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POETRY AND CONTEMPORARY JEWISH WORSHIP:

PIYYUTIM FOR OUR TIME.

JASON HUEBSCH

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

Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion

Pesach, 5733 - April 1973

REFEREE, PROFESSOR STANLEY CHYET.

I dedicate this work to my father

MILTON HUEBSCH

whose humility, resourcefulness,  
and humor are a continued inspiration and blessing to me.

## Digest

As I have written in my first introductory essay, this thesis is primarily an anthology of poetry. Simultaneously, it is intended to be something in addition to the anthology. It is an exploration in Jewish prayer. It includes a partial -- and admittedly fragmented -- development of a theology and understanding of prayer. It is an embryonic aesthetic of worship.

Taking as my dugma, model, the poetic liturgists who have enriched Jewish worship, I have spent several joyous months reading contemporary poetry in a variety of languages and styles. I have been and continue to be intrigued by the comparisons and contrasts found in poetry and worship. I have attempted to articulate some of these; others I hope to create and refine as I continue to grow in the area of worship.

I have also shaped a liturgical framework by which the anthology is organized. I explore in some detail the nature of that framework in my second introductory essay, "An Outline of Shabat Worship." It contains a prayer structure personally derived from a study of several existing alternatives.

I have chosen a small number of poems among those I have studied. I have written a commentary to these selections, attempting to focus upon the emotions and thoughts they invoke together with specific prayers. I have sought to emphasize and develop themes within the liturgy. At



times I have found the language or thoughts of some poems to conflict with statements within the liturgy. At times, I have found the conflicts illuminating, if not revelatory.

In brief, I have attempted to enrich Jewish worship. The project has not been envisioned as a new worship service in itself. Rather, it does present an expanded emphasis, I would like to think, of poetic possibilities and potential in worship. It is my hope that this work and others serve to enhance and more clearly articulate beliefs and emotions within our liturgy.

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PREFACE

I feel prefaces are best when written last. With this "perspective," I can best understand where I have come and how I came there. In turn, I can -- hopefully -- convey this to whomever reads this thesis.

Although I remain a bit dizzy so that my surroundings are unclear as I have not yet gained any distance from this work and place, I do know from whence came my inspiration and guidance. Above all, I am indebted to Professor Stanley F. Chyet for his friendship, his insights, his tolerance, and his unending patience. My greatest joy has been the opportunity to work with him and learn immeasurably from him. He is a blessed example of what a person, a teacher, a Jew, a rabbi can be!

I am also indebted to several other individuals who have read my work or have made some constructive criticisms along the way. I thank Professor A.R. Ammons, Professor Warren Bargad, Dr. Stephen Braude, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, Professor Bernard Martin, Professor Jakob J. Petuchowski, and Professor Robert Turnbull for their comments and suggestions. All errors and misjudgments that remain are original and creative. I would not think of sharing them with any of these people (unless they were similarly inclined).

Jason Huebseh

Cincinnati,

Pesach, 5733.

## Chapter I

### Poetry, Prayer, and Worship.

This is an anthology of poetry but I allow myself to hope that it is also more than this. It is an anthology of poetry which has been assembled and annotated with the design of utilization within the Shabat worship setting, of evening and morning avodah. This is not a substitution or a replacement for previous prayerbooks. I am not trying to proliferate prayerbooks per se -- although I personally see nothing objectionable in such a notion, for ideally, every individual and congregation should have his and its unique prayerbook. The human situation and psyche are so diverse that variations in approach to worship, theology, and aesthetics should be taken into account. The underlying purpose of this anthology of "piyutim for our time" is to learn to pray and to evoke prayer, if indeed that can be done.

I can, at present, speak only of its effect upon me. I have learned immeasurably from this project. My approach has been to design an order and arrangement of prayer simultaneously fixed and change-oriented, in short -- elastic. I have found my work to be both traditional, in reinforcing already existing rubrics of worship, and innovative, in sharpening tensions and conflicts of ideas and sensations. I have tried to do this both by inserting poetic material and adapting some of the rubrics of worship. The work has brought great pleasure and delight to me in developing and orchestrating adumbrations of the prayers and through the use of poems that seem to me to relate intricately to them. By working with themes in the liturgy and poetry, I have experienced new in-

sights -- placing works in degrees of juxtaposition and parallelism.

Although I have felt something of the innovative in this research, it is by no means original with me. It is based on the ideas of the paytanim throughout the centuries. I have sought to emulate them in the places I have chosen for inserting new material. Other times I have tried to discover other places and ways for insertion. On occasion, I have even sought to change the structure of the Shabat service itself.

It might well be asked, "Why not design an entirely new service?" I have attempted to deal with this and related questions in the essay "An Outline of Shabat Worship." In that essay, I also attempt to explain the changes I do want to institute. Generally, my position has been to start from the Sidur. By studying several of the traditional prayers and several of the modern poems as well, I have come to see how man is time- and place-oriented. This is no detriment; rather, it is an intrinsic quality of the human situation. Our prayers should attempt to deal with flux and change. We worship to sanctify time and change (i.e., sunrise, sunset, weeks, months, seasons, years).

My primary learning has been a deeper insight into and appreciation for Jewish prayer and for the variety and depth of the worship experience. Having devoted several months to the intensive reading of contemporary American, English, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Spanish, and Latin American poetry,



I continue to recite Sim Shalom, for example, and to respond to its evocative sounds and melodic movement of words. I have never read/prayed anything more lovely. This deeper appreciation for the liturgy also comes from trying to create some compositions of my own. The inadequacies of my attempts are poignant contrasts to what the Sidur offers. A deeper understanding of the liturgy also comes from examining the prayers and searching for poems that express similar motifs or present conflicting ideas with which one can simultaneously worship. At first, I expected a cacophony produced by contrasting ideas and modes of expression. To my surprise, I sometimes found parallels not despite, but because of the dissonance. Often, I found the tensions of contrast insightful. At other times, I found them unbearable.<sup>1</sup>

I have profited from the opportunity of spending the last several months reading and reflecting upon great quantities of poetry. During that time, I undertook myself to write some liturgical poetry. But it has been a far greater joy to discover several poets whom I had never or seldom read and who more adequately express feelings and experiences I have had, in ways I can not approximate but only gasp at. This, too, has been a reward.

This study of prayer and poetry within a worship setting has implicitly raised several difficult problems for me in aesthetics. Slowly, and not without consummate effort, I have come to my own low-key -- perhaps "low-brow" -- theory of the aesthetics of worship. I began by asking myself some

delightful and provocative riddles -- viz., What makes a prayer prayable? Are prayers by their nature prayable or are there unprayable prayers? Unsingable songs? Unpoemable poems? What makes a poem prayable? What is the relation between poems and prayers? I do not have any answers yet. But I have several more questions. Perhaps it would take a lifetime or better, a life, to answer some of these questions.

The directions I have thus far traversed in the philosophical area of aesthetics are manifold. Poems, like prayers, are not merely recited; they pour out of us. When the poet and liturgist consolidate those outpourings on paper, the product is not a completion so much as it is a beginning. The aficionado of poetry comes to the poetic collections, as the worshipper comes (or should come) to the Sidur and to worship, in eager anticipation of a creative experience. The poems and the prayers are empty vessels and forms which we fill with ourselves, our life experiences, our dreams, our aspirations.

Poems and prayers share immediacy. Both are evocative means of expression. The qualities of sound and cadence as well as content are significant. Are the sounds/rhythms as important as the ideas? Or vice versa? I think that is somehow an illegitimate question. Each poem, each prayer, is a unity. Each may have inner tensions; and we readers/worshippers may come at these inner tensions with certain predilections. I suppose, however, that the question is justifiable in anticipating or reflecting a historical (or,

it may be argued, a real) dualism in man, between the rational and the emotive. But does not the gift of the poet and of the liturgist lie in creating harmonies? Sometimes this can be done without words: cannot silence be a poem, a prayer, worship? I am thinking of a category which blends cognition and emotion. It is not my mind or my emotions which respond -- it is I who respond. The separation is artificial; I have never stopped blaming our Greek "forefathers" for creating this illusion of separation. Since I finally succeeded in expressing those feelings, let me proceed to make another type of artificial separation.

Although poems and prayers have much in common and can be identical, there is something that distinguishes them. Presumably, prayers are expressions addressed to God in addition to man and/or self. Ideally, poems are, too, but a poem which is not addressed to God could still be a poem and, in fact, a marvellous poem. A prayer that is not addressed to God, in addition to man and/or self, is eo ipso -- one might contend -- not a Jewish prayer. What do I mean by "addressed to God"? I certainly do not mean necessarily beginning or ending with a direct invocation of the deity. I do mean: Does the poem bring us to a heightened awareness and sense of interdependency? Does the poem help us to become symbols rather than being possessed of symbols? Does the poem somehow incorporate itself in our lives and our values? Does the poem increase praise, rejoicing, thanksgiving, petition? If the answer to these questions is affirmative, I would say the poem/prayer is "addressing God."

Having differentiated prayers from poems (or have I?), I want to examine the context within which we might hope to place them. Worship is essentially drama. So is life -- though, it may be, not always so emphatically. The purpose of worship is both to express and to impress.<sup>2</sup> Our liturgy is filled with items from the mundane which we consciously (try to) sanctify. Candles, bread, wine become holy. Man and his life become holy.

Prayer is not in itself worship. Prayer is an individual's spontaneous posture-response to life. Worship is a positive assertion of a man's relation to others and to God. It is a subtle combination of the spontaneous and the fixed. For example, suppose we had a prayer that fulfilled our definition, i.e., addressing God. If the worshippers could not relate to the prayer and were unable to "empty" themselves into the prayer -- as it were, become the prayer -- then we would have a case of ineffective worship. In fact, most worship is ineffective because we cannot enter into it. Part of my aim in creating this anthology is to accentuate and increase the degree and possibility of spontaneity in worship. By emphasizing the variety of the thematic motifs, I hope I am making a good case for innovation within the standard rubrics of Jewish prayer. Poetry, prayer, and worship all deal with the directing of thoughts and emotions. We come to understand their impacts best by living with various forms of each and choosing the most suitable to our being. The difficulties lie in knowing what to choose, knowing how to go about

choosing, and knowing ourselves.

Our poetry, prayer, and worship draw significant consequences for our thinking/feeling about God and man. The theology of the Sidur is really composed of numerous theologies. The Sidur calls God: The Shield of our Salvation, Our Father our God, The Merciful God, Judge, The Creator of Light and the Fashioner of Darkness, the Redeemer of Israel, The God of All Creatures, The Blessed One, Our God and God of our Fathers. With each of these terms, every man has different associations due to his unique life-experience and the crises he has had to face. Many of the rabbis of old and those of the present day, too, respond to life and its crises with unsystematic theologies. This used to trouble me, but now I have come to see their intrinsic value. First, on aesthetic and intellectual grounds, consistency is boring -- at the least. Second, life itself is so full of flux that consistency is unprofitable for theology. Similarly, men change; their situations change. Theologies are developed to answer questions that are time- and place-oriented. Yesterday's answers do not fit today's questions. Nor should we expect them to do so. Consistency within man's understanding is no compliment to God. And the ulterior motive for any theology is shevach, praise of God. How can we expect consistency from ourselves when it is impossible especially from Him?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways, saith God. For as the heavens are above the earth so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of the variety of terms we refer to and roles we try to place God within, there are some meaningful generalizations we can make about God, generalizations based upon the nature and form of Jewish worship. Dr. Heschel, of blessed memory, was insightful when he pointed out that man does not speak to God; rather God speaks to man.<sup>4</sup> Man addresses God as if He were present.<sup>5</sup> Whether in fact He is present and is the hearer of prayer -- this remains moot. Is worship of God illusion or reality? Possibly it is illusion and reality! Are the dynamics of prayer vis-à-vis the worshipper changed if in fact God does not listen and is not a listener to prayer? If man only addresses God and does not speak to Him, then there should be no difference. Revelation occurs when God speaks to man; or to follow Berkovitz' line of thought, when revelation has occurred, man interprets this as if God had spoken to him. The man of faith "sees" God initiating "the act." Man responds. And how is the man of faith to know if he is in fact responding to God's presence or the removal of God's presence? Does it ultimately matter? After all, does God benefit from prayer, or does man? I am torn by that question. Reluctantly, I reply, it is mutual, or appears so to me, although the thought of God desiring our praise suggests ego needs on His part as well as on our own. The as if nature of God's Shechinah raises endless paradoxes. I have no better "proof" for my own existence/presence, let alone His. Although I lack the philosophical sophistication to prove existences (I choose

to live mine), neither have I the presumption or short-sightedness to venture into such areas of quicksand, as they appear to me to be. After all, I may disappear. Ultimately, seeking to prove God's existence is nonsensical. Who am I to prove He is? I can only praise Him -- and would that I could do that more often and more adequately. I rely on my rabbinic predecessors, men like Maimonides who sought to develop an efficient means of dispensing with fallacious and meaningless contemplation. Negative theology, i.e., that we can legitimately make no affirmative statements about the nature of God, is based on the belief that we have not the competency. Is He not far more wonderful and less complicated than we are?

I shall propose a few models for better understanding poetry, prayer, worship and man's role in them. Before I do so, let us see what worship indicates about the nature of man. Although we can say little (really, nothing) about the nature of God, we can say a substantial amount about the nature of man. Rav Kook, of blessed memory, maintained that man's soul is continually in a state of prayer.<sup>6</sup> His view is an eloquent representation of the man of faith and practice. However, he assumes what he, in part, wants to prove and believe -- that man is a praying animal. He is correct. However, in not defining his term, does he not risk missing a deeper truth? Man is intrinsically idolatrous. This is the factor that differentiates us from and unites us with the rest of creation. We may try a little

harder; I doubt we do any better. A plant grows towards the sun: Do we move with such singleness of purpose? Idolatry is the worship of a faulty image or value. All worship is the sorting out and developing of value preferences. We are all spoken to through the glass darkly, ha'aspaklaria hame-lachlechet, and the image we apprehend from it is only -- at best -- a rough approximation of what He is.

By asserting man's idolatrous tendency, I do not mean to denigrate him. After all, you know, he is the pinnacle of creation. But he is part of creation and subject to its dependencies, its continual flux, its inevitable, inescapable mortality. Man and life are shot through with imperfections; idolatry is a direct consequence of our imperfections. By criticizing our jaded mirrors and values, I am only indirectly disparaging man. Intrinsically, there is nothing the matter with egos so long as we can differentiate between them and our total selves and learn when to sanctify which. Idolatry is the first model I propose for worship. And life, being reflective of worship, is also, however it is practiced, idolatrous. Although admittedly a rather skeptical position, it does not stand without precedent or insight. When Ecclesiastes described everything as being vanity, he was making a similar observation -- everything, then especially worship. When Shelley describes the broken stele/monument of Ozymandias, he does not ask our sympathy for the monarch's lost power and prestige; he asks our pity -- and disdain. I use this, my first model, as a necessary corrective while the



other models indicate perhaps (perhaps not?) nobler possibilities for worship. Taken together, I hope, they prove insightful.

Poetry/prayer/worship are fundamentally vital models of communication. As mentioned above, their vitality lies in immediacy and evocation. The purpose of communication is to transmit "material." The "material" can be cognitive content as well as emotive-feeling. They bring together and unite many different sensations and perceptions. This form of communication brings people together and creates an environment for sharing. Communication can -- it will not always -- create community. The contemporary expression "getting one's thing together" is instructive within the context of worship as a model of communication. Men communicate to "get themselves together." This entails relationships with self, community, and creator.

Worship can also be seen as a search for priorities and core values. The connection to idolatry appears, and is, striking. What we choose to sanctify and how we choose to sanctify are paramount. They become interchangeable with our names. After all, we are our values; we want and need to reflect them -- be they money, wisdom, youth, sobriety, or what-have-you. Effective worship builds a bridge to life -- or, better, is a bridge to life. When we identify ourselves with our values, we strive to become like or actually to become incarnations of our values. In this context, our poems, prayers, and worship motivate and define us.

Finally, I want to offer the model of art and artistic expression. It is perhaps the most consciously direct application of this poetic anthology. Worship is, I believe, a special art form. It has its particular skills -- seeing God reflected in one's fellowmen and within oneself, and seeing oneself reflected in one's God and one's fellowmen. It involves a need and commitment to experiment in addressing and readdressing God, man, and self. Its biblical image is Jacob struggling with the angel. In worship God seeks somehow to be conquered. If we could only reach Him, each other, ourselves. So we practice and try again. In trying again, we change, we create new modes of idolatry, communication, value searching, art. We develop new ways of wrestling. And so do those with whom we wrestle. So does God. These then are models of worship that I find helpful and will have occasion to refer to when analyzing some of the poetic selections I seek to introduce in worship.

NOTES

- 1 Contrasts and contradictions in Jewish worship are in line with tradition. For example the Torah and Haftarah portions of Yom Kipur.
- 2 Theodore H. Gaster, "Modernizing the Jewish Prayerbook," Commentary, April, 1954, p.353.
- 3 Isaiah 55:89
- 4 Abraham J. Heschel, Man's Quest for God, p.8.
- 5 Eliezer Berkevitz, Prayer, pp. 12-14.
- 6 Ibid., p. 6.

## Chapter II

### An Outline of Shabat Worship.

In selecting and annotating this anthology, I have attempted to explore the nature of Jewish prayer and worship. I have often asked myself what Jewish prayer and Jewish worship denote. Above, I described Jewish prayer as an expression addressed to God in addition to mankind and/or self.<sup>1</sup> I contrasted prayer and worship by describing prayer as an individual's spontaneous posture-response to life, and worship, as a group activity that requires some standardization, compromise, and experimentation.<sup>2</sup> However, it remains for us to explore what in fact constitutes Jewish worship. It has not developed as a monolithic entity. There are several versions, texts, prayerbooks, and lifestyles. New ones are continually being fashioned, and some have fallen into disuse.

Historically, Jews who have assembled to worship have developed a basic framework for the arrangement and order of the service. As one who has come to see himself as standing within this tradition, this shalsholet hakabalah, I can, in part, accept it as my own. Ambiguity arises from my conditioning vis-a-vis tradition. The Reform ideological posture has been simultaneously innovative-modern and eclectic-traditional, taking what its leaders thought to be the best of both and fashioning them into fine idols. The rest of the ambiguity lies in individuality, stiff-neckedness, and aesthetics. What is more subjective than the way in which we worship? Are cognitive arguments for inclusion/exclusion of prayers and symbols justifications or rationalizations? That is something for each individual to determine for him-

self. As I act out my forms of idolatry, I painfully search for values by setting them in competition. Continually I seek to communicate with -- my God, my People, my Fellow-men, myself -- by placing these values before me as signs and reminders. I seek to purify the experience, repeat it, recreate it in a variety of forms. These are both the models of worship delineated above and the process of worship to be described below.

