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We Are Not Worthy:
The History and Development of the *Tachanun* Prayer and its Modern Applicability
Marc Israel

This thesis examines the roots of the *Tachanun* prayer in rabbinic and biblical thought and its development in the early *siddurim*. Divided into six chapters, it traces the roots of the concept for this prayer from the time of the Temple through the contemporary *Siddur*. The Introduction and Chapter One focus on this "prayer without a text." These chapters note that there is no text given for *Tachanun* in the *Mishnah* or *Gemara*, as there are for many other prayer rubrics, yet, it appears that, conceptually, the idea of supplication after the main section of worship dates back to the Temple. In Chapter Two, I explore the history of the earliest *Tachanun* texts, Ben Baboi, *Seder Rav Amram*, *Siddur Saadyah*, and *Machzor Vitry*. Chapter Three follows with a textual analysis of the first three of these texts, noting the similarity in concept even as the language changes drastically. The exception to the rule is *Siddur Saadyah*, which does not focus on the fallibility of human beings, but on the ability to repent. *Machzor Vitry* warranted its own chapter, Chapter Four, as it sets the structure for *Tachanun* that every *Siddur* thereafter uses as a model. In Chapter Five, I summarize the various modern customs, looking at the differences between the *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* customs. Finally, in Chapter Six, I seek to understand what this prayer means in our own day.

Noting that even among the traditional Orthodox, few people find this prayer meaningful, I attempt to demonstrate that the concept of *Tachanun*, with its emphasis on humility is certainly relevant and, I argue, necessary in today's world. Perhaps the language of the modern *Tachanun* does not speak in a meaningful manner, but this thesis proves that the choice of phrases and verses in *Tachanun* dates back, in some cases, only 200 years ago. If there were ever a prayer in which there should be no qualms with shifting the language, *Tachanun* is it. I believe that we must work to find ways of reincorporating it into the Reform Jewish liturgy.

Besides the *Siddurim* already mentioned, I made extensive use of Israel Jacobson's *Netiv Binah*, Ismar Elbogen's *Jewish Liturgy, A Comprehensive History* and Joseph Heinemann's *Prayer in the Period of the Tannai'im and the Amora'im: Its Natures and Its Patterns*, as well as other secondary literature. Of course, this thesis also required extensive use of classical rabbinic texts, including the *Talmud*, the *Tur*, and the *Shulchan Arukh*.

WE ARE NOT WORTHY:
THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE *TACHANUN* PRAYER
AND ITS MODERN APPLICABILITY

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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They say you never forget your first love, and I suppose the same is true of your first *Chevruta*. It was with Andrew Davids that first year in Jerusalem that I first learned to love the study of Jewish text. He has been a *chaver* ever since, in every sense of the word—my study partner, my teacher, and my friend.

While I first fell in love with Jewish text in Jerusalem, it was my weekly study sessions with my brother-in-law, Rabbi Aaron Frank, where, with his great patience, I learned to make my way through a *daf Gemara*. Whether late at night after a long day of work and classes or early in the morning at the Corner Café, Aaron and I would meet, learn and talk. Now that I have left New York, I truly miss those weekly sessions. I could not have made my way through the texts for this thesis without the learning that we accomplished.

HUC in New York is blessed with a wonderfully diverse and distinctive faculty. I have learned so much from all of my teachers. I want to make special mention of my academic advisor and personal mentor, Rabbi Zahara Davidowowitz Farkas. Zahara, thank you for all you have taught me about Judaism, life and myself.

There are many people who helped facilitate my work on this thesis. I want to thank Peggy Pearlstein at the Library of Congress for all of her help and support, in addition to Dr. Philip Miller and Amy Helfman at the HUC library in New York, both of whom were tremendous resources and went out of their way to ease the difficulties of working long-distance. The staffs at both the University of Maryland Hillel and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism were extremely flexible with my schedule, enabling me to earn my *parnassah* while completing this thesis. Thanks—I could not have done it without your understanding.

I am blessed with two very loving families, my birth family and my family by marriage. I want to thank all of them for their support throughout these last five years. I want to thank my in-laws Jerry and Judy Frank for assisting me in so many ways over these past few years. I could never have done any of this without the love and support of my parents, Carol and Jerry Israel, who have done more for me than could ever be written here. I want them to know how much I appreciate all they do and that I love them.

I owe the greatest thanks to my wife, Abbey Frank. Thanks for always being there for me, for pushing me when I thought I could not go on, for having patience when I was not around, for taking care of the things I neglected and for supporting me in everything I did. I truly do not think I could have done this without you.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is to *El Rachum Vechanun*, God, who has been merciful and gracious unto me. Perhaps the other reason I relate to *Tachanun* is the knowledge that in my own life, God has bestowed me with so many gifts, which I have done nothing to deserve. As I am thankful for these gifts and mindful of the precariousness of life, I pray that I may always live my life according to God's will and do that which is pleasing in God's sight.

Preface

On the 14th of Adar, 5754, I woke up, still feeling the effects of a class Purim celebration the evening before, and turned on the radio to glean what I could from *Kol Yisrael*, the Israeli news radio. Unable to believe what I was hearing (and assuming I must have misunderstood the Hebrew), I called my roommate, Natan Elsberg, over to listen and translate for me. But the language was not the cause of my incomprehension, it was the news itself. Earlier that morning—seeking to fulfill a warped understanding of the commandment to wipe out the name of Amalek—Baruch Goldstein entered into a mosque in Hebron and opened fire with an automatic weapon. Before anyone knew what was happening, almost thirty people were dead.

Having now lived through the horror of a “religious” Jew assassinating the Prime Minister of the Jewish State, supposedly in the name of God, this event is no longer so shocking. At the time, although I did not consider myself naïve, I could never have conceived the idea of a Jew, in the name of Judaism, walking into a religious institution and opening fire on people in prayer.

The following Tuesday, as was my custom, I went to the traditional learner’s *minyan* at HUC. We *davened* the service as we always did, in a fairly traditional manner. After the *Amidah*, Rabbi Moshe Silbershein (who led/taught the *minyan*) asked everyone to sit down. He talked about the Baruch Goldstein incident and asked us to focus on the next prayer in the service, despite the fact that we had heretofore skipped it almost every day. He explained that Goldstein proved to him the necessity of saying *Tachanun* every day, as this incident showed the importance of humility in the way we live our lives. Never having seriously

looked at this prayer previously, but believing he was right about the later part, I vowed one day to look deeper into *Tachanun* at some point.

Jumping ahead two years, I was sitting in a classroom at HUC in New York, furiously trying to write down every word the professor was saying as he speedily sought to fill our brains with everything we could possibly learn in one semester about Jewish liturgy.

Suddenly, he paused for a moment and mentions that no one has ever done a comprehensive study of the prayer that we were discussing and that it would make a great thesis topic. The professor, of course, was Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, and the prayer was *Tachanun*. The thesis is what follows.

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	I
PREFACE	IV
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1—BEFORE THERE WAS A TEXT.....	5
CHAPTER 2—THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXT.....	15
CHAPTER 3—TEXTUAL ANALYSIS.....	24
I. BEN BABOI	24
II. SEDER RAV AMRAM.....	32
III. SIDDUR SAADYAH.....	45
CHAPTER 4—MACHZOR VITRY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN TEXT	48
CHAPTER 5—MODERN TEXTUAL VARIATIONS	63
CHAPTER 6—WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?.....	71
APPENDIX.....	76
TABLE I: REGULAR TACHANUN OF SEDER RAV AMRAM	76
TABLE II: ALTERNATIVE TEXT FOR REGULAR TACHANUN IN SEDER RAV AMRAM	77
TABLE III: TACHANUN FOR MONDAY AND THURSDAY IN SEDER RAV AMRAM.....	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY	80

Introduction

The origin of the *Tachanun* is shrouded in mystery. Unlike many of the prayers found in the traditional *Siddur* today, it is difficult to trace its linear development. Most Jewish prayers are known to have existed long before the Mishnah was compiled at the end of the second century. The Mishnah established the rules on how and when to say them, but the prayers were already being said in one form or another at least several decades earlier. For example, the opening chapters of Mishnah Berakhot explain the laws concerning the recitation of the *Shema* and its Blessings. The opening question in the Mishnah, "When should one recite the *Shema* in the evening?" assumes that one already knows that each person is supposed to say these prayers, but may not know the appropriate time.¹ The same is true for much of the fixed liturgy that is found in our prayer book, including the *Amidah*, *Birkat Hamazon* and many others. While the wording may have been free form, the basic categories of prayer found in a traditional *Siddur* and their set order were known to have existed at least since Mishnaic times.

This is not the case with *Tachanun*. In fact, *Tachanun*, the prayer of supplication said after the *Amidah*, is not mentioned in the Mishnah at all. In fact, the Tosefta contains the first reference in rabbinic literature to a petitionary prayer after the *Amidah*. There it states:

One does not say [or "add"] words [דברים] after "True and Firm" [the benediction recited after the *Shema*, immediately before the *Amidah*], but one may say words [דברים] after the *Amidah*, even like the order of the confession on the Day of Atonement.²

It is clear that the word דברים has greater nuance here than its literal definition, "words," might imply. The Babylonian Talmud quotes this passage but indicates in parentheses that

¹ M. Ber 1:1

some manuscripts used the word "petition" (בקשה) in place of "words."³ This passage suggests that it is the intended meaning of the more general דברים. So, notwithstanding the fact that there is no text given at this time and the word *Tachanun* itself is not mentioned, it appears to be the basis for what later became *Tachanun*.

Despite the lack of the use of the term *Tachanun* or any text given, there is some documentation that the practice of making supplications to God after offering the fixed worship goes back to the time of the Temple. Referring to the rituals after the daily sacrifice is offered, Mishnah Tamid states: "The Levites recited the psalm. When they reached the end of the section they blew the shofar and the people prostrated themselves. For every section the shofar was blown and for every blowing of the shofar there was a prostration."⁴ Joseph Heinemann suggests that the placement in the service and the prostration may be the basis upon which *Tachanun* developed. He explains:

The time of bowing—in connection to the time after the burning of the incense—was, apparently, a time for the "people's prayer," so that during this time, each person prayed his own personal prayer. And there are those who see this prayer as the source of the *Tachanunim* that it is customary to say in the synagogue after the *Amidah*.⁵

Most scholars believe that the *Tachanun* was an optional, petitionary prayer in its origin. Just as the prostration after the offerings in the Temple had no set liturgy, so too, this was seen as a time for private prayers. Jakob Petuchowski explains that *Tachanun* was "precisely that part of the service in which the individual was left free to use his own words and to express his own thoughts and concerns—in contrast to the more or less standardized prayers

² T. Ber 3:6

³ Ber 3 1a, as indicated in Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, translated by (Raymond P. Scheindlin) 67.

⁴ M. Tamid 3:1

⁵ Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Period of the Tanna'im and the Amora'im: Its Nature and its Patterns*. 79 (translated from the Hebrew)

of the congregation.”⁶ Ismar Elbogen agrees: “At the end of the *Amidah* the opportunity was given to every individual to pour out his heart and to conduct a dialogue with his Creator without any external pressure.”⁷ Thus, it is understood that the *Amidah* is the section of prayer whose liturgy was set, a communal petition for communal needs, but the *Tachanun* was the time for individual petition for individual needs.

By the time the earliest written prayer books were established, however, this practice had changed and a written text had been provided. Rav Amram, (in his *Siddur*) writes: “The people in the congregation fall on their faces and request mercy and each one asks for his requests.”⁸ This preserves the personal nature of the prayer. However, Rav Amram does not end there. He then provides a written text that one is supposed to say after finishing one's personal requests. That text has developed and been transformed over the centuries into the text(s) that exist in modern prayer books. As Elbogen states, “Today it is a varied mosaic of biblical verses and prayers from different time periods, a group of prayers that has completely lost its original character and can only be understood by retracing its origins.”⁹

This thesis will attempt to do exactly that. By examining the roots of *Tachanun* in rabbinic literature and early prayer books, I will seek to discover how the text that is found in the modern prayer book developed out of a tradition of private, non-fixed prayer. In doing so, I will also try to uncover what was happening in the world around the people who were composing the various editions of *Tachanun* so as to estimate how their environment may have been reflected in the composition of the prayer. I believe *Tachanun*, because of the lateness and variety of its composition, will provide insight into the theology of both

⁶ Jakob Petuchowski, *Prayer book Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism*. 25.

⁷ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*. 66

⁸ *Seder Rav Amram*, 65.

Sephardi and *Ashkenazi* Jewry in the Middle Ages. I will then survey modern Jewish approaches to *Tachanun*, both from a traditional and liberal viewpoint. Finally, I will examine what role *Tachanun* might play in future liberal Jewish liturgy.

⁹ Elbogen, 66.

Chapter 1—Before There Was a Text

A tradition of private prayers after the *Amidah* dates back as least as far as the tannaitic era. The Babylonian Talmud records the private prayers that were attributed to various Rabbis, noting with each one, that the prayer was recited after the Rabbi had finished the communal prayer.¹⁰ Many of these prayers are found in today's *Siddur* at one place or another, but it does not appear that the Rabbis who wrote them intended for them to be used in communal prayer.¹¹ Rather, they seem to be examples of the type of prayer one might say at this time. Joseph Heinemann writes:

But each person said these blessings in his own house and did not speak them out loud at the synagogue. After the *Amidah* each and every individual was accustomed to saying *tachanunim*, which were their private requests (and from here comes the "*Tachanun*" which is part of our prayer book today).¹²

It appears that the geonim who compiled the earliest *siddurim* knew the custom of having supplicatory prayers after the *Amidah*. Since there was no set text for *Tachanun* (as there was by that time for other prayers), they borrowed from these and other talmudic prayers, in addition to biblical sources, to compose a text for *Tachanun*. The idea of composing a set text for this traditionally private prayer was consistent with the times, in which firm rules were established regarding the recitation of all worship. As Lawrence Hoffman states, "The geonic period...produced a sustained effort to harness liturgical novelty by introducing a standard rite."¹³ In general, the effort was to decide between various practices already

¹⁰ Ber 16b-17a. Each of the prayer begins by stating "Rabbi Ploni So and So finished his prayer and said:"

¹¹ In the current traditional *Siddur*, these prayers are used in a variety of places. Rav's prayer, toward the bottom of the page, is part of the blessing of the new month. Rabbi's prayer is said at the end of *Birkot HaShachar*. Ravina's prayer is now the "fixed" private prayer at the end of the *Amidah*, before *Tachanun*.

¹² Heinemann, 24.

¹³ Lawrence Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. 8.

documented in the Talmud. However, the case of *Tachanun* is unusual as it involved the composition of a set of prayers that previously appeared to have no set form.

In addition to there being no set text for *Tachanun* until relatively late in the development of Jewish prayer, there also were debates as to the appropriate time when *Tachanun*-type prayers should be said. The Tosefta text previously referred to states that one does not say words (דברים) after *Emet v'yatziv*¹⁴ but rather, after the *Tefillah*.¹⁵ Such a statement would not be necessary unless there had been a practice of saying private prayers before the *Amidah*, that this Tosefta was trying to negate. As Jakob Petuchowski states, "That provision clearly recalls the earlier procedure when private prayers *were* offered following the benedictions after the *Shema*."¹⁶ The Talmud also records the debate concerning the most appropriate place to insert private prayers.¹⁷ One Rabbi believed that it should be during the *Amidah Birkat Tefillah* "Hear our Voice" (blessing #16). A second advocated placing individual requests at the appropriate blessing within the *Amidah*. The third endorsed placing the blessings after the *Amidah*. Solomon Freehof summarizes the discussion as follows:

Thus we see that the earlier practice as given in the name of the Tannaim (Nachum haMadi and the *Chakhamim*) was to insert private prayers in the benediction *shomea tefilah* ("hear our prayer"), but as is evident from the statement of the Amoraim, this was changed. The opinion of Rab (as given by Judah the son of Shmuel b. Shilat and by Hiya b. Ashi) is that the older custom of uttering private petitions in the benediction *shomea tefilah* may be neglected in favor of the practice of adding petitions to the end of any of the blessings of the Tefilla. The Babylonians are evidently eager to have each private prayer put into the place specifically appropriate to it. Joshua b. Levi,

¹⁴ The last of the blessings of the *Shema*, coming right before the *Amidah*, in the morning service.

¹⁵ Another name for the *Amidah* in rabbinic literature.

¹⁶ Petuchowski "The Liturgy of the Synagogue: History, structure and contents" in *Studies in Liturgy Exegesis and Talmudic Narrative* by Scott Green. 25.

¹⁷ Av.Z. 7b.

the Palestinian Amora, also says that the older custom may be neglected but suggests that the private prayers be added after the Tefilla.¹⁸

For Freehof, then, this debate reflects older customs, but by the time the Talmud was completed, the preferable custom in both Palestine and Babylonia was to say private devotions after the *Amidah* only.¹⁹

Adin Steinsaltz explains the theory behind this practice as follows: "It is, as it were, that after a person stands in prayer, he is regarded as meriting to be in the situation of 'Being brought before the King'; he appears in the inner sanctum, surely this is the proper opportunity to add a few more requests of a more personal and more private nature."²⁰ Thus, according to Steinsaltz's logic, in the same way that within the *Amidah* we link ourselves to our ancestors in order to make our communal requests, so too, by reciting the *Amidah* we link ourselves to the community in order to open the door for our personal petition.

Ismar Elbogen adds a historical reason for the placement of such private prayers. He believes that the prostration and private prayer in the Temple service served as a model for the *Tachanun* in the synagogue. The prostration in the Temple came after the public worship, the sacrifice, and involved bowing down and requesting God's mercy for one's individual needs. Similarly, in the synagogue, each individual had the opportunity for private prayer after the synagogue's form of public worship, the *Amidah*. He writes:

This custom was transferred from the Temple to the synagogue, so that the prayer of the individual was no longer annexed to the public sacrifice but to the public prayer. At the end of the *Amidah* the opportunity was given to every individual to pour out his heart and to conduct a dialogue with his Creator without any external pressure. Thus, the most difficult problem of all public worship was resolved, and an appropriate balance was achieved between the demands of the community for congregational prayer and the

¹⁸ Solomon Freehof, "The Origin of the Tachanun", *Hebrew Union College Annual* Vol. II (1925). 339-340.

¹⁹ Ibid. 341.

²⁰ Adin Steinsaltz, *HaSidur v'haTefilah* vol. I, 81. (Translated from the Hebrew.)

justified desire of the individual for personal prayer independent of and uninfluenced by the community."²¹

Thus, according to Elbogen, the natural place to say *Tachanun* is after the *Amidah*, following the model of the Temple worship.

