbis: everyone who doesn't say "covenant" and "Torah" in Birkat HaAretz and "the kingdom of the House of David" in Boneh Yerushalayim has not fulfilled his obligation. ²²

Not surprisingly, no accompanying explanation was given for the requirement to insert "the kingdom of the House of David" in the blessing; rather it remained for later commentators to provide some basis for the ruling. Rashi, ²³ for example, proposed, "kingdom of the House

of David in Boneh Yerushalayim: for it was through David that the city was sanctified". Somewhat differently, Maimonides ²⁴ wrote:

...the reason one needs to mention "the kingdom of the House of David" in this blessing is that it is the essence of the blessing, for there is no complete restoration (ne-ba-mah) of Israel without the return of the kingdom of the House of David.

Rashi ²⁵ and perhaps Maimonides knew of an earlier tradition reflected in the following midrash ²⁶ which underscored the importance of the Davidic kingdom for the restoration:

R. Shimon b. Yohai taught: "They have not rejected you (Samuel), but they have rejected Me (SI8:7)". Three things we continue to reject: the heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of the House of David and the building of the Temple. When were the three first rejected? In the days of Jeraboam, as it is written (SII20:1), "and the men of Israel responded by saying 'we have no portion with David...': this means the heavenly kingdom; 'and no inheritance with the son of Jesse...': this means the kingdom of the House of David; 'every man to his tents in Israel...': this means, and not to the Holy Temple; don't read "to his tents (le'ohalay)" but rather "to his gods (lelohav)".

R. Simon b. Menasiah: Israel will never see a sign for redemption until they return and make supplication for these three things, as it is written (Ho. 3:5), "after Israel will return and seek the Lord their God...": this is the heavenly kingdom; "and David their king...": this is the kingdom of the House of David; "and shall tremble unto the Lord and his goodness...": this is the holy Temple. ²⁷

Reflection of this midrash raises an interesting problem. Note that in the above text, redemption is

dependent upon Israel's supplication for the heavenly kingdom as well as for the holy Temple and the Davidic dynasty. As theologically consistent as this midrash may be, later commentators prohibited mentioning the heavenly kingdom in this blessing, since it also contains "the kingdom of the House of David":²⁸

And one needs to mention in Boneh Yerushalayim "the kingdom of the House of David"; and this is that which says "for the kingdom of the House of David Thine anointed"; and one is not to mention [in this blessing] any other kingship; thus we do not say, "O God, King, our Shepherd"; nor do we say, "Thy kingdom and the kingdom of the House of David, etc.," but rather "the kingdom of the House of David Thy servant, Thine anointed".

Rashba²⁹ had already noted one explanation for the elimination of "the heavenly kingdom" from Boneh Yerushalayim:

...by itself, it isn't possible to mention "heavenly kingdom", because Boneh Yerushalayim is a "joined" blessing. All that are "joined" neither open [with "blessed"] or have mentioned "kingship" in them. For this reason, we do not say, "Thy kingdom and the kingdom of the House of David Thine anointed"; but rather we retain "kingdom of the House of David"; also we learn that one who says "our Father, our King, our Shepherd" is in error, because "our Father, our King" is considered to be a mention of kingship [of heaven].

However, while Rashba accepted the legislation to exclude a mention of the heavenly kingdom, he was not satisfied with the explanation, based on the status of Boneh Yerushalayim as a "joined" blessing:

...and we need not pay much attention to the argument that Boneh Yerushalayim has no mention of the heavenly kingdom because it is a "joined" blessing/ because in " 'Atah Gibbor," one says "who is like unto Thee, king over death and life..."; and in the "Sanctification" during the Days of Awe, one says "the holy King"; in "return our judges", one says "the King of judgement"; and on the rest of the days, "the King who loves righteousness and judgement"; in "blessing of forgiveness", "forgive us our King"; in "healing", "O King, our Healer"; and in "eternal love", "our Father our King, for the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee"; and in "true and enduring", "our King and our father's King", and in many other "joined" blessings. 30

The reason then for not allowing a mention of the two kingships together remained unclarified. Suggesting a possible cause, Wiesenber³¹ writes,

This meticulous care to avoid the remotest semblance of a divine Messiah mentioned alongside with God seems to be an instance of anti-Christian protest. Despite its first clear formulation in late post-Talmudic writings only, it appears to arise from Talmudic data.

We will attempt to shed light on this difficulty further in the following chapter: there the direct relationship between kingship and the fourth blessing of the Grace will be discussed and its relevance to the legitimacy of the heavenly kingdom in Boneh Yerushalayim will be considered.

While the Davidic kingdom is the only concepts specified directly by the Gemara for insertion in the blessing, it was probably among the later elements added to an already established pattern. By way of

example, all versions of Boneh Yerushalayim reproduced by Finkelstein begin by asking God to show mercy for Israel, Jerusalem, Zion, the holy Temple, etc. as well as for the Davidic kingdom. These items appear in series and form a pattern which re-occurs in variant form in all prayers for Jerusalem. Undoubtedly this pattern is quite ancient. Heinemann³² suggests that it might have been a part of the liturgy spoken by the Priests in the sacrificial rites. Perhaps this would account for the occasional occurrence of this series without the Davidic kingdom. For example: of the pattern without mention of the Davidic kingdom, we note the following:

Have mercy upon the people called in Thy name;
have mercy upon the calling of Thy sanctity;
fill Zion with Thy splendor,
Israel the first born of Thy possessions,
Jerusalem the abode of Thy dwelling,
and from Thy glory, Thy palace.³³

And in the Amidah for the 9th of Ab, according to the Jerusalem Talmud:³⁴

Have mercy O Lord our God
in Thy great mercy and Thy trusting lovingkindness
upon us
and upon Israel Thy people
and upon Jerusalem Thy city
and upon Zion the dwelling of Thy glory
and upon the barren and desolate city...

A mention of the Davidic kingdom is also lacking in patterns similar to these, in the versions of Saadia and Maimonides (as well as the Spanish rite) for the Grace. It appears then that the "kingdom of the House

of David" was probably not an essential part of this list. In fact, R. Abba's requirement to mention the Davidic kingdom may have been a reference to a different section of the prayer altogether. An examination of the collection of rites by Finkelstein reveals that almost all ³⁵ versions include a mention of the Davidic kingdom apart from the series just discussed. Rather it is mentioned in an appeal to God to return the kingdom of the House of David to its rightful place with the re-building of Jerusalem. Actually this supplication is more consistent with the intent of the midrash and may reflect the earliest use of the "kingdom of the House of David" in this blessing. In any event, it is interesting to note that in at least three rites, these traditions have been combined: in the rites from the Palestinian Geniza, in Amram's version and in that in Mahzor Romania, the Davidic kingdom is recalled twice: once as an element in the series, and later as a dimension in the restoration of Jerusalem.

B. Supplication and the impact of Shabbat: With the advent of the Amoraic period, the rabbis began to discriminate among the variety of liturgical formulas being used as prayers for Jerusalem and its restoration. From the evidence of the earliest Talmudic discussions, there appear to have been two basic patterns acceptable to the people: one expressing a wish that God "console"

or "comfort" His people, employing the root n-h-m. The alternate version using the root r-h-m requested that God show "mercy" for a series of items, as noted above. In the process of selecting one pattern over the other, the rabbis were guided by the prohibition of expressing one's needs liturgically on the Shabbat:^{36,36a}

It was taught: it is forbidden for a man to request his needs on Shabbat. R. Zeira asked R. Hiya b. Abba: [then] how can one say, "guide us, feed us and sustain us..." on Shabbat? He answered him: such is the formula of the blessing. ³⁷

But the "formula of the blessing" was not fixed, in spite of R. Hiya's response. At the same time, competing formulas for the beginning as well as for the conclusion of the blessing were yet the object of Talmudic discussions: ³⁸

On Shabbat, one begins with "consolation" (n-h-m), and ends with "consolation" and one mentions the sanctification of the day in the middle. ^{38a} R. Eliezer says: if one wants to mention [the sanctification of the day] in "consolation", he does so; [if he wants to mention it] in the blessing that they fixed at Yavneh (HaTov veHaMetiv), he does so. And the sages say: one can only mention [the sanctification of the day] in "consolation".

In Babylonia, however, the root r-h-m (mercy) had supplanted that Palestinian use of n-h-m (comfort), at least for weekday ritual: ³⁹

Rav Sheshet said: the one who opens with "Have mercy on Thy people Israel" concludes with "Savior of Israel". The one who opens with "Have mercy on Jerusalem" concludes with "the Builder of Jerusalem". ⁴⁰ And Rav Nahman

said: even the one who opens "Have mercy on Israel" concludes with "the Builder of Jerusalem", as it is said (Ps. 147:2), "the builder of Jerusalem is the Lord; He will gather together the dispersed of Israel". When is the Lord the Builder of Jerusalem? When He will gather together the dispersed of Israel.

Even in the later halakhic literature, these alternate versions were given consideration by Maimonides⁴¹ and others:

One opens the third blessing with, "Have mercy O Lord, our God, for us and for Israel Thy people, for Jerusalem Thy city, and for Zion, Thy holy dwelling place". Or one can begin with/ "Comfort us, O Lord our God, in Jerusalem, Thy city". And therefore it seems that this blessing is called "comfort (consolation)".

Thus while Maimonides favored the root r-h-m in his own nusach, he was not inclined to dismiss the alternate formula in his discussions.

Clarification came from the Tosaphists⁴² who offered a then-current explanation for the two separate formulas; nevertheless, even they rejected this explanation in principle:

And there are those who on Shabbat begin "Console us" and conclude with "...the consolation of Zion Thy city and in the building of Jerusalem"; and they reason that "Have mercy" is a form of supplication: and one does not make supplication on Shabbat; but "console us" is not, on the other hand, a form of supplication, but is instead like "...repent (n-h-m) of this evil against Thy people (Ex. 32:12)". But this explanation is not clear, because all of these examples appear to be a form of supplication. And one should not mind even if this is a form of request, for it is said in the Jerusalem Talmud simply that "such is the formula of the blessing". Therefore the custom of changing the blessing from Shabbat to weekdays is quite unnecessary.⁴³

Thus the Tosaphists argued for a single version, dispelling the notion that one pattern was more appropriate to Shabbat observance than the other.

As the discussion appeared in the codes, ⁴⁴ a decision was reached in favor of the root r-h-m, citing Rashi in support. Nevertheless, the alternate n-h-m was still recorded as the choice of notable authorities living only a century earlier:

...and one begins, "Have mercy O Lord, our God, on Israel Thy people and on Jerusalem, Thy city". And Rav Alfasi ⁴⁵ wrote: one begins with "consolation" by saying, "Console us, O Lord, our God, for Zion Thy city". The Rosh, may his name be remembered for a blessing, would /also/ begin according to the suggestion of Alfasi.

And in the Shulhan Aruh, ⁴⁶ the two versions were given equal status once again: the limitation was only that the same version be used on the weekday as well as on Shabbat:

The version of this blessing opens with "Have mercy, O Lord, our God" or "Console us, O Lord, our God". ...and the version should not be changed from Shabbat to weekdays; rather there should be only one version on Shabbat or on weekdays...

To summarize, it appears that originally there were (at least) two competing formulas for the opening of Boneh Yerushalayim: one employing the root r-h-m and the other, the root n-h-m. In time the latter became associated with the Shabbat liturgy and was used as an alternate formula to the version beginning "Have

mercy", with later justification that n-h-m was not a form of supplication. Finally, the legitimacy even of this distinction was questioned: the connotative weight of "supplication" in both roots was recognized and one formula did not, therefore, seem more appropriate for Shabbat observance than the other. Thus, while certain rabbis were making the distinction in their own devotion as late as the 13th century, the tradition in general seemed to have decided in favor of the root r-h-m both for Shabbat as well as for weekdays.

C. Closing benediction: the earliest reference to a formula for the closing benediction is by R. Yosi b. R. Judah: ⁴⁷

Our rabbis taught: how should one conclude the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim? R. Yosi b. R. Judah says: "Savior of Israel".

However, the Gemara ⁴⁸ also records the following:

R. Abba says: ...everyone who concludes... "Savior of Israel" in Boneh Yerushalayim - behold, he is a boor.

R. Abba's statement, made over a century following that of R. Yosi may have reflected the decreasing popularity of "Savior of Israel" during the third century. Or we may consider the following hypothesis: while both "Savior of Israel" and "Builder of Jerusalem" were (equally?) popular during the first two centuries of the Common Era, the 100 years following the unsuccessful Bar Kokhba rebellion saw a pervasive

disillusionment within Palestine over hopes for political autonomy and for a rebuilt Jerusalem. The result was a greater tendency to conclude Boneh Yerushalayim with "Savior of Israel", especially given that this benediction was more appropriate for a nation already dispersed to other lands as well.

Therefore in an effort to sustain a commitment among the people to a Jerusalem free from heathen domination, R. Abba introduced the sanction against the alternative, "Savior of Israel". In this light, we can also understand the question posed by the editor of the Gemara ⁴⁹ following R. Yosi's formula:

Do we say yes to "Savior of Israel" and no to "Builder of Jerusalem"? Rather I should say: also "Savior of Israel" is acceptable as the concluding benediction. ⁵⁰

For a time, both formulas remained acceptable (see opinions of Rav Sheshet and Rav Nahman, above); the combination of both these elements in the benediction may even have reflected a liturgical option chosen by some groups: ⁵¹

Rabba b. Rav Huna visited the House of the Exilarch; he opened with one element and concluded with two elements in the closing benediction.

Rashi ⁵² assumed the following versions to have been used in the above incident:

...when he began the blessing, he did not say "Have mercy O Lord on Israel Thy people and upon Jerusalem Thy holy city"; but rather he said only one of them. And he concluded with two: "Savior of Israel and Builder of Jerusalem".

Eventually, however, the formula "Builder of Jerusalem" became the dominant pattern. And while new arguments were later raised by the commentators regarding the proper wording of the closing benediction, the formula "Savior of Israel" had by then disappeared from Birkat HaMazon texts.

That other options were still available, however, for the closing benediction is reflected in the following statement by Maimonides: ⁵³

One concludes [the third blessing]: ["Blessed art Thou, Builder of Jerusalem" or "...who consoles (n-h-m) His people Israel in the building of Jerusalem".

And regarding a variant form, the Rosh⁵⁴ alludes to the argument prohibiting the combination of two elements in a closing benediction (see Ch. III, "closing benediction").

There are those who explain that if they would conclude with ["Blessed art Thou" who has compassion for His people and the Builder of Jerusalem", this would be two [elements]. But, "...who has compassion for His people in the building of Jerusalem": this is one [element], in that God will show compassion by means of the building. But Rav Jonah, may his name be remembered for a blessing, says that this is also considered two [elements], as we find in "havinenu" ⁵⁵ in which they established, "...and the righteous will be joyful in the building of Thy city", the essence of which is two blessings: the righteous ones and Jerusalem. And yet, the one who concludes "...who shows mercy for His city in the building of Jerusalem" is one who concludes with one [element] only, for Jerusalem and Zion (His city) are one.

Still another version is found quoted in the Tur: 56

And Rav Alfasi wrote: ...one concludes with "consolation" by saying, "...Bring us up into her midst and console us, for Thou art the One, the Master of Consolation. Blessed art Thou, who has mercy for His people Israel through the building of Jerusalem".

Differences of opinion concerning even the word "mercy" itself in the closing benediction entered the halakhic discourse. On one hand, Isserles commented, 57

...and there are those who say "...who builds Jerusalem with mercy"; and this is our custom.

And on the other hand, in the commentary 'Orhot Hayyim', 58

The third is Boneh Yerushalayim...and they conclude it with "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Builder of Jerusalem; and they do not include "with mercy" in [the concluding benediction]; rather, He will only build Jerusalem in judgement, as it is said (Is. 1:27), "Zion will be built in judgement".