I begin fashioning my order of service by searching through the past tradition. Others may begin by starting anew. I cannot. My thought and worship form no tabula rasa. They begin from a context and develop as I grow, and learn, and love. My religion and worship surround and engulf me. I am Israel and I am part of Israel. By virtue of this self-choosing identity, I become part of a suprahistorical entity in which past, present, and future merge. Israel -- the people who strive with God -- both make their history and transcend it. The claim is ludicrous; but worship and the religious realm are presumptuous.<sup>3</sup> So are we. So are our lifestyles and aspirations. And so they should be. The Jew cries out to God in an effort to save himself and the world. The claim has always been an ultimate expression of chutspah. And the degrees and directions of chosenness have always been perplexing.

I start by asking, as at the beginning of Masechet Braehot, with which the Talmud starts, me'ematai -- when do I fix my worship? I have prepared my anthology for the

Shabat -- Friday evening and Saturday morning. Much of it, I would think, is adaptable to daily and to holiday worship. Jewish worship has a basic framework enabling us to insert into, innovate, and delete. Who knows how we shall worship tomorrow?

I gravitate first towards those elements of worship that I cannot do without. And these elements begin with the Shema and the Amidah. In choosing the Shema as an indispensable unit for the evening and morning services, I offer the following reason: It communicates to me that Adonai is our God and in contrast to the multiplicity of people, things, and values continually moving in and out of existence, He is One. Of course, my commentary is only one among several and perhaps less insightful than most. Rashi emphasizes that "He is our God in contradistinction to the God of others, specifically the idolatrous nations, and that in the future He will continue to be One."<sup>4</sup> ~~Some~~ no comments that "to all that is created God gives reality,"<sup>5</sup> Ibn Ezra construes the beginning of the Shema as "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone."<sup>6</sup> According to the Ramban, this sentence is the "source of Jewish faith. He who disagrees blasphemes, i.e., denies God."<sup>7</sup> The Rashbam comments that "Adonai, He alone, is our God and we have no other God but Him." As for the final phrase "Adonai echad," Rashbam asserts: "He alone will we serve and we will not unite him with any other God -- even to make magic."<sup>8</sup>

Most often the Shema is discussed within the Talmud in

the context of what constitutes its proper utterance, viz., number of times, when, how... However, in some places, the Shema is presented as an explanation for the distinctiveness of the covenant, for example, " And it was written , the Holy One Blessed Be He said to Israel, 'You made me the one object of love in the world as it is said, Shema Yisrael...' and I will make you the one object of love in the world as it is said, 'Who is like you O Israel, as a people of the earth?' "9

To increase the significance of the Shema, the rabbis sought to attribute its initial utterance to paradigmatic leaders and central revelatory events. Among these chosen are Moses at Sinai and Jacob at the time he blessed his sons. Instead of exclusively limiting the initial utterance of the Shema to a leader, other writers of rabbinic literature approached the subject from another perspective. Rabbi Pinehas reminds us that God declared, "I am the Lord your God," before the people at Sinai. The Israelites responded, "The Lord our God, the Lord is One."<sup>10</sup> In summation of our brief exploration of the extensive literature dealing with the Shema, Dr. Joseph H. Hertz emphasizes, "That opening sentence of the Shema rightly occupies the central place in Jewish religious thought, for every other Jewish belief turns upon it: all goes back to it; all flows from it."<sup>11</sup>

I retain the three passages of the Shema within my service outline because together they amplify the meaning



of this initial sentence. Many of us have come to read this astounding and beautiful section so mechanically that we often overlook its manifold insights. Therefore, I propose to introduce poetical material between the various paragraphs of the Shema to emphasize and accentuate its themes and rhythms.

The Ve'ahavta contains one of the most bizarre and unnatural commandments possible: We are commanded to love. How does our love for God reflect our love for ourselves, our families, our people, mankind? How does our love for God relate to our erotic love? Should it? Are they separate categories or different expressions of a similar emotion? Judaism has historically been this world-oriented. Through the mitsvot, the Jew has sanctified the mundane. This has been an expression -- perhaps the expression -- of love for God.

The second paragraph of the Shema (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) presents a naive case for reward and punishment. Performing or refraining from the mitsvot is not a simple act. And often by performing some, we are omitting others. And vice versa. As evil, destiny, and freedom are among the most difficult of concepts to apply to the phenomena of the world, we need an opportunity to examine them in the context of our affirmation of God. Perhaps this is such a place. For the simple concept of reward and punishment presented in the prayer is but one of a variety of ways to interpret God's response to man's actions. Rather

than "tit for tat," God might better be understood as uninvolved, a haphazard reactor, a mysterious correspondent, or an absurd clown. The worshipper should not feel compelled to choose one role for all time. The contrast between the prayer text and a poetic selection can serve as an indication of the elasticity of our interpretation of God. God and His creation of the mitsvet are not the only enigmas. For all of the psychological experimentation in the area of motivation, we still have few inklings why people do or abstain from particular acts. The kabalat ol mitsvet, the acceptance of the yoke of the commandments, places a formalized behavioral structure before man and tells him this is "the way." The implications and complexity of the prayer could gain a great deal from further development.

The third paragraph of the Shema, which the rabbis called Yetsiat Mitsraim, the going forth from Egypt, commences with a commandment for fringes. Whether or not we interpret the commandment literally, we need continual reminders to instruct us, reinforce us, give us identification. Without them, we too easily become idolaters, distorted value seekers, inadequate communicators.

The Shema is prefaced and followed by several significant prayers that I have included in my outline. The initial preface is the Borehu, the Call to Worship, the gathering together and asserting the need and significance of praising God, man, and self. This is followed

by a benediction (which is different in the morning and evening service) expressing God's control over nature -- of which man is but a part. This has been for centuries a favorite spot for including poetical inserts. They have taken their names from the benediction into which they fit. In the morning, it is the Yotser Or and hence Yotsrot inserts, and in the evening it is the Ma'ariv Aravim, hence they are called the Ma'aravot inserts. Nature and its workings are popular themes in poetry. The relation between these phenomena and God are expressed through ideas, sound, melody, movement.

The second and final benediction prior to the Shema also has variations and different names in the morning and evening services (Ahavah Rabah in the morning worship; Ahavat Olam in the evening worship). However, they deal with the same theme and actually possess many words and phrases in common. The theme is God's special love and mercy for Israel. The Torah is the symbol of Israel's chosenness. The benediction concludes with the phrase "who chooses His People Israel with love" in the morning service, and "who loves His People Israel" in the evening service. These benedictions together with the first paragraph of the Shema, the Ve'ahavta, deal with what is perhaps the most common theme(s) of poetry and of life -- the nature and mystery of love. By placing selections of poetry in proximity to these prayers, we can examine nuances and expressions of love, in its divine and human

forms.

The Shema is followed by one benediction in the morning and two in the evening service. At both times, it is accompanied by an affirmation of its truth (Emet veyatsiv in the morning and Emet ve'emunah in the evening). Together with the third paragraph of the Shema, Yetsiat mitsraim, the concluding benediction develops the theme of God's redemptive capacities: He is the one who brought us up out of the servitude of Egypt. Appropriately, the section after the Shema is entitled Geulah which means redemption. The historical memory blends into a variety of contemporary settings. By studying the past and seeing ourselves as historical Israel, we relive and recreate our faith. We project these archetypes into the future -- the submission to Pharaoh, the crossing of the Red Sea, the forty years of wandering, the settlement in the Promised Land. We consciously contrast our trials with those of our forebears. The Emet veyatsiv concludes the Shema of the morning service. In the evening, the Emet ve'emunah is followed by the Hashkivenu, which appeals to God for a good night's rest and for the privilege of waking to see yet another day. In the prayer, God is referred to as a shield, a guard, a savior, a king. The images of guardianship and security intertwine within the prayer.

For me, the second rudimentary aspect of Jewish worship, the Amidah or the Tefilah, as it is sometimes called, follows after the Shema. On the Shabat, it consists of

seven benedictions with one special benediction replacing the intermediary petitionary thirteen that are recited on week days. Each of these seven benedictions does present possibilities of insertion. Since Reform worship is confined generally to Shabat worship, it could effectively be argued that the Amidah of Shabat be restructured to include the intermediary benedictions, standing by themselves, with poems, or as expressed exclusively through contemporary poetry. Although I have chosen within the context of the following anthology to exclude such material for reasons of economy -- this seems to me an innovative idea worthy of experimentation.

The first benediction of the Amidah, the Avet, roots the Jew in an historical context. Our God is the God of our fathers as well as our own. As God related in a distinctive fashion to each of the patriarchs, so our relationship with Him will differ from all His other relationships. He will reveal different aspects of Himself to us, and we will respond in our unique fashion. God shows this abundance of love and mercy, in part on account of Zechut avot, the merits of the Fathers.<sup>12</sup> His commitment to us has been built over the millennia; we are a continuation of Israel (Shalshelet hakabalah), but in each generation, we, Israel, are unique as is God, thus producing fluid and dynamic relationships.

The Gevurot benediction has troubled me for a long time. Its overall clarity is obscured by the recurring

phrase mechayeh hametim (who causes the dead to live).

The Reform and Reconstructionist Sidurim omit the phrase.<sup>13</sup>

Although deletion is a tenable solution -- it is not an exclusive solution. Indeed mechayeh hametim has jarred me -- but it has continually directed me away from literalism and has motivated me to seek metaphorical interpretations. Not only does the natural order -- of which we are a part -- go through cycles of birth, death, and decay -- but also the inner life of man exhibits these patterns. God enlivens us who through living are dying. Life and death are wrestling within each of us always. We are continually in the process of dying and being reborn. The tension between these forces accounts for our continual change; we are never the same. We impose more continuity on our lives than is necessarily there. Though we relive our yesterdays and anticipate our tomorrows, our movements are variations on a theme. They are not mere repetitions. Subtly at first, and then more overtly, we become what we were not.

Needless to say, my interpretation bears no relation to the original Sitz im Leben of the prayer. Equally obvious, my intention was nothing of the sort. I have sought to refashion the words of prayer to speak to my situation. As to its original meaning, there appears to be convincing evidence that mechayeh hametim refers to the Pharasaic belief in resurrection of the body. Abrahams maintains that it may have been introduced into the Amidah

during the reign of John Hyrcanus.<sup>14</sup>

The third benediction, Kedushat hashem, is filled with mystery. In it, we proclaim God's holiness. The benediction consists, in part, of Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple<sup>15</sup> and Ezekiel's vision of the heavenly chariot.<sup>16</sup> The eternity of God's presence and existence is developed within this prayer -- Adonai yimloch le'olam vaed<sup>17</sup> -- as it was in the Gevurot. The awe and mystery are conveyed by sounds and rhythms. Historically, the piyutim that were inserted here became known as Gevurot.

The fourth benediction, which replaces the daily intermediate benedictions, is a sanctification of the Shabat. It consists of some common and some different material in the evening and morning services. In the Friday evening service, the middle benediction consists of three paragraphs Atah kidashta, Vayechullu Elohim, and Retseh. The first is a description of God's sanctification of the seventh day. He has caused it to stand apart from the other days of the week. This is followed by the second part, the Vayechullu Elohim, which is a biblical quote (Genesis 2:1-3) describing the nature of God's "resting" on the seventh day. Heschel emphasized that although God created the heaven and earth in the first six days, He left His most creative activity for the seventh day. On Shabat God created menuchah -- rest -- an active art form.<sup>18</sup> The model presented is imitatio dei. As God sought creative rest on the seventh day, so should man

seek to develop serenity, peace, and repose at this time. The Retsch section is identical in the evening and morning services. It is an appeal to God to look with favor on His People's rest and their desire for sanctification through commandments and Torah. The prayer entreats God to create satisfaction and happiness in His workings. He is further besought to help His People to serve Him truthfully. In both the evening and morning versions, the conclusion is an assertion of God's being the sanctifier of the Shabat. It remains for us "modern secularized" Jews to interpret how we might become sanctifiers of the Shabat as well.

The morning recitation of the intermediate benediction begins with a condensed, telescoped view of the paradigm of revelation, Moses at Sinai. It is entitled Yismach Moseh, Moses rejoiced. Moses, the model Jew, prophet, and leader, rejoiced in the Torah. Not only do we rejoice in "the Book" per se, but in sharing and communicating the ideas derived from Torah, shaping the values we apply from Torah, and the art of Jewish living that Torah inspires us towards. Torah is simultaneously a direction, an identity, and a source of learning.

The intermediate benediction continues with Veshamru, a declarative statement of Israel's guarding the Shabat as a sign of its eternal covenant with God (Exodus 31:16-17). It continues by describing Israel's activity as a repetition of divine activity. Following the benediction



is Velo Netato which is a sweeping particularistic claim: He gave the Shabat to us, Israel, exclusively and He did it with love. God chose Israel to celebrate with Him the remembrance of creation. The Shabat morning intermediate benediction is then concluded by the Retseh discussed above. The themes of God's choosing Israel, Israel's following God's precedents, salvation, sanctification, rest, satisfaction -- all intertwine within the basic thrust of the liturgical piece. A variety of poetic materials could be used here to accentuate themes or contrast ideas and language.

The final three benedictions express appreciation to God. The Avodah benediction presents some difficulty for me. It beseeches God to look with favor on Israel and those who pray on Her behalf. Whereupon comes the difficulty for me: A desire for God to cause His spirit to return to Zion and to restore His sacrificial cult as well. I can accept Zion being treated literally as Erets Yisrael or in a figurative sense as the community of Jews or within some contexts as mankind. However, I cannot ask for His return if I do not sense His departure. Of greater importance to the internal dynamic of the benediction, how are we to interpret the sacrificial cult? The editors of the various editions of the Union Prayer Book chose to eliminate the prayer in its entirety. This was done out of deference for modern man's sensibilities. Flesh and blood sacrifices would be accepta-

ble to few. As Rubenstein points out, however, our uncomfortable reaction to such "primitive" notions does not in any fashion displace the deep psychological and religious insights that sacrifice provides.<sup>19</sup> However, since it is a practice so anxiety-inducing for modern man, it may be prudent to provide a more unifying and uplifting type of worship experience. Not that horror, lust, and greed do not have a place in worship as in life. Rather, there are more functional outlets, as for example in the Kadish, for these feelings.

While eliminating the references to sacrifice, the editors of the Reconstructionist Sabbath Prayer Book reworked the Avodah benediction in a brilliant fashion: "Accept Thy people Israel, O Lord our God, and receive their prayer with gracious love. May the worship of Thy people Israel be acceptable to Thee at all times."<sup>20</sup> The ideas implicit within this interpretation have parallels at least as early as Rabbi Yehudah b. Levi who explained: "The prayers were instituted to replace the daily sacrifice."<sup>21</sup>

The sixth benediction, the Hoda'ah, is a paean of thanks for God's wondrous deeds. It reaffirms our commitment to God: "We thank you who are Adonai, our God and the God of our fathers for all time. You are the rock of our lives and the shield of our salvation."<sup>22</sup> The benediction contains the reminder that our lives are in God's hands, in His care, and under His ultimate control.

It expresses the amazement and joy of knowing how good it is that God is merciful and filled with loving kindness.

The seventh and final benediction has two forms, Sim shalom, the longer version which is recited in the morning, and Shalom rav, the abbreviated form which appears in the evening service. The thrust of the prayer is straightforward in Shalom rav. The blessing of peace is the ultimate wish that Israel places before God continually. And would that He saw fit to fulfill that prayer more often. In its longer version, several related themes are spun off from the idea of blessing. Although the items are a virtual grocery cart of variety, their net effect is infinitely more. Through the melody and movement of the words, I have long sensed a profound joy from this benediction.

These prayers, the Shema and the Amidah, are essential to Jewish worship. So is the Alenu.<sup>22</sup> Its ideas point to what is perhaps the central paradox of Judaism: simultaneous particularism and universalism. Whether one utilizes the bowdlerized Union Prayer Book version<sup>23</sup>, or the traditional text<sup>24</sup>, one senses the tension. God has chosen Israel but this choosing has ultimately broader ramifications. God starts within a context and His ambition and ego grow. How the earth is going to be repaired<sup>25</sup> remains the central question. The prayer serves to heighten one's awareness and poses alternatives for contributing towards its fulfillment. What the Lord will be like at that time

and what values He will reflect could be suggested through a variety of poetic materials.

Effective worship must deal with the human situation in toto. Worship as elemental drama must reflect life as elemental drama. Although we have in the already analyzed prayers, references to mortality and death, these issues have not been confronted head on. This last essential rubric of my service outline deals in a paradoxical fashion with death. The Kadish, like the Alenu and several other prayers, has a fascinating history of its own. It is considered by some scholars<sup>26</sup> to have originally been a prayer of the Bet Hamidrash. It has become the doxology par excellence of the synagogue.<sup>27</sup> And within the Union Prayer Book it has been given the singular connection with mourning. Its paradox and irony lie in its not mentioning death explicitly. But in tone, it does suggest death and mortality since these facts contrast vividly with God's eternity. Our responses to death are multifaceted -- reverence and blasphemy, horror and calm, acceptance and rejection.

To this essential core outline of worship I add a few prayers that I feel less decided about, but consider important within a Shabat worship context. Two of these symbolic activities originally were intended for the home. They have been brought into the synagogue and have found wide acceptance there. Although their incorporation within the synagogue raises the danger of over-use or abuse of their sym-

bolism and metaphor, it can be argued that they are mood-setting activities designed to distinguish and set apart the Shabat. These rituals are the kindling of the lights and the drinking of the wine. The images are evocative and archetypal. Many of the representations and moods associated with these activities can be developed further and adumbrated with poetic insertions. For example, the glow of the tapers connotes the beginning of sacred time, an outflow of divine and human warmth, responsiveness, and protection. The cup of wine is an image of the fullness of life, the sanctification of time, rejoicing over another fulfilled week, a good business deal, a successful trial, a good operation, the performance of a mitsvah.

The Torah service is another of these symbolic activities. However, it is simultaneously much more. It is both the revelation of God's word and a teaching-learning situation. Within the liturgy, the Torah is the tree which we seek to grab hold of. It is, perhaps, the most dramatic ritual within the worship setting. Through Torah, our tradition lives and revelation is an active process. The Torah contains our history, our identity, our values, our aspirations.