The debate over the appropriate place for personal prayer such as *Tachanun* seems to have been resolved by the time the Talmud was compiled. However, there continues to be a discussion until modern times regarding that characteristic by which *Tachanun* is best known, the position in which it should be said. This position, called *nefilat apayim*, literally "falling on the face," reflects the nature of *Tachanun* as a prayer of humility.²² In fact, the prayer is not only said while prostrating oneself, but it is often referred to simply by that title, *Nefilat Apayim*.²³ This custom of prostration after worship can be traced back to the time of the Temple, as referred to in Mishnah Tamid 7:3 and Ben Sira 50:16-21, both of which describe the same practice: 1) offering sacrifice, 2) recitation of psalms, , and 3) the people fully prostrating themselves to the ground. *Mishnah Tamid* describes the manner in which the daily sacrifice, the *tamid*, was offered. It then states the following:

The Levites would recite the psalm of the day. They would reach the end of a paragraph and blast the shofar and the people would bow down. For each paragraph, they blasted the shofar and for each blast, the people would bow down. This was the order of the *tamid* offering for worship in the House of God.²⁴

The Ben Sira text explains:

Then the sons of Aaron shouted, they sounded the trumpets of hammered work, they made a great noise to be heard for remembrance before the Most High. Then all the people together made haste and fell to the ground upon their faces to worship their Lord, the Almighty, God Most High. And the

²¹ Elbogen, 66.

²² The origin of this term is found in Meg. 22b. when it describes Rav as refusing to נפל על אנפיה

²³ Elbogen, 67, note 4

²⁴ M. Tam 7:3, My translation based on the commentary of Pinchas Kahati.

singers praised him with their voices in sweet and full-toned melody. And the people besought the Lord Most High in prayer before Him who is merciful, till the order of worship of the Lord was ended; so they completed His service.²⁵

These texts clarify several aspects of the worship. First, the bowing down was connected to praying before “Him who is merciful,” connecting bowing down with requests for mercy. Second, the prostration and requests for mercy occurred after the main portion of worship, the priestly sacrifice. Third, the people bowed all the way to the ground. Ben Sira’s explicit statement that they “fell to the ground upon their faces,” and the *Mishnah*’s use of the verb השתחו, “to prostrate,” clearly indicate that the later term נפילת אפיים, “falling on the face,” was taken literally in the early years.

However, already by the time of the Talmud, there was a debate as to the propriety of bowing down to the ground. It was seen as certainly improper for high officials and at least questionable for everyone else. To permit bowing down on a hewn-stone floor, certainly might be perceived as contradicting the commandment not to bow down to idols, as it states in Leviticus 26:1, “You shall not...place figured stone in your lands to worship (להשתחוות) upon.”²⁶ The New JPS translation notes that the word משחית (“figured”) has uncertain meaning, but in Megillah 22b, the rabbis understand this verse to prohibit bowing down on carved-stone floors. But Rabbi Eliezer taught that even if it is *not* a hewn-stone floor, a person of importance (at least) should not bow down, “A person of importance should not bow down with his face to the ground (ליפול על פניו) unless he is as humble as Joshua bin Nun.”²⁷ The *sugya* debates this matter and then concludes with Rav Chiya report of the practice of Abaye and Raba who “worship” (דמצלי אצוליי). Rashi, however, explains this to

²⁵ The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version. Sirach 50:16-19.

²⁶ New JPS translation.

²⁷ BT Megillah 22b

mean that in context they lean "On their sides and not actually falling on their face, according to the principle that 'A person of importance is not permitted to fall on his face.' This follows the version that the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught."²⁸ Elbogen notes that this is the custom which has spread to the synagogue, "that one inclines to one side or leans one's head on something and covers it." He notes, however, that "the expression falling upon the face continued in use."²⁹

However, Maimonides, who lived about 100 years after Rashi, ruled that one should still fall upon the ground, if not with one's whole body, then at least with the face alone.

How should one prostrate himself? After he raises his head from the fifth bow [of the *Amidah*, the fifth bow coming in *Oseh shalom*], he should sit on the ground and fall on his face to the ground and supplicate with all the supplications that he so desires. Bowing (כריעה), which is spoken of all over the place, refers to [going down] on the knees, and one bows the head down. This prostrating (השתחויה) is extending one's arms and legs until one falls on his face to the ground.³⁰

He bases his ruling on the reading in Megillah 22b, but concludes that one *should* bow all the way down. The Jews of Yemen still follow this custom, although most other Jewish communities have adopted the custom of inclining to one side or leaning one's head on something and covering it.³¹ The *Shulchan Arukh* records several different valid customs regarding the proper posture for *Nefilat Apayim*, even within a particular rite.³²

Whether a person lies down on the ground or simply leans his head on his hand, all of the postures indicate the same message: this is a prayer of supplication, a private prayer between each person and God. As Adin Stenzaltz explains:

²⁸ BT Megillah 23a, Rashi's comment on the words דמצי אצליי.

²⁹ Elbogen, 67.

³⁰ Mishnah Torah *Hilkhos Tefillah* 85 *Halakhah* 13. (Translated from the Hebrew)

³¹ Elbogen, 67.

³² Shulchan Arukh O.H. 131:1 and the comment by the Rema which follows.

We learn from the *nefilat apayim*, during which a person hides his face and fully bows himself down before God (even though in our day, in most places people no longer do *nefilat apayim* in this way, but in a symbolic manner, one rests his head upon his hand), that this is the manner that a person says very personal and private matters. This is the case whether he is saying words of gratitude or words of requests or petitions.³³

In modern times, it is the one place in the service where even the prayer leader will sit down, moving away from the stand from which he usually leads.³⁴ Each person is to humble himself, asking God to have mercy on him and to grant his own personal petitions. The private nature of this prayer goes part of the way to explaining why there was no set text for it until very late.

In addition to its private nature, the *Tachamun* was optional—another reason for there being less of an impetus to establish a set text for it in the pre-geonic period, or even geonic times. Rabbi Natronai Gaon explicitly viewed “the falling upon the face” as an optional prayer.³⁵ In *Seder Rav Amram*, saying some type of *Tachamun* appears as a standard part of the service, but the text is still not fixed. In both the normal weekday and in the longer Monday/Thursday rendition, two different texts are given, so that the person praying may choose between them.³⁶ Maimonides goes farther still, claiming that each person should “recite whatever supplications he desires.”³⁷ Later *halakhic* works which sought to standardize ritual practice, including the *Shulchan Arukh*, still base many of the rulings on *minhag*, not *halakhah*.³⁸

³³ Steinzaltz, 81.

³⁴ Elbogen, 67.

³⁵ Ibid., 67.

³⁶ *Seder Rav Amram* 37, for normal weekdays. Note the second selection beginning at וְאֵי אֵת דְּבַעִי. Similarly, see page 56 for Monday and Thursdays, beginning with the words וְיֵשׁ אֲנִי מִקֹּדֶם.

³⁷ *Mishnah Torah Hilkhot Tefillah* 85 *Halakhah* 13.

³⁸ *Shulchan Arukh* O.H. 131

One more custom appears to pre-exist the written text of *Tachanun*. This is the custom of saying a more elaborate version on Monday and Thursdays. Several inter-related factors account for this phenomenon. Abraham Block notes that Mondays and Thursdays were "days considered propitious for supplication. The meritorious character of these days is attributed to the tradition that Moses ascended Mount Sinai on a Thursday and came down on a Monday, bearing a message of forgiveness."³⁹ Elbogen notes that *Seder Olam*, an ancient chronological work dates the 17th of Tamuz, the day on which Moses broke the tablets, on a Thursday, while the 10th of Tishre, the day God forgave the Israelites for the sin of the calf, is traditionally thought to have been a Monday.⁴⁰ He also notes that "Mondays and Thursdays have been fast days since ancient times." Elbogen explains that the reasoning for this custom is found in *Megilat Ta'anit*:

And furthermore our sages decreed that they should fast on Mondays and Thursdays for three reasons: because of the destruction of the Temple, because the Torah was burnt and because of the disgrace of God's name.⁴¹

Based on such explanations, the connection between these days and *Tachanun* become clear. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes in his *Siddur*, "Ever since, the second and fifth days of each week, every Monday and Thursday, have been a summons to the Jewish people to assemble anew before God, reawakening within their hearts the firm confidence that they could obtain atonement for all past sin."⁴² *Tachanun* consists of two main elements, the confession of the unworthiness of humanity, Jews, and the individual, and the request of God to grant the petitioner his needs. Because God forgave the Jewish people on a Monday with the words *Salachti Kidevarekha*" for the sin of the Golden Calf, God is thought to be more

³⁹ Abraham Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, 76.

⁴⁰ Elbogen, 69.

⁴¹ Ibid., 68

⁴² Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Sidur*, 162.

receptive to petitions and fasting then. This connection between the longer *Tachanun* and Mondays and Thursdays may also explain why much of the liturgy that developed in *Tachanun* is the same as the fast-day liturgy.⁴³

Of course, the connection to Mondays and Thursdays may also be as simple an explanation of that offered by Idelsohn who writes, "The reason why a long *Tachanun* was arranged for Mondays and Thursdays is that on these days the people would assemble in the cities from the suburban hamlets to attend the markets. For this reason, Scriptural readings and special petitions were assigned."⁴⁴ However, this may be a chicken and egg argument, as it is difficult to know which custom came first. Either way, it is clear that the custom of saying a more elaborate set of supplications and petitions after the *Amidah* dates back well before the first formal *Tachanun* prayer was composed.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented in this chapter. First, it is clear that the origins of supplicatory private prayer date back as far as the worship in the time of the Temple. Originally these prayers were viewed as optional, although over time it became the custom for everyone to say some type of supplication. While the Talmud records considerable debate as to the most appropriate time to say such prayers, the rabbis ultimately concluded that after the *Amidah*, based on the model of prostration after the sacrifice, is the most preferable place in the service for private petitions. It was also clear that the physical position one should assume when saying these prayers ought to indicate humility before God, but custom varies as to exactly which position one should take. Finally, the custom of saying a longer, more elaborate prayer on Mondays and Thursdays pre-dates the actual text that one

⁴³ Elbogen notes on page 68 that the *Tachanun* prayers recall "the liturgy of fast days, from which they borrowed much."

⁴⁴ A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 112.

should say. With these customs already set in place, we will now examine the development of the text until it became what is found in the traditional *Siddur* today.

Chapter 2—The Development of the Text

While the concept of private prayer and supplication after the public worship has existed since at least the time of the Temple, there was as yet no prescribed written text. In *Berakhot* 16b-17a, the Talmud records the private penitential-like prayers of several sages and many point to these as examples of early *Tachanun* texts. However, these prayers were simply the prayers of individuals, not texts prescribed by the Talmud itself for communal use. While they later served as a basis for those composing *Tachanun* texts, it does not appear that the Talmud intended them toward that end.

The earliest known actual texts for *Tachanun* come several centuries later, from the Genizah at Fustat and brought to light by Jacob Mann in several articles in the 1920s. These texts reflect the Palestinian rite during the geonic period, roughly 750-1000 CE, and possibly thereafter, depending on the text. Several of Mann's fragments include texts that reflect a prototype of the later tradition of saying *Tachanun* following the *Amidah*.⁴⁵ One such text offers a one-line confession first, followed by instructions for the worshipper to "request his Lord (God) concerning what he has need" (תם יסאל רבוה פי מא יחתאג אליה).⁴⁶ It then indicates that one should read several verses from the Bible, but it does not specify which ones.

A second text begins with a short confession, opening with the words, "God Merciful is Your name" (אל רחום שמך) and including the phrase "Do this for us for the sake of Your name" (עשה עמנו למען שמך).⁴⁷ Both of these phrases are found in multiple places in later *Tachanun* text, although this text is not as elaborate as the later ones. A third folio refers to

⁴⁵ Jacob Mann, "Geniza Fragments of the Palestinian Order of the Service" *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. II (1925), 299

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 298-9. Taken from *J.Q.R.*, X, 657

the recitation of the *Avinu Malkenu* after the *Amidah*.⁴⁸ While Mann notes that this is likely only one line, it is significant, as this becomes a central theme in later *Tachanun* versions. It does not appear that any of these Genizah fragments contains a full-length written *Tachanun*, but it is likely that these formed the basis for the type of material and, in some cases, the actual wording, that would eventually be included in the fully written text. It is noteworthy that most of these texts included some recitation of biblical verses, either from Psalms or Nehemiah. These texts most likely represent the first step along the path from having no set text for *Tachanun* to having little room for the individual's personal petition, as in our situation today.

However, a set text of *Tachanun* (possibly the first) is known to us from relatively early in the geonic era. This text was found within another Geniza discovery, called the "Ben Baboi."⁴⁹ Ben Baboi, who lived around the year 800, was a student of a student of Rabbi Yehudai Gaon, a leading proponent for exclusive use of the Babylonian rite.⁵⁰ According to Lawrence Hoffman, Ben Baboi "dismissed unwarranted liturgical additions of any kind" and claimed that anyone who "says an unnecessary liturgical addition of any kind deserves excommunication."⁵¹ Thus, he would seem an unlikely character to have originally composed the text himself. It would seem probable that the text was either composed by his master, Yehudai, or, more likely, the text is a compilation of previously written materials, such as the Geniza fragments just mentioned or other texts which were not preserved.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 299. This text is taken from Genizah fragment no.8 (Fol. 1.)

⁴⁸ Ibid., 299. This one comes from no. 3.

⁴⁹ Jacob Mann, "Les <<Chapitres.. de Ben Baboi Et Les Relations de R. Yehoudai Gaon," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 70 (1920)

⁵⁰ Hoffman, *Canonization*, 63.

⁵¹ Ibid., 67.

The text of Ben Baboi, as we shall see in the next chapter, is typical in many ways of the *Tachanun* texts that come later. It includes lavish praise for God, a degraded view of human nature and numerous requests for God to be merciful despite the worshipper's misdeeds. The language appears to be more talmudic than biblical, although it does not appear to be taken from any one place. I will show in the next chapter that it contains various lines and phrases from many prayers, along with much which cannot be specifically traced back to any other source. It is somewhat surprising that the text includes several *piyyutim*, given that according to Hoffman, Ben Baboi strongly opposed including them in the service unless absolutely necessary.⁵²

It is remarkable, given the similarities in themes and proximity in time and location, that the Ben Baboi text bears little resemblance to the next known text, that of Rav Amram. Rav Amram, who served as Gaon in Sura from 857-871, is known, among other things, for compiling the earliest complete *Siddur* on record, *Seder Rav Amram*.⁵³ His *Tachanun* text, even more than that of Ben Baboi, is talmudic in style, with several pieces transplanted directly from both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. In addition, Amram appears to be influenced by the *Amidah* itself, with several of the phrases and ideas coming directly from it. As Freehof noted, "In the early *Tachanun* texts we find... side by side with the direct influence of the Tefilla, the use of Talmudic prayers."⁵⁴ He also includes several *Avinu Malkemu* prayers, just as the earlier text found in the Geniza had. He concludes the shorter version with a composition known as *Va'anachnu lo neda*, a prayer that still concludes the *Amidah* today. There are biblical quotations within the compositions and the option to recite

⁵² Ibid, 67.

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴ Freehof, 345

biblical passages, most notably Daniel 9:15-19, which Amram includes in his Monday/Thursday version.

Seder Rav Amram is the clearest indication thus far of the move to change *Tachanun* from an individual, freely composed prayer to a set text. In Ben Baboi and the other Genizah fragments, texts are given, but it is not clear that they were prescribed for the whole community. Amram instructs the congregation to "fall on their faces and request mercy with each person asking his own personal requests."⁵⁵ However, immediately afterwards, Amram includes a series of text, of which the worshipper is supposed to choose. While he appears to retain the personal nature of the prayer, the emphasis is clearly placed on the written text.

Most of the texts Amram includes in his *Tachanun* are talmudic in style and some of them are actually taken directly from the Talmud. They appear to be a part of a genre of prayer that all begin with some form of the phrase *Ribon kol haolamim*, in which the worshipper confesses sins, recognizes the inferiority of humanity relative to God, and pleads for mercy. The prayer then switches into a petition, indicated by the phrase *Yehi ratson milfanekha*. Within each *Tachanun* that Amram provides are several of these types of prayers. As the next chapter will indicate, these appear to be a collection of just a few of the many prayers of this type that were around at the time.

Seder Rav Amram is also the first text to include a separate version of *Tachanun* for Monday and Thursday. His text's introductory section contains many of the phrases later included in *Vehu rachum*, the prayer that becomes our standard section of the longer Monday/Thursday *Tachanun*. However, again, the format here is completely different. It may even be that this *Vehu rachum* was a later addition to *Seder Rav Amram*, since many

⁵⁵ *Seder Rav Amram*, 37

early manuscripts do not include it.⁵⁶ The Monday/Thursday liturgy also includes several *piyyutim*, some of which are believed to be original to *Seder Rav Amram*, while others appear to be borrowed from the fast day liturgy. In many ways this is the text which set the stage for the structure of the contemporary *Tachanun*.

Chronologically, the next text comes from *Siddur Saadyah Gaon*, although by means of content it does not follow from *Seder Rav Amram*. *Seder Rav Amram* contains much material about the general unworthiness of human beings and pleads with God to grant our requests, but it is not a *selichah* type prayer, in that it does not dwell specifically on asking God to forgive our sins. On the other hand, *Siddur Saadyah* almost exclusively deals with the notion of *teshuvah*. The language in *Siddur Saadyah* is based more on the liturgy of Yom Kippur than on fast days and tends to use more biblical than talmudic imagery. Besides an emphasis on God's mercy, the text bears little resemblance to *Seder Rav Amram* until the last section, where it contains an *Avinu malkenu* and the *Va'anachnu lo neda* prayer, as in Amram. It also includes the line *Vehu rachum* and indicates that more is to be said, but does not indicate if it simply means to complete the one verse from Psalm 20 or the long *Vehu rachum* which later becomes a part of the liturgy. It would appear to be the former, however, as the reader would not likely be expected to know the seven-paragraph *Vehu Rachum*, even though he might be able to finish the single verse from the Psalm. Overall, however, the *Saadyah* composition of *Tachanun* appears to be unique, different in style and content from both those that preceded it and those that came later.

The first *Tachanun* that comes close to the text and structure we have today is found in *Machzor Vitry*. This *Siddur*, published in France by a student of Rashi, Simcha ben

⁵⁶ Israel Davidson, *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry* vol. II, 183-4. He notes that "there is no doubt that it is a later edition, as it is not found in the manuscript."