While these examples from the literature are not meant to be inclusive, they do represent the lack of uniformity across the various rites themselves. 59 A graphic illustration of the extent to which variation has been tolerated in the closing benediction to Boneh Yerushalayim has been presented by Heinemann. 60

Surveying the blessing in the "prayer for Jerusalem" category across the liturgy, he found at least twenty-six separate concluding formulas. And Finkelstein, 61 who compiled the same blessing for Birkat HaMazon alone, has published nine variations. From our perspective, these data must be interpreted within the framework of

the liturgical needs of local Jewish communities. The liturgy which these communities used was one which tended toward standardization for the sake of national unity at the same time it resisted rabbinic fiat at the expense of local customs. It was clearly a liturgy responsible to the people's shared theology: in this respect, the content of Boneh Yerushalayim across the different rites is not boldly inconsistent, nor are the needs expressed therein mutually exclusive. And yet in spite of the codifying literature, the liturgy did not level the differences within the Jewish people as a whole, but rather it has retained and sustained the mosaic dimension of Jewish 'avodath ha-lev.'

D. Amen: Amen has been discussed in the literature⁶² as the liturgical response corresponding to "Blessed be Thy glorious name that is exalted above every blessing and praise" in the Temple sanctuary. Also, the manner in which Amen could be enunciated was linked to a man's future reward.⁶³ During the Tannaitic period and the early Amoraic period, Birkat HaMazon led by an individual was affirmed by means of the communal Amen response:⁶⁴

Rav said to his son Hiya: my son, snatch [the cup of wine] and say Grace. And so said R. Huna to his son Rabba: my son, snatch [the cup of wine] and say the Grace. This implies that he who says the Grace is superior to one who says "Amen". But it has been taught: R. Jose says: greater is he who answers "Amen" than he who says the blessing. Said R. Nehorai to him: I swear to you by heaven that it is so. The proof is that while the common soldiers advance and open the battle, it is the seasoned

warriors who go down to claim the victory. On this point there is a difference between the Tannaim, as it has been taught: ...he who says the blessing is more quickly [rewarded] than he who answers "Amen".

However, by the beginning of the fourth century, one could answer "Amen" to his own recital of Birkat HaMazon: ⁶⁵

One taught: he who responds "Amen" after his own benedictions is praiseworthy; but another taught: he is to be reprimanded. There is no contradiction: the former refers to Boneh Yerushalayim; the latter to the other benedictions.

At the same time, an "Amen" at the conclusion of Boneh Yerushalayim served to separate the first three blessings generated by the Torah from the last blessing ordained by the rabbis: ⁶⁶

Abaye responded ["Amen" to Boneh Yerushalayim] with a loud voice for the day laborers to hear and stand up, because HaTov veHaMetiv is not ordained by the Torah. Rav Ashe used to respond softly, so that the laborers should not hold HaTov veHaMetiv in contempt. ⁶⁷

The placement of Amen following Boneh Yerushalayim was similarly understood by Maimonides: ⁶⁸

Why does one answer Amen after Boneh Yerushalayim, since the blessing HaTov veHaMetiv follows after it? Because this [latter] blessing was ordained by the Tannaim and all of it is additional. But the end of the essence of Birkat HaMazon is Boneh Yerushalayim.

It is noteworthy that Amen is not recited as the conclusion to Boneh Yerushalayim in either the version of Rav Amram, in the Sephardic rites (A), or in the English - Northern French - German group published by Finkelstein. ⁶⁹ And while Amram may have felt that

"Amen" was no longer appropriate before the conclusion of the entire Grace, neither did he include Amen at the end of the fourth blessing. This brings us to the unique relationship of the fourth blessing vis-à-vis the rest of Birkat HaMazon. Discussed specifically by the rabbis, it is this relationship which we will examine in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

HaTov veHaMetiv

(The Good and the One Who Does Good)

Although the literature ¹ generally refers to the blessing HaTov veHaMetiv as the fourth blessing in Birkat HaMazon, the Mishna records a version of this blessing independent of the Grace: ²

...For rain and good tidings one says: Blessed is He, the Good and the One who does good. For bad tidings he should say: Blessed is He the righteous Judge.

In the discussion following in the Gemara, ³ however, R. Abbahu records an alternate blessing for rain formulated by Rav Judah and R. Yohanan:

"We give thanks unto Thee for every drop which Thou hast caused to descend for us...Blessed art Thou, O Lord, to whom abundant thanksgivings are due".

Furthermore, both Rabba and Rav Pappa submit variant concluding benedictions to this same prayer: ⁴ The editor of the Gemara was thus faced with an apparent contradiction between the Mishnaic formula and the opposing blessing discussed by the rabbis. His reply, probably written in the latter half of the fourth century, ⁵ was a struggle to find the appropriate setting for the Mishnaic formula and thereby to reconcile the competing blessings: ⁶

...there is no contradiction: the formula in the Mishna applies when he heard that it had been raining, the other when he actually saw it. But if he heard that it had been raining, this too must be considered a case of good tidings; and our Mishna states: "For...good tidings one says, etc."; (and because the phrase "good tidings" implies hearing that it has rained, the words "for rain" in the Mishna must refer to another circumstance, so as not to appear redundant). They must both refer to when he actually sees it...the formula in the Mishna applying when little rain fell, the other when there was a heavy downpour. Or if you want, I can say that both refer to a heavy downpour, the Mishnaic formula applying to a landowner, the other to one who is not. But our Mishna teaches: He who has built a new house...says, "Blessed...who hast kept us in life...": There is a teaching: the summary of the matter is: over things of his own he says, "Blessed...who hast kept us in life..."; over things which belong to him and others he says, "Blessed is He, the Good and the One who does good".

This discussion, recognized later by Maimonides, ⁷ attests to the early independence of HaTov veHaMetiv from the Grace. Moreover, a second tradition recording the use of HaTov veHaMetiv in a house of mourning is further evidence for the blessing's independence: ^{8, 9}

Mar Zutra visited the house of Rav Ashe who had experienced some bereavement. He opened and blessed: "HaTov ve-HaMetiv, true God and Judge, who judges in righteousness, and in judgement takest the souls of men, who rulest in Thy world, doing according to Thy will, for all Thy ways are judgement and all is Thine: we are Thy people and Thy servants, and in all circumstances it is our duty to give thanks unto Thee and to bless Thee. O Thou who reparairst the breaches in Israel, mayest Thou also repair this breach in Israel, granting us life."

We have referred to this phenomenon earlier (see Ch. III) whereby a blessing may appear in variation in

otherwise unrelated settings throughout the liturgy. With regard to Boneh Yerushalayim, however, the Gemara at least presents a unified account of the historical development of this blessing from the Biblical period. On the other hand, because the rabbis showed far less agreement regarding the origin of HaTov veHaMetiv, later commentators seemed less constrained to preserve this fourth blessing in its "original" form. For although at least one tradition claimed that the entire Grace was ordained by the Torah (see Introduction), there were competing traditions that insisted that HaTov veHaMetiv was "rabbinic": that it was fixed during the Tannaitic period for some definite purpose. It is this disagreement among the rabbis that we will now consider.

A. "Dating" HaTov veHaMetiv: There are three parallel texts ¹⁰ in early rabbinic literature which claim Biblical support for HaTov veHaMetiv as the fourth blessing in Birkat HaMazon. The following passage from the Jerusalem Talmud is cited in the name of a specific rabbi; the other two are anonymous:

R. Ishmael said: HaTov veHaMetiv is from the Torah, as it is said (Dt. 8:10), "...the good": this is the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim;... "that He gave to thee...": this is HaTov veHaMetiv.

Other rabbis, however, countered that HaTov veHaMetiv was of more recent origin. The following is the understanding of Eliezer b. Hyrcanos who cited the blessing in terms of more contemporary events: ¹¹

On Shabbat, one begins and ends with "consolation", and refers to the sanctity of the day in the middle. R. Eliezer says: if he wishes to include it in the "consolation", he may do so; in Birkat HaAretz, he may do so; in the benediction instituted by the sages at Yavneh, he may do so.

R. Eliezer, who was a member of the Sanhedrin at Yavneh following the destruction of the Temple, could have been among those sages who, according to the account, instituted HaTov veHaMetiv; if this were the case, we would consider the years immediately following defeat by the Romans in 70 C.E. as the probable period for dating the blessing. However, R. Eliezer later moved to Lod where he presided over his own school. Thus if the "sages at Yavneh" instituted the blessing after he left the Sanhedrin, we could assume a slightly later dating. While either of these views would be consistent with the Talmudic passage cited in his name, a second consideration supports the later dating. Rabban Gamliel, who became president of the academy at Yavneh following the death of R. Yohanan b. Zaccai, still knew of only three blessings in Birkat HaMazon:¹²

If a man ate figs, grapes or pomegranates, he should say [the] three blessings: these are the words of Rabban Gamliel. But the sages say: [one should say] one blessing, the essence of three.

It is reasonable to assume, then, that R. Eliezer made his statement about the benediction "instituted by the sages at Yavneh" some time after Rabban Gamliel's ruling, probably after the former had moved to Lod.

Just how long after remains uncertain, especially in view of the following Baraita which adds a new dimension to the problem: ¹³

Rav Nahman said...the benediction HaTov veHaMetiv was instituted at Yavneh in connection with the slain of Betar, ¹⁴ for Rav Matna said: on the day the slain of Betar were allowed burial, there was instituted in Yavneh the benediction HaTov veHaMetiv: HaTov (the Good) because the bodies did not decompose; ¹⁵ and HaMetiv (the One who does good) because they were allowed burial. ¹⁶

This tradition, ¹⁷ which developed in Babylonia at least a century following the fall of Betar, introduces data which is confusing historically: first, R. Eliezer did not mention Betar in his own account, nor did he include the mass burial as an explanation for instituting the blessing. Furthermore, it is probable that he did not live to see the end of the Bar Kokhba rebellion; ¹⁸ his knowledge of the blessing in Birkat HaMazon thus could render the later Babylonian tradition chronologically inaccurate. Secondly, it is doubtful that Hadrian would have allowed the Sanhedrin to reconvene after the costly Roman victory. And thirdly, this "historical" genesis of HaTov veHaMetiv hardly seems to justify its inclusion in a Grace after meals. These difficulties have led to a number of more recent attempts to place the establishing of HaTov veHaMetiv at a different time or place. Weiss, ¹⁹ for example, suggests that the blessing was instituted by the Synod convened at Usha ²⁰ after

Antoninus-Pius had annulled the anti-Jewish laws enacted by Hadrian. He not only reasoned that it would have been impossible for the Sanhedrin to have met at Yavneh immediately after the fall of Betar. But also he noted that Yavneh is mentioned in connection with HaTov veHaMetiv only in the Babylonian Talmud, while the place name is not recalled in the Palestinian Gemara. And even in the Munich manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, R. Eliezer's statement omits the words "at Yavneh". For Weiss, Usha present none of these difficulties. Assuming that "the slain" were those killed in the Hadrianic persecutions and not those who fought in the Bar Kokhba rebellion, Weiss dates the blessing after 140 C.E. Yet his theory fails to explain how Eliezer, who certainly died before 140 C.E., would have known of the blessing as part of the Grace, whether or not it was ordained at Yavneh. A second theory was advanced by Halevy²¹ who maintained the authenticity of the Amoraic tradition by hypothesizing a special meeting of the Sanhedrin at Yavneh immediately following the defeat at Betar. However, we know of no other law that came from Yavneh after Betar, nor do we read of any question being sent to Betar from Usha during this period.²² Halevy's proposal of a "special meeting" therefore, seems rather unlikely. Finkelstein²³ suggests a third alternative by first establishing the earliest possible date of inception:

recognizing the obvious parallels between the Didache - the early Christian prayer of thanks - and the first three blessings of the Grace, Finkelstein writes,

The date of the Didache^{23a} is somewhat uncertain, but it is generally held to belong to the last decades of the first century. Hence the parallel seems to point to the fact that in the generation immediately following the fall of Jerusalem, the Birkat HaMazon had only three benedictions.

In concurrence with the Baraita ascribed to R. Eliezer, Finkelstein accepts the fixing of HaTov veHaMetiv at Yavneh. However, he rejects the later Babylonian tradition which weaves the Betar tragedy into the history of the blessing. Figuring that the third century rabbis had by then forgotten the real reason for inserting HaTov veHaMetiv in the Grace, he proposes that,

...with all reserve, the suggestion may be ventured that the occasion for the fourth benediction was the granting of permission in the early years of the reign of Hadrian to rebuild the Temple. (!)

While Finkelstein does not discuss the possibility that HaTov ve HaMetiv existed independently of the Grace and prior to the Didache, his dating of the inclusion within Birkat HaMazon nevertheless merits consideration. For we have already seen in the Mishna²⁴ that HaTov veHaMetiv was the specific formula to be recited upon learning good news. If, in fact, Hadrian promised to rebuild the Temple²⁵ early in the second century, this "good news" could have warranted the recitation of HaTov

veHaMetiv in conjunction with a prayer for Jerusalem. Furthermore, such could well have been appropriate legislation from the Sanhedrin at Yavneh. On the other hand, HaTov ve-HaMetiv does not occur in the liturgy in connection with a prayer for Jerusalem anywhere except in Birkat HaMazon. Further, it is unlikely that Hadrian ever anticipated rebuilding the Temple for the Jews. Rather his intention was to turn Jerusalem into a pagan city and to dedicate a temple to Jupiter on the site where the Jewish Temple had stood. It seems just as likely, given that Finkelstein's dating may indeed be accurate, that the "good news" was the report that the patriots in the Bar Kokhba uprising had developed sufficient strength to wage war against Rome and release the Yoke of foreign domination.

A final proposal has been suggested by Buchler.²⁶ While he agrees with Finkelstein that HaTov veHaMetiv must have been established much earlier than the revolt at Betar, he assumes a date even earlier than Hadrian's reign, and possibly even before the destruction of the Temple. His argument is based on the rabbinic tradition ascribing the fourth blessing to the Biblical text. If the blessing had been instituted at Yavneh, he reasons, then R. Ishmael could not have ignored such a ruling, had it been issued during his own life as a rabbi. Buchler explains,

certainly, then, the sages had already established the fourth blessing prior to the statement made by R. Ishmael; for he and his colleague R. Yose the Galilean must have had the same notion that the blessing was much older: [thus we may guess that the blessing] was established at the very latest in the days of R. Yohanan b. Zaccai, and perhaps already before the destruction of Jerusalem (loc. cit., p. 142).

This proposal is certainly consistent with our own considerations that HaTov veHaMetiv was a recognized formula before being considered for Birkat HaMazon. However, we disagree with Buchler on the following point: he maintains that the rabbis who based HaTov veHaMetiv on the Biblical passage must not have known it had really been established at Yavneh. The blessing, Buchler argues, must have been ordained then considerably before the proclamation of R. Ishmael. We feel, however, that R. Ishmael could well have known that the formula HaTov veHaMetiv, already in existence, was attached to the Grace at Yavneh. R. Ishmael, for example, was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin before it moved to Usha.²⁷ It is improbable, therefore, that he would not have known of an enactment issued by this same body. And it does not seem to have been the purpose of the rabbis to disclaim the role played by the Sanhedrin; rather they were interested in justifying the ruling of this court by substantiating the Biblical basis for this blessing. Therefore, rather than disavowing the historical process whereby Birkat HaMazon

acquired a fourth blessing, they reinforced the decision by providing the necessary support text from the Torah.

There is a final note to be considered: while the recent investigators as well as most of the earlier rabbinic authorities agree that HaTov ve-HaMetiv did not enter the liturgy because of the events at Betar, the tradition quoted by Rav Huna and Rav Matna increases our understanding of the alternate function of this formula. In the following Baraita,²⁸ the benediction is again associated with mourning observances:

Rav Nahman b. Isaac said: know that HaTov veHaMetiv is not from the Torah²⁹ because they omit it in the house of mourning - according to the teaching: what do they say in the house of a mourner? "Blessed be He, HaTov veHaMetiv". R. Akiba said "Blessed be the true Judge".