The supplications, Tachanunim, are from a traditional standpoint an unconventional insertion from the daily service that I would like to suggest within the Shabat setting. Customarily, these are omitted on Shabat be-

cause tradition forbids the recitation of petitionary prayer at this time. However, within the traditional setting man worships during the entire week. In a Reform setting, at least at present, worship is a once a week activity (at best). This different situation might well call for a different perspective on petitionary prayer. I suggest a harkening back to the time when the Tachanunim were not a fixed section of prayer, but rather a time when man poured out his supplications to God. I think that the Tachanunim could be refashioned into a period of non-verbal, non-reading activity with possible musical experimentation.

Another area in desperate need of experimental development is the preparation for prayer, the Hachanah letefilah. Our worship, like our lives, is often regrettably transitionless. When we prepare ourselves for worship and pray to be able to pray, we may find a more conducive setting and mood for worship. And we may, in fact, be better able to worship. The difficulty of establishing the bridges of transition is intensified when we realize that people are both coming from different experiences and moods in addition to looking in a variety of directions for the fulfillment of their aims. To combine the individual strivings into a unified orchestra with individual cognizance of group and self is a rather staggering problem. People cannot be dragged into the service; the lines of introduction have to be particular

and universal. Preparatory prayer has been utilized by the ancient sect of Chasidim who spent an hour preparing themselves for worship.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, I have found the half-, or Chatsi-kadish, to be an enjoyable and flexible liturgical piece: singable, chantable, sayable. It also adds order to the worship by functioning as a transitional statement between major rubrics of worship such as the Shema and the Amidah.

I have assembled a few sample worship services below to show how I envision applying the anthology and enhancing the elasticity and spontaneity of our worship. The divisions of the outline correspond to sections in the anthology. Of course, many poems are suitable for more than one area of insertion. At times, I have attempted to indicate this. We may find that some of the poems are not suitable for our worship. Or we may find that some of the prayers are no longer what we sought to be praying. But together, with one another, and with God, we shall experiment.

It remains for us the worshippers to decide how much poetry within worship is helpful, enjoyable, and meaningful. It also remains for the worshippers to determine how to maximize the use of the poetic material. Some poems are best when read to a group, some should be recited together, others read responsively. Some should be seen and not heard, some sung, some danced to, and possibly some should not be seen. In most cases they should be prayed

and we the worshippers, if we can, should strive to become the poems and prayers.

OUTLINE FOR SHABAT EVENING SERVICE

- I. Candlelighting= Hadlakat hanerot
- II. Preparation for Prayer= Hachanah letefilah
- III. The Call to Worship= Borchu
- IV. The Shema and its blessings
  - A. Creation  
The One who brings on the night= Ma'ariv Aravim
  - B. Revelation  
The eternal love= Ahavat olam
  - C. The Shema Itself
    - (1. Deut. 6:4-9. Ve'ahavta
    - (2. Deut. 11:13-21. Ve'hayah im shamrah
    - (3. Num. 15:37-41. Vayomer Adonai el Mosheh
  - D. Redemption  
True and trustworthy= Emet va'emunah
  - E. Cause us to lie down= Hashkivenu
- V. Half-Kadish= Chatsi-kadish
- VI. The standing prayer= The Amidah
  - A. The Fathers= Avot
  - B. Strength= Gevurot
  - C. Sanctification of God= Kedushat hashem
  - D. Sanctification of the Shabat= Kedushat hayom
  - E. Acceptance of worship= Avodah
  - F. Thanksgiving= Hoda'ah



- G. Blessing of Peace= Shalom rav
- VII. Supplications= Tachanunim
- VIII. Prayer over the wine= Kidush
- IX. Adoration= Alenu
- X. Memorial Prayer= Kadish

#### OUTLINE FOR SHABAT MORNING SERVICE

- I. Preparation for prayer= Hachanah letefilah
- II. The Call to Worship= Berehu
- III. The Shema and its blessings
  - A. Creation
    - Fashioner of Light= Yotser or
  - B. Revelation
    - Love of God for Israel= Ahavah rabah
  - C. The Shema Itself
    - 1. Deut. 6:4-9. Ve'ahavta
    - 2. Deut. 11:13-21. Vehayah im shamoah
    - 3. Numbers 15:37-41. Vayomer Adonai el Mosheh
  - D. Redemption
    - True and Enduring= Emet veyatsiv
- IV. Half Kadish= Chatsi-kadish
- V. The Standing Prayer= The Amidah
  - A. The Fathers= Avot
  - B. Strength= Gevurei
  - C. Sanctification of God= Kedushat Chashem
  - D. Sanctification of the Shabat= Kidushat hayom
    - 1. Moses was happy= Yismach Mosheh

2. And they observed= Veshamru

3. And You did not give it= Velo netate

4. Our God and God of our Fathers grant= Retsch

E. Acceptance of worship= Avedah

F. Thanksgiving= Hodaiah

G. Blessing of Peace= Sim Shalom

VII. Supplication= Tachanunim

VIII. Terah Service= Keriat Terah

IX. Adoration= Alenu

X. Memorial Prayer= Kadish

### Some Sample Services.

Example #1.

Shabat Evening.

I. Regular (meaning without poetic insert).

II. Hachanah letefilah

Stephen Crane's Collected Poems, #24.

I saw a man pursuing the horizon  
Round and round they sped.  
I was disturbed at this.  
I accosted the man.  
"It is futile," I said,  
"you can never--"  
"You lie," he cried,  
And ran on.<sup>29</sup>

III. - IX. regular

X. Kadish

Stephen Spender's Poems of Dedication,

You were born; must die; were loved; must love;  
Born naked; were clothed; still naked walk  
Under your clothes. Under your skin you move  
Naked: naked under acts and talk

The miles and hours upon you feed.  
They eat your eyes out with their distance.  
They eat your death out with lost lost significance.  
There is one fate beneath those ignorances  
These flesh and bone parcels in which you're split  
O Thing of skin and words hanging on breath:  
Harlequin skeleton, it  
strums on your gut such songs and merry dances  
of love, of loneliness, of life being death.<sup>30</sup>

Example #2

Shabat Evening

I. Candlelighting.

David Einhorn, "In Soft Moss, Muted Steps."

In soft, muted steps.  
A whole week of Sabbath rest.

You light candles every night--  
Your face in rosy light.

Between the green pine tree boughs  
the blue of God's blue roof top shows.

There too someone lights Sabbath tapers  
on your face blue shadows vapor.

Some sit, keeping watch,  
waiting for a wonder night.<sup>31</sup>

II. Omit

III. - VII. regular

VIII. Alenu

W.S. Merwin, "The Present."

The walls join hands and  
It is tomorrow:  
The birds clucking to the horses, the horses  
Doing the numbers for the hell of it,  
The numbers playing the calendars,  
The saints marching in,  
It seems only yesterday,

when what

I keep saying to myself is  
Take a leaf from the fire, open

Your hand, see  
Where you are going  
When what I am trying to find is  
The beginning,  
In the ashes  
A wing, when what we are looking for  
In each other  
Is each other,  
The stars at noon,  
while the light worships its blind god.<sup>32</sup>

X. regular

Example #3

Shabat Morning.

I. Preparation for Prayer.

Tagore, Untitled.

This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord-- strike, strike  
at the root of penury in my heart.  
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bring  
knees before insolent might.  
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily  
trifles.  
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy  
will with love.<sup>33</sup>

II- III. regular.

IV. Shema

Ve'ahavta or Ahavah rabah

Neil Weiss, "Heaven."

Love is hidden in heaven  
because that's all there is...  
It's like a page of asterisks  
instead of print-- you guess  
a meaning and then go on  
with the story proper.  
But it is a teaser-- I mean,  
what all those people do  
behind the stars. It's something  
more wild than anything  
we can think about without

going up in smoke and fire---  
all the nakedness and heat  
of shining, clasping beings  
too much for us. We weep  
with deepest joy just when  
a beauty drops her clothes  
and stands there for a moment---  
don't touch the contours!  
or they will disappear....  
All the same, I deeply wish  
our writers used less analysis 34  
and went back to some asterisks.

V. - X. regular

Example #4

Shabat morning service

I. emit

II. regular

III. Shema

Yotser or.

E.E. Cummings, #65

i thank You God for this most amazing  
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,  
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth  
day of life and of love and wings;and of the gay  
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing  
breathing any -- listed from the no  
of all nothing -- human merely being  
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and  
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)35

V. - IX. regular

X. Kadish.

Howard Nemerev's "Unscientific Postscript."

There is the world, the dream, and the one law.  
The wish, the wisdom, and things as they are.  
Inside the cave the burning sunlight showed  
A shade and forms between the light and shade,  
Neither real nor false nor subject to belief:  
If unfleshed, boneless also, not for life  
or death or clear idea. But as in life  
Reflexive, multiple, with the brilliance of  
The shining surface, an orchestral flame.  
It is not to believe, the love or fear  
Or their profoundest definition, death:  
But fully as orchestra to accept,  
Making an answer, even if lament  
In measured dance, with the whole instrument.<sup>36</sup>

- 1 See page 5, above.
- 2 See pages 5 and 6, above.
- 3 One is reminded of Tertullian's declaration: "Credo quia absurdum est."
- 4 Mikraet Gedolot, Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 5 Ibid., Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 6 Ibid., Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 7 Ibid., Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 8 Perush Hatorah Rashbam, Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 9 B. Talmud, Berachot 6a.
- 10 Devarim Rabah, 2:31.
- 11 Hertz, The Authorized Daily Prayerbook, p.263.
- 12 The concept of Zeehut avot contains aspects of righteousness and sin. Cf., Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 170-98.
- 13 Union Prayer Book, I, 19, 33, 44. Sabbath Prayer Book pp.24, 126.
- 14 Abrahams, A Companion to the Daily Prayerbook, p. 59.
- 15 Isaiah 6:3.
- 16 Ezekiel 3:12.
- 17 Psalms 146:10.
- 18 Heschel, The Sabbath, p. 22.
- 19 Rubenstein, The Religious Imagination, pp. 1.ff.
- 20 Sabbath Prayer Book, pp. 48-9.
- 21 B. Talmud, Berachot 26b.
- 22 Of particular interest is the history of the Alenu. Cf. in particular: Hertz, The Authorized Daily Prayerbook, pp. 86f.; Arzt, Justice and Mercy, pp. 180f.; Martin, Prayer in Judaism, pp. 143f.

- 23 Union Prayer Book, I, 71.
- 24 Hertz, The Authorized Daily Prayerbook, pp.208-10.
- 25 See the Union Prayer Book, I, 71: "We pray for the day when... corruption and evil will give way to purity and goodness..."
- 26 Cf. Kohler in Jewish Encyclopedia, VIII, 401; Martin, Prayer in Judaism, pp. 145f.
- 27 Petuchowski, Guide to the Prayerbook, p.34.
- 28 Mishnah, Berachot, 5:1.
- 29 See p. 57.
- 30 See p. 172.
- 31 See p. 46.
- 32 See p. 109.
- 33 See p. 122.
- 34 See p. 105.
- 35 See p. 72.
- 36 See p. 168.



ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY

HADLAKAT HANEROT

CANDLELIGHTING

## IN SOFT MOSS, MUTED STEPS

In soft moss, muted steps,  
a whole week of Sabbath rest.

You light candles every night —  
your face in rosy light.

Between the green pine tree boughs  
the blue of God's blue roof top shows.

There too someone lights Sabbath tapers —  
on your face blue shadows vapor.

So we sit, keeping watch,  
waiting for a wonder night.

Through the forest a rustle goes,  
the sky splits apart and glows.

In soft moss, muted steps,  
a whole week of Sabbath rest.

You light candles every night —  
your face in rosy light.

[Einhorn, "In Soft Moss, Muted Steps," in Betsky,  
Onions and Cucumbers and Plums, #6]

Einhorn, examining some of the symbolisms inherent in the ritual of candlelighting, draws upon imitatio dei using the stars of the firmament as the archetype. He is able to evoke the feelings of comfort and warmth associated with this practice. Lighting candles is a means for us to join in the creative process of sacred time and sacred being.

## SOFTLY LET US ALL VANISH

Softly let us all vanish  
just as the evening awakes;  
stars grow golden with light,  
riding away with the night.

Let us be like the stars,  
then we will all swim away.  
Softly, lest anyone hear —  
children still die of fear.

(Landau, "Softly Let Us All Vanish," in  
(Betsky, Onions, and Cucumbers and Plums, #29)

Let us vanish into ourselves and into our prayers. Let  
us vanish into the Shabat and into the candle light. Van-  
ishing is not only a change in place but a change in being.  
Vanishing connotes a change in relationships in addition.

HACHANAH LETEFILAH

PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

## THE HOLY BALSHEMTOV

The holy Balshemtov walked through the fields,  
walked at dawn through the cold fields.  
From the north the winds were blowing,  
cold and frosted the winds were blowing,  
and the cold began to freeze his limbs,  
and with frozen limbs  
the holy Balshemtov opened his lips  
and aloud he began his singing.  
Thus were his opened lips  
singing, singing, singing:  
"How blessed is he that has been favored  
once to be touched by Your wind.  
How blessed am I that I have been favored  
to freeze in the cold of Your wind;  
how blessed am I and how blessed and blessed,  
how blessed and blessed and blessed."

And the frosty air he thirstily drank  
and once more into deep meditation sank.

And little by little in the sky emerged  
a sun so flaming and large  
that it became Gehenna-hot.  
From his face the sweat drops fell  
and in the burning field  
no breeze blew at all.  
But suddenly over the burning field  
the Balshemtov spread his call;  
thus the Balshemtov was singing,  
praise to the Creator singing:  
"For cold and for heat, for sun and for rain,  
for day and for night, be You praised.  
For all that You send toward each man  
praised be You, praised be You, praised,  
and blessed am I that I am now burning,  
in Your fires burning.  
And if I am favored, and You have fated  
that I fall to Your earth, my thirst unsated,  
how blessed am I and how blessed and blessed  
and blessed and blessed and blessed."

(Landau, "The Holy Balshemtov," in Betsky,  
Onions and Cucumbers and Plums, #18).

Landau wants us to focus our consciousness on the several levels of God's ongoing creation: light and darkness, heat and cold . . . For each of these and for the mysteriousness of the total creation which God mechadesh bechol yom, renews daily, Landau's Baal Shem responds with "Blessed." And so ought we to try. Of course, many of us have lost -- or simply lack the spiritual resiliency of a Baal Shem Tov. That ought not to mean that we should remove ourselves from such spiritual exercise. The Baal Shem Tov is a model we can grab hold of for inspiration.

### THE TWIG

A man plants a stick,  
Pats the dirt  
And says, Mine.  
Now he is committed,  
Let him pray for the sun and rain.  
Each night he covers miles  
For the sake of that naked twig,  
And in the morning  
Runs to it as fast.  
He is worn out with worry  
And waits for his last days.  
But how that stick  
Branches in his mind—  
A mighty tree,  
Full of shade,  
Where years later he can sit  
In the middle of the day  
As the sun grows warm.

[Rolnick, Shapiro (tn), Howe and Greenberg, (ed.),  
A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, p.165].

The attachment and devotion of the man to the twig he planted has an apt parallel in God's choosing Israel and revealing His Torah to Israel. Like the man who cared for the twig, God must weary Himself providing and sustaining what He has planted. And, like the planter of the twig, perhaps He is motivated not by what we are so much as by what we can become, what we might do as a people and a spiritual entity for all mankind.



## *The Voice of God*

I SOUGHT to hear the voice of God,  
And climbed the topmost steeple.  
But God declared: "Go down again,  
I dwell among the people."

(Newman, Trumpet in Adversity, p.57).

Often we insist on seeing God as something or someone remote, high, and mighty. But God need not be somewhere beyond -- that is, if He is doing His job. He's here -- in you, in me, in us. But knowing where He is is not knowing where we are. Knowing where we are is knowing where He is. Presumably, that is why we come to sehul -- to find out where we are.

## *There's No Room for God in My Trousers*

All right, Deity, let's agree  
That by your standards I'm no good.  
I've read that book of yours  
But I'm not in the mood for God -  
Have you made a film I can see?

Tell me this: is there anything,  
I don't care what, but anything you can do  
Rather well, like sing  
Or rock-'n'-roll or screw,  
Or *anything* I can grasp as you?

Is there? If there's *anything*,  
Man to man, we'll be there  
Making your plateful of sixpences ring,  
And no-one'll stop us -  
Not you - nor the Coppers.

(Baldwin, Death on a Live Wire, p.66).

What we really crave is to talk with God. And not merely from or within the context of a special book placed in our laps. We want to open our hearts and our mouths. But we hold back. We want to tell Him what we think and feel. But it's so damn hard. And furthermore, we aren't sure He'll listen, or we aren't sure His listening will help. But more weighty than these doubts, we aren't sure we'll (be able to) listen to ourselves, or one another -- and most important -- to His response.

IV

We, divided, join again in belief.

We feel the indivisible knots which bind  
Each separately: the ends which blind  
The eye revolving inwardly in grief.

Each circular life gnaws round its little leaf  
Of here and now. Each is tied within its kind.  
Also nature outside within the mind  
Tempts with its tree each one to be a thief.

Mortals are not aeons, they are not space,  
Not empires, not maps: they have only  
Bodies, and graves. Yet all the past, the race,  
Knowledge and memory, are unfurled  
Within each separate head, grown lonely  
With time, growing, shedding, the world.

(Spender, Spiritual Explorations, p.42).

Coming together to pray as a group is the essential act for Jewish worship. It is an expression of our communal focus. Our group being is more than the sum of all the individuals; we are mutually interdependent. Our coming together to worship is a positive assertion, a preface to an act of faith. Although "Knowledge and memory, are unfurled/Within each separate head," their depth and significance lie in being shared with those with whom we worship.

We

We are dumb.  
If someone's prayer is lost on the way,  
Or his uprooted heart goes astray,  
We give it a home.

We are mute.  
If someone at last finds his road,  
And meets there he knows not whose God,  
We tell him the truth.

[Dobrushin, Leftwich (tr.), The Golden Peacock,  
p.158]

Developing an ability to pray makes us mute in the normal sense of the term, i.e., we are rendered incapable of speaking words clearly. In praying, we learn how empty and inappropriate our words and speech are for one another, how much the more so for God. Finding a road and a home -- our discovery can be conveyed through a sparkling eye, a deep grin, selfless acts, and newly created languages.