Shmuel of Vitry, around 1100, became the basis for most *Ashkenazi* rites. Between the time of *Siddur Saadyah* and *Machzor Vitry*, there were many *Siddurim* published, most of which were simply "a description of the synagogue service and an explanation of the customs observed there." Unlike those prayer books, *Machzor Vitry* is a "work which combines instructions about the order of the prayer with the texts themselves."⁵⁷ Thus, while much of the contemporary traditional service, word for word, can be traced back to it, it is not clear how much of the text is original to *Machzor Vitry* and how much may have preceded it. Either way, it is not surprising to find much of the *Tachanun* from the contemporary traditional *Siddur* established for the first time in *Machzor Vitry*. However, the text of *Tachanun* in *Machzor Vitry* is significantly longer than any known text before or after. It not only contains much of the material that is in the modern *Siddur*, but much more that has since been removed. It contains a mixture of biblical material, mostly Psalms, along with talmudic material. There are several *piyyutim*, including one that is parallel to the text of Ben Baboi but is not found in any other *Tachanunim*.⁵⁸

There are two unique features in the text compared to the others that have been mentioned. The first is the inclusion of entire Psalms. While other texts quote liberally from the Psalms (and the Bible in general), this is the first text which includes an entire Biblical passages as part of its liturgy. *Machzor Vitry* includes both Psalm 25 and Psalm 3.⁵⁹ As we will see, *Sephardi* custom maintained the use of Psalm 25, but *Ashkenazi* custom switched to Psalm 6. Psalm 3 is not found in any later *Tachanun* text of which I am aware.

⁵⁷ Elbogen, 277.

⁵⁸ The text found on page 71 of *Machzor Vitry* at the end of the first paragraph, beginning with the words *אבריהם אבריהם* parallels the Ben Baboi text that begins *ענינו כשענינה אבריהם*. In the next chapter I will deal with this matter in greater detail.

⁵⁹ *Machzor Vitry*, 70.

The other unique aspect to *Machzor Vitry* is that it is the first prayer book to include the full seven-paragraph *Vehu rachum* that is found in all later versions of *Tachanun*. While the text is not exactly identical to the modern text, it is the same in structure and in meaning.⁶⁰ The exact origin of this text is not clear. Three different *aggadot* attempt to supply its history. For the first, Rabbi Issachar Jacobson quotes Rabbi Abraham Berliner who relates in Hebrew an Aramaic story cited later by Zunz and found in Hebrew in King's Library in Berlin.⁶¹

One Bishop—such as was stated in the Aramaic story—said to three anonymous Jews, who came from the expulsion from Jerusalem: “If you are Jews, I wish to test you, just as Hananiah, Mishal and Azariah were tested in the midst of a crematorium with burning fire.” They said to him, “Give us thirty days time.” For those long days, they sat fasting. When the thirty day came to an end, one old Heaven-fearing man told them that in his dream, “A biblical verse was cried out to me in which the word *ki* was written twice and the word *lo* was written three times, and I don't know which verse it is.”

One of the three answered and said: “This is the verse from Isaiah 43:2 which states: *Ki ta'avir bamayim itkha ani uvanharot lo yisht'fukha. ki telech b'mo-esh lo tikaveh v'lehava lo tivar bakh*. [When you pass through water, I will be with you; through streams, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be scorched, through flame, it shall not burn you.]”

“Then this is the tidings. You will enter into the fire and you will succeed.”

Suddenly an officer of the Bishop ignited a very big fire in the street and this same old man entered into it--The fire parted and turned to the three intended ones. The three people also entered into the fire in order to welcome the old man and afterwards they compiled *Vehu Rachum*—The first one up until *Ana Melekh Rachum*, the second one until *Ein Kamokha*, and the third one from there to the end.

Jacobson notes that this *aggadah* is problematic because it “does not correspond with the content of the prayer.” The prayer is asking God to act mercifully towards humanity and the

⁶⁰ Each of the seven paragraphs of the modern structure are found here, with just a few words and phrases which differ between them.

⁶¹ Issachar Jacobson, *Netiv Binah*, vol I 347-8. (translated from the Hebrew.) Elbogen (among others) claim that this story is the basis for Zunz's dating the origin of this prayer to the seventh century, citing his work in *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*. Berlin; L Gerschel, 1865, 16.

Jewish nation, but does not assume that this has already been accomplished. Jacobson also cites a second *aggadah*, which he believes "is a little closer to the historical truth, whose source is in a Geonic Responsa."⁶²

Aspasynos expelled three groups of leaders from Jerusalem. They were settled onto boats without a great sailor and they arrived to Europe. One group arrived in Lyon, one to Arla and one, to Bordyl. The Minister hospitably received those that settled in Bordyl and gave them fields and vineyards and they lived there a long time in tranquility until that minister died and there arose upon them a new king. And he placed new rules upon them. There were two brothers there, Joseph and Benjamin and with them, Shmuel, their cousin. They cried out to God in sorrow for them and they sat fasting (צומות) and fasting (תעניות) and they wore sackcloth's on their bodies and the three of them established *Vehu Rachum*—Joseph, the first section; Benjamin, the second; Shmuel, the third.

While Jacobson may believe that this is closer to the historical truth, it has obvious mythic qualities to it as well. It cannot be mere coincidence that the brothers are named Joseph and Benjamin and that there "arose a new king over them." It simply echoes too loudly of the biblical story of Joseph going down into Egypt and the fate of the Israelites for it to be unintentional.

Israel Davidson provides a third version of the story behind *Vehu rachum*. According to this legend, Rabbi Amitai, Rabbi Shefatia and Rabbi Yosifiah, whom Titus had exiled, established this prayer.⁶³ All three stories seem to agree that there are three composers to this prayer. The way it is divided according to the legends does not correspond with the seven paragraphs we have now, but rather, it breaks according to two consecutive verses with the phrase *rachum vechanun*. Irrespective of this, it is apparent that multiple authors composed this text and its exact origin is unknown. Zunz credits it to the Jews living under the Franks and Goths in the seventh century, but this is questionable, as it does not appear in full in any

⁶² Ibid, 347-8.

⁶³ Davidson, vol. II, 184

text up until *Machzor Vitry*, which is not Spanish to begin with and was written four centuries later, in addition.⁶⁴

Vehu Rachum is first mentioned as an aside in *Sefer Hapardes*, a book of legal rulings from the school of Rashi, compiled around the same time as *Machzor Vitry*, but there it appears as an already established custom.⁶⁵ Regarding the customs of which prayers to say on the day of a *Berit Milah* that falls on a fast day, it simply states that “one should pray the *selichot*, say the confession, but one should not say *Vehu rachum* or the *Tachanunim*.”⁶⁶ It would not seem, therefore, that this was a little known or new composition. Rather, it appears that *Vehu rachum* was established some time between the period during which Rav Amram Gaon compiled his *Siddur* in the 9th Century and the time when the school of Rashi put together *Sefer HaPardes*, around the end of the 11th Century.

From *Machzor Vitry* to today, many different customs have arisen regarding all the aspects of *Tachanun*—what days one ought to say it, what position to say it in, the words one ought to use. Each rite has developed its own customs regarding *Tachanun*, as we will see in Chapter 5. However, in one way or another, all parts of the prayer can be traced back to the texts mentioned here. It is therefore useful to examine closely each of the texts mentioned—Ben Baboi, *Seder Rav Amram*, *Siddur Saadyah*, and *Machzor Vitry* to follow the extent to which each authority served as a model for the prayer as we have it.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jacobson, 347-348

⁶⁶ Rabbi H.L. Eherenreich, *Sepher Ha-Pardes and Liturgical Works and Ritual Work Attributed to Rashi*, 66.

Chapter 3—Textual Analysis

As each *Siddur* contained its own *Tachanun*, there are as many versions of it as there are *Siddurim*. In terms of understanding the history and development of the text and its ideas, however, I will focus on four of these, namely, Ben Baboi, *Seder Rav Amram*, *Siddur Saadyah*, and *Machzor Vitry*. A careful examination of each of these texts will reveal how the text in today's *Siddur* came into being.

I. Ben Baboi

As we saw in Chapter Two, the first known *Tachanun* text is found in the Ben Baboi. However, compared to the *Tachanun* of the contemporary *Siddur*, it would be difficult to recognize Ben Baboi as being a part of the same category of prayer. There is no confession, no readings of Psalms, not much from the Scriptures at all, besides a few phrases at various points. The Ben Baboi text does not specify a separate text for reading on Monday and Thursday nor does it give any type of direction as to how one should sit. In fact, it is not entirely clear that it was meant for public prayer at all since the language is in the first person singular. Yet, a careful study of the text reveals that many of the themes that appear in the contemporary *Tachanun* are found in this prayer, and the inclusion of several *piyyutim* seem to indicate that the prayer is for public worship, not simply one sage's private prayer (as opposed to those *Tachanun*-type prayers that were found in the Talmud).

Section I (the *Reshut*) begins with an introductory stanza asking God to act as the worshiper's protector, even as it is God's judgment from which the worshiper needs protection:

תבונה ומדע והסכל ויצר טוב יושר ערבתני יי
ואל תשליכני לעת זיקנה ולא תשיבני ריקם מלפניך ואל תכלימני בשאלתי

*Understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, and direct good inclinations—God protect me
Don't cast me off in old age and don't allow me to return from you empty
And don't destroy me on account of my request.*

This section appears to be a *kavanah*, similar in function to the *hineni* prayers that were composed later by the Kabbalists, or, alternatively, a *reshut*, typical to some extent of the introductory stanzas with which *kerovot* begin.⁶⁷ While it does make a request of God for protection, such protection is only sought in order to be able to make a request of God.

Similarly, Section II (Private Petition) is still a preface to the main petition. It does not directly ask God for the needs of the petitioner, but instead, it asks God to grant knowledge of God's ways in order for that person to lead a life according to God's will. It is written in the first person singular and is Talmudic in style, with many of the phrases taken directly from private prayers found in the Babylonian Talmud.⁶⁸

והוריני דרכי טובך יי והודיעני חוקי רצונך והדריכני באמתך ויחד לבבי ליראה את שמך :
הוריני יי דרכי שלום וסמכיני בשלום ומלטיני מעברה והצילני מאדם רע ומאיש רע ומכל דין
קשה ומיד בני אדם הרעים והצילני והושיעני ומלטיני וחלצני למען שמך האל הגדול הגבור
והנורא והנשיא והנשגב והושיעני בכל יום ובכל לילת הקשות מכל שעות הרעות ומעין רע ומכל
עונש רע ומכל חולי רע ומכל מכה ומרעש ומרעד ומרוגז ומדבר ומשקר ומלשון רמיה ומכל
נהרות מים ומכל צואה ומכל טומאה ומחמתך ומקנאתך ומגערתך ומחרך ומחרונך ומשעות
הקשות המתרגשות לבוא לעולם.

*Teach me Your ways of goodness O' God
Make me knowledgeable about the laws You desire and guide me in Your truth
and unite my heart to have awe of your name.
Teach me, O' God, your ways of peace and place peace upon me.
Rescue me from transgressions and save me from an evil person, from an evil man, and from
all harsh rulings and from the hand of the evil people.
Rescue me and save me and save me and strengthen me for Your name's sake,
the Great, Mighty, Awesome God who is raised up and exalted.
Save me every day and every night--From the harshness of every evil hour, evil eye and every
evil punishment; From every ordinary evil, from every plague,
From every earthquake, trembling and unsteadiness;
From speaking and lying and deceiving speech; From all rivers flowing with water;*

⁶⁷ For more on the *hineni* prayers, see Stefan Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 246.

⁶⁸ It seems to be based loosely on prayers found in Berakhot 17b, but it is not a quotation of an existing prayer, at least not one recorded in the Babylonian or Jerusalem Talmud.

From all filth and from all impurity; From the heat of Your anger, Your jealousy, Your rebuke and Your flaring anger; And from the difficult and troubled times which are to come in the world.

Many of the elements of this prayer are found in later *Tachamun* prayers. These themes include: God as savior, the problems in the world, the forces within humanity that might lead the worshiper to do evil and the need for protection from God's anger. The one unusual part of this section is the "acts of God" section referring to natural disasters. Such language cannot be found in later *Tachamun* prayers and seems out of place here. Therefore, I would suspect that either the theology of the person writing the prayer included such natural catastrophes as punishment for humanity's evil or that the entire prayer was taken from a previous context. However, such theology is more associated with the biblical period than the geonic. It is possible that this was originally part of the prayers for rain, many of which were supplicatory in nature.⁶⁹

Section III (Supplication) of the Ben Baboi text is the heart of the supplication. It begs God to grant the worshiper the object of the prayer and to have mercy upon him.

תבוא תפלת תחנוני לפניך יי אלהי בשעה הזאת ובעונה
הזאת בא יי אלהינו מלך העולם האל המלך המהולל המושיע שמע תפלת קול תחנוני: יהי
רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי אבות שתשמע בקולי ותקבל תפלתי ורחם עלי למען שמך תמלא
רחמים רבים ופתח לי שערי רחמים לתפלתי ולתחינתי ולזעקתי. כן יהי רצון ורחמים לפניך יי
אלהי שתשמע שועתי כאשר שמעתה שועת אבותינו הראשונים.

*Let my prayer and my supplication come before You at this time, Adonai my God,
In this season, Adonai our God, King of the Universe,
God, King, Who is Praised and Saves,
Hear my prayer, the sound of my supplication.
May it be Your Will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,
To hear my voice and to accept my prayer
Be merciful to me for Your name's sake
Fill yourself with great mercy and open the Gates of Mercy—
For me, for my prayer, for my supplication and for my crying out to You.*

⁶⁹ According to Joseph Heinemann, many of the supplicatory prayers originated in prayers for rain. See Heinemann, Chapter 8

*So to, may You have the desire and mercy, Adonai My God to hear my cry,
Just as you heard the cry of our Forefathers.*

This text contains many of the key phrases found in a *Tachanun* prayer. First, it emphasizes God's mercy, using the word *rachem* three times. Second, it repeatedly pleads with God to accept the prayer of the worshiper, despite the unworthiness of the supplicant. Third, it uses the wording *l'ma'an sh'mekha*. This language denotes humility, as it implies that God should do it for God's own sake, since the human is not worthy of having the request granted, and it is also a part of the formula that, according to an *aggadah*, guarantees the acceptance of prayer.⁷⁰ Finally, it uses the formulaic opening, *Yehi ratson milfanekha* ("May it be Your will"), which was used in the rabbinic and geonic periods for petitionary, judgment prayers. An analysis of this formula will be dealt with extensively in the section on *Seder Rav Amram*.

Section IV (Answer us) contains a *piyyut* that is still used in many rites today in relation to *selichot* and the Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Given Ben Baboi's aversion to *piytim*, it is somewhat surprising to find several of them in his text. Most likely, it is an indication that this piece was already so well established by the time of Yehudai Gaon that it was not possible to excise it from the text.

The final climactic line of the *piyyut*, asks God to answer our prayers just as He (sic) answered our ancestors. If we are of insufficient merit, presumably their merit will count on our behalf. This is based on the prayer that the *Mishnah* prescribes for public fast-days.⁷¹

ענינו כשעניתה את אברהם בהר המוריה
וכשע ליצחק בבאר שבע וכשע ליעקב בבית אל וכש ליוסף בבית אסורים
וכש למשה ואהרן על ים סוף וכש לאבותינו במדבר וכש ליהושע בגלגל וכש לשמואל במצפה

⁷⁰ As cited in "*Dinei Tefilah*," *HaManhig*, 62. "Shmuel says: Whoever say these three things after his prayer—"Do it for your name's sake," "Do it for your right hand's sake," and "Do it for the sake of your righteous messiah"—will not have his prayer returned empty." (Translated from the Hebrew)

⁷¹ M. *Ta'anit* 2:4

וכש לאיליהו התשבי בהר הכר[מל] וכש לאלישע ביריחו וכש לחזקיהו במחלתו
 וכש לדוד ושלמה בירושלים וכש ליונה ממעי הדגה וכש ל דניאל בבור אריות
 וכש למיש וחנניה ועזריה בכבשן האש וכש למרדכי ואסתר בשושן הבירה

וכש לכל הצדיקים הללו כן תעניני ותשיני ותשמע תפילתי ותעשה בקשתי

*Answer us as you answered Abraham on Mt. Moriah;
 As Isaac cried out in Beer Sheba, as Jacob cried out at Beit El,
 And as Joseph cried out from jail.
 As Moses and Aaron cried out at the Sea of Reeds and our ancestors in the wilderness,
 As Joshua cried out in Gilgal and as Samuel cried out at Mitzpeh;
 As Elijah the Tishbi cried out at Mt. Carmel and as Elisha cried out in Jericho.
 As Hezekiah cried out in his disease, as David and Solomon cried out in Jerusalem;
 As Jonah cried out from the belly of the fish and as Daniel cried out from the lion's den.
 And as Mish[el] and Hananiah and Ezariah cried out from the flaming inferno and as
 Mordechai and Esther cried out from Shushan, the capital.*

*As all these righteous people cried out to you, so too answer me, save me and hear my prayer
 and fulfill my request.*

Davidson explains that this text has many different endings in the various rites in which it is
 maintained, varying from Mordechai and Esther, as our text maintains, to Ezra or
 Nehemiah.⁷² While today, the text is no longer a part of the daily *Tachamun* liturgy, it is
 found as such in texts as recent as the *Machzor Vitry*.⁷³

Section V (All is God's) of the text is also a *piyyut* in praise of God declaring that all
 honor, glory and praise goes to God, for the whole land and everything on it is God's.

ותמלא שאילתי ברצון. לך יי הגדולה והגבורה ט.....שבח ומשביחים: לך פאר ומפארים לך:
 לך חדר ומהדרים לך: לך הנצח וההוד: לך תהילה ותודה: לך שירה וזמרה: לך כבוד ועונה
 ושירה: לך שלום והשקט ובטח: לך עונה וגדולה: לך חוד והברכה: לך השמים ושמי השמים:
 לך הארץ וכל אשר בה: לך עליונים ותחתונים: לך ראשונים ואחרונים: לך ממלכה ולך
 מלכות:

*Fulfill my request, as is Your Desire
 For You Adonai, the great, the awesome...You are praised and praised:
 You are crowned and crowns are for You; You are adorned and are continually adorned;
 Victory and Majesty are Yours; Praise and thanksgiving are Yours;
 Song and music are Yours; Honor and Humility and Song are Yours;
 Peace, Tranquility and Security are Yours; Humility and Greatness are Yours;
 Majesty and Blessing are Yours; The Heavens and The Heavenly Heavens are Yours;*

⁷² Israel Davidson, *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry*, vol. II., 488.

⁷³ Shimon Horowitz, ed., *Machzor Vitry*, 71.