And in a parallel passage in the midrash,³⁰

The one who offers a blessing in a house of mourning does not say the fourth blessing: these are the words of R. Yosi the Galilean. R. Akiba says "HaTov veHaMetiv", and the sages say "righteous Judge".

Notably, these two passages ascribe the same positions to different authorities. Yet it remains evident that the formula HaTov veHaMetiv, originally an appropriate benediction to be made upon receiving good news, was later expressed by some in times of death and personal sorrow. We expect that the formula acquired a use similar to that of the kaddish with which mourners were able to reaffirm their faith in a

good God even in the face of unexplainable loss. Buchler's hypothesis is similar in this regard. Based on the passage cited above, he proposed that before the Bar Kokhba revolt, HaTov veHaMetiv was only an optional formula to be used in a house of mourning. However, after its use in conjunction with the mass burial at Betar, the custom of saying "Blessed be He, the Good and the One who does good" became entrenched in the liturgy of mourning. Thus we may suggest that the Babylonian Amoriam in whose names the recital of HaTov veHaMetiv accompanied the burial of the "slain at Betar", were not necessarily talking about "the fourth blessing of the Grace". Rather they were referring to an independent tradition in which HaTov veHaMetiv became a fixed part of the mourning liturgy.

B. Opening benediction and the problem of structure and function: As we have seen in previous chapters, the rabbis were as concerned with the structure of the blessing as they were with the "setting" of the formula. And their deciding whether HaTov veHaMetiv was "ordained from Torah" or "established by the rabbis" directly affected their legislation regarding its structure and its content: the blessing by this time had also become a fixed section in Birkat HaMazon, and its relation to the three blessings before it was at issue. The following passage from the Gemara³¹ includes one of several Beraithot supporting the

argument that HaTov veHaMetiv is merely "rabbinic":

Rav Isaac b. Samuel b. Marta said in the name of Rav: know that HaTov veHaMetiv is not ordained by the Torah, because it opens with "blessed" and does not conclude with "blessed", according to the teaching: one commences all benedictions with "blessed" and concludes them with "blessed", excepting the benediction over fruits and commandments (i.e. short blessings which only open with "blessed"), one blessing which follows immediately after another (i.e. the "joined" blessings) and the last benediction of the reading of the Sh'ma... Since one opens the benediction HaTov veHaMetiv with "blessed" but does not conclude with it, the inference is that it is a benediction by itself.

At first glance, this appears to be confirming that HaTov veHaMetiv was ordained only by the rabbis. If it had been accepted as ordained by the same Biblical passage which generated the other blessings, it would seem that it would have been "joined" as part of the series and its opening benediction would have to have been dropped. And yet the root question is not, as the rabbis suggested, its status as a blessing "from Torah" or "from the rabbis". We know that there already was a rabbinic tradition favoring a Biblical basis to HaTov veHaMetiv. We must ask, instead, why this tradition was never accepted; why wasn't the opening benediction discarded so that the fourth blessing would appear "joined"? Regarding the opening benediction, we must consider the original structure of the blessing itself:

These are the blessings for which one does not conclude with "blessed": the benediction over fruit, for commandments, the Invitation to the Grace, and the last blessing in Birkat HaMazon...³².

Here the Tosephta declares HaTov veHaMetiv to be a "short benediction". That the blessing may or may not have come from the Torah is not of concern: what matters in the Tosephta is that it does not conclude with "blessed" and must therefore, retain its opening "blessed" to be identified as a bona fide benedication. ³³

The argument proposed by Rav Isaac thus becomes questionable: he maintained that HaTov veHaMetiv was not ordained by the Torah because it opens with "blessed". But we know from our discussion above (see Ch. II, Birkat HaAretz: "opening benedication") that even a "joined" blessing may open with "blessed" if it has no concluding benediction, that is if it is a "short" benediction. The blessings noted above to demonstrate that "joined" benedictions could begin with "blessed" were taken from the Havdalah service and from the preliminary list of short benedictions from the morning prayers. And while these benedictions are not "ordained by the Torah", there is every reason to believe that HaTov veHaMetiv could be considered of this category, even if it was based on the Torah passage.

We read, however, in the continuation of the Tosephta passage that,

...R. Yosi the Galilean used to add a closing benediction to the last blessing in Birkat HaMazon, thereby making it a long blessing. ³⁴

We have no adjoining explanation for R. Yosi's decision to alter the form of the blessing. According to Rashba, ³⁵ R. Yosi also discarded the opening "blessed" so that it would be "joined" to Boneh Yerushalayim and assume the status of a "blessing ordained by the Torah". Nevertheless, there is no indication in the text that R. Yosi dropped the opening "blessed". On the other hand, if we assume that he included both an opening and a closing benediction we must speculate that his version contained more than just the words "the Good and the One who does good", for such a short formula hardly merits a closing benediction which would be almost redundant. Unfortunately, we cannot know what additional elements he may have added. Further, we are not convinced that he believed HaTov veHaMetiv to be from the Torah, just because he added a closing benediction.

But we return to our original question: why were most rabbis opposed to the tradition that HaTov veHaMetiv came from the Torah? We have already suggested that they need not have been concerned with the possible historical inconsistency of linking the blessing to a Biblical passage. The rabbis must have known that the Sanhedrin could "ordain" a blessing without "authoring" it. Rather we believe that the rabbis were unconvinced of the Mosaic "truth" or "certainty" implied in the use of the blessing. HaTov veHaMetiv had been, to that

time, an acknowledgement of good news; during mourning observance it was also recited in defiance of sorrow. The blessing, then, was appropriate only in the case of unexpected or unpredictable events. That is, it was not to be spoken routinely. Its very nature seemed to demand its limited use. Thus while the blessing may have been ordained during the national illusion that Hadrian would rebuild the Temple, or at a time promising the defeat of the Roman legions, the rabbis could hardly propose that the Bible required an acknowledgement of God's goodness "because the Temple would be rebuilt". Instead, this addition to the Grace had to remain the product of rabbinic inspiration and piety.

References to "kingship" and the expansion of the text: Indirectly, the discussion concerning the source of HaTov veHaMetiv affected the content of the blessing as it expanded beyond its shortest formula:

Abba Yosi b. Dostai and the rabbis disagree: one declares that HaTov veHaMetiv requires a reference to "kingship"; the other declares that it does not. He who says that it does require a reference to "kingship" is of the opinion that this benediction was ordained by the rabbis (and therefore not a "joined" blessing governed by the reference to "kingship" in Birkat HaZan); he who says that it does not require "kingship" is of the opinion that the benediction is ordained by the Torah. 36

This Baraita records a second-century disagreement among Tannaim which probably reflected an attempt on the part of the rabbis to maintain the formula in its simpler form. Nevertheless, the Gemara also records

that during the second and third centuries, the text of the blessing had expanded well beyond "the Good and the One who does good".³⁷ The discussion here concerns the number of times one should make reference to "kingship" in the fourth blessing. Apparently, the blessing had already developed such that the people were including various elements not originally intended. The rabbis, rather than attempting to eliminate these new phrases, looked for a justification as the blessing developed. The result was the assignment of a curious function to HaTov veHaMetiv: by virtue of its being de facto a part of Birkat HaMazon, yet at the same time not being a "joined" blessing in the technical sense, this blessing would be the "depository" of liturgical elements belonging in the preceding blessings but formally not admissible in their texts. The "extra" references to "kingship" then in HaTov veHaMetiv were those references "on loan" from Birkat HaZan and Boneh Yerushalayim:

Rabba b. Bar Hanna said in the name of R. Yohanan: the benediction HaTov veHaMetiv requires a reference to kingship. What does he intend to tell us: that a benediction which contains no reference to kingship has not the name of benediction? But R. Yohanan has already told us this once.³⁸ R. Zera said: that is to say that HaTov veHaMetiv requires two references to kingship: one for itself, and one for the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim. If so, three are required: one for its own sake, one for Boneh Yerushalayim and one for Birkat HaAretz. But what is the reason that Birkat HaAretz does not have one? Because it is a "joined" blessing (and therefore is governed by the mention of kingship in the opening benediction of Birkat

HaZan). But Boneh Yerushalayim, also being a "joined" blessing, should not require a reference to kingship⁷. Strictly speaking, even Boneh Yerushalayim does not require one; but since it mentions the kingdom of the House of David, it would not be proper to omit a reference to the heavenly kingdom.³⁹

Rav Pappa said: this is what R. Zera said: it requires two references to kingship in addition to the one for itself.⁴⁰

This final statement by Rav Pappa, which was also chronologically the latest, was the position recognized consistently in the later halakhic literature.

Maimonides,⁴¹ for example, stated that "one needs to include three references to kingship in the fourth blessing". Likewise the Tosaphists⁴² wrote,

...and if you ask why does one not conclude the fourth blessing⁷ with "blessed", the answer would be that it is a "short" blessing to which they later added three references to "kingship", three references to "benevolence"⁴³ and three references to "goodness"...⁴⁴

In attempting to account for the additional references to "kingship" as well as the references to "benevolence" and "goodness", we have few if any substantial clues. We will begin, of course, by assuming that these elements were later additions to the shorter formula, "Blessed be He, the Good and the One who does good". But further, the editor of the Gemara implies that a mention of the heavenly kingdom alongside a reference to the kingdom of the House of David would be improper. While this is certainly an indication of theological poity, it may also have been politically

motivated: although hope for the rebuilding of the Temple during Hadrian's reign may have led to the fixing of HaTov ve HaMativ in the Grace, with the elapse of two more centuries these hopes must have altogether vanished. A blessing praising God's goodness for the return of the Davidic line was no longer appropriate. A re-emphasis on God's heavenly rule rather than on a political kingdom through David was needed. The additional elements of "benevolence" and "goodness" augmenting the three references to "kingship" filled this need to exalt God regardless of the social-political situation. Like the other blessings in Birkat HaMazon, HaTov veHaMativ became time-universal. Attempts were even made to repeal the link between this blessing and the specific liturgy of mourning observance:

...One does not say "the living King" ^{in the} fourth blessing of the Grace⁷, for they say "the living King" only in the house of mourning.⁴⁵

Certain formal characteristics of HaTov veHaMativ may also explain the acceptance of additional elements: acknowledged as a blessing innovated by the rabbis, the blessing follows the "Amen" which concludes that part of the Grace ordained by the Torah. And while it has not the status of the other three blessings,⁴⁶ it enjoyed the freedom of expansion not formally given to the "fixed" benedictions:

...R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yohai: the master of the house breaks bread so that he may do so with a good will, and the guest blessed (the Grace) so that he may also bless his host. What benediction does he use? "May it be Thy will that the master of this house may not be put to shame in this world nor confounded in the world to come". Rabbi added to this: "and may he prosper in all his possessions and may his and all our possessions be successful and near the city; may Satan not have power over the works of his hands nor over ours; and may there not leap before him or us any thought of sin, transgression or iniquity from now and forevermore. 47

This freedom to preserve a measure of spontaneity to Birkat HaMazon, even though a spontaneity restricted within the framework of HaTov veHaMetiv, continued unchallenged in the codes: 48

My brother, Rav Yehiel, may his name be remembered for a blessing, wrote that they were accustomed to lengthening the blessing HaTov veHaMetiv with several variations of "The All-Merciful..." I do not know where this custom to add to one's supplications ...comes from, but it is possible that they were accustomed to doing so from the passage in the Gemara: "...and the guest blesses (the Grace); Rabbi added to this..."

Certainly there was precedence to conclude one's prayers with personal supplications:

R. Eliezer used to add at the conclusion of his prayer may it be Thy will O Lord, our God, to cause love and brotherhood, peace and comradeship, to abide in our lot, to enlarge our border with disciples, to prosper our goal with a happy end and with hope, to set our portion in the Garden of Eden, and fortify us with good companionship and the good impulse of Thy universe; this so that we may rise up and find the longing of our heart to fear Thy name; and may the satisfaction of our soul come before Thee for good. 49

Rav used to add at the conclusion of his prayer: may it be Thy will O Lord our God to grant us long life, a life of peace, a life of good, a life of blessing, a life of sustenance, a life of bodily vigor, a life marked by the fear of sin, a life free from shame and reproach, a life of prosperity and honor, a life in which the love of Torah and the fear of heaven shall cleave to us, a life wherein Thou fulfilllest all the desires of our heart for good. 50

Unfortunately, the spirit of spontaneity disappeared as printed editions of Birkat HaMazon texts with "type-set" variations spread. And while, for example, the number of passages beginning with "The All-Merciful" varied extensively across the rites (see Ch. V), this last opportunity for personal expression within Birkat HaMazon was surrendered by the people themselves in favor of the rote recitation of solidified formulas.

CHAPTER V

Rites of Birkat HaMazon

Several of the rites to be presented in this chapter will also be found in Finkelstein's article on Birkat HaMazon; we therefore have not considered duplicating his valuable apparatus here. Rather the several orders collected for this chapter have been arranged such as to document two of the major positions held in this study: 1) that Birkat HaMazon continued to develop beyond the Talmudic and Gaonic eras; and 2) that given the rabbinic ideal of liturgical uniformity, a significant degree of variation and local custom was preserved across the minhagim.

A. The Palestinian Birkat HaMazon: The Palestinian ritual observed during the Gaonic period is yet being rescued through analysis of the discoveries made in the Ezra Synagogue at Fustat, Egypt near the turn of the last century. At that time, Solomon Schechter¹ was able to transfer some 100,000 pages to the Cambridge University for study. Clearly, the publication of these documents is of major importance to the student of liturgy. As has become apparent in the preceding chapters, our understanding of Birkat HaMazon in its early development has been gleaned from limited halakhic references to the blessing in the Tannaitic and Amoraic literature. The Gemara established the basic framework

of the blessing by fixing the order in which each blessing follows the other and by cannonizing certain words and themes. Yet we have no recording of even a partial Talmudic nusah for the Grace. Not until the Gaonic period do we find a complete text of Birkat HaMazon. Even here, as we will note, the earliest extant siddur of Rav Amram is in a highly redacted form. The genizah manuscripts therefore, afford us our earliest records of a Grace which was used by members of a congregation.

In the present stage of research with these genizah fragments, it is difficult to unravel the pure Palestinian nusah from the modifying influences of local Egyptian minhag or from the effect of the Babylonian rites. Nevertheless, what has been found could not have been altered beyond the eighth or ninth century.² As such, these texts are invaluable aids in tracing with greater accuracy the development and expansion of Birkat HaMazon, from its fluid and possibly uncontrolled form in the Talmudic period. In the present study, we have chosen to include two texts of the Grace taken from the Palestinian genizah, since each represents certain characteristics worth noting. The first is the nusah reproduced by Mann³ (Fragment #18) in 1925. Immediately apparent is the rhymed form of Birkat HaZan which deviates radically from all other rites, including the Palestinian rite published by Finkelstein⁴ three years later.

Remembering the discussion in which Rav had approved a variation of Birkat HaZan in the name of Benjamin the Shepherd (see Ch. I), we are now able to say with certainty that major variations from the norm continued to be acceptable at least five centuries after Rav's opinion. And as we have discussed in the same chapter in connection with the pi'el construction of the root h-s-r, the present rite also appears to stress God's function as provider rather than emphasizing the elevated importance of the food itself. A second characteristic missing in the Babylonian and Egyptian rites of Amram and Saadia reproduced below is the occurrence of a Biblical passage in each of the first three blessings traditionally understood to be ordained from the Torah.⁵ Concerning the beginning words to Birkat HaAretz, we note the initial prepositional phrase "for our land". This leaves open the question regarding the possibility that the blessing once included an opening benediction beginning with "blessed". Also in Birkat HaAretz, we see the double reference to "Torah" and "covenant" which suggests the merging influence of the Babylonian rite. In Boneh Yerushalayim, the option to use the root n-h-m on Shabbat according to the Talmudic dictum (Ber. 48b) is taken. And finally we find reference to the connection between satiation and the destruction of the Temple which later becomes a part of the Italian and Romanian rites which

were themselves dependent upon the Palestinian nusah.