III

*In the desert*

*I saw a creature, naked, bestial,  
Who, squatting upon the ground,  
Held his heart in his hands,  
And ate of it.*

*I said, "Is it good, friend?"*

*"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;*

*"But I like it*

*Because it is bitter,*

*And because it is my heart."*

[ Follett (ed.), The Collected Poems of Stephen Crane, p.5 ]

At times, we all appear like the creature who "enjoys" consuming his own heart and his own prayers. However, we can utilize our distinguishing characteristic -- our propensity to pray. Through prayer we may be able to deal directly with our bitterness -- which we all possess by virtue of being human in an inhuman world. The heart can be viewed as the point where worship begins. By consuming the heart, we are denying that mechanism its ability to find a way to worship.

XXIV

*I saw a man pursuing the horizon;  
Round and round they sped.  
I was disturbed at this;  
I accosted the man.  
"It is futile," I said,  
"You can never——"*

*"You lie," he cried,  
And ran on.*

[Follett (ed), The Collected Poems of  
Stephen Crane, p.26].

The individual of prayer should be -- although he is not always -- cognizant of the grandiose nature of his claim: he asserts that he prays to a Listening God. His is the absolute paradox: the bravado of a true believer who must believe. Man reaches upward, outward, pursuing the ineffable. His aspiration becomes the search itself as opposed to the act of finding.

It matters little whether Stephen Crane's man is a projection of himself or a caricature of the man of faith. It matters significantly for the man of faith to see the possibility of his quest and to continue pursuing it.

TEXT

We all—  
stones, people, little shards of glass in the sun,  
tin cans, cats and trees—  
are illustrations to a text.

In some places they don't need us.  
In some places they only read the text—  
the pictures fall off like shriveled parts.

When a death-wind blows in the deep grass  
and clears off from the west all the pictures  
that the clouds set up—then  
night comes and reads the stars.

[Zeitlin, Whitman (tr. and ed.), An Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry, p.135]

Being unneeded is not being unnecessary. Each of us is an embellishment and hopefully an embodiment of the prayers we internalize. It is a pity many people only read the text. The text must be elucidated by the commentaries of which the illustrations are an integral part. How else are we to become our prayers?

The blowing "death-wind" might be a metaphor for the Sho'ah -- the systematic destruction of our people during the Second World War. Ironically, the Holocaust prompted many of us who remained to reexamine the text and become Jews. No one deters us from studying the text (reading the stars) nor from choosing previous illustrations that illuminate the shades of our doubt and questioning.

# ADVANCING

Simply to think about some things  
Is to accomplish them; you turn your head  
And the earth vanishes  
And what you see is a permeated heaven

Of stars and lattices and everything flourishing  
And you have accomplished it all  
Almost by accident, as if while lifting

Enormous weights from cloud plateau to cloud plateau  
Your thought had somehow turned to something solid  
And at last you felt the wholesome atmosphere

of doubt

(Benedikt, The Body, p.54)

"Advancing" links thought with act. ("Simply to think about some things/ Is to accomplish them"). Our actions reflect our values in a concrete fashion. The search for values is an integral part of worship.

Particularly insightful here is the accidental and haphazard nature of the "advance." We modern and nimble "sophisticates" stumble by accident -- or "almost by accident." As important as "the find," "the truth," and "the advancement" is the continual refinement. This is only accomplished through "the wholesome atmosphere of doubt."



### Reply to a Young Poet

You say you want the poem to be absolute You,  
No crap (you say), no bilge, no flourishes.  
You want to dig to the clear source that nourishes,  
Every feeling honest, every image true.

You want the poem clean and hard as stone,  
And yet to sing and soar like a bird;  
To go back to what was in the beginning—the word,  
And strip the word to the bone.

Then will the word speak with its elemental force,  
No echo from the Past, no tampering by Art.  
I understand: Everything straight, straight from the heart!  
Of course! Of course! Of course, of course, of course!

Well, suppose you cut the poem down to a single word—let's say  
Rain:

No two rains are alike, falling out of no two skies,  
No two moments observed by no two eyes,  
Aside from all the hanky-panky in the brain.

Or say you get the poem down to the number 1:  
Even that simple 1, stared at long enough,  
Puts forth a foliage of outlandish stuff  
And dances off into the blinding sun.

So babble or grunt, hack away with a knife,  
Turn all your working hours into Judgment Days:  
You can write a poem in as many ways  
As you can live a life.

(Yellen, New and Selected Poems, p. 59).

The text of a poem or a prayer may be fixed by printers  
or those who read by rote. But its flexibility -- its  
life -- is in the interpretations and the feelings experi-  
enced during the reading.

Worship can be something other than the recitation of  
bland formulae and timeworn phrases. But we must contin-  
ually strive to worship anew and live anew. Worship is

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serving its best purpose perhaps when it helps us make our days into "Judgment Days" for ourselves.

(untitled introduction).

'And what,' said the Emperor, 'does this poem describe?'

'It describes,' said the Poet, 'the Cave of the Never-Never.'

'Would you like to see what's inside?' He offered his arm.

They stepped into the poem and disappeared for ever.

(Barker, Collected Poems, p.vii).

It is unfortunately a rare phenomenon for us to become caught up in our praying. We run through our prayers, we recite them, we speak them. We do not believe them and inexorably almost never truly practice them. Poems and prayers are meant to be lived. George Barker's introduction to his collected poems seems to me a fitting introduction to prayer itself. It opens up to us a new way of experiencing prayer with one another.

TRYING TO PRAY

This time, I have left my body behind me, crying  
In its dark thorns.  
Still,  
There are good things in this world.  
It is dusk.  
It is the good darkness  
Of women's hands that touch loaves.  
The spirit of a tree begins to move.  
I touch leaves.  
I close my eyes, and think of water.

(Wright, The Branch Will Not Break, p.42).

I am delighted that James Wright chose to call his poem, "Trying to Pray" instead of "Praying." It's simply not as easy as one might naively think. It is painful to become conditioned to pray. Perhaps that accounts for Wright's "crying" and "thorns." The poem conveys the associative fashion in which our minds jump to find things to grasp hold of and to absorb their evocative meaning. Wright contrasts the pain of a particular moment to the release and comfort he finds in praying. It is the pain and conflict that lead him to prayer.

Little Prayers, #6.

6. Lost—God help me—in a waste  
where the dusk has fallen fast  
I panic and my cowardice  
is what it always was.

No light, no guide, but now thank God  
my wet tears are welling hot  
and I can breathe in the black night  
and look about as I wait.

(Goodman, Hawkweed, p.172).

The irony of prayer is seen herein: It presupposes the nearness of God. But the fact that we have to call desperately to Him indicates that either He was not listening or we have been out of touch. There is no response, yet the one who prays, finds strength to wait and think out his plight. The waiting is, itself, a form of communication.

Although Goodman's poem is at odds with the Alenu -- I find it an expanding addition. In the stillness of waiting, I am reminded of Israel's unique selection and its joint responsibility with all peoples. The silence loses its frightfulness and has become revelatory by supplying meaning to the lost.

# INHERITANCE

How still I find it here  
in this place  
how like a lake at dawn  
a dream of Eden  
a dream rare  
untroubled  
as if the world were such a dream  
as if we never bore the scratch of storm  
never felt the wrath within  
swell into fierce imaginings and ghostly shrieks

How still here  
in this place  
because I am an arrow  
loosed from the hunter's bow  
fallen splintered in a thicket  
beyond the touch of hands

I live no more  
reflect no more on what it is  
to listen  
to sigh  
to move fingers gently over skin  
even the skin of stone

I know nothing of all these  
having inherited too much  
of soap  
and cinder  
and stillness

(Chet, unpublished).

To fulfill our needs the synagogue must become a sanctuary. Those with whom we pray must become a sanctuary. Our praying is a form of our dreaming. In prayer, we dream of how the world, of how we ourselves should be untroubled.

Our dreaming as our praying comes from external stimuli and internal denial. In such a world how can we not be troubled? How can we not crave concealment? When we have saturated our senses with all of the horrors we can bear -- we then shut out the sounds and sights.

## SELF-DECEPTION

Like one who dares not ask and tries  
to keep her mind from thinking lest  
an inquiry reveal if pressed  
that love is lost and her faith lies

is one who hopes despite all signs  
of cosmic infidelities  
discounting what his reason sees  
for comfort found in dreamed designs.

(Kaufmann, Cain and Other Poems, p.61)

There are elements of self-deception in prayer as in all things. Why should our worship be any different from the rest of our living? When it is different -- we have committed the most thorough of self-deceptions. Emanah, faith, is a continual searching and finding, doubting and discarding. When we stop searching, stop asking, we have stopped living. Similarly, when we have ceased dreaming and ceased enjoying, we have lost our ability to worship.

BORCHU

THE CALL TO WORSHIP



The Bagel

I stopped to pick up the bagel  
rolling away in the wind,  
annoyed with myself  
for having dropped it  
as it were a portent.  
Faster and faster it rolled,  
with me running after it  
bent low, gritting my teeth,  
and I found myself doubled over  
and rolling down the street  
head over heels, one complete somersault  
after another like a bagel  
and strangely happy with myself.

(Ignatow, Poems, 1934-1969, p. )

Occasionally we do stop to pick up what we have dropped  
only to find it has moved ahead. And if we want it --- we  
must pursue it. And much can be derived from the pursuit  
itself: We can create new values, experience a fulfilling  
moment, and communicate our changes.

(untitled)

The hollow of morning  
Holds my soul still  
As water in a jar

(Menashe, No Jerusalem But This, p.57).

The morning is hollow until we have assembled with one another and praised God. Simultaneously, the morning is without struggle or predetermination. Until we assemble, we are confined; after that we should try to follow our group act by reaching out with ourselves and one another.

YOTSER OR  
THE FASHIONER OF LIGHT

IX

spring omnipotent goddess thou dost  
inveigle into crossing sidewalks the  
unwary june-bug and the frivolous angleworm  
thou dost persuade to serenade his  
lady the musical tom-cat, thou stuffest  
the parks with overgrown pimply  
cavaliers and gumchewing giggly  
girls and not content  
Spring, with this  
thou hangest canary-birds in parlor windows

spring slattern of seasons you  
have dirty legs and a muddy  
petticoat, drowsy is your  
mouth your eyes are sticky  
with dreams and you have  
a sloppy body  
from being brought to bed of crocuses  
When you sing in your whiskey-voice  
the grass

rises on the head of the earth  
and all the trees are put on edge

spring,  
of the jostle of  
thy breasts and the slobber  
of your thighs  
i am so very  
glad that the soul inside me Hollers  
for thou comest and your hands  
are the snow  
and thy fingers are the rain,  
and i hear  
the screech of dissonant  
flowers, and most of all

i hear your stepping  
freakish feet  
feet incorrigible  
ragging the world,

(Cummings, Poems: 1923-1954, p.51)

65

i thank You God for most this amazing  
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,  
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth  
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay  
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing  
breathing any—lifted from the no  
of all nothing—human merely being  
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and  
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

(Cummings, Poems: 1923-1954, p.464).

67

when faces called flowers float out of the ground  
and breathing is wishing and wishing is having—  
but keeping is downward and doubting and never  
—it's april (yes, april; my darling) it's spring!  
yes the pretty birds frolic as spry as can fly  
yes the little fish gambol as glad as can be  
(yes the mountains are dancing together)

when every leaf opens without any sound  
and wishing is having and having is giving—  
but keeping is doting and nothing and nonsense  
—alive; we're alive, dear: it's (kiss me now) spring!  
now the pretty birds hover so she and so he  
now the little fish quiver so you and so i  
(now the mountains are dancing, the mountains)

when more than was lost has been found has been found  
and having is giving and giving is living—  
but keeping is darkness and winter and cringing  
—it's spring (all our night becomes day) o, it's spring!  
all the pretty birds dive to the heart of the sky  
all the little fish climb through the mind of the sea  
(all the mountains are dancing; are dancing)

(Cummings, Poems: 1923-1954, p.465).

As part of the creation, we often reflect its moods. With each spring, something within us awakens anew and refreshed. Indeed does God "bestow light to the earth and those who dwell upon it." Experiencing the freshness of spring, the hope, the blessed illusion of something new in our lives, we, too, exclaim; "How great are your works, O Lord, all of them did you make in wisdom."

*A Mountain Creed*

A MOUNTAIN flower once I spied,  
A lonely height its dwelling,  
Where winds around it wailed and sighed  
Sad stories sadly telling.

'Fair flower,' said I, 'thou all alone  
'Thy days up here art spending,  
'Now listening to the sad winds' moan  
'And now before them bending.

'When clouds and mists infold thee round  
'For many days together  
'And o'er thee weep until the ground  
'Is murky as the weather,

'I fear thy life is lone and sad,  
'Thy soul encased in sorrow,  
'Thou hast no songs to make thee glad;  
'No bees come here to borrow

'Tell me the secret of thy life,  
'Thy very soul's religion,  
'That I may know the hope and strife  
'That fill this dreary region.'

'My life is lonely as the sea,'  
It softly made reply,  
'But not so sad as seems to thee  
'Or I should quickly die.

'I live not here to pine and mourn  
'O'er what is not my making,  
'But to fulfil my fate inborn  
'And hold myself unquaking.

'Though gloomy cloud and storms of might  
'Are not forever raging,  
'And times there come of calm delight  
'My weary woes assuaging;

'Yet cloud and storm can hurt me not,  
'My joy it is not pleasure,  
'But 'tis to be, no humble lot,  
'One jewel 'mid God's treasure.'

[Shelton (ed.),  
J.M. Synge,  
Collected  
Works, pp.4-5 ]

All things verify the divine behind nature. There is an intrinsic interdependency of the natural order (Ma'aseh Bereshit), some quality which reflects -- if only by intimation -- the uniqueness of God.

Synge communicates and worships by studying nature, relating to it, and drawing inferences beyond nature itself. The Jew does the same through worship.

How can a flower be "lone and sad"? How can a man not feel "lone and sad"? At the least indirectly, the poet and worshipper sense, a purpose to what God does. For we are all part of the continuing creation.



# THE SCIENTISTS ARE MISTAKEN

The scientists are mistaken, the universe was not created eons ago.

The universe, I maintain, is created every day.

The scientists are mistaken when they claim the universe was shaped from one primeval clay, I maintain the universe is shaped every day from diverse materials with nothing in common; only the ratio of their masses, like that of the element sorrow and the element hope, makes them companions and curbstones. I much regret

the need to stand up in all humility, to challenge what is so well accepted by the experts, that the greatest of velocities is that of light. But I and my radiated flesh quite recently experienced something else whose speed exceeds even the speed of light and returns surely, not in a straight line, because of the convolutedness of creation or the perfection of the Name

and if we combine all this into a proper equation, perhaps it will explain why I refuse to believe that your voice and everything I set before myself eternally and everything that was so real and suddenly was lost was really lost forever.

And if the world has not yet been constructed from it, every day there is blessing.

[Kevner, Chyet (tr.), Mikol Haahavot, pp.11-12]

The acts of creation were not performed once for all time. As the Yetser or benediction states: "In His goodness He renews each day always the acts of creation." Creation is a continuous activity.

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MA'ARIV ARAVIM

THE ONE WHO BRINGS ON THE NIGHT

# TWILIGHTS

Twilights are children discovered behind fences,  
Twilights are the aged who cannot achieve death,  
Twilights are lamps-- the wicks already burning.  
Twilights are the eyes of inarticulate madmen,  
Twilights are letters written and torn up;  
something is easing, something perishing...  
Twilights are rings on axed-off fingers:  
blood on gold, gold on blood.  
Twilights are arms of beautiful beggar girls,  
Twilights are flags in lost battles.  
Twilights are fiddlers, while devils  
snatch the bridges from our homes...  
Twilights are windows of abandoned synagogues,  
the panes lamenting in color...  
[Stern, Blum (tr.), A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry,  
p.226]

Twilights are all of these images and more. Twilight  
worship differs from morning worship in the degree and in-  
tensity of its imagery. In offering praise to a God who  
brings on the night, we are extolling the nature of dark-  
ness, mystery, and secrets. Night is the time of dream and  
fantasy. It is a mixture of the unknown and the sought.

## ON MY WANDER FLUTE

A barefoot vagabond on a stone  
in evening gold  
casts from himself the world's dust.  
Out of the woods  
flits a bird in flight,  
and snatches the last fragment of sun.

Here is a willow near the river.

A road.  
A field.  
A quivering meadow.  
Muffled footsteps  
of hungering clouds.  
Where are the hands that shape this wonder?

Here is a lively fiddle.

What then is left to do in such an hour,  
O, my world of a thousand colors,  
except  
to gather into the knapsack of the wind  
the red loveliness  
and bring it home for evening bread.

Here is loneliness like a hill.

[Sutskever, "On My Wander Flute," in Betsky,  
Onions and Cucumbers and Plums, #1]

The wanderer is a fine evocative image for us Jews. It connotes our restlessness and our endless searching. The dust each wanderer casts off clings to him, in part, and comes to belong to him. Not only the dust becomes a part of us, so do the roads; we claim them as part of us due to our familiarity.

At dusk and in the early Shabat evening, we sanctify time and consider where we have wandered during the past week, where we might have wandered, and where we will wander during the next week.

## OVER ALL THE ROOF TOPS

Over all the roof tops  
a quiet night is posed.  
Leaning at the window  
my child stands engrossed,

gets up on his tiptoes,  
peers and peers outside;  
his face grows paler  
and his eyes grow wide.

His blond ringlets  
curl in the breeze.  
The good God alone knows  
what my child sees.

(Iceland, "Over All the Roof Tops," in  
Bestsky, Onions and Cucumbers and Plums, #5).

Reuben Iceland calls forth the identification of the child in this poem with the child within all of us. Fascination for visual stimuli -- the entire world becomes a miracle! The religious man finds awe and wonder in the world before him. It is the handiwork of God bestowed on man.

## NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

Night on the prairies;  
The supper is over -- the fire on the ground burns low;  
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets:  
I walk by myself -- I stand and look at the stars,  
which I think now I never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace.  
I admire death, and test propositions.

How plenteous! How spiritual!

I was thinking the day most splendid, till I saw what the  
not-day exhibited,  
I was thinking this globe enough, till there sprang out  
so noiseless around me myriads of other globes.  
Now, while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill  
I will measure myself by them;  
And now, touch'd with the lives of other globes, arrived  
as far along as those of the earth,  
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of  
the earth,  
I henceforth no more ignore them, than I ignore my own life,  
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or wait-  
ing to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me -- as the  
day cannot,  
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by  
death.