*The Earth and everything on it are Yours; The Upper world and lower world are Yours;
The Beginning and endings are Yours; The kingdom and kingship are Yours.*

This text is unique to Ben Baboi. It appears in no other *Tachanun*, and is not listed in Davidson's *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Poetry*. However, it appears to be based loosely on the text from I Chronicles 29:11-13, an appropriate model for *Tachanun*, as it comes in the midst of David's prayer at the end of his reign and is followed immediately by David's asking, "Who am I and who are my people that we should have the means to make such a freewill offering, but all is from You and it is Your gift which we have given to You."⁷⁴ This recognition of God as the source of everything—people only have that which God grants—is the theme of this *piyyut* and a central idea within *Tachanun* in general.

In fact, this theme is continued in Section VI (Ruler over Everything):

מלך על כל ממשלתו כל כל ומושל בכל ומרומם בפי כל מלך יוצר כל נשמה מלך אל חי
וקיים שמך לעולם ועד ברוך ברוך ומבורך שמך ומרומם על כל ברכה ותהילה: כי שמך
בך ובך שמך. כי לפני כל נכון שמך ולעולמי עולמים יעמוד שמך ומשמך ינוס הים וכל משברי
וגליו מאד מאדירים שמך. ארץ תנווד בהביטך בה ועמודיה ינודו מיהות(?) שמך. וכל דר מעלה
שבכל מעון ומעון למענך ירעדו ויפחדו מאימת שמך. וארץ ודריה מהום ואבדון צייה וצלמות
וגם עדם וכל חסידים ירננו לשמך. ולשמך ירופפו וכל אשר נשמת רוח חיים באפיו בנעימת
לשונו ישים כבוד שמך. ואינם לפי גודל שמך.

*Ruler over His whole Kingdom, Who rules over everything,
Higher than the words of any other ruler
Creator of every soul, Ruler of all Life, Establish Your name for ever and ever
Blessed, Blessed, Blessed and we bless Your name, above all blessing and praise.
Because Your name is You and You are Your name.
For before all that is correct is Your name; forever and ever, Your name will stand.
From your name flows the sea, all of its breaks and waves, greatly adorning Your name. You
move the land with your goodness; You move those who stand against Your name.
In each generation they arise and in every place, for Your sake, they tremble and fear from
the truth of Your name.
The land and its inhabitants, from their depth and their absence,
see both the Valley of Death and the Garden of Eden and all the mercy and
They rejoice for Your name.
Before Your name they tremble and everything which has the soul of a living spirit
within its breath, in the chanting of his language, will give honor to Your name.
And none will be according to the Greatness of Your name.*

⁷⁴ I Chronicles 29:14

This section emphasizes God's rule over all that is. The word כל ("everything") is used thirteen times in six lines. Even the one who recognizes God's rule over everything and gives all praise to God is still not able to exalt God's name to the extent it deserves. This message is consistent with many other prayers in a traditional prayer book, most notably,

Birkat Hashir of Shabbat, *Nishmat kal chai*.⁷⁵ There it states:

Were our mouths filled with the song as the sea, and our tongue with ringing praise as the roaring waves; were our lips full of adoration as the wide expanse of heaven, and our eyes sparkling like the sun or the moon; were our hands spread out in prayer as the eagles of the sky, and our feet as swift as the deer—we would still be unable to thank thee and bless thy name, Lord our God and God of our ancestors, for one thousandth of the countless millions of favors which thou hast conferred on our ancestors and on us.

While the *Birkat hashir* may be more poetic, the message is the same—nothing we do could ever be enough to praise God to the extent He deserves. This theme is particularly appropriate in the context of a *Tachanun* text, which emphasize the lowliness of humanity relative to God.

This message of humility is stated most clearly in Section VII (Humility). The worshiper proclaims that he is dust and ashes, as lowly as a worm. Such statements are found in every *Tachanun* except that of *Siddur Saadyah*. It is the ultimate expression of the unworthiness of the worshiper to make his request, and yet it is always followed by a request for God to heed the prayer and answer it with mercy.

ואני עפר ואפר רימה ותוליעה נכה לבב ושפל
רוח...מה רימה ותולעת צל עובר ציץ נוביל בצד שדה באתי להפיל תחינתי לפניך ולבקש רחמים
מלפני כסא כבודך. למען אמצא חן בעיניך. כי אתה קרוב לקוראך. ומצאוי לדורשיך. עשה נא
שאלתי ובקשתי ומהר שאילתי ברחמים כי אתה יצרתני ממעי אמי ולך מחילה...גי ובך
בטחתי...וגאליני במר צרתי והצלח לי בכל מצ...ריי כי מלך מלא רחמים אתה ואין לנו מלך
גואל ומושיע אלא אתה. יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והיגיון [וגו] ויהיו דברי אלה [וגו] למען דעת כל עמי
הארץ וגי' בא יי שומע תפלה.

⁷⁵ See Philip Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book*, 321-2.

Yet I am dust and ashes, a worm and a crawler, of small heart and fallen spirit... Just as a worm or a crawler moves across the fallen fruit on the side of the field, I have come fallen in my supplication before you and to request mercy before Your holy seat. So that I may find mercy in your eyes. Because You are close to those who call upon You. And you are found to those who seek You. Please now do that which I ask and request and quickly. I ask for mercy because You created me from the belly of my mother and you are forgiving. and in You I trust... You have redeemed me from the bitterness of my sorrows and save me in every situation... Because You are a ruler, full of mercy and we have no Ruler, Redeemer or Savior besides You. May the words of my mouth, etc... May these words, etc... for the sake of the opinion of all peoples of the earth, etc... Come, Lord, who hears prayer.

The central theological message is expressed in the line *כי אתה קרוב לקוראיו* ("For you are close to all who call upon you"). Despite the unworthiness of the worshiper and his request, God will listen and heed the request, because God has great mercy and is close to all who seek Him [sic].

This, in a nutshell, defines the concept of *Tachanun* and its placement in the service. First one engages in the worship of God as commanded, namely, by saying the *Amidah*. Then, through a series of readings and prayers, the worshiper praises God and tries to show the humility of humankind, all of this, in order that God will hear the prayer and grant the request. While other texts may use different language and a somewhat different structure, this conceptual framework remains consistent through every text that I will present.

With this understanding, it is no surprise that the Section VIII (Summary) is simply a summary argument.

מלכינו אלהינו יחד שמך בעולם וקיים מלכותך וג' אשנה... דעה בכל עת ועונה וברחמי
ימציאני... יש אבקש רחמים ממך אל שוכן מרומים. צדיק הצור תמים ומלא רחמים: גרוני
בתחן אפתח. כדל עומד על פתח. נא שער לתפילתי פתח. ומסורותי תנתק ותפתח.

My Ruler, My God, unite your name in this world and establish your rule... I will change... knowing in every time and every season and His mercy will be bestowed upon me. I come to request mercy from you, God, who dwells in the heights. The Rock is just, pure and full of mercy: I will open my throat with supplications. As the needy stand at the gate, please open the gate to my prayer. My trust You will break loose and open.

It restates the idea that God is ruler over everything and emphasizes the concept of God's mercy as expressed through heeding the prayer of God's loyal servant.

Thus, the Ben Baboi text begins with Section I, an opening petition for God to hear the prayer about to be offered. Then, in Section II, it asks God to teach the worshiper the correct ways of living in this world, according to the ways of Torah and far from those who would do otherwise. Sections III and IV continue by asking God mercifully to grant the requests being made, even as God answered the prayers of our ancestors. Next, in Section V and VI, the worshiper expresses a recognition of God as ruler over everything, that nothing can exist except by God's desire. It then reaches its climax in Section VII with the admission of the unworthiness of the request and the need for God's mercy, begging God to fulfill the request. Finally, it summarizes the request in Section VIII.

There are several elements that are not found in this text, notably any type of confession or a separate, more elaborate text for Mondays and Thursdays. However, because this is a fragment from the *Genizah* and not a prayer book, it is possible that these simply were not among the material found. Given what we know about the early *Tachanun*, it is doubtful that these traditions did not exist at the time, especially since by the time of *Seder Rav Amram*, both of these elements are well established. Since it does appear to be a complete text, with an introduction and conclusion, I would conclude that this is most likely not a Monday/Thursday text, but rather a text that was to be used every other day of the week on which *Tachanun* is said.

II. Seder Rav Amram

Despite the fact that *Seder Rav Amram* does not come much later than the "Ben Baboi," in terms of chronology, it represents an entirely different level in the development of

Tachanun. It is a complete text with stage directions for both the prayer leader and the congregation. While it is clearly rabbinic in emphasis, significant biblical passages are quoted as well. Much of the text is taken directly out of the Talmud and even those parts of the text which are not come much closer in structure to Talmudic styles of prayer than the material found in Ben Baboi. Large portions of the text found in Amram can be found in the various rites today, including *Va'anachnu lo neda*, a short *vidui* for Monday and Thursday, and the recitation of the 13 *Midot* of God. It also contains several passages from *Vehu Rachum*, although it is not clear if this is an original part of the text or a later addition.⁷⁶ While not every *Tachanun* text compiled after this includes all of the text of Amram, it is clear that almost every other text used it as a basis.⁷⁷

A close look at the shorter of the two texts, the one used every weekday except Monday and Thursday, reveals that this is actually not one prayer but a collection of many. Each begins by addressing God, usually continuing with the recognition of the inadequacy of the petitioner, and concluding with a request for God to mercifully fulfill the prayer despite the worthlessness of the petitioner. Joseph Heinemann analyses.⁷⁸ He explains that in this type of prayer "the worshiper turns to the Eternal [focusing on the aspect of] *El haShofet* 'God, the Judge.' The worshiper brings his case before the Eternal, hoping that, because of his worship and humility in making his request, God the Judge will deal righteously with him in the dispute and sentence him according to his merit."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See note 56. However, it was not clear to me if *Im avoneynu* was also considered a later addition or if there are some editions which include the entire *Vehu rachum*, thereby making *Im avoneynu* a part of the original text.

⁷⁷ *Siddur Saadyah* is the one exception.

⁷⁸ Heinemann, Chapter 8: Form Patterns of the Law-Courts in Prayer

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 121.

These prayers usually open with the expression, *Ribono shel olam, ribon haolamim*, or something similar. They continue by admitting the worthiness of the petitioner (often using the words *galui veyadua*) and conclude with a petition, usually with the formula, *Yehi ratson lefanekha*. These prayers usually deal with one of three matters—a request in the time of need, a confession of sin, or a prayer of thanksgiving.⁸⁰ Most of the prayers found in the *Tachanun* of Rav Amram fit Heinemann's description perfectly and fall within the first of these categories, although all three are represented. It is likely that Amram had a whole series of these prayers which different communities and different people within those communities were accustomed to saying. He simply picked several of the ones that were either more popular or more widely known and put them into his text.

The first set of prayers that *Seder Rav Amram* presents can be broken it down into four separate prayers, each beginning with 1) The Address, usually the phrase *Ribon kol haolamim*.⁸¹ Section I (The Debasement) begins by addressing of God this way, but goes quite beyond this simple phrase, adding the title for God given in Deuteronomy 10:17:

רְבוֹן כָּל הָעוֹלָמִים וְאֲדוֹנֵי הָאֲדוֹנִים הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא

Next we find 2) The Claim, the reason why God should listen to our prayer. But, generally, the claim here (as with many of the *Tachanun* texts) works the opposite of what one might expect. Rather than list all of the merits and positive attributes of the worshiper to claim why God ought to listen to the prayer, the worshiper details all of the reasons why God would not heed it, and then goes on to ask God to grant the request anyway.

רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ שְׂאֵנוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ בָּשָׂר עֹפֵר רִימָה וְתוֹלַעַה
מִה אֲנוּ מִה חַיֵּינוּ מִה חֲסָדֵינוּ מִה צַדִּיקָנוּ
וּמִה נֶאֱמַר לִפְנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
הֲלֹא כָל הַגִּבּוֹרִים כֹּאֵין נִגְדָךְ וְאִנְשֵׁי שָׁם כֹּלָא הֵיוּ

⁸⁰ Ibid., 121.

⁸¹ Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Seder Rav Amram*, 37.

וחכמים כבלי מדע ונבונים כבלי השכל
 כי כל מעשינו תוהו ובוהו וימי חיינו תבל לפניך
 מה נאמר לפניך ה' אלוהינו כי אנחנו העוין והרשענו
 אין בנו כח לעשות הובותינו ולא כהן גדול לכפר על חטאתינו ולא מזבח
 להקריב עליו קרבן ולא בית קדש הקדשים להתפלל שם.

This particular text borrows from Tractates Yoma and Berakhot and asks God to have mercy on us since we are God's servants.⁸² It uses the language seen in Ben Baboi: humanity is but dust and worms; all our heroes are nothing, compared to God. Finally, it reminds God of the predicament of the Jewish people, namely, that there is no longer a way to make restitution for the sins committed since there is no Holy Temple where one can make sacrifices.

The third part of the prayer, 3) The Petition, begins with the words *Ela Yehi Ratson milfanekha*. Recognizing all of the reasons why God would not grant the request, the prayer goes on to make it anyway.

אלא יהי רצון מלפניך שתהא תפליתנו שאנו מתפללים לרצון ותחשב
 לפניך כפרים וכבשים כאלו הקרבנו אותם על גבי המזבח ותרצנו.

In this case, the request is simply that God will hear the prayer and accept it in place of a Temple sacrifice as atonement for the sins that were committed. This prayer thus is a mixture of two of Heinemann's categories. It certainly contains a confession of sin, but mostly it laments the situation in which there is no proper way other than prayer to make restitution with God for the sins committed. Therefore it is also a request in a time of need.

Section II (the Bad) is taken directly from *Berakhot* 17a and follows Heinemann's diagram exactly. The opening address is the simple phrase, *Ribon kol haolamim* and the claim follows directly using the classic language, *galui veyadua lefanekha*.

⁸² The text directly quotes Yoma 87b, beginning with the words *mah anu*. The latter part of the text, beginning with the words *eyn banu koach*, is loosely based on the fast prayer of Rav Sheshet found in *Berakhot* 17a.

רבון כל העולמים גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוני לעשות רצונך אבל שאור
שבעיסה מעכב

Immediately afterwards comes the request, in this case, asking God to keep the worshiper away from all negative influences in the world, especially from his own evil impulse. The request in this case is to surround the worshiper with that which is good so that he may do God's will. This prayer parallels the meaning, although not the structure, of Section II of Ben Baboi.⁸³

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוהי שתשמיד ותכניע ותרחיק יצר הרע ממני
ותשפילהו ותכניעהו ותרחיקהו ממאתים וארבעים ושמונה אברים שבי
ואל יכשילני מדרכיך הטובים
אלא תן בלבי יצר טוב וחבר טוב לשמור חקיך ולעבדך ולעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם

This prayer presumes that by requesting that God grant the worshiper the good inclination and good companions to enable him to do God's law and wishes, God will also look favorably on the worshiper's other requests.

Section III (The Good) in this series begins with the same opening, 1) The Address, *Ribon kol haolamim* but this one lacks 2) The Claim. Instead, it goes directly to 3) The Petition, again beginning with the words *Yehi ratson milfanekha*. In this prayer the plea is more directed than the last one, this time asking God to help the worshiper do God's will and not to leave his fate in the hands of other human beings, for "their gifts are small and their shame is great."

רבון כל העולמים יהי רצון מלפניך שתהא תורתך אומנותי ומלאכתי
בכל יום ולא אשגה בה
ואל תצריכני לידי מתנת בשר ודם שמתנתם מעוטה וחרפתם מרובה
שבענו בבקר חסדך ונררנה ונשמחה בכל ימינו
הארנו ה' חסדך וישעך נתן לנו

⁸³ See page 24.

The ending of this prayer, with the quotation from two different Psalms, is unusual.⁸⁴ While the psalms, and various portions of Scripture in general, are quoted throughout these prayers, here the quotation seems out of place, in that the voice of the prayer switches from first person singular to first person plural. Moreover, according to its content, the first of the two lines ought to be in 2) The Claim and not in 3) The Petition.

Most likely, this was a text that Amram found already in existence and did not change. Since the first half of the prayer is in both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud, one could assume that some communities already were saying such a prayer with the verses from Psalms.⁸⁵ Perhaps it was in a different context or there was a different ending, but as Amram was compiling prayers to be included for *Tachanun*, he included this one in as he knew it, without paying attention to the change in style from the other prayers of judgment.

Similarly, in Section IV (The Helper), we find the proper addressing of God, but none of the other formulaic items one would expect. However, it is clearly a supplication similar to the others, one that would be said in a time of need, as Heinemann suggests. Like Section III in Ben Baboi, this prayer provides a place for the worshiper to make the actual request for his needs.

רבון כל העולמים ואדוני האדונים עזרני סמכני סייעני וחזקני בפרנסתי
ובפרנסת בני ביתי ואל תבישני ואל תכלימני לא לפניך ולא לפני בשר ודם
ה' שמעה ה' סלחה ה' הקשיבה ועשה אל תאחר למענך אלהי כי שמך
נקרא על עירך ועל עמך

This prayer also introduces a central theological component of *Tachanun*, namely that even if the worshiper is not deserving, God will still grant his request because God's name is associated with the people of Israel. Here the connotation is only implied but in later prayers

⁸⁴ The last two lines are from Psalm 90:14 and 85:8 respectively.

⁸⁵ Ber 17b and PT Ber 4,2. Also see Chart I.

it will be explicit: if God does not grant the requests of the Jewish People, it will reflect poorly on God, since God singled out the Jewish People in the eyes of the world.

As the text is laid out, all of the prayers listed above are one composition. It is not certain whether everyone was supposed to say them all or whether they were gathered together as options. But Amram supplies an alternative text, implying that one was expected to say this first compendium in its entirety. We are justified, therefore, in looking at the message of the unit as a whole.

Our prayer begins with Section I (The Debasement), which asks for mercy because humans are but dust and worm, and even the greatest among us are nothing when compared to the power of God. Everything humans do and the lives of human beings in general amount to little more than vapors. Yet we ask God to listen to our prayers and accept them as atonement for our sins. The composition continues with Sections II and III (The Bad and The Good), which beseeches God to keep negative influences far away and, instead, to teach us God's way of goodness. By doing so, the worshiper hopes to be able to do God's will and place his fate in the hands of God, not of humans. Then Section IV (The Helper) concludes by crying out to God, "Help me, support me, aid me, make me strong, sustain me, and my household" for God's own sake. The message thus portrays a human who, by nature, can never live up to God's ideals. But because Jews seek to do God's will and because God is associated with the Jewish people, God ought to grant the request of the petitioner anyway. There is no claim that a person's doing God's will entitles him to have his prayers answered. Instead, the request is for God's mercy and God's grace in hearing the plea and helping those who seek to do God's will, despite the fact that human beings will never reach the standards that God has set.