The second text taken from the genizah is that published by Finkelstein. The more conventional Birkat HaZan is noteworthy for its inclusion of the word imanu which remains a continuing characteristic in the Mahzor Vitri and in the Italian nusah. In Birkat HaAretz we find the singular and literal reference to "covenant" and "Torah" as well as the absence of the Biblical support verse, Dt. 8:10.

B. Seder Rav Amram: According to an epistle in manuscript at the beginning of Rav Amram's siddur, Rav Amram (d. 875) sent a complete order of the prayers for the entire year to Rav Isaac b. Shimon of Spain. Speculation has been raised ⁶ as to the true authorship of the siddur; at the very least, it can be seen that some of the general text consists of modifications added in Babylonia by halakhists of later generations. Indeed most scholars admit that the received siddur is a corruption of the original, replete with copyists' errors and intentional alterations; therefore, it is difficult to discern which passages belong to Amram's own compilation. The version of the Grace presented here is that which Goldschmidt ⁷ has reproduced - having relied on the following most heavily: 1) the 14th - 15th century manuscript in the British Museum, representing the Spanish rite and reflecting the minhag

used in the copyist's congregation; and 2) the 14th century manuscript belonging to The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Amram's version as presented here is characterized by the absence of Biblical verses and by the characteristically Babylonian use of the phrase "for Thy-covenant which You placed in our flesh". In the same manner, "Torah" is recalled with the phrase "for the Torah that You gave to us", although one would have expected the usual "Torat-kha". In the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim, the spelling indicates the phrase "our Shepherd, our Provider, our Sustainer..." rather than "guide us, provide for us, sustain us..", the former requiring no change on the Shabbat⁸ when petitions were considered inappropriate. Note also that Boneh Yerushalayim begins with the root r-h-m and concludes with n-h-m: the closing benediction contains neither root. Compared with other rites which developed centuries later, Amram's fourth blessing, HaTov veHaMetiv, is relatively short, extended only by an unexpectedly long list of indirect petitions to the "All-Merciful".

C. Saadia's siddur: Two important discoveries have rescued Saadia's siddur from oblivion. In 1851 a copy of the work was found in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University; at the end of the century, additional fragments were uncovered in the Cairo genizah. Various theories have been proposed fixing the date and place in which Rav Saadia Gaon (882-942) composed his siddur.⁹

Ginzberg ¹⁰ for example, wrote that Saadia formulated the work in Egypt at the request of the Egyptian congregation; however, given Saadia's own personal observations of local Palestinian and Babylonian customs, it is probable that the siddur was not completed much before his appointment to the academy at Sura. While Rav Amram's compendium was dedicated to the Babylonian traditions of the Amoraim, Saadia's work on occasion was at variance with the rituals observed at Pumbedita and Sura.

Again it must be assumed, therefore, that Saadia was cognizant of both Babylonian and Palestinian traditions as he composed his siddur. In general, and specifically with regard to his version of Birkat HaMazon, his work is characterized by its uncomplicated form and brevity. Saadia's general methodology was to present liturgical material which would be understandable to everyone; as differentiated from the scholarly orientation of his predecessor Rav Amram, Saadia wrote primarily for the people. A key element in the preparation of the prayers he arranged was Saadia's own awareness that praying was still done by heart. Even then, the inclusion of Biblical support texts was yet being disputed on the basis that these passages would be misquoted if one relied only on his memory. ¹¹ This however, was probably not Saadia's reason for excluding all Biblical references from Birkat HaMazon. Elsewhere, ¹²

he permits Biblical verses during the musaf service on Passover, provided that these verses are recited carefully and were previously committed to memory. As we have suggested above, the omission of Biblical references may well have been Saadia's polemic against the Karaites' use of Scripture in their Grace.

The clearest indications of Palestinian influences in Saadia's siddur are contained in the blessing Birkat HaZan. They are reflected most clearly in the phrase "covenant, Torah, life and sustenance" and in the words "ki hinhaltanu" rather than "she-hinhalta lanu" (see Finkelstein's Palestinian rite).

D. Maimonides' rite: The version of Birkat HaMazon ascribed to Maimonides is found, not in an early siddur, but rather at the end of the book Ahavah in his Mishne Torah. The chapter is "Seder Tefillot kol Hashana" ("the Order of the Prayers for the entire Year") and is in fact a supplement to his preceding review of liturgical halakha. Nevertheless, the authorship of "Tefillot kol Hashana" has been questioned¹³ in that no reference to this chapter is made in the Mishne Torah; nor does the chapter begin with a preface by Maimonides. On the other hand, Goldschmidt assumes that Maimonides compiled the liturgy, yet believing the chapter was not to serve as a nusah composed unto itself. Rather he feels that Maimonides was merely transmitting that which was the custom during the time he was in Fostat (Cairo).

The extent to which Maimonides was influenced by the competing rites practiced in Egypt is difficult to ascertain, because the Cairo community was then supporting the traditions of both the Palestinian and Babylonian congregations which must have had some direct influence on each other. Similar to Saadia's version of Birkat HaMazon, the Mishne Torah also contains elements of the Palestinian rite: כִּי הֵיטֵב rather than כִּי הֵיטֵב; הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ rather than הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Yet unlike the Palestinian nusah, Maimonides omitted the word imanu and included the variant אֱלֹהֵינוּ. We can agree with Goldschmidt that Maimonides had not intended to unravel the Palestinian from the Babylonian rite. But at the same time he must have been aware of the average man's confusion in the face of the varied nusahim for Birkat HaMazon. We know, for example, that in his "Seder Tefillot kol Hashana", the blessings he included were often not reproduced in their entirety. Rather, Maimonides shortened several of his entries with the word "etc.," ¹⁴ the implication being that these prayers enjoyed a basic familiarity among the people and a general uniformity in their recitation. Yet, because Maimonides presented a complete version of Birkat HaMazon, he may have been suggesting his own preference (compromise?) among the many existing alternatives. Maimonides' own nusah was never adopted

at large, and became authoritative only for the Yemenite community.

E. The Italian rite: According to A.I. Schechter,¹⁵ the Palestinian liturgy, far from being displaced by a universal acceptance of the Babylonian rites, enjoyed a modified existence among the Italian congregations. Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., Rome emerged as a bulwark of Diaspora Jewry. Tannaim continued to resettle in Italy during the Hadrianic persecutions and several yeshivoth were established. As the Italian Jewish community increased, the link between Rome and Palestine also grew. Thus while the Babylonian Talmud superceded the Palestinian in halakhic authority, Jewish scholars in Italy continued to write in the Palestinian tradition. Midrashim and piyyutim became the vehicle through which the independence of the Palestinian tradition was maintained. Indeed, the liturgy remained the one area in which the Babylonian Gaonim exercised little control.

The text presented here is taken from Luzzatto's edition, 1865.¹⁶ It is characterized in Birkat HaZan with the introductory formula "Blessed be the One who satisfies the hungry; blessed be He and blessed be His name" which was ruled unacceptable in the codes.¹⁷ The word imanu is included, and the inclusion of Biblical verses is emphasized. (Note that the word וְאֵלֵינוּ identifies וְאֵלֵינוּ as a Biblical passage [Ps. 136:25] which is not so identified in

other rites.) Birkat HaAretz begins with a rhymed extension and includes both the Palestinian and Babylonian references to "covenant" and "Torah". The weekday Boneh Yerushalayim has also expanded well beyond the earlier rites mentioned. This nusah also builds the connection between satisfaction at the table and the memory of the destruction of the Temple in the "distant land". As we have suggested, this reference may be a reminder that the table has taken the place of the altar in the Temple. In addition to the normal Shabbat insertion לְבָנֵי הַבַּיִת, Boneh Yerushalayim also includes a special insertion beginning with the root n-h-m and recalling both the "covenant" and the "kingdom of the House of David"; surprisingly, "Torah" is omitted. The fourth blessing HaTov veHaMetiv contains a long list of petitions beginning with the formula "the All-Merciful". As is the case with the more recent rites, the Italian nusah concludes with several Psalms verses reflecting the hope in a redeeming God.

F. Spanish rite: While we have noted that Amram Gaon sent his order of the prayers to the Spanish community in the ninth century, significant differences exist nevertheless between Amram's siddur and the current Sephardic ritual. It has been suggested ¹⁸ that the earliest Spanish rite was based on the Palestinian service and that Amram's order modified this ritual only in part. ¹⁹ Corroborating evidence is the similarity

gifts of spiritual nourishment as well as physical sustenance.

G. Ashkenazic rite: Minhag Ashkenaz is the name subsuming that current of Jewish liturgy preferred by most congregations in Northern Europe, England and the United States. Although popular opinion ²¹ holds that the Ashkenazic rite is the historical extension of the Palestinian ritual and that the Sephardic rite is a product of the early Babylonian liturgy, we know from the preceding study that no such clear distinctions can be drawn. Jewish liturgy is certainly no exception to the dynamics of cultural exchange, and our textual analysis of Birkat HaMazon has repeatedly pointed to these cross-cultural influences.

In so far as the Ashkenazic rite can be traced to the Mahzor Vitri, ^{22,23} this nusah may be considered indigenous to France ²⁴ and Southwestern Germany of the eleventh century and perhaps earlier. Birkat HaZan of the Ashkenazic rite herein reproduced is identical to that of the Mahzor Vitri except for the latter's use of both the word imanu and of the verse Ps. 145:16. Together with the further omission of the phrase "covenant, Torah, life and sustenance" in Birkat HaAretz, we find evidence of Babylonian influences on the Ashkenazic order. Similar to other rites of a later development, the Ashkenazic version concludes with a series of Psalm verses testifying to the Lord's providence and care for those who trust in him.

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע
 ה' אֶת הַקּוֹל
 וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת
 הַקּוֹל וְיִשְׁמַע
 ה' אֶת הַקּוֹל
 וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת
 הַקּוֹל וְיִשְׁמַע
 ה' אֶת הַקּוֹל
 וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת
 הַקּוֹל וְיִשְׁמַע
 ה' אֶת הַקּוֹל

AL

A1

[illegible]

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III

1. የግል ስራ
 2. የግል ስራ
 3. የግል ስራ
 4. የግል ስራ
 5. የግል ስራ
 6. የግል ስራ
 7. የግል ስራ
 8. የግል ስራ
 9. የግል ስራ
 10. የግል ስራ
 11. የግል ስራ
 12. የግል ስራ
 13. የግል ስራ
 14. የግል ስራ
 15. የግል ስራ
 16. የግል ስራ
 17. የግል ስራ
 18. የግል ስራ
 19. የግል ስራ
 20. የግል ስራ
 21. የግል ስራ
 22. የግል ስራ
 23. የግል ስራ
 24. የግል ስራ
 25. የግል ስራ
 26. የግል ስራ
 27. የግል ስራ
 28. የግል ስራ
 29. የግል ስራ
 30. የግል ስራ
 31. የግል ስራ
 32. የግል ስራ
 33. የግል ስራ
 34. የግል ስራ
 35. የግል ስራ
 36. የግል ስራ
 37. የግል ስራ
 38. የግል ስራ
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 40. የግል ስራ
 41. የግል ስራ
 42. የግል ስራ
 43. የግል ስራ
 44. የግል ስራ
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 46. የግል ስራ
 47. የግል ስራ
 48. የግል ስራ
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 62. የግል ስራ
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 64. የግል ስራ
 65. የግል ስራ
 66. የግል ስራ
 67. የግል ስራ
 68. የግል ስራ
 69. የግል ስራ
 70. የግል ስራ
 71. የግል ስራ
 72. የግል ስራ
 73. የግል ስራ
 74. የግል ስራ
 75. የግል ስራ
 76. የግል ስራ
 77. የግል ስራ
 78. የግል ስራ
 79. የግል ስራ
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 81. የግል ስራ
 82. የግል ስራ
 83. የግል ስራ
 84. የግል ስራ
 85. የግል ስራ
 86. የግል ስራ
 87. የግል ስራ
 88. የግል ስራ
 89. የግል ስራ
 90. የግል ስራ
 91. የግል ስራ
 92. የግል ስራ
 93. የግል ስራ
 94. የግል ስራ
 95. የግል ስራ
 96. የግል ስራ
 97. የግል ስራ
 98. የግል ስራ
 99. የግል ስራ
 100. የግል ስራ

ELCU LKLA

II

[illegible]

FROM H. A. L. L.

לוח טעמים

1

Palestinian (Finkelstein)

(No more continued. A dirge follows).

[illegible]

A. Palestinian (Mann)

B. Seder Rav Amram

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם הוּן את העולם כְּלוּ בטוב בחסד וברחמים נותן לחם לכל
בשר כי הוא זָן ומסרגס לכל והתקין מוֹן לכל בריותיו. ברוך אתה ה' הוּן את הכל.
נודה לך ה' אלהינו על ארץ חסדה טובה ורחבה שרצית והנחלת את אבותינו ועל בריהך
ששמת בבשרנו ועל תורה שנתת לנו ועל חיים והסד חזן וכוֹזן שאתה מלווה אותנו בכל
עת. ועל כלם ה' אלהינו אנו מודים לך ומברכים את שמך. יתברך שכך תמיד עלינו
לעולם ועד. בא"י על הארץ ועל המזון.
רחם ה' אלהינו על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל מלכות בית
דוד משיחך ועל הבית הגדול והקדוש שנקרא שמך עליו. רועינו ונינו מפרנסנו מכלכלנו
הרות לנו מהרה כצורחינו. ואל תצריכנו לידי מחנות בשר ודם. שמתנתם מעוטה וחרפתם
מרוצה. כי בשם קדשך הגדול והנורא בטחנו. ויבא אליהו ומסית בן דוד בחיינו. ומלכות
בית דוד מהרה תחזור למקומה. וסלך עלינו אתה לבדך והושיענו למען שמך והעלנו
לחוכה ושמחנו בה ונחמנו בציון עירך. ברוך אתה ה' בונה ירושלים.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אבינו מלכנו גואלנו אדירנו יוצרנו אדון נשמתנו
קדוֹשְנו קדש יעקב המלך הטוב והמטיב שבכל יום ויום הוא מטיב עמנו והוא גוסלנו הוא
יגמלנו לעד חן וחסד ורחמים וכל טוב.
הרחמן יסרגסנו בכבוד.
הרחמן יתברך בשמים ובארץ.
הרחמן ישתבח לדור דורים.
הרחמן יתפאר לנצח נצחים.
הרחמן יאיר עינינו במאור תורתו.
הרחמן יצילנו ממיתה כסונה.
הרחמן יצילנו מהליים רעים.
הרחמן יצילנו מיסורין קשים.
הרחמן יצילנו מדינה של גיהנם.
הרחמן יצילנו מחבוס הקבר.
הרחמן יצילנו מעניות.
הרחמן יצילנו מחלול השם.
הרחמן יצילנו מכל מיני שמד.
הרחמן יצילנו מכל צרה וצוקה.
הרחמן יצילנו מכל מיני פורעניות.
הרחמן ישים עלינו שלום.
עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום על כל ישראל.

ואומר

מלכנו אלהינו יחד שמך בעולמך. יחד מלכותך בעולמך. בנה ביתך ושכלל היכלך ושמח
עולתך. עשה למען שמך. עשה למענך ולא למעננו. עשה למענך והושיענו. למען יחלצון
ידידך והשיעה ישיגך ועננו. הרחמן יוכנו לימות המשיח ולהיי העולם הבא.

C. Saadia's siddur

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם הון אותנו ואת העולם כלו בטוב בחן
בחסד וברחמים ב' א' יי הון את הכל. נודה לך יי אלהינו כי הנהלתנו
ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה ברית ותורה חיים ומזון ועל כלם אנו מודים לך
ומברכים את שמך לעולם ועד ב' א' יי על הארץ ועל המזון. רחם יי
אלהינו עלינו על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלם עירך ועל היכלך ועל מעונך
ועל ציון משכן. כבודך ועל הבית הגדול והקדוש אשר אתה שמך נקרא
עליו ומלכות בית דוד תחזיר למקומה בימינו / ובנה את ירושלם בקרוב
ב' א' יי בונה ירושלם אמן. ב' אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם האל אבינו
מלכנו בוראנו גואלנו המלך הטוב והמטיב אשר בכל יום ויום הוא מרבה
להיטיב עמנו והוא יגמלנו לעד הן וחסד ורוח ורחמים וכל טוב.