[Whitman, Trapp (ed.), Modern Religious Poems, pp.288-9].

The poem starts as a paean to night, illustrating its possibilities of excitement, variety, beauty. Within the poem Whitman develops analogies between day and life as well as night and death. In each case, Whitman is saying that the sum of each is more than its distinct parts. This complements the Ma'ariv aravim prayer by drawing death into God's creative developments. It, too, is an aspect of the natural world He fashioned. Death is not separate from life but an integral part of it.

AHAVAH RABAH/ AHAVAT OLAM

GREAT LOVE/ ETERNAL LOVE



# Picketing God, Or Something to Be God

We are picketing God.  
We are demanding that our lives make sense.  
We are demanding that our lives have something to do with  
everything we meet and with all time.  
We want a sense of forever.  
We are against narrowness and temporariness.  
We demand that death fall into place honestly and agreeably.  
We do not wish to be foaming fractions.  
We are tired of seeming bubbles (bubbles swiftly vanishing into  
blah indignity).  
We are again disguises that disgust with the years.  
We wish this moment to stand, somehow, always.  
We shout against degrading and sickening impermanence.  
We wish to be wretches with radiance, if wretches we have to be.  
We want clearness that has aroma in the world, warm and  
authentic, and withstanding all looking at.  
We are picketing God.

And if God isn't here to be picketed, why then we picket  
What Is,  
And say it must be God.

(Siegel, Hail, American Development, p.34).

In stark contrast to the Ahavah rabah which affirms subjective meaning and sense, I chose Eli Siegel's "Picketing God, Or Something to Be God." The feelings of love and meaning are not within us all the time (thank God for that). Incorporating daily havoc into our understanding of the world -- is a painful process we learn through the years. It is natural and good to have occasion to throw some of the chaos back at Him who created it, or at least allowed it to flourish within His creation.

For all of our protestations we know life is ephemeral as "seeming bubbles" that vanish before us. Degrading and sickening impermanence is with us to stay -- though we often have a hard time accepting it.

13. YOURS

Yours is the light that breaks forth from the dark,  
and the good that sprouts from the cleft heart of strife.

Yours is the house that opens upon the world, and the  
love that calls to the battlefield.

Yours is the gift that still is a gain when everything  
is a loss, and the life that flows through the caverns of death.

Yours is the heaven that lies in the common dust,  
and you are there for me, you are there for all.

Rabindranath Tagore

(in Trapp, Modern Religious Poems, p.33).

I feel this poem can be utilized within an affirmative Jewish experience since it describes a relationship based upon God's possession. However, it runs dangerously close to pantheism which it would have reflected if it had equated God with the world. Although Tagore is not unique in expressing this tension in his work, his manner of expression is unique.

CREDO

Laugh at all my dreams, my dearest;  
Laugh, and I repeat anew  
That I still believe in man--  
As I still believe in you.

For my soul is not yet unsold  
To the golden calf of scorn  
And I still believe in man  
And the spirit in him born.

By the passion of his spirit  
Shall his ancient bonds be shed.  
Let the soul be given freedom,  
Let the body have its bread!

Laugh, for I believe in friendship,  
And in one I still believe,  
One whose heart shall beat with my heart  
And with mine rejoice and grieve.

Let the time be dark with hatred,  
I believe in years beyond  
Love at last shall bind the peoples  
In an everlasting bond.

In that day shall my own people  
Rooted in its soil arise,  
Shake the yoke from off its shoulders  
And the darkness from its eyes.

Life and love and strength and action  
In their heart and blood shall beat,  
And their hopes shall be both heaven  
And the earth beneath their feet.

Then a new song shall be lifted  
To the young, the free, the brave,  
And the wreath to crown the singer  
Shall be gathered from my grave.

[Tchernichovsky, Ben-Serek (ed.), Poems and Poets of Israel, pp.86-7]

The belief in man as the pinnacle of God's creation --  
Ma'aseh Bereshit -- is continually called into question.  
Persistently Tchernichovsky's protagonist -- be it God addressing man, man addressing his beloved, or men addressing

one another -- invites us to laugh at man and to know simultaneously Tchernichovsky's unshakeable trust in him. In part, man does shape himself. From every perspective other than God's, faith in man borders on irony. No! Even from God's perspective, faith in man contains elements of irony.

## *Song of a Hebrew*

Working is another way of praying.  
You plant in Israel the soul of a tree.  
You plant in the desert the spirit of gardens.

Praying is another way of singing.  
You plant in the tree the soul of lemons.  
You plant in the gardens the spirit of roses.

Singing is another way of loving.  
You plant in the lemons the spirit of your son.  
You plant in the roses the soul of your daughter.

Loving is another way of living.  
You plant in your daughter the spirit of Israel.  
You plant in your son the soul of the desert.

(Abse, Poems, Golders Green, p.33)

Prayer is planting; prayer is singing; prayer is loving.  
We pray about our concerns to understand them better and to deal with them more successfully. As with planting, we must nourish our prayers. As with singing, we must pour the words and feelings out.

Like Cohen's "Song for Messiah," Abse's work offers a majestic lyricism. In both, this derives from the deceptive simplicity of the work, its straightforward structure, and the effective repetition

Our primary concerns are the raising and educating of the next generation, specifically, our own contributions, our own children. Abse has chosen the lemon to represent the Jewish son. This suggests his strength and endurance.

Being the "soul of the desert," the Jewish male's essence is tough and durable. In contrast, the Jewish daughter is epitomized by the fragrant and gentle rose. The odor and delicacy convey the subtle influence of the Jewish female.

INSPIRATION WON'T SUFFICE

Adonai,  
it is clear to me  
mankind never was your forte.  
You,  
like many artists of my acquaintance,  
are superbly gifted for the inanimate --  
able enough even where dogs and sparrows  
and kings are concerned --  
but when it comes to shaping  
the features and souls of common men,  
manifestly incompetent.  
Not that it wasn't a splendid dream  
which lay behind your ambition,  
But  
Adonai, Adonai,  
inspiration won't suffice.  
One needs Sitzfleisch, tedious discipline,  
and being Adonai,  
You had no stomach for it, I suppose  
and haven't yet troubled yourself  
to read the reviews ...

(Chyet, unpublished).

Occasionally God's use of us deserves chiding. Less often than we forget Him, He misinterprets the implication of having created us. Our chiding is no rebuke. On the contrary, we recognize -- all too well -- the hazards of His artistry. We common men are a difficult medium to fashion. There are many facets to our being. By chiding through love, we might indulge our Artist's pride. At the least, we might come to expect less from ourselves and others in the future. After all, if the Artist did not perform the ultimate creation, we ought to be more accepting of the product. We may be compelled to admit, it was not such a terrible job of creation after all.

I  
Despite this and despite this,  
despite this and despite this, too;  
for we are a stubborn people.  
The bulls of Assyria gored and trampled us  
and the jackals and hawks of Egypt tore us to bits  
and the eagles of Rome feasted upon us,  
and yet despite that and despite that--  
why not, Israel,  
despite this and despite this, too?

(Reznikoff, By the Waters of Manhattan, p.54).

Our stubbornness, Reznikoff seems to be saying in his profound manner, is integrally linked to our chosenness and our historic environments. There is something more than persistent about our stubbornness -- it actually elucidates God's abundant love for us: "On account of our fathers who trusted in you, do You choose us from all peoples and language group..." Our fathers, alluded to in the Ahavah rabah partially quoted here and more directly adulated in the Avot benediction, were also unmitigatingly stubborn as, in fact, we their descendants tend to be. Reznikoff's liturgically adaptable poem heightens the tensions of the Alenu's particularistic-universalistic confrontation. It is our stubbornness that actually sets us apart from the rest of mankind. We exhibit an unwillingness to let go of our aspirations, of separating our illusions from our realities.



PRAYER FOR MESSIAH

His blood on my arm is warm as a bird  
his heart in my hand is heavy as lead  
his eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
O send out the raven ahead of the dove

His life in my mouth is less than a man  
his death on my breast is harder than stone  
his eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
O send out the raven ahead of the dove

O send out the raven ahead of the dove  
O sing from your chains where you're chained in a cave  
your eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
your blood in my ballad collapses the grave

O sing from your chains where you're chained in a cave  
your eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
your heart in my hand is heavy as lead  
your blood on my arm is warm as a bird

O break from your branches a green branch of love  
after the raven has died for the dove

(Cohen, Selected Poems, p.4)

An inspired and inspiring poem, "Prayer for Messiah," combines several things in a singular fashion. Like so many traditional prayers, there is a fluid movement in the poem between the first person speaker and the "addressee" who freely changes between third and second person. The poem builds upon subtle repetition which is not uncommon within several prayers. The frequent use of the vocative is another common feature between Jewish prayer and this poem.

The repeated allusions to the raven and dove -- surely are inspired by the Flood Story. The birds which Noah sends

out of the ark are harbingers of the future. They are also sacrifices in lieu of man risking his life prior to some experimentation. Cohen within his poem develops a unique relationship between the raven and dove: the stronger, more powerful bird dies for the more vulnerable.

Above all, Cohen has given us a melodic love poem. It Like many love poems, its overtones are filled with visions of death as felt by such imageful words as "blood," "grave," and "death" itself. They are focused upon the human body -- "arm," "hand," "eyes," "heart," and "breast."

Certainly, this poem complements the Ahavah rabah and Ahavat olam prayers by building emotionally on the theme of love. It contrasts vividly with these by its romantic tone which, if present in the benedictions, is so subdued as to be almost imperceptible. However, mercy and compassion do balance the references to instruction in law. An intriguing parallel exists between choosing the birds and choosing Israel. As the raven's acts come to represent something for the other protagonist, so Israel's behavior means something for mankind.

My inclusion of the Tachanunim for Shabat use is predicated on a common infrequency of worship. It might be meaningful to introduce some intermediate benedictions into Shabat worship due to their lack of stress. In this context, "Prayer for Messiah" expands upon the prayer for the messianic king placed within the intermediate benedictions. Cohen's poem is a romantic and lyrical expansion of the

prayer and wish. Each one of us is the Messiah -- rather, has the potentiality of becoming messianic and drawing similar authentic characteristics from his fellowmen. It is not always so easy to recognize this within others, let alone within ourselves. Our love of God can carry expressions of appreciation for these unique gifts within ourselves and within our fellowmen.

THE SHEMA

REVELATION

We make ourselves a place apart  
Behind light words that tease and flout,  
But oh, the agitated heart  
Till someone really find us out.

'Tis pity if the case require  
(Or so we say) that in the end  
We speak the literal to inspire  
The understanding of a friend.

But so with all, from babes that play  
At hide-and-seek to God afar,  
So all who hide too well away  
Must speak and tell us where they are.

(Frost, Complete Poems of Robert Frost, p.27).

The problem with all communication -- revelation included -- is "tuning in" on our levels of listening. What's being said behind what's being said? Within the context of our worship, we affirm a God who is a "hearer of prayer." Would that we could as readily acknowledge ourselves as "hearers of prayer" or "hearkeners of revelation."

Just as we play games with one another, what keeps us from playing games with God? Nothing. When we say we cannot sense His presence, we may be saying we have blind spots, are myopic, or simply are not looking. And is God a passive agent? Are not his actions in history a puzzling game?

WORD

The word bites like a fish.  
Shall I throw it back free  
Arrowing to that sea  
Where thoughts lash tail and fin?  
Or shall I pull it in  
To rhyme upon a dish?

(Spender, The Edge of Being, p.43)

AND WHOEVER BRINGS

And whoever brings the song should buckle on a sword,  
And whoever carries the word should also carry a spear,  
And whoever comes with God—he should come as a lord  
And sweep the earth like fire.

*Lenore Marshall*

[Tabachnik, Marshall (tr.), Howe and Greenberg (ed.),  
A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, p.271]

Carrying, sustaining, and vividly communicating the religious message is a struggle that Tabachnik seeks to convey starkly by employing war imagery. The accoutrements of war -- the sword and the spear -- need not be additions, rather interpretations of the song and the word. He is emphasizing the use of instruments of worship. We might see, for example, the fire we carry as the Law, the intensity of the revelation, the warmth we feel.

Spender begins at a similar place as Tabachnik in his view of the word: It has punitive implications. Whereas

Tabachnik leaves the problem of commitment open ended (who is the "whoever?"), Spender emphasizes an intrinsic conscious freedom -- "what if I throw it back free?" Won't I remain free? -- were it not for the impact of the thoughts that lash throughout us. Spender moves beyond Tabachnik by asking summarily, once I have the word, just what ought to be done with it? With this question the Shema presents some meaningful alternatives.

IN THE BEGINNING  
WAS THE WORD

In the beginning was the word  
And then the word spread thin.  
God was present in every place  
But we did not come in.

God was there, the word was there,  
Stranded, where were we?  
Left with a blurred shadow,  
A yellowed family tree.

[Tabachnick, Marshall (tr.), in Howe and Greenberg (ed.), A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, p.271]

The word as a vehicle of communication has been a foundation within Judaism involving the Patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. Throughout our history, "the word," focused upon our perception and integration of the events of this world. The difficulties inherent in our perception and integration account for the spreading of the word. Tabachnik seems to be indicating that God and the word have been present, but we have not been inclined or have been disinclined to see and to hear. Our participation in the process of communication is an integral link in our worshipping. The dramatic high point of that communication is our uttering the first paragraph of the Shema. We are not reciting a formula; rather we are participating in the communication and affirming its centrality to our lives.



*I Struck a Diminished Seventh*

I struck a diminished seventh  
and sat down  
to wait

for the universal word

Come word

I said

azalea word

gel precipitate

while I

the primitive spindle

binding the poles of earth and air

give you

with river ease

a superior appreciation

equaling winged belief

It had almost come

I perishing for deity stood up

drying my feet

when the minor challenge was ignored

and death came over sieving me

's

(Ammons, Selected Poems, p.18)

Too often we do sit down and wait for the Word to come to us not realizing that we are the ones who need to gel and precipitate. Jewish worship is not intended as a passive entity. It does not happen to us. We happen in it. We become concerned with God in so far as we search for answers to the ultimate questions for which we have no easy answers -- indeed rarely any answers at all.

MINOTAUR AS MUSE

Saw his face through the grass,  
bell on his neck like a cow.  
I said no, but he said yes.  
Sorry I said: I have to go.  
He said lay on yourself a task.

Took my steps two at a time.  
Got inside and locked the door.  
Sat at my desk and tamed  
a poem I had read before.  
Then heard the bell ring out my name.

Now whenever wind blows,  
it's only wind rattling my door.  
But when the stillness grows,  
I hear "I am the law"  
in bells ... I feed him poems.

(Weiss, Changes of Garments, p.16)

The key phrase in the poem for me is "...Lay on yourself a task" (line 5). Man apprehends God through the sense data of his world. He extrapolates God from the data, but though he never arrives at or reaches God, he becomes excited in the process of trying to reach Him.

The brazenness of our relationship with God is two-directional. Not only have we the chutzpah to ask things of Him, but He asks them of us -- such as worshipping Him exclusively, being ethical in our dealings with others, in being different from other peoples, in laying upon ourselves a task.

*Bridges*

Between the substance  
And the form there lies  
More than the fragile  
Pupils of the eyes,  
More than the wistful  
Image of the mind,  
More than the quanta  
Of the referential sign.

Between the image  
And the mold is found  
All of the rooted  
Pregnancy of ground,  
All of the winged  
Agonies that fly  
A fertile pain  
From cloud forms  
In the sky.

Yet between  
The real and the sham  
Is but the single  
Verity I am,  
And the intuition  
That there span  
Bridges between  
The distances in man.

(Mintz, The Darkening Green, p.12).

Ruth Finer Mintz describes man as a series of polarities substance and form, image and mold, real and illusory. Our mitsvot, whether they be of traditional or homespun varieties, are intended as resolutions of these polarities. These "guidelines for action" bring us together and define us.

They are as fragile as our organs of discernment, equally subject to illusion and perceptual blindspots. That does not negate our need for them. But merely having mitsvet and articulating them is not living with them. The image of our existence might be far from the mold of our behavior.

VE'AHAVTA

AND THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

HEAVEN

Love is hidden in heaven  
because that's all there is . . .  
It's like a page of asterisks  
instead of print—you guess  
a meaning and then go on  
with the story proper.  
But it is a teaser—I mean,  
what all those people do  
behind the stars. It's something  
more wild than anything  
we can think about without  
going up in smoke and fire—  
all the nakedness and heat  
of shining, claspings beings  
too much for us. We weep  
with deepest joy just when  
a beauty drops her clothes  
and stands there for a moment—  
don't touch the contours!  
or they will disappear . . .  
All the same, I deeply wish  
our writers used less analysis  
and went back to some asterisks.

(Weiss, Changes of Garments, p.20).

This is a joyous treatment of love. It clashes vigorously with the ve'ahavta -- which is why I chose it and is, in part, why I think it is suitable here. Being commanded to love God are we not commanded to love our beloveds? Saying that love is "hidden in heaven" indicates -- not without ambiguity -- that it is a prime and mysterious value which is either out of reach or with which we are out of touch. Out of reach, possibly at the present --

but might that not encourage us to gaze upward and stretch outward for it?

YETSIAT MITSRAIM

THE GOING FORTH FROM EGYPT

VAYOMER ADONAI EL MOSHEH

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO MOSES

NUMBERS 15:37-41



*Red Sea*

How long this way: that everywhere  
We make our march the water stands  
Apart and all our wine is air  
And all our ease the emptied sands?

[Fitzgerald (ed.), The Collected Poems of James Agee, p.58].

The third paragraph of the Shema ends with the statement:

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be to you as God." Within the traditional prayer-book, this is expanded upon as the great act of salvation: "From Egypt you redeemed us, O Adonai, our God, and from the house of slavery you delivered us. All of their first-born you killed whereas your first-born you saved. And you split the Red Sea and drowned the proud ones while you caused the beleved to cross as water covered their adversaries...." The same children of Israel who rhetorically asked who was to be compared to God (Exodus 15:1) soon began thinking it wiser to return to Egypt than to continue on towards the Promised Land. To participate in the redemptive act, we have to know its opposite, we have to know the subtle point at which salvation becomes desperation and redemption, hopelessness. Man's situation continues to change -- not excluding yesterday's victories and today's defeats.

Agee -- with striking brevity -- lets us know the length of the way and the bleakness of the environment en route to salvation.