This is the same message that is found in the alternative text that Amram offers. This prayer, taken from the Palestinian Talmud, follows the same structure as the previous prayers and contains many of the same words and phrases.⁸⁶ Although, 1) The Address, differs slightly, *Ribono shel olam* instead of *Ribon haolamim*, such variety is not significant.⁸⁷ 2) The Claim, here is a simple one, *chatati lefanekha*, I have sinned before you. The plea, as in each of the prayers, is a guilty one. Yet 3) The Petition follows anyway. In this case it is in the first person plural, as opposed to the previous passages written mostly in the first person singular.

רבונו של עולם חטאתי לפניך
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתתן לנו לב טוב וחלק טוב
ורוח נמוכה ונפש שפלה וחבר טוב ואל יתחלל שמך בנו ואל תעשינו
שיחה בפי כל הבריות ואל תעשינו קללה בפני כל הבריות
ואל תהי אחרינתנו להכרית ותקותנו למפח נפש ואל תצריכנו למתנת
בשר ודם ואל תמסור מזונותינו ביד בשר ודם שמתנתם מעוטה
וחרפתם מרובה.
ותן חלקנו בתורתך עם עושי רצונך ובנה ביתך ועירך והיכלך ומקדשך
מהר עננו ומהרה בימינו פדנו מכל גזרות קשות והושע ברחמך הרבים
משיח צדקך ועמך

There is no significant change in message from the previous passages. It is simply stated all within one construct, rather than being a construct of constructs. The fact that it was included at all gives further credence to the theory that Amram is not composing new prayers so much as he is compiling previously existing ones. We know from Heinemann that hundreds of this type of prayer existed at the time.⁸⁸ Like any good editor, Amram, had to decide which to include and which not. We do not know the criterion he used in making such decisions, but most likely, he included the prayers that already had a set textual tradition. That this latter text is Palestinian and most of the former texts are Babylonian

⁸⁶ PT Ber. 4:7, page 4

⁸⁷ Heinemann notes many options for the address including *Elohai*; *Eloheinu ve' elohei avoteinu*; and *Avinu Malkeinu*. All of these appear to be interchangeable. 131-137.

further the idea that Amram sought, on this matter, where there was no need for consistency, to include materials representative of the many communities in which his prayer book would be used.

The next two sections of *Seder Rav Amram* are similar in tone and content, although they utilize a slightly different construct. Each of them begins by addressing God as *Avinu Malkemu*, another common beginning for these "judgment prayers." The worshiper then acknowledges his lack of merit to make a request and his need, therefore, for God's mercy. Each prayer then concludes by asking God to do it for God's name sake, if not for the worthiness of the worshiper.

אבינו מלכינו אלהינו הבט בענינו ואל תציץ בעונותינו והתלבש
בחסידותך והתעטף בחנינותך ותבא לפניך מדת רחמך וחסדיך ואל
תשיבנו ריקם מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואל למעננו תעשה כי לשמך תן כבוד
על חסדך ועל אמתך

אבינו מלכינו חננו ועננו כי און בנו מעשים. עשה עמנו צדקה וחושיענו
למען שמך

By the time Amram compiled his *Siddur*, there was already an extensive *Avinu Malkeinu* liturgy as a part of the Yom Kippur and *Selichot* service. Therefore, it would seem natural to have such prayers as a part of *Tachanun*. Given its placement both here and in later prayer books, the *Avinu Malkemu* seems to be a stronger plea than the *Ribon kol haolamim* prayers. It serves as a transition between the requests made in the *Ribon kol haolamim* and the concluding argument presented in the last section.

According to the *Shulchan Arukh*, the final section of the daily *Tachanun*, *Va'anachnu lo neda*, represents a final plea by the worshiper, who no longer has the strength to pray before God:

⁸⁸ Heinemann, 121. He notes that he has brought in "tens, of the hundreds, of such prayers that are found in the sources."

The prayer-leader says *Va'anachnu lo neda*, etc, because the community has already prayed for every matter that a person can pray for, while sitting, standing, or fallen on his face, just as Moses our teacher, about whom it is written, "And I dwelt (sat) on the mountain," (Dt 9:9); "I have stood at the mountain," (Dt. 10:10); and "I have fallen before God" (Dt. 9:18). Since we no longer have any strength to pray for any other matter, we say *Va'anachnu lo neda*.⁸⁹

The prayer itself consists of a collection of verses from Chronicles, Psalms and Habakkuk.⁹⁰ Only one line, which begins *aseh lema'an sh'mekha*, is not a direct biblical quote, although its components are biblical. Interestingly, this is the only line that is not included in any of the later prayer books. The rest of the paragraph, albeit with some variants, is included in every *Tachanun* that thereafter.⁹¹ This appears to be a part of a more general move away from rabbinic styles of prayer and towards biblical quotations.

ואנחנו לא נדע מה נעשה כי עליך עינינו זכור רחמך ה' וחסידך
 כי מעולם המה יהי חסדך ה' עלינו כאשר יחלנו לך
 אל תזכר לנו עונות ראשונים מהר יקדמונו רחמך כי דלוננו מאד
 עשה למען שמך הגדול הגבור והנורא שנקרא עלינו חננו ה' חננו
 כי רב שבענו בוז ברוגז רחם תזכור ה' הושיעה המלך
 יעננו ביום קראנו כי הוא ידע יצרנו זכור כי עפר אנחנו. עזרנו
 אלהי ישענו על דבר כבוד שמך והצילנו וכבר על לחטאתינו למען שמך

This paragraph, more than any other in Amram, sums up the situation of the worshiper, according to the theology of *Tachanun*. It begins by crying out, "We don't know what we are doing because our eyes are on You!" The message is that God cannot hold human beings fully accountable for every misdeed, for the misdeeds humanity commits are too numerous. "We don't even know what we are doing!" This is why God must be merciful and gracious to us and save us. God, the prayer reminds us, is our creator and knows that we are but dust. However, God, as our savior, is responsible for forgiving our sins and getting us out of the terrible situation in which we find ourselves. Perhaps this paragraph was retained in every

⁸⁹ *Tur, O.H.* 141.

later prayer book because it states this central message of *Tachanun*—of human fallibility and of God's grace—so clearly and so succinctly. Precisely at the end of *Tachanun*, after every argument has been placed forward to advance the case why God should grant the worshiper's request, there is a recognition that, in truth, there is no argument; only God's mercy, *rachamim*, and God's grace, *chesed*, have the power to save a person, not the deeds of the person. This is the message of *Va'anachnu lo neda*, the conclusion the *Tachanun* of *Seder Rav Amram* for regular weekdays.

Seder Rav Amram is the first known prayer book to contain a special *Tachanun* for Mondays and Thursdays. As was discussed in Chapter 1, these days were considered especially appropriate for *Tachanun*-type prayers. According to tradition, the sin of the Golden Calf was committed on a Thursday and, on Monday, God forgave the People Israel with the words, *salachti kidevarekha*.⁹² Therefore these days are considered days on which it is especially appropriate to plead one's case and confess one's sins, as God, as it were, is holding court then. It is not surprising therefore, to find a more extensive liturgy, including a confession of sins, for Monday and Thursday *Tachanun*.

In *Seder Rav Amram*, the special prayers for *Tachanun* on these days begin with a group of verses found in the later *Vehu Rachum* prayer. Almost all of these lines are direct biblical quotations and those that are not still make allusion to biblical verses.⁹³ Like the passages found in the regular *Tachanun*, there is an emphasis on the unworthiness of the worshiper. Here, perhaps, there is a greater emphasis specifically on sin and transgression. However, the request is the same as those other passages—that God should have mercy,

⁹⁰ For a line-by-line analysis, see Chart II.

⁹¹ Saadyah includes a few changes in verses and the order, but it begins and ends the same.

⁹² For more extensive treatment of this subject, see Chapter 1, page 11-12.

⁹³ See Chart III

rachum, on us despite our sinning, not judging us solely on the merit of our deeds, for this prayer recognizes that our deeds alone would not merit God's mercy.

אם עוֹנֵינוּ עָנִי-בָנוּ ה' עֲשֵׂה לַמֶּעַן שְׂמַךְ כִּי רַבּוּ מִשְׁוֹהוּתֵינוּ לָךְ חֲטָאנוּ סִלַּח לָנוּ
אם עוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר יְהוָה מִי יַעֲמוֹד כִּי עִמָּךְ הַסְלִיחָה לַמֶּעַן תּוֹרָא
חוֹסֶה ה' עַל עִמָּךְ וְאֵל תִּתֵּן נַחֲלֶתְךָ לַחֲרָפָה לְמִשּׁוֹל בָּם גּוֹיִם
לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ בַעֲמִים אֵיךְ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
יִדְעוּ כִּי חֲטָאנוּ וְאֵין מִי יַעֲמוֹד לְכַפְרֵבִעְדָנוּ כִּי אִם שְׂמַךְ הַגְדוֹל יַעֲמוֹד לָנוּ בַּעַת צָרָה
כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים צְדָקָה עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לַמֶּעַן שְׂמַךְ
וְכָרַח אֵב עַל בָּנִים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ
אֲמֵן אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַבּוּ אֲשִׁמִּינוּ אֹון קָץ וְאֵין מִסְפָּר לַעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ
רַחוּם רַחֲמָנוּ וְזָכוּר לָנוּ בְּרִית אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
זָכוּר לַעֲבָדֶיךָ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלַיַּעֲקֹב אֵל תִּפְּן אֵל קָשִׁי הָעַם הַזֶּה
וְאֵל רָשָׁע וְאֵל חֲטָאָנוּ שׁוֹב מַחֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ וְהִנֵּחֵם עַל הָרַעָה לַעֲמֹךְ
וְחָסֵר מַעֲלֵינוּ עוֹל הַגּוֹיִם כִּי כֵן דְּרָכְךָ פֹּדֶה וּמַצִּיל גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשִׁיעַ בְּכָל
דּוֹר וָדוֹר

Again, it is not clear that this passage was originally a part of Amram.⁹⁴ It does not appear to be an integral part of the text. Unlike the full *Vehu Rachum*, which becomes almost the entirety of the *Tachanun* for Mondays and Thursdays, the *Im avoneynu* in Rav Amram's collection is followed by a complete text that would be appropriate for *Tachanun* unto itself. In fact, Amram himself suggests that Daniel 9:15-19 may be used as a substitute for this passage.⁹⁵

The main emphasis of Amram's Monday/Thursday *Tachanun* is the material that comes between *im avoneynu* and the passage from Daniel, namely, the 13 Attributes of God and the confession of sin. *Tosefta Berakhot* 3:6 mentions that the "words" one says after the *Amidah* can be as long as the "order of the confession of Yom Kippur," and Amram seems to take this to mean that one should literally say a full confession at this time, at least on Mondays and Thursdays. He precedes the confession with the recitation of the 13 Attributes of God, as enumerated in Exodus 34. Thus, first one mentions that God is full of mercy, grace, patience and forgiveness, as told to our ancestors after they had committed the sin of

⁹⁴ See Note 56.

the Golden Calf. Then, Amram gives the short *vidui* from Yom Kippur, the *ashamnu*, including the introductory paragraph that always precedes it.⁹⁶ The message is unmistakable—just as God was able to forgive our ancestors (on a Monday) for the sin they had committed (on a Thursday), so too, God will have mercy upon us if we confess our sins on these days. This confession, like any other, serves to cleanse one of his sins, but more importantly here, it allows one to have a clean slate in order to petition God for one's own needs. Immediately after this section Amram instructs the worshipers that they should "fall on their faces and make claims for their needs."⁹⁷ Already having invoked God's mercy, now is the opportunity to make all kinds of personal requests. Thus, even with this entire liturgy, at least a part of the original intent of *Tachamun*, a time of personal devotion, is retained.

Following the private devotion, Amram provides a series of *piyyutim*. These liturgical poems continue along the same themes of the fallibility of the worshiper, the greatness of God and the need for Divine mercy. Most of these *piyyutim* are also used in *selichot* prayers, the prayers asking for forgiveness before and during the High Holidays.⁹⁸ Most likely, they were written for that purpose and Amram simply chose several from among them to include in the longer *Tachamun* of Monday and Thursday. One interesting note is that among the *piyyutim* Amram includes is the beginning and the final line of the first *piyyut* that Ben Baboi used, "As you answered Abraham on Mount Moriah, so too, answer us and save us."⁹⁹ This *piyyut* is also included, albeit in slightly different form, in *Machzor Vitry*.

⁹⁵ Goldschmidt, 56.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 56. Also, see Chart III for the full text.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 57.

⁹⁸ For more information about the origins of specific *piyyutim*, see Davidson, *Treasury of Mediaeval Poetry*, vol II, pg 232 #202, pg 239 #371, pg 488 #551, pg 234 #259 and vol I, pg 222, #4817.

⁹⁹ See page 26, the first *piyyut* of Ben Baboi.

Israel Davidson attributes this prayer to the High Holiday and *selichah* liturgy and notes that there are several different versions used among the various rites.¹⁰⁰ However, every rendition has the same message—God who heard the prayers of our ancestors and responded in kind, so too, hear our prayers and answer them.

After the *piyyutim* the congregation says the line from Psalm 20:2 “May the Lord answer you in time of trouble, the name of Jacob’s God keep you safe.” It is possible, as is the custom today, that the entire Psalm was recited, but this is not clearly indicated in the text.¹⁰¹ The prayer leader then says *Avinu Malkenu*, but again it is not clear from the text how much was said: whether just one line, as is customary today, or more. Finally, it concludes with *Va’anachnu lo neda*.

The text of Rav Amram’s *Tachanun* for Monday and Thursday is certainly less extensive than what will come later in *Machzor Vitry*, but it already establishes these two days as originally deserving of special, lengthier prayers. In addition, the custom of saying a confession along with the 13 Attributes of God is initiated. The form of the prayers that will be said on these days will change substantially, but the theology behind it will not. God must have mercy upon humanity, in general and the Jews, in particular. These are prayers to invoke that Mercy, so God will answer favorably the petitions of those who worship God.

III. Siddur Saadyah

The *Tachanun* text of *Siddur Saadyah* is completely unique among those I studied. Not only is it significantly shorter than any of the other texts but, more important, there is also no suggestion that this is a time for private prayer. Most significantly, however, is the difference in theology. There is much less emphasis on God’s divine intervention, and much

¹⁰⁰ Davidson, pg 488 #551.

greater weight to what humans can do, namely, *teshuvah*, to make up for our sins. Like other *Tachanun* prayers, it recognizes that humans do commit sin and it does contain a confession. However, rather than rely solely on divine mercy, Saadyah's *Tachanun* requests God to accept our repentance. The language is borrowed directly from the Yom Kippur liturgy.

רחום וחנון חטאנו לפניך רחם עלינו נושא עון ועובר על פשע
 חטאנו לפניך רחם עלינו עשה למען שמך הגדול הגבור והנורא שיתקדש בעולם כלו
 ורחם עלינו וכפר על חטאתינו למען שמך
 אבל חטאנו עוינו הרשענו פשענו ומרדנו וסרנו ממצותיך וממשפטיך הטובים
 ולא שוה לנו ואתה צדיק על כל הבא עלינו כי אמת עשית ואנחנו הרשענו
 ועכשו באתי ועמדתי על פתחיך יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו שתפתח לי שערי רחמים ושערי תשובה
 ואחזור בתשובה שלימה לפניך משובה שאתה רוצה בה תשובה שאתה חפץ בה תשובה
 שתמחול ותסלח לכל עונותי בשבילה

אבינו מלכנו אלהינו חנונו ועננו אין בנו מעשים עשה עמנו למען שמך צדקה.

While there is an acknowledgement of sin and the need for God's mercy and help, *Saadyah's* version of our prayer does not hold that this is the permanent condition of humanity. Instead, it asks that God will hear the prayer and allow the worshiper to "return in full repentance" and be forgiven. The concept of *teshuvah* is completely absent from every other *Tachanun* text.

Saadyah includes *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Va'anachnu lo neda*, but makes some interesting alterations to the latter. He removes Psalm 123:3: "Show us favor, O Lord, show us favor! We have had more than enough of contempt." He also removes Habakkuk 3:2: "Though angry, may You remember compassion." While it is possible that Saadyah simply had a different version of this prayer and that many versions existed at the time, there is reason to believe he was making a deliberate choice.

ואנחנו לא נדע מה נעשה כי עליך עיינינו זכור רחמך יי וחסדיך כי מעולם המה אל תזכר לנו
 עונות ראשונים מהר יקדמונו רחמך כי דלונו מאד. קומה עזרתה לנו ופדנו למען חסדך יהי

¹⁰¹ In the modern *Ashkenazi* rite, Psalm 20 is recited after Psalm 145 ("Ashrei"). See Birnbaum, *Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem*, 127-131.

חסדך יי עלינו כאשר יחלנו לך. אם עונות תשמר יה יי מי יעמד. כי עמך הסליחה למען תורא יי
הושיעה המלך יעננו ביום קראנו. כי הוא ידע יצרנו זכור כי עפר אנחנו. עזרנו אלהי ישענו על
דבר כבוד שמך והצילנו וכפר על חטאתינו למען שמך

Given its emphasis on *teshuvah* (in the first section) Saadyah's *Tachanun* seems to reflect a difference in theology from those that came before or after him.

Saadyah's *Tachanun* does reflect an appreciation of human fallibility, but it does not suggest that it is a permanent state. He suggests instead that humans have the ability to do better, and his request to God is to help the worshiper to effect this repentance. This is markedly different from the various *tachanunim* found in Ben Baboi, *Seder Rav Amram* and *Machzor Vitry*, all of which picture human nature as one that is permanently flawed, so that, without God's intervention, there is little humans can do to improve. We cannot be sure why his text is so different—whether it reflects a personal difference in theology, a difference of sociological conditions under which he lived, or any number of other reasons. Irrespective of the exact reason for the change, this text could serve as a helpful model for the modern liberal Jew seeking to understand the message of *Tachanun* in his or her own life, as I believe that its message is one to which the modern person could relate. This is a topic to which I will return in the final chapter.

Chapter 4—Machzor Vitry: The Emergence of the Modern Text

The *Tachanun* text included in the 11th Century *Machzor Vitry* is the first to closely resemble, both in style and in substance, the one found in the prayer book today. While important changes still occurred thereafter, the basic structure of *Tachanun* in this *Siddur* is replicated in every subsequent prayer book. Because this text so closely parallels the modern prayer, its analysis warrants its own chapter.