וזאת הפלה קצרה שיתפלל

והוא דעא סכתצר ידעו בה

הרחמן ימלוך לעולם ועד ישתבח נצח סלה. הרחמן יאיר עינינו במאור
תורה יצליח לנו בכל דרכינו ישים יראתו לנגד עינינו יסיר מחלה מקרבנו
יגער בהושבי רענתנו יהיה לנו עוזר וסומך יעשה עמנו למען שמו ישים עלינו
שלום עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום על ישראל.

D. Maimonides' rite

נוסח ברכת המזון

ברוך אתה "אלהינו מלך העולם הן את העולם כולו נבטוב בהסוד ברחמים ושוב הגדול לא
חסר לנו ואל יחסר לנו לעולם ועד כי הוא ז' ומפרנס לכל כאמור פותח את ידך ומשביע לכל
חי רצון ומסכן מזון לכל בריותיו אשר ברא ב"א "הן את הכל" גודה לך "אלהינו ונברך
מלכנו כי הנחלתנו והנהלתו את אבותינו ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה ברית ותורה נחיים ומוון
ועל שהוצאתנו מארץ מצרים ופדיתנו מבית עבדים על תורתך שלמדנו על חוקי רצונך
שהוצאתנו ועל כולם "אלהינו אנו מודים לך ומברכים את שמך כאמור ואכלת ושבעת וברכת
את "אלהיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך ברוך אתה "על הארץ ועל המזון רחם "אלהינו
על ישרי עמך ועל ירושלם עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל הבית הגדול הקדוש שנקרא שמך
עליו ומלכות בית דוד משיחך תחזיר למקומה בימינו ובנה את ירושלם בקרוב כאשר דברת
ברוך אתה "בונה ברחמי את ירושלם (אמן) ברוך את "אלהינו מלך העולם האל אבינו
מלכנו אדירנו בוראנו קדושנו קדוש יעקב המלך (הרחמן) הטוב והמטיב (אשר) נשגב כל יום
ויום והוא מטיב עמנו הוא גמולנו חן וחסד ורחמים וכל טוב הרחמן נשתבח בשמיים ובארץ הרחמן
ישתבח לדור דורים הרחמן יתפאר לנצח נצחים הרחמן יפרנסנו בכבוד הרחמן יוכיני לימות
המשיח ולבניין בית המקדש ולחי העולם הבא מגדול ישועות מלכו ועושה חסד למשי לדור
ולדור עד עולם כפידים רשו ורעבו ודורשי "לא יחסרו כל טוב והדו ל" כי טוב כי לעולם
חסדו. ()

E. The Italian rite

סדר ברכת המזון

קודם סיכך ברכת המזון כימי החול אומרים מזמור של אלהים יום כמו שכתוב כיצור
 וכשתב אומרים והכלל חנה וכו' * וכימים טובים אומרים המזמור של יצחק כמו
 שכתוב כל אחד במקומו והנה כך אומרים למנהל כשימות * ואח"כ לוקחין כוס שלמי
 אם המסובין שלמי אחר המזון * וברכה שאכלנו משלנו * ואם המסובין ברוך שאכלנו
 משלנו ובטובו הגדול היינו * ואחר המזון ברוך שאכלנו משלנו ובטובו הגדול
 היינו

ק

ברכת המזון

חיינו :

ואם הם שמימי יום יאמר המזון בברכה אלהינו שאכלנו משלנו : ואם המסובין ברוך
 אלהינו שאכלנו משלנו ובטובו הגדול היינו : ואחר המזון ברוך אלהינו
 שאכלנו משלנו ובטובו הגדול היינו :

יחיד ברוך משביע לרעבים ברוך הוא וברוך שמו :
 ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם הן את השלם כלו בעבור
 שמו הגדול * בטובו בהן ובחסדו וברחמים באמור נותן
 לחם לכל בשר כי לעולם חסדו ובחסדו הגדול ידויה עפנו כי
 הוא אל זן מפרנס ומכלכל את הכל ומכין מזון לכל בריותיו
 ולכל מעשה ידיו אשר ברא * באמור פותח את ידיו ומשביע
 לכל חי רצון * ברוך אתה יי הן את הכל :
 טרה לה יי אלהינו וגפארה מלכנו וגשפחה יוצרנו ונהדרה
 מושיענו וגמליכה מלכנו מלך יחיד חי העולמים * על
 שהנחלת לאבותינו ארץ המדה טובה ורחבה * (כאם לומר המדה)
 ברית (ותורה) ותיים ומזון * ועל שהוצאתנו יי אלהינו מארץ
 מצרים ופדיתנו מלכנו מביט עבדים * (כאם לומר המדה) ועל בריה
 שחמסת בבשרנו ועל הוהחה שלמדנו ועל חקי רצונה
 שרדענו ועל היום ומזון שאהיה זן ומפרנס אותנו תמיד בכל
 יום ובכל עת ובכל שעה ובכל רגע :

בטובת וטובים אומרים כהן על הנשים *

על הכל יי אלהינו אנו מודים לה ומברכים את שמך תמיד
 אלהי ישענו והנחם לנו מצרינו ונודה לה על נחלת אבותינו
 ועל מזונות שחננתנו בכתוב ואכלת וישבעת וברכת את יי
 אלהיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לה * ברוך אתה יי על
 המזון ועל המזון :

רחם יי אלהינו עלינו ועל יי אלהי עמך ועל יי אלהי עמך ועל
 יי אלהי עמך ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחה * ועל
 הבית הגדול והקדוש שנקרא שמך עלינו ועלנו אבינו רצנו
 וזנו פרנסנו ומכלכלנו הרות לנו יי אלהינו מנהיג מכל
 צרותינו : ונא אל הערבה יי אלהינו ואל הביאנו לירי מתנת
 בשר

נאל ונאלנו והבנה עיר ציון ותכון העבודה בירושלם :
 ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אלהי אברהם יתברך לעד
 האל אבינו מלכנו מחננו אדירנו בוראנו נאלנו יוצרנו
 קדושנו קדוש יעקב רוענו רועה ישראל רועה נאמן השלח הטוב
 והמטיב לכל אל שבכל יום ויום עמנו הוא הטוב לנו הוא
 מטיב לנו הוא ייטיב עמנו הוא נמלנו הוא נמלנו הוא ינמלנו
 ברחמי לעד חן וחסד ורחמים ברכה רוחה והצלחה וחיים
 ושלום וכל טוב ומכל טוב אל יחסרנו אבינו אב הרחמן :
 הרחמן הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם ועד : הרחמן יתברך על כסא
 כבודו : הרחמן ישמח בשמים ובארץ : הרחמן
 ישמח לרחי דורים : הרחמן יחפאנו בנו לנצח נצחים : הרחמן
 יוליכנו קוממיות : הרחמן יצילנו מעניות : הרחמן יצילנו ממיתה
 משונה : הרחמן יצילנו מכל פגע רע : הרחמן יצילנו מדינה
 של גהינם : הרחמן ישבור על גלות מעל צאצאנו : הרחמן
 ייטיב אחריתנו מראשיתנו : הרחמן יסלק יצר הרע מקרבנו :
 הרחמן יפרנסנו בכבוד : הרחמן יהיה לנו עוזר וסומך בכל
 מקום : הרחמן ישמור צאצאנו ובואנו מעתה ועד עולם : הרחמן
 יברך את הבית הזה ואת השלח הזה ואתנו שאכלנו עליו :
 הרחמן יברך את כל אחד ואחד מן השמו הגדול כמו שברך
 את אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב בכל כול כל בן יברך
 אותנו כלנו יחד בברכה שלמה ונאמר אמן : הרחמן ישלח לנו
 אליהו הנביא וסור לשב וילמדנו לקח טוב ויפתח לנו את
 אוצרו הטוב : הרחמן ישע חזרתו ואהבתו כלבנו להלמי נחמא :
 הרחמן ינבנו לימות המשיח ולדני העולם הבא :
 כסא הרחמן הוא ינחילנו עולם יצאנו מן העולם הזה :
 נאל חסד הרחמן הוא יתבשר עלינו את החדש הזה לכוונה ולברכה :
 יום טוב הרחמן יתענו למעדים ולקבלים ויחיים הקמים לקראתנו לשלום :
 נאל חסד הרחמן הוא יתבשר עלינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה :
 כסא הרחמן הוא יקים את סבת ידו וינחילנו :
 הרחמן ישים עלינו כינוי ברכה וחיים ורפואה ושלום משכנת
 שלום : מגדול ישועות מלכו ועושה חסד למשיחו לדור ולדור
 עד עולם : עושה שלום בטרומיו הוא ברחמי עושה שלום עלינו
 ועל כל ישראל אמן :
 סברי מורי ורבותי * ויטין לחיים *
 ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הנפץ :
 ויטין כסא כהניכ סגל ויח' ימנו כוס רכיש ויחמ' *
 שפוך חמתך אל הנוים אשר לא ידעך ועל ממלכות אשר
 בשמך לא קראו :

ԼՈՒԵՐԱՅ ԸՆԵՒ. ՏԵՂՆ ԶԻՆԱ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԼՈՒԵՐԱ. ՄԱՅԻՆ
 ԶԻՆԱ ԸՆԵՒ ԸՆԵՒ ԸՆԵՒ. ԼԵՂ ԶԻՆԱ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ՄԱՅԻՆ ԸՆԵՒ
 ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ ԶԻՆԱ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԻՆՏԵՂ
 ՄԱՅԻՆ ՄԱՅԻՆ ԸՆԵՒ. ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԼԵՂ. ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ.

ԼԵՂ ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ. ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ
 ԸՆԵՒ ԻՆՏԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ.

ԼԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ
 ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ

ՍԵՂՆԱՆ:

ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ
 ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԼԵՂ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ
 ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ՍԵՂՆԱՆ:

ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ. ԸՆԵՒ
 ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ
 ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ
 ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ. ԸՆԵՒ ՍԵՂՆԱՆ.

R. Spanish rite

והפתוחה. שלא גבוש בעולם הזה. ולא נקלם לעולם הבא.
ומלכות בית דוד משיחך. תחזירנה לסקוסה. במהרה בימינו:

בשבת אומר

רצה והחליצנו יי אלהינו במצותיך. ובמצות יום השביעי השבת
הגדול והקדוש הזה: כי יום גדול וקדוש הוא מלפניך.
נשבות בו. ונגמל בו כמצות חקי רצונך. ואל תהי צרה ויגון
ביום סגורתנו. והראנו בנחמת ציון במהרה בימינו. כי אתה
הוא בעל הנחמות: עד כאן

בראש חודש אומר אלהינו ה' לר

ברוך אתה יי. בונה ברחמיך ירושלים. אמן:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם. לעד ועל. אבינו. מלכנו.
אדירנו. בוראנו. גואלנו. קדושנו קדוש יעקב. רוענו רועה
ישראל. המלך הטוב והמטיב לכל. שבכל יום ויום הוא מטיב
לנו. הוא מטיב לנו. הוא ייטיב לנו: הוא גמלנו. הוא גומלנו.
הוא יגמלנו לעד. חן. וחסד. ורחמים. ורחמים. ורחמים. ורחמים.
הרחמן הוא ישתבח על כבודו
הרחמן הוא ישתבח בשמים ובארץ
הרחמן הוא ישתבח בנו לדוד דודים
הרחמן הוא קח לעמו ידים
הרחמן הוא יתפאר בנו לגאח נצחים
הרחמן הוא יפרנסנו בכבוד ולא בבזוי. ברחמיך ולא באכזר.
בנחת ולא בצער
הרחמן הוא ימן שלום בינינו
הרחמן הוא ישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשי ידיו
הרחמן הוא יצליח את דרכינו
הרחמן הוא ישבור עול הגוים מהרה מעל צווארנו
הרחמן הוא יוליכנו קוממיות לארצנו
הרחמן הוא ירפאנו רפואה שלמה
הרחמן הוא יפתח לנו את ידיו הרחבה

הַדְחָקִים הֵם יְבָרֵךְ כָּל־אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מֵעַם בְּשֵׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל • כִּמוֹ
שֶׁנִּתְפָּרְסוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבִרָהֶם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב בְּכָל • מַל • כָּל •
בֶּן יְבָרֵךְ אֶתְנוּ יַחַד • בְּרַכָּה שְׁלֵמָה • וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן •
הַדְחָקִים הֵם יִפְרֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמוֹ
הַדְחָקִים הֵם יִטַּע תְּהִלָּתוֹ וְאַהֲבָתוֹ בְּלִבֵּנוּ לְבִלְתִּי נִחְסָא
הַדְחָקִים הֵם יִמְלֵא מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבֵּנוּ לְטוֹבָה
(מִשְׁכַּת הַדְחָקִים הֵם יַנְחִילֵנוּ עוֹלָם שְׁפָלוֹ טוֹב וְהַגְהָה לְחַיֵּי
הָעוֹלָמִים •)

בִּרְכַּת הָאוֹחֵל

הַדְחָקִים הֵם יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַשְּׁלֵחַן הַזֶּה שְׂאֵבְלֵנוּ עָלָיו וְיִסְדֵּר בּוֹ
כָּל מַעֲדָנֵי עוֹלָם • וְיִהְיֶה כִּשְׂחֻלְחָנוּ שֶׁל אֲבִירָהֶם אֲבִינוּ • כָּל
רֹעֵב מִמֶּנּוּ יֵאָכֵל וְכָל צָמָא מִמֶּנּוּ יִשְׁתֶּה •

הַדְחָקִים הֵם יְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּעַל הַבֵּית הַזֶּה וּכְעַל הַסַּעֲדָה הַזֹּאת •
אוֹתוֹ • וּבְנָיו • וְאִשְׁתּוֹ • וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ • וְלֹא יִבוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה
וְלֹא יִכָּלֵם לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא • אָמֵן • עַד טוֹ

הַדְחָקִים הֵם יַחֲיֵינוּ וְיִזְכְּנוּ וְיִקְרְבֵנוּ לִיְמֵת הַמְּשִׁיחַ • אֲלִבְנֵי בֵית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ • אֵלֵינוּ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא • יִמְגִּדֵּל (מַגְדוֹל) יִשְׁמְעוֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ •
וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ • לְדוֹר וָדוֹר עַד עוֹלָם • בְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבֵנוּ •
וְרָדְשֵׁי יִי לֹא יִחְסְרוּ כָּל־טוֹב • גֵּעַר הָיִיתִי גַם וְקִנְיָתִי • וְלֹא רָצִיתִי
צָדִיק גָּעוּב • וְחָדְעוּ מִבְּקֵשׁ־לָהֶם • כָּל־הַיּוֹם חוֹגֵן וּמִלְּנָה • וְחָדְעוּ
לְבִרְכָּה • מַה שְׂאֵבְלֵנוּ יִהְיֶה לְשִׁבְעָה • וְמַה שְּׁשִׁיתֵנוּ יִהְיֶה
לְרִפְאוּאָה • וְמַה שְּׁהוֹמַרְנוּ יִהְיֶה לְבִרְכָּה • בְּדִרְכֵּיב • נִסְמָן לְפָנֵינוּ •

וְאֵבְלוֹ וְיוֹתִירוֹ בְּדִבְרֵי יִי • בְּרַגְלֵי אֲהֵם לִי • עֲשֵׂה שְׂמִיךְ
וְאֶרְוֶה בְּרֹדֶף הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בִּי • וְיִהְיֶה יִי מִבְּטַחוֹ • יִי עֵץ
לְעֵמִי יִמֵּן • יִי יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם • כִּי הַשְּׂבִיעַ גָּפֶשׁ
שְׂקָקָה • וְגִפֶּשׁ רַעֲבָה מִלֹּא טוֹב • הוֹדֵי לִי כִי טוֹב • כִּי
לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד •

G. Ashkenazic rite

When saying grace alone, begin here:

ברוך אתה יי אלקינו מלך העולם. הן את העולם.
כלו בטיבו כסן כהסד וברחמים הוא נותן לחם לכל-
בשר. כי לעולם הסדו: וקמנו הגדול הסיד לא-
הסד לנו ואל והסד לנו מזון לעולם ועד בעבור
שמו הגדול: כי הוא ון ומפרנס לכל ומטיב ל-
כל ומביא מזון לכל ברייתו אשר ברא. ברוך אתה יי
הן אתה חבל:

נוהה לה יי אלקינו על שהתקלם לאבותינו ארץ
הסדה מוקד ורסה ועל שהוצאתנו יי אלקינו
מארץ מצרים וקדיתנו מבית עקרים ועל ברייתך
שהתקלם בלשוננו ועל תורהך שלמדנו ועל חסדך
שהוצאתנו ועל מים הן והסד שהוצאתנו ועל אכילת
מזון שאתה ון ומפרנס אותנו הסיד בכל יום ובכל-
עת ובכל שעה:

ועל הכל יי אלקינו אנחנו מודים לך ומתקנים
אותך והסדך שפך בבי כל-מי הסיד לעולם ועד:
כרתוב ואכלם ושבעם וברכם את יי אלקיך על-
הארץ הטבה אשר נתת לך. ברוך אתה יי על-
הארץ ועל המזון:

רחם יי אלקינו על ישראל ועל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך
ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך
ועל מכות הגדול והקדוש שנקרא שפך צדיו:
אלקינו אבינו רענו וזמנו פורקנו וכלפנו ומרדנו
ומרדנו יי אלקינו מהרה מכל צרותינו ונא אלי
פאריקנו יי אלקינו לא לידי מלכות בשר ודם ולא
לידי מלכותם כי אם לידי המלכה הסתוסה הקדושה
והרסה שלא גבוש ולא נפלם לעולם ועד:

רצה וסלח לנו יי אלהינו במצותה ובמצות יום השביעי השבת
הקדוש ובהקדש סוף כי יום זה קדוש וקדוש הוא לשבתנו
ולנו בו באהבה במצות רצונה ברכה חנה לנו יי אלהינו
שלא תהי צרה וטון ואהבה ביום מנחתנו וסלח לנו יי אלהינו
במחמת ציון עירך ובבנין ירושלים עיר קדשך כי אהבה הויה
בעל השונות ובעל השמחות:

ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו.
ברוך אתה יי בנה ברחמינו ירושלים. אמן:

יברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם. הויה לנו
מלכנו אדירנו בוראנו גאלנו יוצרנו קדושנו קדוש
יעקב רנענו רועה ישראל מלך הטוב והמטיב לכל
שבעל-יום ויום הוא מטיב הוא מטיב הוא יטיב לנו:
הוא גמלנו הוא גמלנו הוא יגמלנו לעד לחן להסוד
ולרחמים ולרחמי הצלה והצלה ברכה וישועה
נהמה פרגסה וכלכלה ורחמים וחסדים ושלום וכל-
טוב, ומכל-טוב אליהם ברכנו:

הרחמן. הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם ועד:

הרחמן. הוא יתברך בשמים ובארץ:

הרחמן. הוא ישתבח לדור דורים ויתפאר בנו
לנצח נצחים ויתחדד בנו לעד ולעולמי עולמים:
הרחמן. הוא יפרגנו בכבוד: הרחמן. הוא יספור
עלנו מעל צוארנו והוא יוליכנו קוממיות לארצנו:

הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִשְׁעָה בִּרְבָּה בְּרָבָה בְּכֵית הַנֶּה וְעַל־
שְׁלֵחַן נֶה שְׁאֵבְלֵנוּ עֲלֵיו: הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת־
אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא זְכוּר לְטוֹב וּבִישׁוּרֵינוּ בְּשִׁירֵהוּ טוֹבוֹת
וְשִׁיעִית וְנִחְמֹת: הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִכְרֹךְ אֶת (אָבִי) מִיְּרֵי
בְּעַל הַכֵּית הַנֶּה וְאֶת (אָמִי) מִיְּרֵתִי בְּעַלֵּת הַכֵּית הַנֶּה
אִיהֶם וְאֵת בִּיהֶם וְאֵת עֲרֵעֶם וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם אוֹהֶנּוּ
וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ כִּמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְּכָרְכוּ אֲבִיקֵנוּ אֲבִירָהֶם
וְצָחֵק וְנִצְעָק בְּכָל מְבַל כָּל כֵּן וְיִכְרֹךְ אוֹהֶנּוּ בָּלָנוּ
נֶחֱד בְּבִרְבָּה שְׁלֵמָה וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

בְּמִרוֹם וּלְפָדוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וְעֲלֵינוּ זְכוּת שְׁתֵּחִי לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת
שְׁלוֹם וְנִישָׂא בִּרְבָּה מֵאֵת יי וְצִדְקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ
וְנִכְצָאֵהֶן וְנִשְׁבֵּל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם:
לִי הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְנִחְיֵלֵנוּ יוֹם שְׂבָלוֹ שְׂבַח וּמְנוּחָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָמִים:
לִי הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִסְדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַנֶּה לְטוֹבָה וְלִבְרָכָה:
לִי הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְנִחְיֵלֵנוּ יוֹם שְׂבָלוֹ טוֹב:
לִי הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִסְדֵּשׁ עֲלֵנוּ אֶת־הַשְּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה וְלִבְרָכָה:
לְחַיֵּי דְבָרֵינוּ הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיָקִים לָנוּ אֶת־סֶבֶת דָּוִד הַנִּשְׁלָמָה:

הַרְחֵם־לִּי הוּא וְיִבְנֵנוּ לִימֹת הַמַּשִּׁיחַ וְלַחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם
הַבָּאִי: מְגִדִּיל (מִרְמָה וְשִׁבְתָּ וְיִשְׁעֵנוּ מִיְּרֵתֵינוּ) וְשִׁיעֵנוּ מִלְּפִי
וְעֵשֶׂה הַסֵּד לְמִשְׁחֹה לְדָוִד וְלִצְרָעוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם: עֵשֶׂה
שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמֵינוּ הוּא וְעֵשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵנוּ וְעַל כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲמַרְנוּ אָמֵן:

וְיִרְאוּ אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּי אֵין מִחְסוֹר לִי־אֵין: בְּפִרְיֵם קָשׁוּ
וְרָעִיב וְדָרְשִׁי יי לְאֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּלִיטוֹב: הַזֶּה לִּי בְּיָמֵינוּ בִּי לְעוֹלָם
הַכֹּהֵן: בּוֹקֵם אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִשְׁבָּע לְכָל־חַיֵּי רִצּוֹן: בְּרוּךְ הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר
יִבְרָא בְּיָ וְנִתְּחַו יי מִבְּמִחוּ:
נֶחֱד קִיָּמִי נִסְתַּחֲמִי וְלֹאֲדָאִמִּי צָדִיק גִּעֻב וְרָעִי מִכְּחַט־לָהֶם:
יְיָ עוֹ לְעַמּוֹ וְיָיִן יי וְיִכְרֹךְ אֶת־עַמִּי בְּשְׁלוֹם:

SUMMATION

In the preceding pages, we have conducted a critical survey of Birkat HaMazon as a liturgical text. The present study examined the thesis that Birkat HaMazon was a product of a developmental process: the first stage might have been called a "prehistory" in which the separate themes embodied in the present Grace were independent unto themselves. Each of these themes was probably expressed through informal "petitions" or "supplications" before God and took a variety of forms in the spontaneous prayers of the people. We have thus remained cautious about dating first prayers resembling, for example, the ideas central to Birkat HaZan. We may suggest that the roots of such a prayer were born sometime during the Biblical period with the first fruit offerings and related harvest rituals. But our investigation gained firmer footing as these fluid prayer-expressions began to appear in the rabbinic literature. Under the legislative discussions of the Tannaim and the Amoraim, these prayers began to assume a "required" if only elementary rubric. During this time, the benedictions were defined and their minimal requirements established. During this period too, the four major themes of the Grace developed their associations with each other, and Birkat HaMazon emerged as a definite liturgical unit. Even then the text was not fixed. Rather the Amoraim were responsible for

deciding what the framework of the Grace would be: there was still ample room for the addition of minor thematic material, and spontaneity was yet a built-in dimension of the fourth blessing. We noted the element of variation well into the Gaonic period as the versions of Amram Gaon, Saadia Gaon and later Maimonides were reviewed. As the codes appeared, further restrictions and limitations were recorded. And while the major local rites maintained their distinctive characteristics, each one was eventually frozen in its form, aided by the increased availability of "type-set" mahzorim...

In any study which at first attempts to be comprehensive, ultimately the remarks written for the "conclusion" must also register those areas which remain yet to be examined. So too, in writing the present thesis, the author recognizes that an exhaustive study would necessarily have had to include a discussion including elements such as the following: the rabbinic decisions regarding the amount of food for which the Grace must be recited and the implications of these discussions; the "short form" of the blessings already known to the Tannaim; the concept of erring while reciting Birkat HaMazon and the importance of "fulfilling one's obligation", whether for oneself or for another. With specific regard to the "textual development" of the Grace, the present study has, in effect, proposed a further area for research: that is, the Gaonic

responsa material to increase our understanding of the development of the blessing immediately beyond the Amoraic period. And in conjunction, a deeper and more critical study of those phrases not required halakhically but which appear in many extant rites must be undertaken. For example:

- 1) in Birkat HaAretz, *אשר נתת לנו ארץ זבת חלב וסוכה*
אשר נתת לנו ארץ זבת חלב וסוכה.
- 2) in Boneh Yerushalayim, *אשר נתת לנו ארץ זבת חלב וסוכה*
אשר נתת לנו ארץ זבת חלב וסוכה.

Furthermore, the variant texts which imply the appellative "the All-Merciful" is generally disregarded by all commentators. Since this division of HaTov veHaMetiv seems to be a later development than the other sections of the Grace, its content and form may provide us with further insights into the expansion of the text and its liturgical moment among the people.

A final word: In most American Reform-Jewish homes, Birkat HaMazon is no longer part of a daily meal ritual. While at one time this blessing was the family's expression of Thanksgiving to a God who has sustained us with the hope of salvation as well as with the nourishment of food, the concept of a Grace-after-meals has all but vanished from contemporary religious consciousness. To some degree, the language barrier accounts for the diminished role of the blessing. Jews who neither read nor understand Hebrew are ill-equipped

to incorporate Birkat HaMazon as an element in their daily lives. But while the blessing is readily available in translation, the English copy, which is repetitious, static, and without inspiration, provides a weak alternative. Rather, Jews have abdicated an "English" thanksgiving-acknowledgement to the Christian sector where a "Grace" (albeit before meals) remains spontaneous and meaningful, at least on occasion.

To be sure, there have been attempts - notably at summer camps and in a few Reform congregations - to reintroduce Birkat HaMazon as a part of a total program of "reidentification with our heritage". And while the blessing may now be heard again at larger community dinners (an image of the early havurah-type meals?), it has failed to work as family liturgy again at home, despite its appearance in the UPB. Unlike the hallah, the Shabbat candles and the spice-box which have been readopted as viable symbols, Birkat HaMazon remains, at best, a forgotten prayer of historical interest. And perhaps this blessing spoke to those of earlier generations in a way it does not speak to us. If this is an accurate picture of Reform minhag, then we must first rescue - not the prayer text - but the theological propositions and religious yearnings which Birkat HaMazon was created to express. For if we who gather around a table remain unmoved by the idea of a Creator providing nourishment; are not sensitive to our historic

roots in the land; do not cherish the hope in a world moving from slavery to redemption - then Birkat HaMazon can have no meaning. But if these concepts return relevant to the home as they are yet heard in the synagogue, then a blessing-after-meals within a Jewish framework should once more reaffirm its place in the family's religious experience.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Ber.48b; cf. Tosephta Ber.7:1, Jer. Ber.7:1 (11a).
2. Mishne Torah, Hilkhot Berakot, 1:1; Sefer HaMitzvoth, 70:19; Sefer Mitzvoth HaGadol, positive commandment #27.
3. Ber.21a, top. The discussion concerns the Ba'al Keri and his obligation vis-avis the Sh'ma, Birkat HaMazon and the Amidah; cf. Ber.15a, 16a, and 17b-18a for further legislation of a principle involving both the Sh'ma and the Grace.
4. cf. Ber.2a.
5. Mekhilta: Bo, section 16.
6. Ber.48b.
7. Sefer HaHinukh, commandment 430.
8. Ibid. The same opinion is held by Maimonides in his Mishne Torah, op. cit., 5:1.
9. Finkelstein, L., "The Birkat HaMazon", JQR, 19, 1928-1929.
10. Finkelstein, L., "The Amida", JQR, 16, 1925.
11. Finkelstein, 1928-1929, pg. 243, 247, 253, 259.
12. This insert is a possible reference to Neh. 9:36 or Jer.2:7 as well as Dt.8:10.
13. Heinemann, J., Prayer in the Period of the Tanna'im and the Amora'im, Magnum Press, Jerusalem, 1966.
14. Ibid., p. II.
15. Heiler, F., Prayer, Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1932, p. 39 (translation from German by Samuel McComb).
16. Dt.12:5-7; KII16:10-16.
17. Ez.43:13-27.
18. Macc.I.4:44ff.
19. cf. Josephus, The Jewish War, 5:5 and 6
20. cf. Ber.26b.
21. cf. J.E., vol. 1, p.467 for a discussion of the altar replaced by the following: the man of desirable virtues, study, charity, widows, orphans, virgins and the pious wife.

22. Menahot 97a; cf. Ber.55a.
23. M. Avot 3:1.
24. Ovadiah b. Avraham Bartinoro (-1500?): commentary
to M. Avot, 3:1.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Ber. 48b
2. J. Ber. 7:1 (11a)
3. Tosephta Ber. 7:1
4. Tos. Ber. 46a: ad hehan.
5. Mishne Torah: Berakhot 2:1
6. Tur: Orah Hayyim, 187
7. Ber. 48b. This passage occurs in a discussion listing the derived proofs that one make a blessing before eating as well as after the meal. It is noteworthy that immediately following M. Ber. 7:1-2, the Gemara opens with a discussion of the Biblical basis for Zimmun to be said when three eat together (Ber. 54a) in which Dt. 8:10 is not mentioned at all. Rav Assi also selects Ps. 34:4, while R. Abbahu argues from Dt. 32:3. Both were second generation Amoraim.
8. M. Ber. Ch. 7; M. Meg. 4:3
9. Heinemann, J. "Birkath HaZimmun and Havurah Meals," JJS, 13 (1-4), 1962, p. 23-29.
10. cf. Burrows, M. (Ed.), The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery, vol II, Manual of Discipline, Amer. Schools of Oriental Res., New Haven, 1951, plate 6, line 4-6.
11. Ber. 46a
12. cf. J. Ber. 7:11a
13. Ber. 48b
14. Ber. 46a, bottom; cf. Pes. 104b
15. Rashi (Ber. 46b, top) clarifies that it is a blessing joined immediately to one preceding it which requires a closing "Blessed", but not an opening "Blessed".
16. J. Ber. 1:5 (3a): harae nevarekh
17. Ibid.
18. M. Ber. 7:1 and following discussion, Ber. 45 a,b.