THE PRESENT

The walls join hands and  
It is tomorrow:  
The birds clucking to the horses, the horses  
Doing the numbers for the hell of it,  
The numbers playing the calendars,  
The saints marching in,  
It seems only yesterday,

when what

I keep saying to myself is  
Take a leaf from the fire, open  
Your hand, see  
Where you are going,  
When what I am trying to find is  
The beginning,  
In the ashes,  
A wing, when what we are looking for  
In each other  
Is each other,

The stars at noon,

While the light worships its blind god.

(Merwin, The Moving Target, p.51).

This epigrammatic work expresses as much between the lines as in what is explicit. I am left, upon reading it, with a bag with a hole in it: The words are intriguing individually, but what does the whole add up to?

I sense the enigma of a search for order -- the interdependency of the birds and horses -- and identity "what we are looking for/In each other/Is each other..." The

search for order and identity is found in examining the past through a perishable leaf. The Jew examines his past history which may offer a guideline for the present. Not only is our history a norm but a destiny as well.

Burnt Norton, II, (excerpt).

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor  
towards,

Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.

And I cannot say, how long; for that is to place it in time.

(Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p.119).

Not only is our coming forth from Egypt an historical experience. We Jews strive continually -- or at least our tradition calls upon us to do so -- to come forth out of bondage, affliction, darkness. Our search is rooted as much in ourselves as for our forebears it was in themselves. Part of our redemption lies in the search itself. Searching for our own authentic form of Jewish becoming, we anticipate the moment when our behavior, our thoughts, our feelings become rhythmically attuned and we find ourselves dancing.

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EMET VA'EMUNAH/ EMET VEYATSIV

TRUE AND TRUSTING/ TRUE AND ENDURING

## WHEN MY EYE LOSES ITS HUE

When my eye loses its hue,  
it is good that the sky stays blue,  
and the forest is ruled  
by green summer and by dew,  
and too,  
and too,  
probably by God,  
for without God such good cannot be.

I now remember all:  
a horse that stumbled on the road,  
the pauper-days,  
my brother, the rejected slave,  
his head that greys.

(Melodowsky, in Betsky, Onions and Cucumbers and Plums, #2).

Here is a reluctant affirmation of God's omnipotence and sovereignty. In an age of doubt, it mirrors the views which must be held by many who recite the Shema. Creation itself seems to support God's existence. It is not always possible to feel affirmative about one's values. After all, many of us preach -- and believe -- a relativity of values. It follows logically that God, too, becomes a relative value.

It is incumbent upon the poet and the person involved in prayer to attempt to explain to himself what -- and how much -- that relative value of God is. One's value will be highly influenced by past experience. And more important than the past experience per se is our recollection of it.

## AWAKENING

Stark as a dream, not softened by  
a conscious hope, yet a reply  
to a pervasive longing—I  
was, till now unaware.

A flash, a vision, an encounter—  
dams are broken that my cowardice  
had built, a rush of power,  
no escape.

A word, a woman, or a page—  
each time the dread as torrents rage  
toward a ravine, light floods the stage,  
I plunge awake.

(Kaufmann, Cain and Other Poems, p. 39).

The religious moment, the revelatory moment, the prayerful moment is repeatedly throughout literature likened to an "awakening." Within Jewish worship, the concluding material of the Shema acknowledges the heightened intensity of the moment in which our notion of God is affirmed. It elevates the transient to something timeless.

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AVOT

FATHERS



THE SONG OF THE HELLENIST (excerpt)

O cities of the Decapolis across the Jordan,  
you are too great; our young men love you,  
and men in high places have caused gymnasiums  
to be built in Jerusalem.

I tell you, my people, the statues are too tall.  
Beside them we are small and ugly,  
blemishes on the pedestal.

My name is Theodotus, do not call me Jonathan.  
My name is Desitheus, do not call me Nathaniel.  
Call us Alexander, Demetrius, Nicanor . . .

"Have you seen my landsmen in the museums,  
the brilliant scholars with the dirty fingernails,  
standing before the marble gods,  
underneath the lot?"

Among straight noses, natural and carved,  
I have said my clever things thought out before;  
jested on the Protocols, the cause of war,  
quoted "Bleistein with a Cigar."

O cities of the Decapolis,  
call us Alexander, Demetrius, Nicanor...

(Cohen, Selected Poems, pp.5-6).

Remembering the Fathers -- our fathers -- we see how  
far we have journeyed and how enmeshed we have become in  
the foreign cultures through which we wander. The Fathers  
are wanderers who neither changed their names nor lost  
their direction. Identity is direction. It is both in-  
herent in and beneath a name, a set of relationships, a  
home. Jewish identity is a perspective, a shared view of a  
peripheral outsider becoming the insider. It is formed by  
becoming one with a people and its search.

*The 151st Psalm*

Are You looking for us? We are here.  
Have You been gathering flowers, Elohim?  
We are Your flowers, we have always been.  
When will You leave us alone?  
We are in America.  
We have been here three hundred years.  
And what new altar will You deck us with?

Whom are You following, Pillar of Fire?  
What barn do You seek shelter in?  
At whose gate do You whimper  
In this great Palestine?  
Whose wages do You take in this New World?  
But Israel shall take what it shall take,  
Making us ready for Your hungry Hand!

Immigrant God, You follow me;  
You go with me, You are a distant tree;  
You are the beast that lows in my heart's gates;  
You are the dog that follows at my heel;  
You are the table on which I lean;  
You are the plate from which I eat.

Shepherd of the flocks of praise,  
Youth of all youth, ancient of days,  
Follow us.

(Shapiro, Poems of a Jew, p.6).

The charge seems like bravado -- although most likely it is true: God is looking for us, His people. But simultaneously, we are looking for Him. God seeks His people to guide Him and inspire Him; we seek Him for similar pur-

poses. Like the Avot of old, we Americans remain wanderers still. We maintain a sense of existing on the periphery, on the edge of the New World. Do we not project God's dependence upon us in multiple forms (beasts, dogs, tables, plates?) to assert our own independence (even though it remains an illusion)?

The second stanza presents a series of insightful contrasts. When asking, "At whose gate do You whimper/ In this great Palestine?" Shapiro could be referring to the American Galut as "this great Palestine." Or he may be contrasting contemporary Israel to past Israels. Since within the first stanza, Shapiro focuses upon American Jews, the contrast probably remains constant throughout the poem. Regardless, the allusions to Palestine and Israel do make the contrast ambiguous and multidimensional.

Our Father

The creative one, man or God,  
Looks down on his new child---  
His strength and testament.

Forgets the rest: the tenderness,  
the burden on the hands.

Rather quicksilver joy  
Of arrow or of dart,  
Creation's ecstasy . . .

We say of God, the one, the ever young,  
"He is our Father."

(Blank, The Spoken Choice, p.40).

I sometimes wonder what it would be like to look upon mankind -- and especially Israel -- from the divine perspective. We say "Father," projecting warmth, protection, and admiration. But is He simply that one-dimensional? And does a paternal perspective necessarily "look down?" As often, He looks "up" -- as in the case of a child, we focus our attention on the amazing and blessed development and creation of which we are a part. If we are to explore and create a God to fashion ourselves upon, we must not simply inherit the one belonging to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. If He is to remain "ever young," we, too, have to be "remade."

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GEVUROT

STRENGTH

The death I have entered is a death  
In which I cannot lie down.

I have forgotten, literally, God, and through  
The enormous hollow of my head, History  
Whistles like a wind.

How beautiful are the young, walking!

If I could weep.

(Warren, Selected Poems, p.80).

We cannot "lie down" or let go because our death is pervasive and implicit in our lives. Up against such a problem, what can we expect of God? What can we expect of ourselves? How can we accept -- i.e., resign ourselves -- to history, a word synonymous with decay?

FOR STRENGTH

This is my prayer to thee, my lord -- strike at the root  
of penury in my heart,  
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my  
knees before insolent might.  
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily  
trifles.  
And give me strength to surrender my strength to thy will  
with love.

[Tagore, in Trapp (ed.), Modern Religious Poems, p.52]

Within this trying world -- we seek renewed strength  
to continue living, to face ourselves, our fellowmen,  
our God. It is what God, the man able to pray believes,  
can offer as His best gift -- the strength to endure, to  
go on to whatever end awaits us.

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KEDUSHAT HASHEM

SANCTIFICATION OF GOD



11

so many selves(so many fiends and gods  
each greedier than every)is a man  
(so easily one in another hides;  
yet man can,being all,escape from none)

so huge a tumult is the simplest wish:  
so pitiless a massacre the hope  
most innocent(so deep's the mind of flesh  
and so awake what waking calls asleep)

so never is most lonely man alone  
(his briefest breathing lives some planet's year,  
his longest life's a heartbeat of some sun;  
his least unmotion roams the youngest star)

-how should a fool that calls him "I" presume  
to comprehend not numerable whom?

(Cummings, Poems: 1923-1954, p.435).

As God is holy, so man is holy. As God is mysterious,  
so man is mysterious. His greatness cannot be seen apart  
from ours. And our weaknesses cannot be seen apart from  
His.

This poem is an assertion that the smallest things are  
the largest. Above all, we remain mysterious to ourselves  
and incapable of understanding the existence within us and  
around us. Our truth combines subjective experiences. Our  
finite nature is our limitation and our greatest virtue.

By relating this poem to the Kedushah benediction, I  
seek to place God within our experience. What we can't  
experience -- we can't be shocked by. The holiness of the  
other is a projection of the holiness within us. These are  
not separate -- they are the same and should be seen as such.

GOD-FORGOTTEN (excerpt)

I towered far, and lo! I stood within  
The presence of the Lord Most High,  
Sent thither by the sons of earth, to win  
Some answer to their cry.

--"The Earth, say'st thou? The Human race?  
By Me created? Sad its lot?  
Nay: I have no remembrance of such place:  
Such world I fashioned not" --

--"O Lord, forgive me when I say  
Thou spak'st the word, and mad'st it all." --  
"The Earth of men -- let me bethink me . . .  
Yeah! I dimly do recall

"Some tiny sphere I framed long back  
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)  
So named . . . It perished, surely --  
not a wrack  
Remaining, or a sign?

"It lost my interest from the first,  
My aims therefor succeeding ill;  
Haply it died of doing as it durst?" --  
"Lord, it existeth still."

(Hardy, Poems of the Past and Present, pp.99-100.).

Is God so holy, so transcendent, so wholly other that  
His concerns do not, cannot relate to ours? Are we merely  
one "of millions of such shapes" and creations of His? Or  
rather, is God simply reluctant to admit that, with all His  
powers, He is unable to influence us or His creation as a  
whole? Or, is God really placing the responsibility upon  
us? Shall we sanctify His world as holy only so long as  
we are capable of experiencing it as holy? Even limitation  
of God does not eliminate His awesomeness. In fact, lim-  
iting God makes Him more mysterious. It also makes us more

mysterious. A limited God could make such a world? A limited God would make such limited men? Mystery of mysteries!

## *Kedushah*

### *1. The Hidden God*

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts"

Thou who makest retreat upon retreat  
Till the round heavens reverberate  
And the throbbing drum of space  
Echoes the beat  
And thunder of thy creative grace,  
Thou receding God, halt upon thy way!  
Breaks on thy world resplendent  
Another blazing sun; the newest day  
Upon thy going is attendant;  
The trembling stars implore thee stay.  
Inexorable God,  
Thou who art Place,  
Thou unutterably far—  
Far till the mind cracks  
Climbing a Jacob's ladder  
Across the constellations where thy tracks  
Are lost, where thou beyond the frayed comet's trace  
And thy most distant star  
Makest a fool of space—  
Halt thy creative flight.

Remote because so sore to find  
Down tortuous channels of the mind,  
Somewhere he is where gropings fail;  
Somewhere between the harmonies  
Of colour and of form he reigns alone;  
Somewhere he is within the human scale  
Poised between tone and tone.  
He is not these;  
Holy is He.

(Blank, The Spoken Choice, pp.3-4).

## *Our King*

Where shall we find a king  
To pattern God upon?  
A man so perfectly anointed, crowned,  
And to the stars infallible?

The purple fades,  
There is a hooting to the skies,  
An atom bursts with laughter  
Convex into a poisoned heaven  
(Beauty but in reverse)  
Life staggers to its end,  
And kingdom come  
Is kingdom gone.  
Falters the ancient prayer.

Now has the glory flown within,  
The hidden place under the shards of mind  
Become a hallowed spot.  
In this quick core—  
Fled all pretence—  
Is room for understanding;  
Man has met his dignity  
And is a king.

In this still covert  
Also God is majesty,  
And rules in man consenting;  
The godhead overreaching man's integrity.  
Of him we say:  
"He is our King."

(Blank, The Spoken Choice, p.41).

In our strivings, we would vainly reach out and seek to speak with God. However, part of His holiness lies in his inaccessibility. In fact, the Hebrew term for holiness has the root meaning of "set apart." To insist that God be totally within our experience is to demand a desanctified God, subject to our limitations. Hence we can know no

king to pattern God upon. Unwilling to accept such limitation, we "kick Him upstairs." We say "holy," but what does that mean? Distant, fearful, powerful, awesome? To place God too far out of human experience is to deny His impact upon us and concern for us. When the poetess writes, "Receding God," "unutterably far," "remote," she does not mean to deny His presence and impact so much as our human ability to describe Him, know Him, and be like Him.

Hymn

I know if I find you I will have to leave the earth  
and go on out

over the sea marshes and the brant in bays  
and over the hills of tall hickory  
and over the crater lakes and canyons  
and on up through the spheres of diminishing air  
past the Blackset noctilucous clouds

where one wants to stop and look  
way past all the light diffusions and bombardments  
up farther than the loss of sight  
into the unseasonal undifferentiated empty stark

And I know if I find you I will have to stay with the earth  
inspecting with thin tools and ground eyes  
trusting the microvilli sporangia and simplest  
coelenterates

and praying for a nerve cell  
with all the soul of my chemical reactions  
and going right on down where the eye sees only traces

You are everywhere partial and entire  
You are on the inside of everything and on the outside

I walk down the path down the hill where the sweetgum  
has begun to ooze spring sap at the cut  
and I see how the bark cracks and winds like no other bark  
chasmal to my ant-soul running up and down  
and if I find you I must go out deep into your  
far resolutions  
and if I find you I must stay here with the separate leaves

(Ammons, Selected Poems, p.31)

An aspect of the awesomeness and mystery of God lies  
in His being somewhere and everywhere simultaneously. How-  
ever, it is not always easy to be found by Him. Being par-  
tial and entire, He remains unknown. We remain unable to  
bring the variety of our experience together into focus.  
Hence, we feel compelled to turn out to examine the earth  
to find Him reflected in the world of nature.

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KEDUSHAT HAYOM

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SHABAT



Therefore Choose Life

"Therefore choose life."  
The old man said

But he was old.  
Some sneered.  
They said it was a trick  
That made hard Pharaoh see  
A serpent in the stick  
Before the slaves  
Went free  
And the first born sons  
Grew deathly sick.

"Therefore choose life"  
The old man said,  
And went the way he came.

All the clever striplings  
Shook their heads.  
Forgetting,  
Once he had been  
Young enough  
To see the bush aflame.

(Mintz, The Darkening Green, p.84).

As mentioned above, Yismach Mosch is part of the intermediate benediction unique to Shabat morning. Moses, the inspired model of prophecy and leadership, is represented as having rejoiced at Sinai upon receiving the Torah and presenting it to his people. How was he to communicate the experience he had: confrontations with Pharaoh prior to the departure from Egypt and the receiving of the Law on Mount Sinai?

Our situation is not so remote from that of Moses. We all have the responsibility given Moses -- to teach one another the sanctity of life through our acts.

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HODA'AH

THANKSGIVING

### Little Prayers

1. God, do you make me happier,  
for by my doing I am here  
and the outlook is even worse  
as I grow old. I have been cautious  
  
not prudent, and unusually thoughtful  
not wise. But indefatigable  
has been my love whether I could  
or not, which you count highly, God.

(Goodman, Hawkweed, p.170)

Epigrammatic, this "little prayer" is unmistakably not little. It shares implicitly with the Heda'ah a view of God as essential to life -- "the Rock of our lives and the shield of our salvation." While man (here, Goodman) is troubled by his own plight, he projects his condition of happiness as influenced by God. This might be seen in the Heda'ah as "wondrous deeds." Man, ruminating over his own life and the speed with which it flees, sees his utter insignificance when contrasted to God's.

Hymn

As complicated as a nightingale,  
as tinny as,  
kind-hearted as,  
as crease-proof, as traditional,  
as green grave sour, as streaky,  
as symmetrical,  
as hairy,  
as near the water, true to the wind,  
as fireproof, frequently turned over,  
as childishly easy, well-thumbed as,  
as new and creaking, expensive as,  
as deeply cellared, domestic as,  
as easily lost, shiny with use,  
as thinly blown, as snow-chilled as,  
as independent, as mature,  
as heartless as,  
as mortal as,  
as simple as my soul.

[Grass, Hamburger (tr.), New Poems, p.31]

With a stark economy of words, Grass (and similarly Hamburger) captures the depth and beauty of the human soul. The feat is all the more remarkable because they manage to use common place words in uncommon and unexpected ways. Grass takes the metaphysical-religious term "soul" and sculpts its concrete humanness. How wonderful to compare the soul to a nightingale! How eloquently that describes the soul's capacity and inclination to sing and enrapture. How succinctly that focuses upon our vanity. Being "tiny" and "easily lost" describes the soul's transparencies and rhythms. Although it is ours -- we are not always "in touch" and often see ourselves as set apart from it. Our soul consists of manifold paradoxes: It is simultaneously

"well-thumbed," "new and creaking," and "shiny with use."

Since our external world is always changing as we are developing, our soul takes on new characteristics.

OUR PRAYER OF THANKS (excerpt).

For the gladness here where the sun is shining  
at evening on the weeds at the river,  
Our prayer of thanks.

For the laughter of children who tumble bare-  
footed and bareheaded in the summer grass,  
Our prayer of thanks.

For the sunset and the stars, the women and the  
white arms that hold us,  
Our prayer of thanks.

God,

The game is all your way, the secrets and the  
signals and the system; and  
so for the break of the game and the first  
play and the last.  
Our prayer of thanks.

(Sandberg, Complete Poems, p.48).