By the time of *Machzor Vitry*, the custom of saying a longer *Tachanun* on Mondays and Thursdays was already well established. However, in *Seder Rav Amram*, the Monday and Thursday text is completely distinct from the one said the rest of the days of the week, sharing only *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Va'anachnu lo neda* in common. In *Machzor Vitry*, on the other hand, the same basic text is used for both, but with several long additions for Mondays and Thursdays. The most significant being *Vehu rachum*, which still serves as the longest staple in our Monday/Thursday rubric today. As we will see, this is not the only area in which the text of *Machzor Vitry* bears little resemblance, in terms of style, to Amram's text.

Simchah ben Samuel, Rashi's student, who compiled *Machzor Vitry*, clearly knew the *Seder Rav Amram* text of *Tachanun*. Indeed, he used it for the *Tachanun* of *Mincha*.¹⁰² However, he chose not to use most of Amram's *Shacharit Tachanun*, whether daily or Monday/Thursday. Instead, he introduces an altogether new prayer, *Vehu Rachum*, for Monday and Thursday, along with the mixture of Psalms, *piyyutim* and rabbinic-style prayer that he ordains for the rest of the days. It is not clear why he felt that a new text was required. The Amram text was, apparently, acceptable for *Tachanun* or it could not have been used for *Minchah*. An obvious solution arises from the fact that the first known

reference *Vehu rachum* is found in *Sefer Hapardes*. Perhaps Simchah preferred it because it was original to Rashi's school. However, most scholars believe it is significantly older.¹⁰³ Zunz dates it back to the 7th Century, saying it was a "cry of rage in a period of oppression by the Franks and Goths."¹⁰⁴ But Zunz's dating is arbitrary. It is based on the general *midrashic* accounts that explain the prayer's origin as having been written during a time of repression. Such dating is always suspect, especially in this case where (as we have seen) there are at least three different versions of the *midrash*.¹⁰⁵ In fact, no one has been able to pinpoint its authorship to an exact date.

Furthermore, we have seen that the *midrashim* indicate the existence of multiple authors, most likely three, in that they break the text into three sections. Both breaks come after the words *ki el Melekh chanun verachum atah*, and each section begins with some variation of the phrase *chanun verachum*. It is possible, I would venture to say likely, that like the *Ribon haolamim* prayers of Rav Amram, there were many prayers of this genre that developed.¹⁰⁶ Somehow, this type of prayer must have gained in popularity as an appropriate expression of *Tachanun*, so that Simchah, or someone on whom he depended, selected these three prayers, from all the *chanun verachum* prayers available to him for his morning *Tachanun* service.

At this point it is appropriate to examine the text of *Vehu Rachum*, itself. The *Machzor Vitry* text is not exactly the same as our own but the differences are mostly scribal details, not substantive or theological changes. For this reason, I will not distinguish between

¹⁰² *Machzor Vitry*, 76.

¹⁰³ Elbogen, 69.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Chapter 2 of this work, pages 21-23 includes the full text of the *midrashim* cited.

¹⁰⁶ Elbogen, (page 69) argues that they were most likely independent compositions, but does not speculate on whether there were other such compositions.

the two, but rather I will be using *Machzor Vitry's* text, but treating it as if it were the same as the modern one, which, for all intents and purposes, is the case.

While the *midrashim* break the text into three sections, most modern editions of the *Siddur* break it into seven. One might argue that these breaks are arbitrary, but they are helpful in terms of doing a textual analysis. At the end, we will examine the logic of the break-up to understand which system fits the text better. For now, however, despite the fact that *Machzor Vitry* does not divide the text into sections at all, I will use the seven-paragraph model in order to better understand the meaning of the text.

Israel Jacobson notes that a total of 58 sources from *Tanakh* are quoted in this prayer, twenty-four of which are full verses, while the rest are partial quotations or simply expressions taken from a verse. This appears to be part of a movement over time from use of rabbinic material to recitation of Biblical verses.¹⁰⁷ He also notes that several phrase recur within the seven-paragraphs, namely: *Avinu Malkeinu*, *chanun verachum*, *hoshiyenu l'ma'an sh'mekha*, and *habet*.¹⁰⁸ As we come across each of these in the text we will pay especially close attention to them.

Section I, *Vehu Rachum*, begins with a series of biblical verses, mostly taken from Psalms, with one from Jeremiah.¹⁰⁹ The text focuses on God as the One who is patient and forgiving, while human nature is to sin. According to this theology, as in previous *Tachanun* texts, humankind is in need of saving and God is the only one capable of saving us. Again, the reason God should heed our prayer is because God is linked to the fate of the Jewish

¹⁰⁷ Ben Baboi used little Biblical language, while Amram used a mixture of rabbinic material and biblical verses. By the modern text, there is nothing which stands out as rabbinic in style other than short *piyyutim*.

¹⁰⁸ Jacobson, 348

People (as indicated by the use of *l'ma'an sh'mekha*) through the covenant made with our ancestors.

והוא רחום יכפר עון ולא ישחית, והרבה להשיב אפן, ולא יעיר כל חמתו. [Psalm 78:38]

אתה, יי, לא תכלא רחמין ממנו, חסדך ואמתך תמיד יצרונו. [Psalm 40:12]

הושיענו, אלהי ישענו, וקבצנו ויצילנו מן הגוים, להודות לשם קדשך, להשתבח בתהלתך.
[Psalm 106:47]

אם עונות תשמר יה, אדני מי יעמד? כי עמך הסליחה, למען תורא. לא כחטאינו תעשה לנו, [Psalm 130:3-4]

אם עונינו ענו בנו, יי, עשה למען שמך. [Jeremiah 14:7]

זכר רחמין, יי, וחסדיך, כי מעולם המה. [Psalm 25:6]

יענו יי ביום צרה, שגבנו שם אלהי יעקב. יי, הושיעה המלך, יענו ביום קראנו. [Psalm 20:2,10]

אבינו מלכנו חננו ועננו, כי אין בנו מעשים צדקה עשה עמנו כרב רחמין והושיענו למען שמך.
אדונינו מלכנו שמע בקול תחנונו ועננו, וזכור לנו ברית אבותינו, והושיענו למען שמך.
ואתה, אדני אלהינו, אשר הוצאת את עמך ישראל ממצרים, ותעש לך שם כיום הזה חטאנו רשענו.

יי ככל צדקותיך, ישוב נא אפך וחמתך מעירך ירושלים הר קדשך. כי בחטאינו ובעונות אבותינו,
ירושלים ועמך לחרפה לכל סביבותינו. ועתה, שמע, אלהינו, אל תפלת עבדך ואל תחנוני,
והאר פניך על מקדשך השמים למען יי! [Daniel 9:15-17]

It is difficult to detect a set structure to this first section. It begins with the seven Biblical quotations, then moves into rabbinic language with the *Avinu Malkenu*, and reverting back into biblical language, quoting the prayer from Daniel, *Adonai k'khol tsidkoteykha*. Finally it closes with the request for God to hear the prayer and supplications of His worshipers. While the text flows nicely and deals with the same general concept, of human sin and divine forgiveness, if any one of the biblical verses were removed or the order changed, the message would be the same. Of course, the request at the end clearly relies upon that which precedes it, but everything else could have been in an almost any order and it would still have the same meaning.

Section II, *Hateh Elohai*, is similar in structure and meaning to Section I. It contains several verses from the Tanakh towards the beginning, but this section quotes mainly from the Prophets, as opposed to the Psalms used in the previous section.¹¹⁰ However, the language then switches back and forth between biblical and rabbinic style. In Section II, the first transition is marked with the words *Avinu ha'av harachaman*, which is similar to the language used in Section I to make the same transition, *Avinu Malkeinu*. This section is a prayer, most of all, for mercy. Note that the second to last line uses the word *rachem* in some form three times. The paragraph as a whole includes the root *r.ch.m.* six times, often with its synonym, *chanun*.

הטה, אלהי, אזנך ושמע, פקח עיניך וראה שוממתינו, והעיר אשר נקרא שמך עליה. כי לא על צדקותינו, אנחנו מפילים תחנונינו לפניך, כי על רחמיך הרבים. אדני, שמעה: אדני, סלחה: אדני, הקשיבה. ועשה ואל תאחר, למענך, אלהים, כי שמך נקרא על עירך ועל עמך. [Daniel 9:18-19]

אבינו האב הרחמן! הראנו אות לטובה, קבץ נפוצותינו מארבע כנפות כל הארץ. יכירו וידעו כל הגוים, כי אתה יי אלהינו הושיענו למען שמך.

אתה, יי, אבינו אתה, אנחנו החמר ואתה יוצרנו, ומעשה ידך כלנו. אבינו, צורנו מלכנו וגואלנו. [Isaiah 64:9]

חוסה יי, על עמך, ואל תתן נחלתך לחרפה למשל בם גוים. למה יאמרו הגוים: איה נא אלהיהם? [Joel 2:17]

ידענו כי אין בנו מעשים, צדקה, עשה עמנו כרוב רחמך והושיענו למען שמך. כרחם אב על בנים, כן תרחם יי עלינו, חמול על עמך, רחם על נחלתך, חוסה נא כרוב רחמך, חננו ועננו, כי לך, יי, הצדקה, עושה נפלאות בכל עת.

This text is another plea for God to pay attention to the needs of the Jewish people, not because of our righteousness, but because of our piety, on the one hand, and God's mercy, on the other.

Section II focuses more on the Jewish people as a whole rather than the individual worshiper.

The entire prayer is written in the first person plural, which is not unusual unto itself.

However, in other cases, the first person plural is indicative of a collection of individuals all

praying for the same thing. Here, it is to emphasize the plight of the people over the plight of the individual. God's mercy, we pray, will extend to the entire Jewish people, despite the lack of worthiness. Again, the argument is made that God ought to have mercy on the people because God is implicated in the results, for if God does not answer the prayers of the Jews, the nations of the world will ask *ayeh na eloheihem*, where is their God? Thus, as in the other texts of *Tachamun* that we have examined, God ought to hear our prayer and respond favorably for God's own sake, not necessarily because of our own worthiness.

The idea that the Jewish people need God's mercy is continued in Section III, *Habet na*. This section does not contain any direct Biblical quotes, although it certainly contains many Biblical allusions. Its style is biblical, not rabbinic. While the reasons cited for God to be merciful to the Jewish people remain the same, i.e. for God's name's sake and because of the covenant with our ancestors, this section does not contain a confession of sin or refer to a lack of worthiness on the part of the worshiper. Rather, it directly appeals for God's mercy and saving powers.

הבט נא, רחם נא על עמך במהרה למען שמך, ברחמיך הרבים, יי אלהינו, חוס ורחם והושיעה צאן
לך מרעיתך, ואל ימשל בנו קצף, כי לך עינינו תלויות. הושיענו למען שמך, רחם עלינו למען בריתך, הביטה
ועננו בעת צרה, כי לך יי הישועה. בדך תוחלתנו, אלוה סליחות אנא סלח נא, אל טוב וסלח, כי אל מ
חנון ורחום אתה.

Section III, however, presents no new ideas not already contained in Sections I and II. Like the abundance of biblical verses in Section I, had this entire paragraph not been here, there would have been no difference in the message of the prayer. Whatever the reason for its inclusion, it was not to provide fuller theological argumentation or to fill in missing cognitive elements to the claim that God should save us.

Section IV, *Ana melekh*, on the other hand, has its own clear message. Here we ask God to be merciful for the sake of our ancestors, especially Abraham with whom God made the

first covenant, which was renewed at the binding of Isaac. According to this section, God should not judge the worshiper based on the worshiper's own merit, for he lacks the strength to do God's will, *due to the terrible circumstances in which he finds himself*. This section more than any other gives credence to theories that state that the entire *Vehu Rachum* came out of a time of persecution. It asks God not to desert the worshiper in this time of need, but rather to hear the prayer and answer it.

אנא מלך חנון ורחום, זכור והבט לברית בין הבתרים, ותראה לפניך עקדת יחיד, למען ישראל: אבינו
מלכנו מחסנו, אל תעש עמנו כרוע מעללינו, זכר רחמך יי וחסידיך כי מעולם המה: וברוב טובך
הושיענו, וחמל נא עלינו, כי אין לנו אלוה מבלעדיך צורנו: אל תעזבנו יי אלהינו, ואל תרחק ממנו, כי
נפשנו קצרה, מחרב ומשב, ומדבר וממגפה, ומכל רעה ויגון הצילנו, ואל תכלימנו יי אלהינו, והאר
פניך, וזכור לנו את ברית אבותינו, והושיענו למען שמך, ראה בצרותינו, ושמע קול תפלתנו וענינו, כי
אתה שומע תפלת כל פה:

The last line, *for You hear the prayer of every mouth*, presents an interesting paradox. The section as a whole is quite particularistic, speaking of the situation of the Jewish people in times of trouble and asking God to grant special favor to them because of the deeds of their ancestors. However, this last final line is universalistic. One would have expected something similar to the *chatimah* of the 16th blessing (*Shema koleinu*) of the *Amidah*, *for You hear the prayer of Your people Israel*. The overall thrust of the prayer remains particularistic, but perhaps this final line is there as a reminder that God hears everyone's prayers, Jewish or not, worthy or not. Thus, God would definitely hear the prayer of a Jew, even one who is not meritorious, because God hears all prayer and moreover, God has a special relationship with the Jewish people via the covenant with our ancestors.

The next paragraph, Section V (*El Rachum Vechanun*), is, in its essence, a prayer of praise. Again, it contains no biblical verses, but its style and language remains biblical for the most part, with sprinklings of rabbinic influence. After the direct pleas found in Section IV, this section makes reference to asking God to forgive us and to deal with us mercifully, but its

emphasis lies on its praising God's attributes. This section refers to God as *El chai v'kayam*, talks about how God is *tov al kol ma'asekha*, and describes God as patient and full of mercy. While it then asks God to act accordingly and answer the prayers, here the reason is not because of the situation of the worshiper, but the goodness of God.

אל רחום וחנון אתה, רחם עלינו ועל כל מעשיך, אין כמוך יי אלהינו, אנא שא נא פשעינו, אבינו מלכנו צורנו וגואלנו, אל חי וקים, החסין בכח חסיד וטוב על כל מעשיך: כי אתה הוא אל ארך אפים, ומלא רחמים, עשה עמנו צדקה כרב רחמך, והושיענו למען שמך: שמע מלכנו תפלתנו, ומיד אויבנו הצילנו: אבינו מלכנו אלהינו אתה, ושמך הגדול בנו נקרא עשה עמנו למען שמך, אל תעזבנו אבינו אל תטשנו בוראנו, אל תזניחנו יוצרנו ואל תשכיחנו נצח ואל תעש עמנו כלה כחטאותינו ואל תבישנו מסיבירינו ואל תכלימנו מתקוותינו ואל תמסרינו ביד אויבנו ואל תרחק ממנו בעת צרה, כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה:

This section appears to be a self-contained unit. It has all of the elements that are essential in this style prayer. It begins with *Rachum vechanun* and ends with *Channun verachum*, bracketing the rest of the text. It includes the important stock phrases such as *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Hoshiyanu l'ma'an sh'mekha*. Finally, it asks God to forgive our transgressions and to hear our prayer. These appear to be the critical elements in this style of prayer, and Section V, therefore, is a classic example of a well-constructed *Rachum vechanun* supplication.

Section VI, *Ein Kamokha*, again deals with the notion of God's patience and God's saving power from all of the evils of this world. Once more, the reason given for God to grant us this mercy is the faithfulness of Abraham. This paragraph, more than the others, recognizes the fallibility of the human worshiper and the inability to live up to God's standards. It expresses the imagery of God always willing to accept those who return, asking God to save us, for that is all we have left.

אין כמוך חנון ורחום אלהינו, אין כמוך ארך אפים, ורב חסד ואמת, הושיענו ברחמך הרבים, מרעש ומרגז הצילנו, זכר לעבדיך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב, אל תפן אל קשינו, ואל רשענו, ואל חטאתנו: שוב מחרון אפך, והנחם על הרעה לעמך: והסר ממנו מכת המות, כי רחום אתה, כי כן דרכך, עשה חסד חנם, בכל דור ודור: חוסה יי על עמך, והצילנו מזעמך, והסר ממנו מכת המגפה, וגזרה קשה, כי אתה שומר ישראל: לך אדני הצדקה, ולנו בששת הפנים כהיום הזה: מה נתאונן, ומה נאמר, מה נדבר, ומה נצטדק. נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה, ונשובה אליך, כי ימיך פשוטה לקבל שבים: אנא יי הצליחה נא אנא יי הצליחה נא: אנא יי עננו, ביום קראנו: לך יי חכינו, לך יי קוינו, לך יי ניחל, אל תחשה ותעננו, כי נאמו גוים, אבדה תקותם, כל ברך וכל קומה, לך לבד תשתחוה:

While there are a couple of biblical verse cited directly, Section VI appears to be a hodgepodge of rabbinic and biblical allusions.¹¹¹ This section is similar to Section II of the Ben Baboi and Section II of Rav Amram, both of which also ask God to keep us away from all evil, be it evil people or God's evil decree, through natural disasters. While it came much earlier in the text in each of the earlier versions of *Tachamun*, in each case the section immediately precedes the section that contains the most direct request. This is true for *Machzor Vitry* as well. One constant idea appears to be that before one makes the most direct request of God for mercy, one must first recognize the factors that lead one astray and ask God to keep him far away from such factors.

Section VII, *Hapoteach yad*, is the final section of the long *Vehu Rachum*. In many ways it is a summary of the previous six paragraphs. As Israel Jacobson writes, "It is a return of all of the motifs found in previous paragraphs."¹¹² It is, essentially, simply a listing of all of the petitions found in *Tachamun*. Specifically, it asks God, the one who accepts repentance, to accept our sins; it asks God not to forget or forsake us ever, but rather to rise up and save us because we have sinned. Next, it asks God to see our terrible situation and the sorrows in our heart. Then it requests that God not pour anger out onto us because we are the people of the covenant. Following that, this section contains the plea that if God will not do it for our sake, then God must act for God's own sake, because of God's link to the Jewish People. Finally, in the penultimate line, it lists, for the first time, the worshiper's merit for which God ought to

¹¹¹ *Shuv mecharon*, Ex 32; *Ana Adonai hoshiyah* Ps 118.

¹¹² Jacobson, 350. Translated from the Hebrew.

grant all of our prayers: "With love we declare the unity of God's name twice each day in the first line of the *Shema*."¹¹³ Then the person immediately recites the *Shema*.