19. Pne Moshe of Rabbi Margolioth, 18th cent. Although this observation is quite late, it is the only traditional statement that I found suggesting a developmental aspect in the use of a benediction for this blessing.
20. Tur, op. cit.
21. Finkelstein, L. "The Birkat HaMazon," JQR, 19, 1929, 211-262.
22. J. Ber. 9:1 (12d).
23. Both Rav (Abba Areca) and (Mar) Shmuel were first generation Babylonian Amoraim who studied under Judah haNasi in Palestine.
24. Midrash Psalms 16:8.
25. cf. Pne Moshe to J. Ber. 9:1. "The one who opens with the Tetragrammaton": this means [the one who says], "Blessed art Thou, O Lord".
26. Shibbole HaLeKet: 188.
27. Abudurham's statement is quoted in Heinemann, J., Prayer in the Period of the Tannaim and the Amoraim, Magnum Press, Jerusalem, 1966 (Heb.), p. 52.
28. Heinemann, J., ibid.
29. M. Ber. 4:4
30. Rav established his academy at Sura in 219 C.E.
31. Ber. 40b. According to Abaye, Rav's statement is understood in the light of Dt. 26:13: "I have not transgressed..., "i.e. I have not transgressed by omitting the benediction; and "...neither have I forgotten..., " i.e. neither have I forgotten to mention Thy Name thereby; cf. Ber. 12a.
32. M. Ber. 9:5
33. M. Tamid 7:2; cf. M. Sota 7:6
34. M. Sanh. 10:1 Abba Saul was a fourth generation Tanna.
35. Tosephta Ber. 7:26; cf. J. Ber. 9:1
36. In Pne Moshe to J. Ber. 9:1, "Y-H" and "EL" are explained thus: "The one who opens the blessing with 'Y-H' ...": this means [the one who opens the blessing with,] 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord' ...'; "...with 'EL' ..." means "...with, 'our God' ..." - and he doesn't say "O Lord".

37. Finkelstein, L., "The Development of the Amidah," JQR, 16, 1921, p. 1-44. See esp. p. 6.
38. ibid., p. 8
39. M. Pes. 10:6
40. Finkelstein, L. "The Birkat ha-Mazon," JQR, 19, 1928-1929, p. 211-262. See esp. p. 227.
41. Weiss, J.G., "On the Formula Melekh Ha-'Olam as Anti-Gnostic Protest," JJS, 10(3-4), 1959, pg. 167-171.
42. cf. Ps. 10:16.
43. cf. Koh. 3:11; Ben Sira 16:7.
44. Heinemann, J., "The Formula Melekh Ha-'Olam," JJS, 11(3-4), 1960, p. 177-179.
45. Roth, C., "Melekh Ha-'Olam and Zealot Influences," JJS, 11(3-4), 1960, p. 173-175.
46. Ber. 12a.
47. Wiesenberg, E., "The Liturgical Term Melekh Ha-'Olam," JJS, 15(1-2), 1964, p. 1-56.
48. Wiesenberg, E., "Gleanings of the Liturgical Term Melekh Ha-'Olam," JJS, 17(1-2), 1966, p. 47-73.
49. Wiesenberg, E., 1964, p. 2.
50. Ber. 12a; Rabbi Yohanan was a first generation Palestinian Amora.
51. Ber. 40b. Rabbi Yohanan's proof (omitted in some MSS) is based on Dt. 26:13, where "...neither have I forgotten..." requires the mention of both the Divine Name and the Divine Kingdom.
52. cf. Mishna Brura to Shulhan Aruh, Orah Hayyim: 214:6.
53. Munich manuscript, Ber. 40b. Quoted in Wiesenberg, E., 1964, p. 29.
54. Rosh to Ber. 40b: quoted in Wiesenberg, E., ibid.
55. Rashba to Ber. 40b; quoted in Wiesenberg, E., op. cit.
56. Shitta Mekubetzet; quoted in Wiesenberg, E., op. cit.
57. Paris Manuscript Ber. 40b; quoted in Wiesenberg, E., ibid. Here the reading is Malkhah de-'almah (King of the world)!

58. Rav also rules for a reference to the "Divine Name" in every blessing (kol berakhah). Is it to be reasoned by analogy, then, that he too includes the "joined" blessings? It is interesting that in all blessings of the Amidah save "Tsemah David", the Tetragrammaton does appear. And of course it appears in all closing benedictions of the Amidah.
59. Tosephta Ber. 1:10, that a "joined blessing is governed by the opening benediction belonging to the blessing preceding it.
60. Wiesenberg (1964, p. 19ff) admits that there are exceptions, cf. blessings #19, 10, 12, 14 and 15 of weekday Amidah; he explains that these prayers were able to remain without a reference to "kingship" because Yohanan's ruling hadn't the status of "Received Law".
61. Tosephta Ber. 2:1.
62. Tos. Ber. 40b: " 'amar.
63. Heinemann, J., "Once Again Melekh Ha-'Olam", JJS, 15(3-4), 1964, p. 151.
64. Tos. Ber. 40b: 'amar.
65. Heinemann finds support in Midrash Psalms 16:8:
 R. Ze'era and R. Judah taught: a blessing without mention of kingship is no blessing, as it is said, "I will extol Thee, O God, my King (Ps.145:1)."
 R. Berechiah commented: what you say applies only to blessings such as those over fruit or for commandments. In general worship, however, if one mentions the Lord's name, he is exempt.
 Yet Wiesenberg dates this text to be at least as late as 4th century. Rabbi Tanhum (340 C.E.) could have supported Rav's requirement for "kingship" "... in the same sense of the current statutory melekh ha-'olam ..." See Wiesenberg, 1966, p. 54.
66. M.Tem. 3:1-2, 5: "The young and the substitute for a Thank-offering, their young and their young's young /may be offered/ ad sof ha-'olam." M. Eduyoth 1:4: "For lo, avoth ha-'olam did not persist in their opinion." In Heinemann's reply, 1964, he maintained that the word 'olam with its definite article "he" appeared in rabbinic literature only with the meaning "the world", and not in the sense of "forever" as suggested by Wiesenberg.
67. cf. Koh 3.11.

68. Ber. 40b.
69. The major conclusion drawn by the Talmud is that Birkat HaMazon, or at least Birkat HaZan can be recited in any language, even if the wording is not exactly as the rabbis had ordained it,
70. cf. Rosh 9:3 to Berakhot; also Ma'adme Yom Tov 1:5 to Rosh, loc. cit.
71. cf. Ber. 35a, top and Ber. 39b, top.
72. Tur, op. cit.: 187.
73. Rashba compendium to Ber. 40b (39b): vehah; cf. also Shulhan Aruh, Orach Hayyim: 187.
74. M. Ber. 1:4.
75. Rashba, op. cit.
76. Tur, op. cit.; cf. also comment by Bayit Hadash: "The intent [in Ber. 40b] is that he fulfils his obligation even if he doesn't sign with 'Blessed'. But Rashba [says] he doesn't fulfil unless he lengthens it..."
77. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.: "There are those who say one needs to sign with 'Blessed be the All-Merciful who gives food to all'..."
78. Magen Avraham to Shulhan Aruh, loc. cit. Commentary by Abraham Gumbiner, 17th century.
79. cf. Ps. 81:17.
80. Finkelstein, L., op. cit., p. 243-246.
81. Mekhilta: section Shira, div. 4; cf. Yalkut Shimoni, 2:887.
82. This is true of the Karaite and Italian rites, and the Mahzor Vitri.
83. Tur, op. cit.
84. Bet Yosef to Tur, ibid.
85. Finkelstein, L., op. cit., p. 243.
86. Mahzor Vitri, p. 52.
87. The words "with us" are also forbidden in Sefer Mordecai, quoted by Bet Yosef to Tur, op. cit. Similarly, in Magen Avraham to Shulhan Aruh, Orach Hayyim: 187.

88. Shibbole HaLeKet HaShelem: 157. Contains 13th century compilation of ritual by Zedekiah b. Abraham Anaw of Italy.
89. The notable exceptions are the Yemenite rites which show a direct dependence on Maimonides' siddur; cf. Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 243.
90. Magen Avraham to Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.
Also see Baer's commentary in Avodath Yisrael, p. 155.
91. cf. Is. 51:14.
92. Baer, op. cit.
93. Sefer Abudarham: section on Birkat HaMazon, p. 101b, top. Reference is to the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness.
94. cf. Mann's discussion of the genizah fragments for Birkat HaZimmun in which "for the food" is omitted in the Babylonian rites but included in the Palestinian: in Jacob Mann, "Geniza Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service", HUCA, Vol. 2, 1925.
95. Kolbo, 23b. A collection of rites and ceremonies extracted from Orboth Hayyim of Aaron b. Jacob b. David haKohen by Shemariah b. Simhah (?), 15th cent.
96. Bet Yosef to Tur, op. cit.
97. The Order of the Prayers for the Whole Year: Section Birkat HaMazon, in Mishne Torah.
98. cf. Finkelstein, op. cit. Includes also the version by Abudurham, 14th cent.
99. MS Dropsie College (Halper 192); reproduced in Finkelstein, ibid. See also page 246, where the verse is shown in the Persian and Romanian rites, two Italian versions, the Amsterdam Haggadah and in the Mahzor Vitri.
100. cf. Altmann, A., Saadia Gaon, in Three Jewish Philosophers, Temple, New York, 1969, P. 14.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Ber. 48b; cf. Tur, Orah Hayyim: 187; Mishne Torah, Hilkhoh Brakhot, 2:1.
2. Ber.48b; J.Ber.7:1(11a); Tosephta Ber.7:1.
3. Ber.49a, top; cf. p. 1 and ft. 38 and 39 for a discussion of R. Abba as Rav.
4. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:3.
5. Tur, op. cit., 187.
6. But cf. Magen Abraham to Shulhan Aruh, Orah Hayyim: 187 for a repetition of the position taken in the Tur.
7. M.Ber.4:2. Nehunia b. Hakana was a Tanna of the 1st. and 2nd. centuries.
8. Ber.28b.
9. M.Ber.9:4.
10. Ber.60a; cf. prayer on leaving a bath-house, ibid.
11. M.Meg.4:9.
12. M. Yoma7:1.
13. M.Ber.5:2.
14. cf. Tur, op. cit., end.
15. Hertz, J., The Authorized Daily Prayer Book, Shapiro, Vallentine & Co., London, 1963, p. 154-155.
16. Rashi to Ber.49a, top.
17. cf., however, the "thanksgiving" of the Palestinian rite discovered in the genizah fragments published by S. Schechter: reproduced in Petuchowski, J., Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy, KTAV, New York, 1970, p. 376. Departing considerably from the Babylonian version, the Palestinian rite may in fact be closer to the "thanksgiving" of the Temple ritual.
18. cf. Finkelstein, L., "The Birkat ha-Mazon", JQR, 19, 1928-1929, p. 247-248.
19. Lacuna to Rashi text supplied in Masoret HaShas: "we thank Thee"; but note no-de-kha rather than the expected nodeh lecha.

20. Tur, op. cit.
21. cf. 'Or Zarua Zhitomir, 1862, section 199; Ber. 49a: commentary by Isaac b. Moshe; Tos. Pes. 104b; Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 249, Nusah Ez Hayyim.
22. German Tosaphist, 1215-1293. One of his pupils was Asher b. Yehiel (ROSH).
23. This verse appears in this manner in the Thanksgiving blessing of the Amidah.
24. Tur, op. cit.
25. Bayit Hadash to Tur, op. cit.
26. Ber. 48b. R. Eliezar was a second generation Tanna, and the brother-in-law of Gamliel II.
27. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:3.
28. Tur, op. cit.
29. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.
30. cf. Weill, J. in the Levi Volume (R.E.J., 82, p. 129-131) (in French); reported in Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 230, note 39.
31. Bayit Hadash to Tur, op. cit.: ve-im.
32. cf. Shibbole HaLeket HaShalem: 157.
33. Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 230, ft. 29.
34. J. Ber. 9:1(3d).
35. ibid.; Joshua b. Levi was a first generation Palestinian Amora; R. Simon was of the following generation.
36. The implication in citing these two verses together is that Torah cannot be separated from the land.
37. Ber. 48b, bottom, R. Jose was a 4th generation Palestinian Tanna (Jose b. Halaftha?); Nahum the Elder was a 3rd century Palestinian Amora (Nahum b. Simai?).
38. Both quotations have been ascribed to Rav; cf. Masoret HaShas:7 to Ber. 49a; also, "...in the name of our Master (Rav)" in Cohen, A., The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakot, p. 313, ft. 4. This seems unlikely in view of the conflicting passage ascribed to Rav: see above, Section C: discussion between R. Zera and Rav Hisda.

39. Ber.48b-49a. R. Elai b. Eliezar was a Babylonian Amora of the second century. R. Abba was a Palestinian Amora (born in Babylonian) of the 3rd. and 4th centuries.
40. This position is upheld in the Jerusalem Talmud 1:9(3d); confirmed with proof texts by Rashi to Ber.48b: "Torah was received by Israel in three places: on Mt. Gerizim (Dt.27:11ff); in the hills of Moab, and in the Sinai in the tent of meeting (Dt.28:69)"; cf. Sota 37a. The covenant of circumcision is mentioned 13 times in Gen. 17: cf. M.Ned.3:11; position supported by Maimonides in Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:3 and Hilkhot Milah 3:9.
41. Ber.49a. R. Zera was a second generation Amora who emigrated from Babylonia to Palestine where he was ordained. Rav Hisda and Rav Sheshet were Babylonian Amoraim of the same generation.
42. Rav Hananel was a Babylonian Amora of the Third century and a disciple of Rav's.
43. Rashba to Ber.48b. 43a. R. Abraham b. David (1125-1189).
44. Tur, op. cit.
45. cf. Isserles' comment to Shulhan Aruh, op. cit. The exception for women and slaves is still acknowledged by allowing their omission of "covenant" and "Torah" from Birkat HaAretz.
46. The distinction is more apparent in the Hebrew, since both "your covenant" and "Your Torah" can each be expressed by a single word using a suffix, (e.g. be-ri-the-kha). "Covenant" and "Torah" would thus not be rendered precisely as they appear in the Gemara.
47. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.; cf. also Karo's earlier commentary to the Tur in which he agrees with the Tosaphists in favor of the suffixed noun form.
48. Heinemann, J., Prayer in the Period of the Tanna'im and the Amora'im, Magnum Press, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 31. Heinemann recognizes that the preposition "for..." ('al) followed by a direct object is rarely preceded by "Blessed art Thou, O Lord". And while he draws attention to the similarity of this pattern with the syntax in Dt. 8:10 (...for the good land which He has given you,) the Biblical verse contains only one direct object.
49. Ber.49a; cf. Pes. 102b, Sota 8a, and Betza 17a.

50. Levi b. Sissi: a Palestinian Amora of the first generation.
51. Ber.49a, top.
52. Tur, op. cit.
53. Ber.46a, bottom.
54. Ber.49a.
55. Tos. Pes. 104b: hutz.
56. Tur, op. cit.
57. cf. Bayit Hadash to Tur, op. cit.: "...and it seems that we ought to have preceded /Birkat HaZan/ with Birkat HaAretz - in that the food comes from the land - and afterwards to bless the food itself... Therefore the explanation /is given/ that because Moses established /Birkat HaZan/ for Israel when the manna fell, therefore it is the first..."; see also Tos. Ber.49a: lomar and Tos.Pes. 104b: hutz.
58. Karl, Zvi, Mehakrim beToldot haTefilla, Tel Aviv, 1950, p. 140. The weakness in this proposition as in much of Karl's writing is his failure to define an hypothesis as such or to document his position with appropriate historical data.
59. M.Ber.1:4.
60. cf. M.Ber.9:1-3.
61. cf. Mahzor Romania, Mahzor Turin, and Mahzor Avignon as reported in Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 249.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Ber. 48b; cf. Mishne Torah, Berakhot 2:1, Tur, Orah Hayim: 188.
2. Ber. 48b; Mishne Torah, op. cit.
3. Ber. 48b; cf. J.Ber.7:1(11a), Tosephta Ber.7:1, Mishne Torah, op. cit.
4. Ber. 48b; cf. Rosh 7:22 to Ber. 48b.
5. Rashba 12a to Ber. 48b.
6. Sefer HaHinuch, commandment #430.
7. Rosh 7:22 to Ber. 48b.
8. Palestinian version from the Geniza; reproduced in Finkelstein, L., "The Birkat Ha-Mazon", JQR, 19, 1928-1929, pg. 211-262. See parallels in Seder Saadia Gaon and Maimonides' rite, p. 254.
9. cf. Finkelstein, ibid: Seder Rav Amram.
10. Tur, op. cit.
11. Finkelstein, op. cit.
12. Finkelstein, L., The Amidah, JQR, 16, 1925, p. 159.
13. cf. Heinemann, J., Prayer in the Period of the Tannaim and Amoraim, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1966, pg. 48-50 for examples of prayers for Jerusalem without the phrase "O Lord, our God": prayer for Jerusalem (Amidah) in the Ashkenazi ritual, in Seder Rav Amram, and in Maimonides' version; the blessing of the Essence of Three in Seder Rav Saadia Gaon; and the Haftara blessing in the Ashkenazi ritual and in Seder Rav Saadia Gaon.
14. For other Psalms revealing Jerusalem in the consciousness of the people, cf. Ps. 122 and Ps. 137.
15. cf. Lam.1:17.
16. Note especially Hos.3:5, Is.2:2-5, and the parallel in Micah 4:1-5.
17. Heinemann, op. cit., Ch. II.
18. ibid., pg. 48-51.