This excerpt from Sandberg's "Our Prayer of Thanks" is a joyous experience. It adds to our difficulties of differentiating prayers from poems by presenting the tensions between poem, prayer, and song. This version flows with the Hoda'ah benediction: "Our thanking You and our relating Your praises for our lives" is no small thing! For as complicated and frustrating as existence is -- we are overjoyed to experience and to create. Sandberg's examples shine as the miracles and wonders mentioned in the prayer. Of course, the game of life is all God's way: He invented it. Yet, there are moments when we wonder if, in fact, the game has not run out of control.

SIM SHALOM/ SHALOM RAV

BLESSING OF PEACE

*Debate with the Rabbi*

You've lost your religion, the Rabbi said.

It wasn't much to keep, said I.

You should affirm the spirit, said he,

And the communal solidarity.

I don't feel so solid, I said.

We are the people of the Book, the Rabbi said.

Not of the phone book, said I.

Ours is a great tradition, said he,

And a wonderful history.

But history's over, I said.

We Jews are creative people, the Rabbi said.

Make something, then, said I.

In science and in art, said he,

Violinists and physicists have we.

Fiddle and physic indeed, I said.

Stubborn and stiff-necked man! the Rabbi cried.

The pain you give me, said I.

Instead of bowing down, said he,

You go on in your obstinacy.

We Jews are that way, I replied.

(Nemerov, Next Room of the Dream, p.58).

This appealing and playful poem indicates our resourcefulness and, simultaneously, our shortcomings as the "generic Jew." We are plagued with stubbornness and doubt. But this does not deter our wanting to believe. Not only does this poem provide an engaging entrance into worship, but it elucidates the end of the Sim shalom: "Let it be your will to bless your people Israel at all times and at every hour with your peace."



### Kaddish

Upon Israel and upon the rabbis  
and upon the disciples and upon all the disciples of their  
disciples  
and upon all who study the Torah in this place and in every  
place,  
to them and to you  
peace;

upon Israel and upon all who meet with unfriendly glances,  
sticks and stones and names—  
on posters, in newspapers, or in books to last,

chalked on asphalt or in acid on glass,  
shouted from a thousand thousand windows by radio;  
who are pushed out of class-rooms and rushing trains,  
whom the hundred hands of a mob strike,  
and whom jailers strike with bunches of keys, with revolver  
butts;  
to them and to you  
in this place and in every place  
safety;

upon Israel and upon all who live  
as the sparrows of the streets  
under the cornices of the houses of others,  
and as rabbits  
in the fields of strangers  
on the grace of the seasons  
and what the gleaners leave in the corners;  
you children of the wind—  
birds  
that feed on the tree of knowledge  
in this place and in every place,  
to them and to you  
a living;

upon Israel  
and upon their children and upon all the children of their  
children  
in this place and in every place,  
to them and to you  
life.

(Reznikoff, By the Waters of Manhattan, pp.52-3).

The Kadish derabenan is traditionally recited upon the  
completion of a section of rabbinic material. From the per-  
spective of the synagogue as a place where all Jews study

Torah in its widest sense -- as a way of life -- the application of the poem transcends the prayer's original focus.

The poem's grave, compassionate concern for peace, safety, and life parallel motifs of the final benediction of the Amidah, called alternatively Sim shalom in the morning service and Shalom rav in evening worship. The prayer focuses upon renewed well-being and mercy for all of Israel: Bar-chenu avinu kulanu ke-echad, "Bless us, our Father, all of us as one..." The prayer contains a list of the virtues God bestowed through the Torah.

A NEW SONG

Once again

it is time

time

to shape words for anger

to dismember ancient prides

to set a crown upon the head of havoc

to bring the self-appointed hosts of heaven down in splinters,

at our feet

For all this it is time

and once again

it is time

time

to wed old music to new words

to sing a new song unto the Lord

(for our singing has been

lamentation

and the Lord longs for a song

of delights)

(Chyet, unpublished).

Resolving our conflicts and our dreams requires fewer accoutrements than a wand and a formula. Yet, it requires a greater expenditure of energy than a mysterious moving of the hand. In praying "for peace, goodness, grace, loving-kindness, and mercy," we seek to realign the dreams with the realities and create a new environment. The old

music and new words are indeed a new song. And with the song and prayer, we envision new challenges, deeper satisfactions and meanings. Prayer offers an opportunity to deal directly with our angers and prides -- and their impacts.

TACHANUNIM  
SUPPLICATIONS

VERY WELL

Very well, I'm prepared.  
Let's start dredging our hearts till we  
Get the root of the matter bared:  
Who's innocent, who's guilty.  
But please don't cry.  
When tears cloud your eyes  
Into my plot burst the mushrooms of lies.

Well, let's have it out, just the same.  
To the bitter end: very well -  
I'm not evasive at all -  
But for God's sake remember this  
That a shell  
Empty except for shame  
Is no haven for flower and kiss.

For the sin of arrogance and  
The sin of a sulky nature  
(You miserable creature)  
For the sin of a calloused hand  
And of a roving eye  
(Handkerchief? Here, take mine)  
And for the sin none can ever put by -

Why, really, everything here is fine!

[Carmi, ~~Mona Lisa~~ (etc.), The Brass Serpent, p22].

Carmi furnishes us with an exemplary "rap" as prayer and supplication. However, being able to compose them and recite them with kavanah certainly does not necessitate that they will lighten our load or improve communication. To communicate in prayer we have to mean and feel while the other receives. The stumbling blocks are too many to enumerate. It's amazing we communicate as often as we do (praying included).

LAMENT

There are no words at all.  
For there will be no deed.

Our seed is fruit and decay.  
For we have no root.

Our tracks drifted off in the wind.  
For the road had shifted away.

Eyes like a scorpion that dies.  
Because for us there are no words.

[Carmi, Meraes (tr.), The Brass Serpent, p.25.]

This lament states the inadequacy of our means for expressing feelings, frustrations, supplications. Words are a limited means of communication. But, of course, when such thoughts are shaped by such poets as Carmi and Meraes, significant things are expressed.

*My Soul*

I have made journeys to my soul  
But have not arrived at its mysteries.  
My soul in invisible cycles  
Dispels  
Illusions of certainty  
And the bliss of serenity.  
Never can man grasp his soul  
As it presses and twists  
In his ribs.

My soul was to me  
Like a skipping bird on a bough—  
Heavier than bleak rock is it now.

*Translated by Richard Flantz*

(Broides, in Penueli, Anthology of Modern Hebrew Poetry, p.376).

Getting "in touch," finding an "inner balance" is one of the continual wars we wage with ourselves, both in and out of the synagogue. For worship to be reflective of our lives and cares, it must incorporate this striving and incompleteness.



*Reflective*

I found a  
weed  
that had a  
mirror in it  
and that  
mirror  
looked in at  
a mirror  
in  
me that  
had a  
weed in it

(Ammons, Selected Poems, p.155).

The play and the tension are the "thing," for Ammons and for us. People and objects are mirrors for us. Rarely are the externals in themselves hard to accept. Rather, it is their reflections -- namely what we see of ourselves and our desires in them -- that are often hard to accept. The implication is that much of the external world we label as ugly or bad -- is a projection of feelings we have about ourselves.

## THE HOLLOW MEN

*A penny for the Old Guy*

### I

We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Our dried voices, when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind in dry grass  
Or rats' feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.

(Eliot, Collected Poems, 1909-1962, p.79).

Living in an empty world -- devoid of love, friendship, and concern, we become hollow. To fill our void, we join committees and organizations -- we become stuffed. Having taken on these characteristics, we seek to alter ourselves. But can we merely empty ourselves of our emptiness? Eliot would have us believe we are empty by nature. However, the Tachanunim and Kadish present a more optimistic view of man by removing the focus from man and concentrating on God's responsiveness. Eliot's cynicism (and our own) results from an inability to see beyond himself.

The contradiction between prayer and poems is not irreconcilable. Is it not presumptuous to consider ourselves more than hollow or stuffed? One's hollowness may reflect his ineptitude in prayer as opposed to the paradoxes of being a person. Limitation is not necessarily all bad!

REB LEVI YITZKHOK

Reb Levi Yitzkhok in prayer shawl and *tefillin*  
Is rooted where he stands  
Before the altar, with prayer book open,  
But will not utter a sound.

He sees the ghetto like so many pictures  
Of agony, trouble and pain.  
Silent and stubborn, the old man quarrels  
With his old God again.

Leonard Wolf

[Manger, Wolf (tr.), in Howe and Greenberg (ed.),  
A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, p.280].

The poem, like Tachanunim-- and the entire structure of our worship-- is based on the efficacy of communication. Worship, perhaps the most sublime form of communication, is not conceived within a one-dimensional framework. Man is endowed with the free will and "loose tongue" to take God to task. Perhaps our presumption derives from the assumption that God is not only listening but looking forward to hearing what we are going to pour out before Him. Perhaps, too, this is the humorous high point of our worship -- when the created informs and redirects the Creator.

HOLIDAY'S END

He went off; didn't say when he'd be back  
a short holiday, you might call it

But surely he'll soon be back  
surely: that raven over a road which this once isn't empty  
that caravan making its way through the Negev

He went off to die a while  
and then to rise from the dust, to come home from the desert

For his "servitude is over," his "sin is atoned for"  
wordlessly, ever so wordlessly

O, I know it by the disquiet in the air  
which bears these conflicting rumors  
(one of them is good!)

I know it by the wind gusting over these dead words  
these words which only moments ago knew nothing

I know it by this city which senses his loss.

[Guri, Chyet (tr.), T'nuah l'maga, p. 9]

Each one of us goes off to die -- and quite frequently,  
in fact. Trouble is, we rarely see it that way. Nor do  
these for whom we mean the most. Our lack of continuity  
is a variety of dying. Although our change in being is  
less abrupt -- and of an entirely different nature than  
the physical death of the "he" described in the poem --  
it requires a similar reflection as found in the poem.

KERAT TORAH

TORAH SERVICE

187. BABYLON

Babylon that was beautiful is Nothing now.  
Once to the world it tolled a golden bell:  
Belshazzar wore its blaze upon his brow;  
Ruled; and to ruin fell.  
Babylon—a blurred and blinded face of stone—  
At dumb Oblivion bragged with trumpets blown;  
Teemed, and while merchants throve and prophets dreamed,  
Bowed before idols, and was overthrown.

Babylon the merciless, now a name of doom,  
Built towers in Time, as we today, for whom  
Auguries of self-annihilation loom.

Siegfried Sassoon

(in Trapp, Modern Religious Poems, p. 235).

Babylon serves as an instructive model in humility --  
or at least skepticism -- for those of us who would absolu-  
tize our state -- any state.

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ALENU

ADORATION



Unsaid (excerpt).

Have you listened for the things I have left out?  
I am nowhere near the end yet and already

hear  
the hum of omissions,  
the chant of vacancies, din of  
silences.

You will not hear

hear me completely even at this early point  
unless you hear my emptiness:

go back:  
how can I  
tell you what I have not said: you must look for it  
yourself: that

side has weight, too, though words cannot bear it  
out: listen for the things I have left out:

I am  
aware  
of them, as you must be, or you will miss  
the nonsong

in my singing: it is not that words cannot say  
what is missing: it is only that what is missing

cannot  
be missed if  
spoken: read the parables of my unmaking:

feel the ris-

ing bubble's trembling walls: rush into the domes  
these wordy arches shape: hear

me  
when I am  
silent: gather the boundaried vacancies.

(Ammons, Selected Poems, pp.86-7).

How are we to invoke prayer? What are we to say? What  
are we to listen for? How can we reach out and respond to  
those with whom we pray? Each one of us stands as a run-  
ner in a race -- only to discover as the starting gun goes

off -- we ought not to run. Rather, we might walk together hand-in-hand. It's not the words we say -- never the words we say -- that bind us together. It is always the spaces between the words and the thoughts between the thoughts.

I IMAGINED A PAINTER  
PAINTING SUCH A WORLD

Like successive layers of leaf that dwindle the sunlight  
Are the overlapping cumulative shadows  
Projected by things, which huddle in them darkly  
Within the greater shadow: suffering.

Breaching the shores of matter a swell of shadows  
Destroys all sanctions of formal separateness;  
And objects, transposed of vesture, take doubtful values  
Like hulks vaguely discerned under the tides.

What inner or outer flames may shine are random  
In the one, shadowed sea where all things melt,  
While through all, the superior dark, the subjective night  
Encloses and bathes the universe.

(Plutznik, Apples from Shinar, p.23)

Hyam Plutznik's "I Imagined a Painter Painting Such a World," is a deep and engagingly ambiguous work. We find no sense of personalness within the poem. At its conclusion we are asking: Who is this painter and why does he paint so enigmatically? Layer upon layer, overlap upon overlap -- toward what end? Does a destruction of the sanction of formal separateness also destroy the formal separateness itself? Or, at least the personal separateness? Is the separateness of doubtful value or does the complexity of the whole make our values doubtful and unsure?

Should we not expect order -- not randomness from the inner and outer flames? And why should all melt and flow together? All men are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and mortality.

KADISH

MEMORIAL PRAYER

LET US

Let us meet again:  
it's October,  
when leaves must part  
and winds cry.  
Then let winds cry,  
I have no more tears,  
and let skies mourn,  
I am empty of mourning.

Let us meet again:  
two gravestones  
standing  
with wind  
between.

(Veprinski, Goldberg (tr.), Howe and  
Greenberg, A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry,  
p.161).

The colorful falling leaves are premonitions of the  
flux of existence around and within us. All human meet-  
ing will eventually become inorganic meeting. Our existence  
is an ordering by Our Fashioner from chaos into being and  
back into chaos.

LIKE OUR BODIES' IMPRINT

Like our bodies' imprint,  
Not a sign will remain that we were in this place.  
The world closes behind us,  
The sand straightens itself.

Dates are already in view  
In which you no longer exist,  
Already a wind blows clouds  
Which will not rain on us both.

And your name is already on the passenger lists of ships  
And in the registers of hotels  
Whose names alone  
Daden the heart.

The three languages I know,  
All the colors in which I see and dream:

None will help me.

[Amichai, Gutmann (tr.), Poems, p.14]

Man's intrinsic situation is mortality. That, especially,  
calls for underseering our need to relate ourselves to what  
is beyond mortality.

IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU  
LOOK AT IT

I.

Terezín is full of beauty.  
It's in your eyes now clear  
And through the street the tramp  
Of many marching feet I hear.

In the ghetto at Terezín,  
It looks that way to me,  
Is a square kilometer of earth  
Cut off from the world that's free.

II.

Death, after all, claims everyone,  
You find it everywhere.  
It catches up with even those  
Who wear their noses in the air.

The whole, wide world is ruled  
With a certain justice, so  
That helps perhaps to sweeten  
The poor man's pain and woe. •

*Miroslav Košek*  
*Miroslav Košek*

(Košek, "It All Depends on How You  
Look at It," in ...I Never Saw  
Another Butterfly, n.p.).

Filled with paradox, this poem conveys low-key, high-intensity anger. Indeed, can the death camp itself be seen as a place full of beauty? And for a child to see beauty there? After all, it "is a square kilometer of earth/ cut off from the world that's free" (lines 7-8).

Where is the justice with which the whole world is ruled? And whose justice is it? I am left with the sting of bitter resignation. Summarily, the child concludes that such is the world.

THE BUTTERFLY

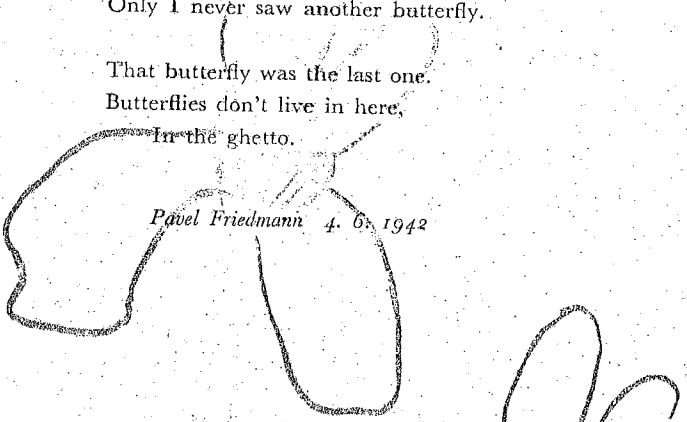
The last, the very last,  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing  
against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to  
kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,  
Penned up inside this ghetto  
But I have found my people here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto.

Pavel Friedmann 4. 6. 1942



(Friedmann, "The Butterfly," in ...I Never Saw  
Another Butterfly, n.p.).

With the tenderness and pathos possessed only by the very young, Pavel Friedmann brings us into a make-believe world of what was once a most gruesome reality. There are no contemporary Jewish parallels to such a death camp, but it remains part of our heritage, an integral aspect of our consciousness. The poet's realization that a butterfly could not exist in Terezien was lamentably the case. Nor



could freedom, beauty, or life.

### Last Words

I do not want a plain box, I want a sarcophagus  
With tigery stripes, and a face on it  
Round as the moon, to stare up.  
I want to be looking at them when they come  
Picking among the dumb minerals, the roots.  
I see them already—the pale, star-distance faces.  
Now they are nothing, they are not even babies.  
I imagine them without fathers or mothers, like the first gods.  
They will wonder if I was important.  
I should sugar and preserve my days like fruit!  
My mirror is clouding over—  
A few more breaths, and it will reflect nothing at all.  
The flowers and the faces whiten to a sheet.

I do not trust the spirit. It escapes like steam  
In dreams, through mouth-hole or eye-hole. I can't stop it.  
One day it won't come back. Things aren't like that.  
They stay, their little particular lusters  
Warmed by much handling. They almost purr.  
When the soles of my feet grow cold,  
The blue eye of my turquoise will comfort me.  
Let me have my copper cooking pots, let my rouge pots  
Bloom about me like night flowers, with a good smell.  
They will roll me up in bandages, they will store my heart  
Under my feet in a neat parcel.  
I shall hardly know myself. It will be dark,  
And the shine of these small things sweeter than the face  
of Ishtar.

(Plath, Crossing the Water, p.40).

Sylvia Plath mourns the ephemerality of her life, and by extension, ours. Craving attention is extreme vanity. Attention for us when we are no longer here is of no use to us. We would like to think our example will be of instruction for others. But that does not increase the value of our "here and now." "Sugar and preserve our days,"

we would try to increase our daily consciousness.

Is, in fact, the spirit separate from the self? Is it independent and uncontrollable? We are our life force. They are not separable -- except in the sense that when we die our life force may exist in others. But then -- it is no longer our life force!

II

This tree in the twilit street—  
the pods hang from its bare symmetrical branches  
motionless—  
but if, like God, a century were to us  
the twinkling of an eye,  
we should see the frenzy of growth.