הפותח יד בתשובה, לקבל פושעים וחטאים, נבהלה נפשו מרב עצבוננו, אל תשכחנו נצח, קומה והושיענו, כי חטאנו לך. אבינו מלכנו, אין בנו צדקה ומעשים טובים, וזכור לנו את ברית אבותינו, עדותינו בכל יום יי אחד. הביטה בענינו, כי רבו מכאובינו, וצרות לבבנו הרחיבו. חוסה יי עלינו, בארץ שבינו, ואל תשפוך חרוך עלינו, כי עמך אנחנו בני בריתך: אל הביטה דל כבודנו...ואל ימעטו לפניך תלאותינו, ויקדמונו רחמך בצרתנו, ואם לא למעננו, כי אם למענך פעול, ואל תשחית זכר שאריתנו, וחון על אום המייחדים שמך בכל יום תמיד ואומרים פעמים באהבה, שמע ישראל, יי אלהינו, יי אחד:

The seven paragraphs of *Vehu rachum* contain many of the same ideas that have been expressed in the other *Tachanun* texts that have been studied here. However, structurally, it is a completely different type of prayer. Overall, it appears to have much less set organization to it than Rav Amram's *Tachanun*. While there are certain phrases that are mentioned in almost every paragraph, it does not have the same formulaic structure of address, claim and petition that the Amram texts have. More importantly, there is no building of ideas from one section to the next. In both Ben Baboi and Amram, there are introductory paragraphs leading up to the section that contains the central claim, which is then followed by concluding paragraphs. Other than the final paragraph, each of the paragraphs in *Machzor Vitry* appear to be interchangeable. Even if we had followed the break up of the text into three sections, according to the way the *midrash* divides it, it would not matter, in particular, which one would go first.

This entire discussion still leaves open the most important question-- why was this text needed in the first place? Amram provided a perfectly acceptable text for *Tachanun*. Simchah of Vitry was well aware of this text when he compiled his *Machzor* and, in fact, he uses it in *minchah*. Therefore, he could not have believed that the text was flawed. Rather, I believe that as *Tachanun* was still a rather free-flowing set of prayers, there were most likely

¹¹³ Jacobson, 350. He points out that this is the only case in all of the *Tachanun* text that a merit is listed for the

several different texts from which to choose. Just as the prayer *Ahavat olam* was arbitrarily assigned to evening prayer and *Ahavah rabbah* to morning when two texts existed, so too, perhaps, Rav Simcha of Vitry took one tradition and assigned it to the morning prayer and took the other and assigned it to the afternoon service. While we know the origin of the Amram text, the *Vehu Rachum* remains more mysterious. One might construct any one of many hypotheses about its origin based on the *midrash*, but as of now, no one has been able to find a manuscript which would give credence to any such theory. Therefore, I will leave the matter as an "unsolved mystery."

After *Vehu rachum*, the most long-lasting contribution of *Machzor Vitry*, in terms of its *Tachamun* liturgy, is the inclusion of a reading from the book of Psalms. The shift from Ben Baboi to Amram brought with it a shift from almost entirely rabbinic language to a mixture of rabbinic and biblical, including the reading of segments of biblical texts.¹¹⁴ *Machzor Vitry* took this one step farther and included two psalms to be read every day *Tachamun* was said, immediately after *Vehu Rachum* on Mondays and Thursdays.¹¹⁵ As a part of *nefillat apayim* (which Simchah explains to mean leaning on the side with one's head on his hand), one would recite Psalm 25 in its entirety and Psalm 3, without the introductory verse. It is possible, even likely, that this custom of reciting psalms while bowing down was meant to mimic what would happen during the time of the Temple when the people would bow down while the Levites would recite psalms.¹¹⁶ While many of the modern rites did not retain the use of these psalms in particular, the recitation of a psalm with *nefilat apayim* is now an almost universal custom.

people of Israel.

¹¹⁴ Most notably Daniel 9:15-19. See *Seder Rav Amram*, 56.

¹¹⁵ *Machzor Vitry*, 70.

¹¹⁶ See page 2 for greater detail.

The two psalms included in *Machzor Vitry* both follow the themes in *Vehu rachum* and other *Tachamun* texts. Psalm 25 is an acrostic that begins with an entreaty that God not disappoint those who trust Him and are loyal to Him. It continues to ask God to teach his ways and to be compassionate unto the worshiper, ignoring the worshiper's sins and judging him favorably instead. It then moves to a personal entreaty for God to be with the worshiper in this time of trouble and to "deliver me from my straits"¹¹⁷ The final verses ask for God to protect the worshiper from the people who surround him and to redeem Israel. Throughout the psalm, one can find many of the phrases that are repeated in every *Tachamun* text. It is therefore an appropriate choice for inclusion.

Psalm 3 is a much briefer text with one central message. The worshiper is exclaiming that he cannot trust the people who surround him and therefore, God must act as his protector. This is similar to the verse that introduces the psalm in the modern *Ashkenzi* rite: II Samuel 24:14 in which David asks for God to judge him rather than be judged by humans. The idea is that God will always have more compassion than the humans. Therefore, Psalm 3 concludes with asking God to deliver the People of Israel and to bestow His blessing on the People.

After the Psalms, *Vitry* includes a classic rabbinic-style prayer. It is unusual in that its structure follows Heinemann's analysis of "Judgement prayers" exactly, but it actually appears to be a hodgepodge of many phrases from rabbinic prayers, many of which are found in the Yom Kippur liturgy. The text is ambiguous in that it is neither classic nor original. It definitely is not found in early material and I have not seen it used elsewhere either. Neither have I seen any writing or analysis of it. Yet, all of the elements within it ring familiar and many can be traced to other rabbinic texts. My best guess is that it was an original

¹¹⁷ Ps 25:17

composition based on a range of rabbinic texts. However, as the text is an anomaly, I did not include it for a full analysis.¹¹⁸

After this rabbinic-style composition, there are two *piyyutim*. The first one, *K'tefilat Avraham* is parallel to the texts found in Ben Baboi and Amram, *K'shanitah et Avraham*. This text, while well-attested in modern *selichot* liturgy, is no longer a part of *Tachanun*. However, the second *piyyut* in *Machzor Vitry* is still said on Mondays and Thursdays.

The text in question I am writing is *Adonai elohei Yisrael, shuv mecharon apecha*. This prayer, according to Elbogen "became the refrain for elaborate liturgical poems."¹¹⁹ While many of these were quite long, the text in *Machzor Vitry* contains just seven verses. This *piyyut* includes much of the same language from the *Vehu rachum* prayer, although it has a greater emphasis on the plight of the people, rather than the sin of the individual. Note that every stanza except for the last one contains a phrase concerning the status of the Jews relative to the surrounding nations

יְי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אַפַּי, וְהִנַּחֵם עַל הָרָעָה לַעַמֶּךָ:

(1) הִבַּט מַשְׁמַיִם וְרָאָה, כִּי הֵייוּ לַעַג וְקִלְס בְּגוֹיִם, נִחְשַׁבְנוּ מֶלֶךְ כֶּשֶׁה לַטֶּבַח (אַבֵּל) [יִוְבֵל], לַהֲרוּג וְלֹאֲבֹד וְלִמְכָּה וְלִחְרָפָה: וּבְכָל זֹאת שֶׁמֶךְ הַגְדוֹל לֹא שָׁכַחְנוּ, נָא אֵל אֵל תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ: יְי

(2) חוֹסֶה יְיִי עָלֵינוּ בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ וְאֵל תַּחֲנֵנוּ בְּיַדִּי אֲכֻזִּים לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ הָעַמִּים אִיהָ נָא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם לְמַעַנְךָ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ חֶסֶד וְאֵל תֵּאָחֵר אֲנֵנוּ שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן וְרַחֵם סְגוּלָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרָתָּ. יְי

(3) זֵרִים אֹמְרִים אֵין תּוֹחֵלֶת וְתִקְוָה. חוֹן אֹם לְשֶׁמֶךְ מִקְוָה. טָהוֹר, יִשׁוּעַתְנוּ קִרְבָּה. יִגְעֵנוּ וְלֹא הוֹנַח לָנוּ. רַחֲמֶיךָ יִכְבְּשׁוּ אֶת כַּעַסְךָ מֵעָלֵינוּ: אֲנֵנוּ שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן, וְרַחֵם סְגוּלָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרָתָּ: יְי

(4) חוֹסֶה יְיִי עָלֵינוּ בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ, וְאֵל תַּחֲנֵנוּ בְּיַדִּי אֲכֻזִּים. לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ הָגוֹיִם, אִיהָ נָא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם. לְמַעַנְךָ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ חֶסֶד, וְאֵל תֵּאָחֵר: אֲנֵנוּ שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן, וְרַחֵם סְגוּלָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרָתָּ: יְי

(5) קוֹלָנוּ תִּשְׁמַע וְתַחֲוֹן, וְאֵל תִּטְשֵׁנוּ לְמַחֲוֹת אֶת שְׁמֵנוּ, זָכַר אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם, כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעֵתָה נִשְׁאַרְנוּ מֵעַט מִהֲרַבָּה: וּבְכָל זֹאת שֶׁמֶךְ הַגְדוֹל לֹא שָׁכַחְנוּ, נָא אֵל אֵל תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ:

(6) יְי נִתֵּן בַּעֲפָר פִּינוּ וְנִכְפַּשׁ בְּאַפֵּר כַּחֲנוּ כִּי מֵאֵד שִׁבְעֵנוּ מִרּוּרֵינוּ וְרוּיָנוּ לַעֲנָה וְרוּשׁ וְלֹא שֶׁב מִמֵּנוּ חֲרוֹן וְעֵתָה. וּבְכָל זֹאת שֶׁמֶךְ הַגְדוֹל לֹא שָׁכַחְנוּ, נָא אֵל אֵל תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ. יְיִי אֱלֹהֵי וְכוּ'

¹¹⁸ *Machzor Vitry*, 70, beginning with the word *Ribon haolamim*.

¹¹⁹ Elbogen, 70

7) עזרנו אלהי ישענו על דבר כבוד שמך. והצילנו וכפר על חטאתינו למען שמך: יי אלהי ישראל, שוב
מחרון אפך, והנחם על הרעה לעמך:

The modern *Ashkenzi* text contains almost the exact same *piyyut*, but without the-second or sixth stanzas. Variations are also used in the French and Spanish rites.¹²⁰

Finally, after saying *Va'anachnu lo neda*, *Vitry* includes two short compositions for Mondays and Thursdays, both called *El Erekh Apayim*. And there is no significant difference between them. Both serve as final pleas for God to be patient, to deliver the worshiper out of bad situations and to forgive the worshiper's sins.

ש"ץ	ציבור
אל ארך אפים ורב חסד	אל ארך אפים ומלא
ואמת, אל באפך	רחמים, אל ותסתר פניך
תוכיחנו: חוסה יי על	ממנו: חוסה יי על ישראל
עמך, והושיענו מכל רע:	עמך, והצילנו מכל רע:
חטאנו לך אדון, סלח נא	חטאנו לך אדון, סלח נא
כרוב רחמין, אל:	כרוב רחמין, אל:

In *Machzor Vitry*, these texts are prescribed, as noted, one for the prayer leader and one for the congregation. Later, communities would choose one or the other, with the Polish rite choosing the one for the congregation and the *Ashkenazi* rite choosing the one for the prayer leader. As is the case in *Vitry*, modern rites only recite these texts on Monday and Thursday.

The *Machzor Vitry* text has many important differences from Amram. It further shifts the language away from rabbinic-style petitionary prayer and towards pietistic poems of biblical origins. It also introduces the recitation of psalms, a custom now followed throughout the Jewish world. Finally, it includes several of the *piyyutim* which remain a part of the liturgy, many of which were first found in *Machzor Vitry*. While there would be minor

¹²⁰ Ibid., 70

additions and subtractions, this text established the base from which the various customs of *Tachanun* throughout the world would develop.

However, in many ways, *Machzor Vitry* is only new in terms of its style. Looking at the other texts that have been studied here, there are not major theological differences in terms of the language used, with the noted exception of *Sidur Saadyah*. In fact, I believe that what is most remarkable about *Tachanun* is not the many different versions that one can trace, but rather, the similarity of the message in each of these texts. The form has certainly changed tremendously over the years, but the content has remained remarkably constant. As we take a brief look at the variations in modern rites, we will note that despite the differences, the meaning has not been altered.

Chapter 5—Modern Textual Variations

While *Machzor Vitry* serves as the basis for every later *Tachanun*, there are great variations among the numerous modern rites. This makes *Tachanun* unusual since, in general, the modern rites are more remarkable in their similarity to one another than in their difference. The lack of harmony in *Tachanun* texts can be attributed to its original (and, to some extent, current) nature as a private prayer, as well as to its late addition to the prayer book. This allowed it to have a more free-flow textual development compared to most other prayers, many of which have a set text dating back to the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. Thus, with *Tachanun*, each rite was able to include its own variations according to its particular ideas and values. In this chapter, I will examine the differences in the text among the various rites, including the most recent developments in liberal prayer books.

There are, of course, two major rites of prayer in modern Judaism, *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi*, with many sub-groups within each one of these. Looking first at the *Tachanun* in the *Sephardi* rite of the Spanish and Portuguese, one is immediately struck by both the similarities and the differences between it and the *Machzor Vitry* prayer.¹²¹ Indeed, the two texts share much in common. They both include a *Vehu rachum* prayer for Monday and Thursday, followed by Psalm 25 and concluding with *Va'anachnu lo neda* and two versions of *El erekh apayim*. Thus, the basic structure of the prayer is the same in both rites. However, the *Vehu rachum* of the *Sephardi* rite is considerably shorter than the one found in *Machzor Vitry*. In fact, in the *Sephardi* rite, *Machzor Vitry's* Section IV and V (*Ana Melekh* and *El Rachum Vechanun*) are condensed into just two verses, taking the first verse of Section IV and the last verse of Section V. There are also several verses from each of the

other sections of the *Machzor Vitry* text, especially Sections VI and VII, which are not found in the *Sephardi* rite. However, without much further research, it would be difficult to ascertain whether these two versions developed separately out of a common text or if one developed first and the other rite added verses to, or subtracted verses from, the original.

Another striking difference between the two texts is the inclusion of the 13 Attributes of God at the beginning of the Monday/Thursday *Tachanun* in the *Sephardi* Rite. This is not found in the *Machzor Vitry* text nor is it a part of the modern *Ashkenzi* rite. However, it is in accordance with *Seder Rav Amram*, which prescribes it for Mondays and Thursdays as the lead-in for the confession. Similarly, in the Spanish/Portuguese setting, it also precedes a confession. However, in *Amram*, it is placed after *Im avoneinu*, (the biblical verses from *Vehu Rachum* found in *Amram*) while in the Spanish and Portuguese rite, it precedes *Vehu Rachum*.

The Spanish and Portuguese rite also adds a new element not found in the previous *Siddurim* studied here. It contains two special *selichot* prayers—one assigned to Monday, the other to Thursday—that precede the 13 Attributes. On Monday, the prayer is called *Anshei Emunah*, while on Thursdays it is *Tamahnu mera'ot*. According to Elbogen, both of these are fast-day *piyyutim*, the first an alphabetical acrostic and the second, a reverse-alphabetical acrostic. Considering that Mondays and Thursdays were historically fast-days, it is no surprise that certain fast-day *piyyutim* would be found in the Monday/Thursday liturgy of *Tachanun*. As to the origin of these *piyyutim*, Elbogen explains that “these passages recall the poems of the Syriac church and are built in the same pattern. Powerful reciprocal influences must have been operating at that time between Judaism and the church,

¹²¹ Moses Gaster, ed., *The Book of Prayer and Order of Service According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, 1901, 39-46.

though we are not able to identify here who influenced whom.”¹²² In addition to unanswered questions regarding the origin of this type of *piyyut*, we also cannot say for certain why these poems entered into the *Sephardi* rite for *Tachanun*, but never made it into the *Ashkenzi* ones.

Following these *selichot*, the *Sephardi* rite continues with the 13 Attributes and then a confession. Here, there is a slight variation amongst the different *Sephardi* rites, as the Spanish and Portuguese Jews do not beat their chest during the confession, while the Syrian, Moroccan and Judeo-Spanish (most of whom now live in South America) Jews do.¹²³ After the confession, all of the *Sephardi* rites continue with Psalm 25. Afterwards, on Monday they recite *Ayeh chasdekha harishonim*, while on Thursday they recite *She'erit peleitat ariel*. These are two additional *selichot* that are included in the *Sephardi* rite for *Tachanun*. Finally, they recite the short *Avinu malkeinu* and close with *Va'anachnu lo neda*.

These additional *selichot*, as well as the 13 Attributes and the confession, link the *Sephardi Tachanun* with the concept first mentioned in the *Tosefta*, that “One may say words [זְבָרִים] after the *amidah*, even like the order of the confession on the Day of Atonement.”¹²⁴ In the *Sephardi* rite, this literally has meant that the *Tachanun* prayer should be like the Yom Kippur liturgy. This highlights the difference between the theology of the *Sephardi* rite and that of *Machzor Vitry*. The text of *Machzor Vitry* suggests that humans are fallible and must rely on God’s mercy, for humans are incapable of *earning* God’s grace. Therefore, there is little emphasis on what humans can do, and instead, the liturgy suggests throwing oneself before God and asking God to be merciful for the sake of the covenant God made with our ancestors and for God’s own sake. On the other hand, in the *Sephardi* rite, *Tachanun* carries

¹²² Elbogen, 217

¹²³ Herbert Dobrinsky, *A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs: The Ritual Practices of Syrian, Moroccan, Judeo-Spanish and Spanish and Portuguese Jews of North America*. Pages 173, 187, 198, 213.

¹²⁴ T Ber. 3:6.

the implicit message that humans can take action to help bring about God's mercy. The action is repentance, as laid out in the confession. According to this theological viewpoint, one must still recognize that it is only by God's mercy that repentance can be accepted, but there is a greater role for the human to help bring about that mercy.

In the modern *Ashkenazi* rite, the theological conception of *Tachanun* is closer to that of *Machzor Vitry*, although textually, there are some major differences.¹²⁵ Foremost among the changes is the substitution of Psalm 6 for Psalms 25 and 3. According to Abraham Berliner, this change was accepted and instituted into the rite quite recently, approximately 235 years ago.¹²⁶ This does not appear to be, at least, as I understand the two psalms, a major conceptual change. Rather, I believe that this was actually a case of trying to abbreviate the text. Psalm 6 and Psalm 25 have the same message, but Psalm 6 gets that message across in about half the number of verses. Perhaps, given the fact that this change occurred around the same time that people had greater access to printed *Siddurim*, the editors of the modern prayer book were able to substitute the shorter (but non-acrostic) Psalm 6 in place of the longer (but easier to remember) acrostic, Psalm 25.

The structure of the *Tachanun* in the modern *Ashkenazi* rite includes several other changes from the *Machzor Vitry* text. For example, preceding the recitation of Psalm 6, it adds a verse from II Samuel in which David tells his prophet Gad that he would rather rely on God's judgement than that of humanity, for God is more merciful.¹²⁷ This is consistent with the message of *Tachanun* as explained in the previous paragraph with regards to *Machzor Vitry*. It is only by placing oneself at the will of God that one can hope to have

¹²⁵ For the modern *Ashkenazi* rite, see Philip Birnbaum, ed. *Ha-siddur Ha-shalem*, pp. 103-118.