19. Ber.48b, passim.
20. Mahzor Romania (Venice 1526) folio page 115a, reproduced in Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 257.
21. noted in Gelis, J., Minhage Eretz Yisrael, Jerusalem, 1968, p. 82, sec. 8 (Hebrew).
22. Ber.49a, top; cf. J.Ber.1:9(3d) and Shulhan Aruh, 187:4.
23. Rashi to Ber.48b.
24. Mishne Torah, 'Ahavah, Hilkhoh Berakhot, 2:4; also quoted in Bet. Yosef to Tur, 187:4.
25. Rashi to Hos. 3:5.
26. Yalkut Shimoni: Samuel, 106.
27. cf. Rashi to Hos. 3:5 and the parallel in Midrash Shmuel.
28. Tur, op. cit.; cf. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.
29. Rashba to Ber.48a: ve-ai-dae.
30. ibid.
31. Wiesenberg, E., "The Liturgical Term Melekh Ha-'Olam", JJS, 15(1-2), 1964, p. 30, note 121.
32. Heinemann, op. cit., p. 40, note 29.
33. Ben Sira 36:17-19; in Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 220.
34. J.Ber. 4:3(8a); reproduced in Heinemann, op. cit., p. 49.
35. The exception is the Italian grouping, Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 225.
36. J. Shabbat 15:3(15b).
36. The element of Shabbat observance became critical, because reference to the Shabbat itself had already become established in the Grace. In a discussion between Rabena and R. Nahman b. Isaac concerning the recitation of kiddush, Rabena recalls, "...on the Sabbath evenings and on the nights of a festival there is kiddush over the cup and a reference /to the Shabbat of festival/ in the Grace.

37. Commentary to this passage is found in 'Or Zarua, laws of a feast: 199. "One should not establish prayers and arrange supplications and say them on Shabbat as he does on weekdays; but the formula of the blessing which the sages already established and fixed for everyday prayer are also permissible on Shabbat..." Commentary compiled by Isaac b. Moses, c. 1260.
38. Ber.48b.
- 38a. This is the earliest rabbinic reference to a special blessing devoted to the Shabbat within the text of Boneh Yerushalayim. The practice became accepted halakha, cf. Mishne Torah, op. cit. and Tur and Shulhan Aruh, op. cit. The opening text of this insert "Be pleased and give us rest" can be traced back to a passage in Lev. Rabbah: 34 which discusses the root h-l-tz in Ps. 140:2. (See also J. Shabbat in the name of Eliezer b. Jacob: noted in Abudurham, Prague, 1784, p. 102.)

It has been suggested (J. Petuchowski, personal communication, 1975) that the Shabbat insert in Boneh Yerushalayim was at an earlier period an independent blessing for Jerusalem which could have served as the third blessing in the Grace. We find support for this proposition in that the insert is sealed with a closing benediction of its own (see Italian and Palestinian rites); the blessing also incorporates the root n-h-m in the closing benediction. On the other hand, it should be noted that the "kingdom of the House of David" does not occur in any of the extant Shabbat inserts. This omission would indicate that "Be pleased and give us rest", if it served as an independent blessing within Birkat HaMazon, did so only as late as R. Abba's ruling calling for the inclusion of the Davidic kingdom.

39. Ber.49a.
40. cf. Rashi to Ber.49a. He explains that this formula allows for the idea inherent in the opening to be contained in the concluding benediction.
41. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:1.
42. Tos. Ber.48b: mathil.
43. cf. Rashi to Ber., ibid.
44. Tur, op. cit.
45. Isaac B. Jacob Alfasi (1013-1103); wrote the Halakhot, the earliest major code.

46. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.
47. Ber.49a.
48. ibid.
49. ibid.
50. ibid.
51. Ber.49a.
52. Rashi to Ber.49a.
53. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:4.
54. Rosh 7:22 to Ber.49a.
55. cf. J.Ber.4:3(8a).
56. Tur, op. cit.
57. Isserles to Shulhan Aruh:188.
58. 'Orhot Hayim, Birkat HaMazon; commentary by Aaron Ha-Cohen of Lunel Steinberg and Son, Jerusalem, 1954-55, p. 71.
59. cf. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit. for an additional variation preserved in the codes: "...who consoles Zion in the building of Jerusalem".
60. Heinemann, op. cit., pg. 50-51.
61. Finkelstein, op. cit.
62. Ber.63a; cf. Buchler, A., Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety, London, 1922, p. 224ff for possible occurrences of Amen even within the Temple Service: reported in Heinemann, op. cit., p. 80, note 14. The general requirement to answer Amen is also noted in Sifre to Dt. 32:3, and is used as a liturgical affirmation in Ich. 16:36.
63. cf. J.Ber., ch. 8, end (12c), and Ber.47a. For a more complete summary of Amen in rabbinic literature see The Talmudic Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, p. 46-50, Jerusalem, 1949.
64. Ber.53b.
65. Ber.45b, bottom; cf. Succah 38b.
66. ibid; cf. Meg 23b.

67. i.e., so they would not omit the fourth blessing:
Rashi to Ber.45b; cf. Shulhan Aruh, op. cit.
68. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:1; cf. Tur, op. cit.
69. Finkelstein, op. cit., pg. 254 and 256. Note that
he correctly omits Amen from his own reconstructed
text.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Mishne Torah, Berakhot, 2:5; Tur, Orach Hayim: 189.
2. M.Ber.9:2; cf. Pes. 50a.
3. Ber.59b; cf. Ta'anit 6b.
4. ibid. Rabba declared, "God of thanksgivings"; Rav Pappa said, "Abundant thanksgivings and God of thanksgivings".
5. Rav Pappa, a disciple of Rabba, presided over his school in Nares for the nineteen years from 354-375.
6. Ber.59b.
7. cf. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 10:5.
8. Ber.46b.
9. It has been assumed that this prayer was offered as part of the Grace after meals in the house of mourning: cf. Cohen, A., The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakot, 46b. We would argue that while this passage is included in a general discussion of HaTov veHaMetiv as part of Birkat HaMazon, there is no reference to the Grace in this specific incident. It would appear that the passage is included here only because of the associated nature of the discussion, but is rather a record of an alternate use of the formula; cf. Gemara's response to R. Akiba, Ber.46b; also Ber.59b, bottom: "come and hear: if a father dies..."
10. Ber.48b; Tosephta Ber.7: 1 and J. Ber.7:1(11a).
11. Ber.48b.
12. M.Ber.6:8.
13. Ber.48b.
14. Betar: scene of final defeat of Bar Kokhba rebellion, (132-135).
15. Presumably, the bodies were not allowed burial for a time under the edict of Hadrian; in general, edicts established during Hadrian's rule were reversed under the new regime of Antoninus-Pius (138-161). Burial of the slain was permitted in the year 138 or 139; cf. J.E., vol. 1, p. 657.

16. cf. the parallel passages in the name of R. Huna in J.Ber.7:1(11a), J.Ta'anit 5:4(69a) and B. Ta'anit 31a.
17. cf. Tur, op. cit.
18. cf. Finkelstein, L., "The Birkat Ha-Mazon", JQR, 19, 1928-1929, p. 221.
19. Weiss, __ ., Dor:145, esp. note 2; reported in Finkelstein, ibid.
20. cf. J.E., vol. 11, p. 645.
21. Halevy, __ ., in Dorot Ha-Rishonim, I, e, p. 74ff; reported in Finkelstein, op. cit.
22. cf. Buchler, A., "Toldot Birkat HaTov veHaMetiv", in Chajes Memorial Volume, Wien, 1933, p. 137-167, (Hebrew section).
23. Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 217.
- 23a. Didache: see article in J.E., vol. 4, pg. 585-587.
24. M.Ber.9:2.
25. cf. J.E., vol. 6, p. 134.
26. Buchler, op. cit.
27. cf. J.E., vol. 6, p. 649; M. Eduyot 2:4.
28. Ber.46b, top.
29. Rav Nahman, speaking in the fourth century, knew of the conflicting traditions regarding the origin of the fourth blessing in Birkat HaMazon. He assumed that if HaTov veHaMetiv had been ordained by the Torah, the blessing could not have been eliminated from the Grace, even in a house of mourning. However, we need not assume that R. Akiba and the rabbis were discussing the formula only as pertaining to the Grace. Rather we suggest that HaTov veHaMetiv was one of several formulas with which one greeted a mourner: cf. above, notes 6 and 7; also Ber. 60a and 60b.
30. cf. Evel Rabbati, 14:end; in Buchler, op. cit., p. 143.
31. Ber.46a-b.
32. Tosephta Ber.1:9.

33. cf. Tur, op. cit., 189: that the blessing was originally a "short" blessing which read only "Blessed be He, the Good and the one who does good".; also Rosh 7:22 to Berakhot.
34. Tosephta, op. cit.
35. Rashba to Ber.49a; cf. Heinemann, op. cit., p. 102, note 6, for other examples of HaTov veHaMetiv with only a concluding benediction.
36. Ber.49a.
37. Ber.49a, bottom.
38. cf. Ber.12a and Ber.40b.
39. cf. Rosh 7:22 to Ber.49a: ...in that they established that the kingdom of the House of David be mentioned in Boneh Yerushalayim, it seemed fitting to mention the kingdom of heaven [in it] also. However, they didn't want to mention the heavenly kingdom alongside the earthly kingdom; therefore they ordained the mentioning of the heavenly kingdom in HaTov veHaMetiv.
40. Approximate dates for the rabbis mentioned in this passage are as follows: R. Yohanan, 199-279; Rabba b. Bar Hanna, 257-320; R. Zera, 279-320; Rav Pappa, 320-375.
41. Mishne Torah, op. cit., 2:7.
42. Tos. Ber.46b: veHaTov; cf. Rashba op. cit. and Tur:189.
43. Shulhan Aruh, Orach Hayyim:189.
44. The additional elements of "benevolence" and "goodness" are first mentioned by the Rosh 7:22 to Ber.49a, and are established as halakha in the Tur, op. cit. They also appear in all versions reported by Finkelstein (1929), and were undoubtedly an integral part of the fourth blessing before the period of the Medieval commentaries. There was no clear agreement across the various rites, however, with regard to the enumeration of these elements. Compare the following variations of "the three references to 'goodness' " in representative rites:
 - A. Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, ...the Good (1) and the One who does good (2) who, each and every day does good (3) among us; ...he will reward us with grace, lovingkindness, relief, mercy, and all good (4?).

(While this final phrase "all good" occurs in all rites, it is generally not considered among the three references to "goodness" required in the blessing.)

Palestinian geniza
Seder Rambam
Seder Rav Saadia
Seder Rav Amram

- B. Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, ...the good and the one who does good, who each and every day He does good, (1) He has done good, (2) and He will do good (3)...

This is Sirkes' enumeration; he reasons with the Tosaphists that the three references to "goodness" were required after Betar: thus the three additional words. This text of the fourth blessing is representative of most of the other versions reproduced by Finkelstein (cf. pg. 259-262).

An alternate enumeration is suggested by Sirkes, quoted in the name of Solomon b. Yehiel Luria. The last three are counted as a unit by eliminating all but one pronoun for God:

- C. Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe ...the Good (1) and the One who does good, (2) who each and every day, He has done good, does good and will do good (3)...

45. Tur, op. cit.; cf. Shulhan Aruh, 189. Note that the Persian rite ignores this prohibition, including "the living King" in its daily Birkat HaMazon: in Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 262.
46. cf. Ber. 46a: "Rav Joseph said: know that HaTov veHaMetiv is not from the Torah, because laborers may omit it."
47. Ber. 46a.
48. Tur, op. cit.
49. Ber. 16b; cf. M. Ber. 4:4.
50. Ber. 16b. The Gemara lists here personal concluding supplications of ten other rabbis, including those of Rabbi, R. Yohanan, and Rav Sheshet.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Schechter, S., "Genizah Specimens", JQR, vol. 10, 1904, 654-659.
2. cf. Paul Kahle, The Cairo Geniza, Oxford, 1959, pg. 3-13; reported in Millgram, A., Jewish Worship, 1971, p. 340.
3. Mann, J., "Geniza Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service", HUCA, vol. 2, 1925, pg. 269-338 and esp. p. 336.
4. Finkelstein, L., "The Birkat Ha-Mazon", JQR, vol. 19, 1928-1929, pg. 243 ff.
5. Ps.147:2 which is found in the Shabbat insert herein reproduced is placed directly in Boneh Yerushalayim proper of the Pesah liturgy shown in Fragment #19, published by Mann, op. cit.
6. The arguments are discussed in Goldschmidt, D., Seder Rav Amram Gaon, Mossad Harav Kook (publishers), Jerusalem, 1971, p. 7; cf. also p. 10 for specific questions of authorship relating to the section on "laws of the meal".
7. ibid., pg. 45-46.
8. cf. Ch. III, note 36.
9. The discussion is found in Davidson, I., Assaf, S., and Joel, I. (editors), Siddur Rav Saadia Gaon, Mekitze Nirdamim (publishers), Jerusalem, 1941, pg. 22-23.
10. Ginzberg, L. Geonica, vol. 1, p. 166.
11. Ginzberg, L., "Saadia's Siddur", JQR, vol. 33, 1942-1943, p. 316.
12. cf. Davidson, op. cit., pg. 152-153.
13. cf. Goldschmidt, E.D., "Maimonides' Rite of Prayer According to an Oxford Manuscript" (Hebrew), Studies of the Research Institute for Hebrew Poetry in Jerusalem VII, Jerusalem, 1958.
14. cf. Mishne Torah, Ahavah, Seder Tefillot kol HaShanah for blessings including the following: the last blessing after Pesuke Hazemiroth, and after the morning and evening Sh'ma; the 1st, 2nd, 18th and 19th blessing of the Amida; the Kaddish; the middle blessing of the Shabbat Amida, etc.

15. Schechter, A.I., Studies in Jewish Liturgy, Philadelphia, 1930, p.3.
16. Luzzatto, D.S. (editor), Mahzor Minhag Italiani, Leghorn, 1956.
17. cf. Ch.I, section F: "Blessed be the One who satisfies the hungry, etc..."
18. Gaster, M., The Book of Prayer and Order of Service according to the custom of the Spanish and Portugese Jews, vol. 1, Henry Frowde, London, 1901, pg. xiv-xv.
19. This position is to be contrasted with that held by Heinemann; reproduced in Petuchowski, J., Guide to the Prayerbook, Cincinnati, 1968, p. 10.
20. Note the alternate grammatical form in the following blessing, HaTov veHaMetiv, of this same nusah.
21. Hertz, J., The Authorized Daily Prayer Book, Shapiro Vallentine and Co., London, 1959, p. xxii.
22. Mahzor Vitri was compiled by Simha b. Samuel in the 11th century.
23. cf. Idelsohn, A., Jewish Liturgy, Schocken, New York, 1967, p. 61.
24. Note that Finkelstein includes the Ashkenazic Prayer Book in the English - Northern French - German group.

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