(Reznikeff, By the Waters of Manhattan, p.22).

But for man one hundred years is not the twinkling of  
an eye. Our coming in and out of existence has limits of  
time and identity. But within these limits we see and  
participate in much frenzied growth and decay.

## UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

There is the world, the dream, and the one law.  
The wish, the wisdom, and things as they are.

Inside the cave the burning sunlight showed  
A shade and forms between the light and shade,

Neither real nor false nor subject to belief:  
If unfleshed, boneless also, not for life

Or death or clear idea. But as in life  
Reflexive, multiple, with the brilliance of

The shining surface, an orchestral flare.  
It is not to believe, the love or fear

Or their profoundest definition, death;  
But fully as orchestra to accept,

Making an answer, even if lament,  
In measured dance, with the whole instrument.

(Nemerov, The Image and the Law, p.68).

Designing and redesigning answers to our questions about death offers an important means of understanding -- or at least "accepting" -- our living. There is nothing I can say about Nemerov's poem "Unscientific Postscript" except this: Simply, for me, it points to the Kadish as a means for developing an answer in all the fullness of a person's being.

### *Clock and Compass*

The clock, man's fear of time's short hour,  
hums like a heart hung in a tower.  
The weathervane, man's fear of the west,  
hymns in terror that land of rest.

Together clock and weathervane  
rejoice in pouring sun and rain.  
It is in vain, and all in vain,  
when man is gone, we shall remain.

(Aiken, Brownstone Elegues, p.37).

Too often we enter the Kadish -- or if not the Kadish, the experience of death to which we relate it -- with a sense of dread and awesome guilt. Every man is sensitive about mortality; that, however, ought not to hide its paradox and humor. The clock and compass, man-made instruments, serve to increase our awareness. Simultaneously, they define and limit us. The clock and weathervane continue to operate long after their inventors have ceased to use them. Just think -- the playthings we fashion are capable of outliving us. They may also be used in ways we never intended. It is not humorous?? Is it not threatening?

But nothing outlives God. An interesting contrast is developed between the poem which does not explicitly refer to God and the prayer which does not explicitly mention man. Yet to utter either is to imply both.

### THE FUNERAL

DEATH is another milestone on their way.  
With laughter on their lips and with winds blowing  
round them

They record simply  
How this one excelled all others in making driving  
belts.

This is festivity, it is the time of statistics  
When they record what one unit contributed:  
They are glad as they lay him back in the earth  
And thank him for what he gave them.

They walk home remembering the straining red flags,  
And with pennons of song still fluttering through  
their blood

They speak of the world state  
With its towns like brain-centres and its pulsing  
arteries.

They think how one life hums, revolves and toils,  
One cog in a golden and singing hive:  
Like spark from fire, its task happily achieved,  
It falls away quietly.

(Spender, Poems, p.51).

Spender eloquently expresses several of the emotions we feel upon hearing about someone else's death. These phrases and thoughts protect us from the horrors of confronting our own mortality. Spender tells us how insignificant a human life is. He then asks a rhetorical question: How is death a festivity? One's bereaved -- those who love the deceased -- can celebrate his life. In celebrating his life, we are celebrating Life and Being Alive, facts that are taken for granted or totally overlooked.

A person's life is a separate individual entity. Simultaneously, lives are interconnected and mutually dependent. In experiencing another's death, we experience our own death. For our beloved who has died is part of ourselves. Although the death may, in some instances be "quiet," its significance rarely is. We come to learn how significant an influence we have on one another. And we come to bless God for giving us life and each other.



Spiritual Explorations

II

You were born; must die; were loved; must love;  
Born naked; were clothed; still naked walk  
Under your clothes. Under your skin you move  
Naked: naked under acts and talk.

The miles and hours upon you feed.  
They eat your eyes out with their distance  
They eat your heart out with devouring need  
They eat your death out with lost lost significance.

There is one fate beneath those ignorances  
Those flesh and bone parcels in which you're split  
O thing of skin and words hanging on breath:  
Harlequin skeleton, it  
Strums on your gut such songs and merry dances  
Of love, of loneliness, of life being death.

(Spender, Poems of Dedication, p.40).

For all of the changes of the past century with its technological and scientific developments, it remains to be seen how different the human condition is qualitatively. We wear clothes made of fabrics unheard of a decade ago, in styles that were high fashion three decades ago -- but covering bodies indistinguishable in form from those of past millennia. And with our cities and machines, we are still, and possibly more so, plagued by loneliness and the fear of life.

Spender is saying that despite our knowledge and sophistication, we really have no better notion of what life and being alive mean than those upon whom we build.

Spiritual Explorations

III

Since we are what we are, what shall we be  
But what we are? We are, we have  
Six feet and seventy years, to see  
The light, and then resign it for the grave.

We are not worlds, no, nor infinity,  
We have no claims on stone, except to prove  
In the invention of the human city  
Our selves, our breath, our death, our love.

The tower we build soars like an arrow  
From the world's rim toward the sky's,  
Upwards and downwards in a dazzling pond  
Climbing and diving from our world, to narrow  
The gap between the world shut in the eyes  
And the receding world of light beyond.

(Spender, Poems of Dedication, p.41).

The individual's identity is highly contingent upon the length and type of his human existence. Spender stresses the span of life as limiting -- in vivid contrast to E. E. Cummings, who sees the infinite reflected in the finite (cf. "So many selves...", p.124).

It remains ambiguous what the light is that we see when we are alive. Though alive, we need not see light, feel light, communicate light, worship light. And what kind of being is that?

Is acceptance of death -- an act of resignation? Ought it to be? We are dying continually; cells dying and becoming our epidermal layers. The food whose nutrients we have utilized passes out of our system; we seek more food. The trees flower, giving forth a lovely aroma, but they blossom

wither, fall, and soon decay. Within a short time, we enjoy the fruit whose inner core was once part of the flower. No -- death is not resignation; it is affirmation of life and of God. It is affirmation of our dependence upon Him.

OF ALL MY LOVES

A sky unshaken, smokeless ashless  
will turn blue again, a head-rest of memory for me

O my soul, be thankful  
that of all my loves  
I've saved from trampling this one flower fallen  
between the album pages

Accuse me not aloud!  
Of all I own,  
I left for safeguard  
in the customsouse  
only the teeth of a blackened comb  
a tongueless shoe like a mouth unquestioning  
and a bundle  
of names like a camel's freight;

they didn't die for me I didn't  
die beneath their weight; one day when your womb  
gave me up to love  
the lovers came in smoke O you their creator,  
it's a waste to weep for me. I'm not the only  
one to lose the world. What do we know anyway?  
Look, the flower dead between the album pages  
returns root-  
less to life:

[Kovner, Chyet (tr.), Mikel Haahavot, p.5]

There is little I can say about Abba Kovner's poem, or  
the new poem inspired by it -- except that Kovner and Chyet  
are able to move from the She'ah itself to the way it is  
reflected in the tragic aspects of life. Man is vulnerable  
and his existence is transitory. How can a rose be saved/  
alive when it lies rootless between the album pages? In  
what sense is a Jew saved/alive apart from the memories and  
events of his people?

VIII

Your end's to end forever  
War's wrath, the rotted laws.  
But man in his last anger  
Shall kill for larger cause.

[Fitzgerald (ed.), The Collected  
Poems of James Agee, p.63]

Man's instinct to kill is caustically treated by Agee.

Even within the insanity of war, we can only praise Him  
who fashions us and breathes life into us. Man is not  
alone in his capacity to brutalize and destroy. The Jew  
is capable of following the model set by his God. For  
the deity is a ferocious "man of war;" "Adenai ish mil-  
chama, Adenai shemo" ("The Lord is a man of war, the Lord  
is His name," Exodus 15:3).

(untitled)

We only came to sleep.  
We only came to dream.  
It is not true, it is not true  
That we came to live upon earth.

We are changed into the spring grass.  
Our hearts will grow green again  
And they will open their petals.  
But our body is like a rose tree.  
It puts forth flowers and then withers.  
-Aztec

[Lewis (ed.), Out of the Earth I Sing, p.84]

This "primitive" poem poses some stark observations.

We cannot deny that sleep and dream are major aspects of  
what we come to call "life." Our existence does correspond  
to the cycles of a rose tree.

(untitled).

The day we die  
Then the wind comes  
To wipe us out,  
The traces of our feet.  
The wind creates dust  
Which covers  
The traces that were  
Where we had walked,  
For otherwise  
It would be  
As if we were  
Still alive.  
That is why it is the wind  
That comes  
To wipe out  
The traces of our feet.

-- Bushman

[Lewis (ed.), Out of the Earth I Sing, p.130]

The primitive song-poem deals in an intriguing fashion with the same theme as "dust thou art and unto dust Thou shalt return." The footprints -- be they our contributions to society, our children, our books, our library donated to a synagogue, or just plain non-metaphorical footprints -- are by no means us nor by any means adequate expressions of us. Perhaps the wind is little different in function from time itself which reinforces our mortality. That wind can so easily -- and in fact so often does -- obliterate our footprints.

THERE'S NO FORGETTING (SONATA)

Ask me where have I been  
and I'll tell you: "Things keep on happening."  
I must talk of the rubble that darkens the stones;  
of the river's duration, destroying itself;  
I know only the things that the birds have abandoned,  
or the ocean behind me, or my sorrowing sister.  
Why the distinctions of place? Why should day  
follow day? Why must the blackness  
of nighttime collect in our mouths? Why the dead?

If you question me: where have you come from, I must talk  
with things falling away,  
artifacts tart to the taste,  
great, cankering beasts, as often as not,  
and my own inconsolable heart.

Those who cross over with us, are no keepsakes,  
nor the yellowing pigeon that sleeps in forgetfulness:  
only the face with its tears,  
the hands at our throats,  
whatever the leafage dissevers:  
the dark of an obsolete day,  
a day that has tasted the grief in our blood.

Here are violets, swallows—  
all things that delight us, the delicate tallies  
that show in the lengthening train  
through which pleasure and transiency pass.

Here let us halt, in the teeth of a barrier:  
useless to gnaw on the husks that the silence assembles.  
For I come without answers:  
see: the dying are legion,  
legion, the breakwaters breached by the red of the sun,  
the headpieces knocking the ship's side,  
the hands closing over their kisses,  
and legion the things I would give to oblivion.

[Neruda, Belitt (tr.), Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda, p.97].



Life is in continual movement towards its contrary -- death. Whether the "river" is a day's events, an individual's life, or the entire world -- everything moves towards destruction, loss, nothingness.

The pain intensifies as the elements that define us and give us meaning pass out of existence before we ourselves do. Groping, we seek to reverse the process; at least, we seek to bring it to a stand-still. But all in vain. We have no ultimate answers to the ultimate question of death. Rather, we are temporary questions in our transitory relation to our Fashioner.

LYING AWAKE

This moth caught in the room tonight  
Squirmed up, sniper-style, between  
The rusty edges of the screen;  
Then, long as the room stayed light,

Lay here, content, in some cornerhole.  
Now that we've settled into bed  
Though, he can't sleep. Overhead,  
He hurls himself at the blank wall.

Each night hordes of these flutterers haunt  
And climb my study windowpane;  
Fired by reflection, their insane  
Eyes gleam; they know what they want.

How do the petulant things survive?  
Out in the fields they have a place  
And proper work, furthering the race;  
Why this blind fanatical drive

Indoors? Why rush at every spark,  
Cigar, headlamp or railway warning  
To knock off your wings and starve by morning?  
And what could a moth fear in the dark

Compared with what you meet inside?  
Still, he rams the fluorescent face  
Of the clock, thinks that's another place  
Of light and families, where he'll hide.

We'd ought to trap him in a jar,  
Or come, like the white-coats, with a net  
And turn him out toward living. Yet  
We don't; we take things as they are.

15

(Snodgrass, After Experience, p.15).

As Snodgrass remarks, "we take things as they are"  
(line 28). Around us life is continually exhibiting its  
strangeness -- its regenerative capacities and its mad race

for death. The plants and insects around us are poignant examples of our own limitedness. Their beauty and spans of life are far briefer than ours; they epitomize the transience, danger, and insanity of existence.

my way is in the sand flowing  
between the shingle and the dune  
the summer rain rains on my life  
on me my life harrying fleeing  
to its beginning to its end

my peace is there in the receding mist  
when I may cease from treading these long  
                  shifting thresholds  
and live the space of a door  
that opens and shuts

(Beckett, Poems in English, p.57).

Our lives are moldable, tractable aspects of our surroundings -- assuming the shape and features of the environment. Above all, our lives are rushing, harrying, fleeing -- without time to reflect on where we are moving, on the nature of our environment.

Beckett seems to be indicating that he builds his security in the "mist that recedes as he steps "fleeing," "fleeing," and "treading." His movements are vain attempts to remain abreast of the mist. Living "the space of a door" places Beckett at a point of willful transitions. By positing the door, he is able to include or preclude further stimuli.

## DO NOT PRAY

The branches do not pray, but I  
am almost moved to imitate their thrust,  
by raising my arms blindly to the sky,  
neither in thanks nor, least of all, in trust—  
no, not to beg and bend or pray and preach  
but, like this tree, to leave behind the earth  
in which I too am rooted and to reach  
into sheer air: radiance and heedless mirth,  
abandonment without all faith or hope,  
the freedom of a gesture without aim,  
a slanting dance of blossoms, or a trope  
that breaks a context and resolves a tension—  
a protest, a delight, a dying flame  
that seeks an uninhabited dimension.

( Kaufmann, Cain and Other Poems, p.165).

Gestures often say more than words. Gestures can in themselves be prayers, such as raising one's arms "blindly to the sky." Among the gestures within our worship, our bowing before the open ark during the Alenu is a forceful statement of submission and creatureliness. We aspire by our movement to express what our words themselves cannot convey.

## A RECORD

A record, a rocket,  
date upon date,  
three books in one pocket:  
what still has weight?

A record, a rocket,  
doubt upon doubt,  
ten crimes in one docket:  
what still stands out?

Datum on datum,  
hit upon hit,  
a man is an atom,  
atoms are split.

(Kaufmann, Cain and Other Poems, p.45).

Too often we introduce the Kadish with remorseful, guilt-ridden tones or banal comments about mortality. Although death has many anxiety-provoking aspects -- there are also humorous insights to be derived concerning our lives. Death is our beginning -- the foundation of our consciousness. Of what importance is that which precedes it? Everything and nothing! In developing values, we ought to keep in mind their relative nature. In sharp contrast to our mortality, we affirm the existence of an eternal God. There is no lack of humor in this statement.

XIII

*If there is a witness to my little life,  
To my tiny throes and struggles,  
He sees a fool;  
And it is not fine for gods to menace fools.*

[Follett (ed.), *The Collected Poems of Stephen Crane*, p.15)]

The poem reflects man's realization of his insignificance and his extensive ego needs. It is a "little life" with "tiny throes and struggles." The diminution of ourselves is a distancing mechanism to help us distinguish a larger framework in which to relocate or to which to relate ourselves. The self-indulgent worshipper (and who is not?) blithely acknowledges God's omnipotence and yet wants to assert his own freedom and individuality.

GOOD MORNING, AMERICA (excerpt).

1

In the evening there is a sunset sonata comes to the cities.  
There is a march of little armies to the dwindling of drums.  
The skyscrapers throw their tall lengths of walls into black bastions on  
the red west.  
The skyscrapers fasten their perpendicular alphabets far across the chang-  
ing silver triangles of stars and streets.

And who made 'em? Who made the skyscrapers?  
Man made 'em, the little two-legged joker, Man.  
Out of his head, out of his dreaming, scheming skypiece,  
Out of proud little diagrams that danced softly in his head—Man made  
the skyscrapers.  
With his two hands, with shovels, hammers, wheelbarrows, with engines,  
conveyors, signal whistles, with girders, molds, steel, concrete—  
Climbing on scaffolds and falsework with blueprints, riding the beams  
and dangling in mid-air to call, Come on, boys—  
Man made the skyscrapers.

When one tall skyscraper is torn down  
To make room for a taller one to go up,  
Who takes down and puts up those two skyscrapers?  
Man . . . the little two-legged joker . . . Man.

(Sandberg, Complete Poems, p.320).

Sandberg's poem is simultaneously a statement of naive incredulity at man's creative capacities together with a tone of mock arrogance -- if not affection. As two-legged jokers, we do some amazing things: save and destroy lives, build cities and death camps. But in the final analysis, we two legged jokers can alter only the quantifications of life, not its nature. We are free to search for meaning and bring value to our acts. But our superimposing of value



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is a form of "joking" as well. The acts are not changing --  
only their interpretations.

Cross Reference

Landau, "Softly Let us All Vanish," p.47. This poem could also be used within the context of Hachanah letefilah.

Baldwin, "There's No Room for God in My Trousers," p.53. This poem could be effectively used within the context of the Tachanunim.

Whitman, "Night on the Prairies," p.83. I have found this poem to be meaningful within the context of the Kadish, too.

Tchernichovsky, "Crede," p.86. This poem might be effective as an introduction to prayer.

Reznikoff, (untitled), p.91. I can see applications within this poem to the Avot and the Alenu.

Weiss, "Heaven," p.105. I sense applications within the Kadish and Ahavah Rabah.

Merwin, "The Present," p. 109. This poem might have a powerful impact with the Alenu.

Warren, #9, p.121. This would be equally as effective in conjunction with the Kadish.

Tagore, "For Strength," p.122. This poem could be used as an introduction to prayer or within the Tachanunim.

Nemerev, "Debate With the Rabbi," p.139. It might also be instructive with the Kadish.

Reznikoff, "Kaddish," p.140. It might also be effective with the Kadish.

Eliot, "Hollow Men," p.149. It might also be appropriate with the Kadish.

## EPILOGUE

Despite some "let downs" felt from completing the work and "letting go" of it, I have several good feelings about this study that I want to convey. Primarily, I have learned a great amount about poetry, prayer, and worship, and their complex relationships. I have developed a more clear understanding of the subtleties underlying worship. And, I have become more appreciative of the rare moments when effective worship is taking place.

I have no pretensions that this is anything more than a most introductory view of a little-explored area. The mounds of xeroxed poetic material and my undecipherable notes still (and hopefully, will continue to) clutter my desk. But they only touch a fraction of available material. There is simply no end to exciting and provocative poems which could embellish our worship. I cannot imagine a dearth of poetry as the primary problem of worship. I hope -- above all -- that I may have helped to expand the vision of what worship can be.

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