¹²⁶ As cited in Israel Jacobson, *Netiv Binah* vol 1, 351. Berliner records the change having occurred 150 years before he wrote his book, which was published about 88 years ago.

¹²⁷ II Sam 24:14

God's grace bestowed upon him/herself. Alternatively, Seligman Baer, the editor of *Seder Avodat Yisrael*, suggests that this verse was placed here to instruct how one should "fall on his face"—by placing one's head on one's hand.¹²⁸ Another addition that immediately follows this verse is a brief one line confession which states "Merciful and Gracious One, I have sinned before you. Eternal, full of mercy, have mercy upon me and accept my supplication." Note that this one line repeats the request for God's mercy three times, using the root *r.ch.m.* each time. While there is a confession, that is not enough to "earn" the worshipper the right to have his request answered. Rather, it is God's nature as the "Merciful One" that will cause God to answer the prayer.

The final major modification to the *Tachanun* in the *Ashkenazi* rite is the addition of the *piyyut* "*Shomer Yisrael*." According to Elbogen, this liturgical poem had been a part of fast day and *Selichot* ritual for some time, but only entered into the daily *Tachanun* within the last century. He notes that now it is not only found in the *Ashkenazi* rite, but also in *Nusach Sepharad* and *Nusach Roma*. While there are only three stanzas in the modern prayer book, Elbogen notes that at one time there must have been several verses.¹²⁹ In the *Ashkenazi* tradition, a one-sentence addendum pleads for God to be appeased by our prayer. This leads into the single-line *Avinu Malkenu* that pleads with God to have mercy upon us despite our lack of deeds warranting it. Finally, like every *Tachanun* since *Seder Rav Amram*, it concludes with *Va'anachnu lo neda*.

The modern *Ashkenazi* rite for *Tachanun* is considerably shorter than the one in *Machzor Vitry*. It eliminates the rabbinic section that followed the psalms and cuts out the *piyyut* "*Bitefilat Avraham Avinu Behar haMoriah*." In addition, the modern rite chooses

¹²⁸ *Seder Avodat Yisrael*, 116. This is based on the words "*nifla na b-yad adonai*".

either *El erekh apayim v'rav chesed* (in the *Ashkenazi* rite) or *El erekh apayim male rachamim* (in the *Polish* rite), but does not include both, as *Machzor Vitry* does. Besides these changes noted here, the most significant one being the change in which psalm is recited, the structure remains the same as it was 900 years ago. None of the alterations noted mark a significant change in the ideas or theology of the prayer, but instead, seemed to streamline its message into a more concise pattern. While the modern prayer book is not known for its tendency towards brevity, the process with *Tachanun* may have been different as its development was much later. The process of fusion of the various texts into a few set traditions may be the same as that which occurred with other sections of the prayer book in the first millennia, but we lack the documentation of such a course of events.

However, in the case of *Tachanun* the process of change is not complete, as the liberal movements of the 19th and 20th centuries have continued to make alterations. While one might expect that the Reform movement would make serious changes to *Tachanun*, as it did with many of the prayers, it is more surprising to find significant alterations in the Conservative movement's liturgy, as that movement tends to be much more reticent about liturgical change.

In the earliest Reform liturgies in Germany, the changes began as minor edits, eliminating a verse or two that the editor of the prayer book found offensive or no longer true. For example, in his 1843 *Siddur* Samuel Holdheim simply eliminated one line in the last paragraph of *Vehu rachum* (Section VII—*Hapoteach yad*) that stated "Our glory has waned among the nations; they utterly detest us. How long shall thy glory remain in captivity and thy splendor in the hand of the foe? Arouse thy might and thy zeal against thy

¹²⁹ Elbogen, 68. He notes that manuscripts include a few additional verses. Jacobson, 354 explains that there was a verse "*Shomer goy raba*".

enemies, that they may be put to shame and crushed despite their power."¹³⁰ Similarly, Joseph Aub's 1853 *Synagogenordnung* in Mayence keeps most of *Tachanun*, but eliminates the last paragraph of *Vehu rachum* in its entirety, save the final line. He also declares that *Tachanun* should not be said on national holidays.¹³¹ By 1929, when Caesar Seligman, Ismar Elbogen and Hermann Vogelstein published *Einheitsgebetbuch*, recognizing that *Tachanun* was "originally, a silent outpouring of the heart, without a fixed form" the Reformers thus "reduced [*Tachanun*] to Psalm 6 with a short introductory and concluding formula."¹³² In America, the process was more radical. In their efforts to reduce the length of the service, whole sections of the service were eliminated. Abraham Millgrom explains:

One of the principles adopted, though not followed consistently, was to discard those prayers which were last to enter the *Siddur*... A second guiding element was to eliminate those prayers which originally entered the *Siddurim* as optional elements... Thus came almost total elimination of three prayer units—the Early Morning Blessings, the Verses of Praise and the Penitential Prayers.¹³³

Thus, we find that the closest reminder of *Tachanun* that exists in the *Gates of Prayer*, the modern Reform *Siddur*, is the time for silent prayer after the recitation of the *Amidah*.

The Conservative movement, always more reticent to alter the liturgy, remarkably, has also made significant changes to *Tachanun*. Jules Harlow, editor of the Conservative movement's *Siddur Sim Shalom*, writes the following concerning the modifications they instituted:

Originally the text was not fixed, as worshipers were encouraged to pour out their hearts to God. Over time, however, one particular version of *Tachanun* became virtually canonized by printers. We wanted to restore the

¹³⁰ Samuel Holheim, *Synagogen-Ordnung für die Synagogen des Grossherzogthums Mecklenburg-Schwerin*, 1843, as cited in *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism*, by Jakob Petuchowski, 117. The English translation taken from Birnbaum, 114.

¹³¹ As cited in Petuchowski, 120. The subject of days on which *Tachanun* is not said will be dealt with in the final chapter.

¹³² *Ibid*, 210.

¹³³ Abraham Millgrom, *Jewish Worship*, 587.

sense of the personal here and to delete theological themes, such as self-abasement or the abased condition of Jerusalem, which no longer reflect our reality. Thus we abridged the conventional text, but added new material drawn from the ninth-century prayer book of Amram and the tenth-century Egyptian prayer book of Saadyah. We introduced the text with a note pointing out that "any words or thoughts that one cares to offer are appropriate at this point, from a brief reflection to a lengthy expression of deep feelings. Suggested texts follow. You are free to supplement or to replace the texts which are headed by Roman numerals."¹³⁴

As Harlow notes, this is among the more significant changes made in the *Siddur*. While eliminating any liturgy that would be offensive or out of place today, it maintained the overall rubric and restored the element of personal prayer to it. I believe that this can serve as a model for the Reform movement as we consider changes for our next *Siddur*. This will be the subject of the final chapter.

¹³⁴ Jules Harlow, "Liturgy for Conservative Jews," *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, edited by Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, 138.

Chapter 6—Where do we go from here?

While it is hard to imagine that *Tachanun* was ever a “popular” prayer to say, it is safe to assume that at one time, its message spoke to the needs of the people and was fitting to the society in which they lived. Were this not the case, it is hard to imagine that a non-statutory prayer would have survived at all, let alone, develop to the extent of the modern *Tachanun* prayer. Obviously, it must have struck a chord with the people. However, for most people with whom I have talked, that is no longer the case. Whenever I mentioned the topic of this thesis to people, I almost always received a negative reaction. This was true across the religious spectrum, from those who had never heard of it before I explained what it said, to those who dutifully say it every day. For those who had heard of it, almost everyone had some story or joke about people’s negative associations with saying this prayer or about how many excuses people have found in order not to say it. The most positive reaction I received were neutral comments like, “Oh, really. That’s interesting.” Such people would then quickly move on to the next subject. All of this is by way of explaining that, except for a few stalwarts, most people do not find *Tachanun* to be a relevant prayer as we move towards the beginning of the 21st Century.

This negative attitude towards *Tachanun* is underscored by the increased number of days on which *Tachanun* is not said. According to Elbogen, *Tachanun* “is not recited on any day that has a festive character; the number of such days increased in the course of the Middle Ages, while their recognition spread gradually.”¹³⁵ Obviously, these included Shabbat and Festival days. But the *Shulchan Arukh* adds to these days many others. No one says *Tachanun* if there is a groom present in the *minyan* (for the full week after his wedding),

or if there is going to be a circumcision at the *Beit Hakenesset* that day. It is also not said in the house of a mourner.¹³⁶ *Tachanun* was also taken out of the service for minor holidays, such as *Tu B'av*, *Tu B'shevat*, *Rosh Chodesh*, *Chanukah*, *Purim* and even *Purim Katan*. According to the *Rema*, the great *Ashkenazi* authority, *Lag B'Omer*, the day before *Rosh Hashanah* and the day before *Yom Kippur* are included in this list as well.¹³⁷ In addition, there were entire seasons during which it was deemed inappropriate to say *Tachanun*. These include the entire month of *Nisan*, from *Yom Kippur* until after *Sukkot* and from the beginning of the month of *Sivan* until after *Shavuot*. The Ninth of *Av* was included in this list as well, despite its already dour nature.¹³⁸ In modern times, many have added *Yom Ha'atzmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* to this list.¹³⁹ In addition, some communities have also excluded *Tachanun* on secular national holidays, such as the American Thanksgiving.¹⁴⁰ In the Syrian tradition, one does not say *Tachanun* on the 13th of *Sivan*, because of the "Miracle of Musan," known as the *Purim* of Aleppo.¹⁴¹ The continually increasing list of days on which *Tachanun* is not to be said is fairly strong testament to the desire people have to refrain from saying it.

While such an instinct is understandable in many ways, I believe that there is also something lost in the complete removal of *Tachanun*, as has occurred in the Reform movement. Certainly the idea of saying that we are but worms and dust is not an appealing concept; nor do I believe that humans are completely unworthy of God's graciousness.

¹³⁵ Elbogen, 70.

¹³⁶ S.A. O.H. 131:4

¹³⁷ S.A. O.H. 131:6

¹³⁸ S.A. O.H. 131:7

¹³⁹ *Siddur Rinat Yisrael*, 79 and *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 128 both include these modern, Israeli-state holidays among the list.

¹⁴⁰ *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 128 and Joseph Aub's *Syangogenordnung* both declare national holidays to be days on which *Tachanun* should not be recited.

¹⁴¹ As cited in Dobrinsky, 173.

However, I strongly believe that there is great import to the traditional religious notion of humility. While *Tachamun* may have overstated the case, I believe its complete removal goes too far in the other direction.

Jewish prayer, in general, does not require the worshiper to be submissive to the Eternal. In fact, quite the opposite, much of the traditional liturgy includes lists of requests of what we want God to grant us. However, this was always couched in terms of deference or praise. Thus we get the traditional blessing formula, "Blessed are You, Sovereign of the Universe," which praises God, even as it includes requests that God help each individual with the troubles in his/her life. Alternatively, there is the formula *Yehi ratson milfanekha Adonai Elohemu*, "May it be Your will, the Eternal our God," which asks God to grant the needs of the worshiper. In each case, the intent is clearly that God will pay attention to the lives of the individual worshiper and grant his or her needs, even while that request is couched in language of humility. In reality, however, this is not humility, but rather, a lack of hubris, of over-stepping the bounds. It is not true humility.

Tachamun, on the other hand, traditionally has been a prayer of true humility. Perhaps its placement in the service, after the petitions of the *Amidah*, was originally meant to recognize the audacity that is inherent in the *Amidah*, in its request that God heed our individual needs. Whether this was the intent or not, I believe that there is a need for such humility and that part of the purpose of religion is to instill such humility into its adherents. As those who compiled the prayer book recognized, that humility need not hinder the human's ability to act, as one was still able to petition God for one's needs. However, there is a great difference in being able to ask for one's needs and the expectation that one deserves

to be given the answer one desires. It is this difference that appears to be lacking to me in our modern world.

American society, in particular, and Western society as a whole was founded upon the notion of individual rights. These rights formulate much of what is great about the Western world—the right to free speech, the right to practice one's religion, the right of assembly, etc. These rights are absolute rights and that is how they ought to remain. On the other hand, there are matters, from the mundane "right" to drive, to the "right" to carry an assault weapon, which are not absolute rights. However, in our society, with its emphasis on individual rights and its lack of emphasis on humility, many people confuse these two types of rights and believe they have an absolute right to do whatever they want. Traditionally, religion, with its emphasis on responsibility, has served to counter-act this tendency. For this to happen, however, there must be a religious concept of humility, a reminder that there is something greater than I am, that I do not have all of the answers, nor can I demand that they be given to me. This is a role, I believe, a modern *Tachanun* can play.

Such a text need not go as far as the current *Tachanun* in terms of the language it uses. Obviously, as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, such language does not speak to people in today's world. However, some of the older texts, especially the text of Saadyah, might serve as an appropriate model. Saadyah's text begins with the admission of sin. The first step towards humility is to recognize that we, as human beings, are not perfect. Despite our best intentions, we will always make mistakes. Next, it recognizes that there is a greater power than us, that human beings are not the be all and end all of the world. Perhaps most importantly, it recognizes that we are not asking for forgiveness because we necessarily deserve it. We don't have a right to be forgiven. On the other hand, we do have the right to

ask for it and we have the ability to try and earn it. A prayer such as this could help emphasize the importance of humility, while not debasing humankind and all we do.

As the Reform movement reconsiders many of its previously held ideas, I hope that it will also reconsider its complete removal of *Tachanun* from the daily liturgy. I believe that the concept of humility that it emphasizes is one that is becoming more and more relevant each year, as we move towards the 21st Century. We have seen too many incidents, including the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, to ignore the effects of a society without a sense of humility. As this thesis has shown, there has been great flexibility over the centuries in terms of the type of texts that are appropriate to use during this block of prayer. Therefore, we need not discard the whole notion of the prayer, simply because the language that is currently used does not speak to us. Rather, I believe we must work to find new ways of instilling this concept into our daily prayers. This is the challenge that awaits us.

Appendix

Table I: Regular Tachanun of Seder Rav Amram

Tanakh	Babylonian Talmud	Palestinian Talmud	Ben Baboi	Seder Rav Amram	Siddur Saadyah	Machzor Vitry
Deut. 10:17	Yoma 87b		Pg 147, ln16	<p>רבון כל העולמים ואדוני האדונים האל הגדול הגבור והנורא חסם עליו שאנו עבדיו ומעשה ידיו בשר עפר רימה ותולעה מה אנו מה חיינו מה חסדינו מה צדקנו ומה נאמר לפניך ה' אלוהינו ואלוהי אבותינו הלא כל הגבורים כאן גודל ואנשי שם כלא היו וחכמים כבלי מדע ונבונים כבלי השכל כי כל מעשינו תוהו ובוהו וימי חיינו הבל לפניך מה נאמר לפניך ה' אלוהינו כי אטחנו העוין והרשענו אין בנו כח לעשות תובתינו ולא כהן גדול לכפר על חטאותינו ולא מזבח להקריב עליו קרבן ולא בית קדש הקדשים להתפלל שם. אלא יהי רצון מלפניך שתהא תפילתנו שאנו מתפללים לרצון ותחשב לפניך כפרים וכבשים כאלו הקרבנו אותם על גבי המזבח ותקדשנו.</p>		Included at Minchah
	Berakhot 17a			<p>רבון כל העולמים גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוני לעשות רצונך אבל שאור שבעיסה מעכב יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוהי שתשמד ותכניע ותרחיק יצר הרע ממני ותשפילחו ותכניעו ותרחיקו ממאמתי וארבעים ושמונה אברים שבי ואל יכשילני מודרכי הטובים אלא תן בלבי יצר טוב וחבר טוב לשמור חקיך ולעבדך ולעשות רצונך בלבב שכל</p>		Included at Minchah
Psalms 90:14; 85:8	Berakhot 16b	Berakhot 4, 2		<p>רבון כל העולמים יהי רצון מלפניך שתהא תורחץ אומנותי ומלאכתי בכל יום ולא אשגה בה ואל תצריכני לדי מותנת בשר ודם שמתנתם מעוטה וחרפתם מרחבה שבוענו בבקר חסדך ונדרתה ונשמחה בכל ימינו הארנו ה' חסדך וישעך נתן לנו</p>		Included at Minchah
Daniel 9:19				<p>רבון כל העולמים ואדוני האדונים עזרני סמכני סייעני וחזקני בפרנסתי ובפרנסת בני ביתי ולא תבישני ולא תכלמני לא לפניך ולא לפני בשר ודם ה' שמענה ה' סלחה ה' הקשיבה ועשה אל תאחר למענך אלהי כי שמך נקרא על עירך ועל עמך</p>		Included at Minchah

Table II: Alternative Text for Regular Tachanun in Seder Rav Amram

Tanakh	Babylonian Talmud	Palestinian Talmud	Ben Baboi	Seder Rav Amram	Siddur Saadyah	Machzor Vitry				
		Ber. 4:7, page 4		רבונו של עולם חסדאי לפניך יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו אלהי אבותינו שנתן לנו כל טוב וחלק טוב ורחם גמולנו ונפח שפלה ורחם טוב ואל יתחלל שמך בנו ולא תעשנו שיחיה בפי כל הבריות ואל תעשנו קללה בפי כל הבריות ואל תהי אחרינו ותקורנו ולפנינו נפח ואל תצרכנו למחנה בשר ודם ולא תמסורנו מלפניו ביד בשר ודם שמחמתנו מעושים והרפתים מרובם . ותן חלקנו בתורתך עם עשרי רצונך ובנה ביתך ויעיד ויכילך ומקדשך מהם ענו ומחנה בימיהם פדנו מכל חרות קשות והושינו ברחמיך הרבים משחית צדק ועמד	אבינו מלכנו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ועל חסדך ועל אמתך תשיבנו ויקם מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואל לא נעשנו תעשה כי לשמך תן כבוד אבינו מלכנו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ועל חסדך ועל אמתך	אבינו מלכנו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ואל תהי צדק בעינינו ועל חסדך ועל אמתך למען שמך	ואמתנו לא נדע מה נעשה כי עליך ענינו	זכור רחמיך ה' וחסדיך כי מעולם המה יהי חסדיך ה' עלינו כאשר יחלץ ילד אל תכחל לנו עונות ראשונים מהם יקדמונו ורחמיך כי דלנו מאד עשה לפניך שמך הגדול הגבור והנורא שנקרא עלינו חננו ה' חננו כי רב שבוענו בו ברוך רחם תבורך ה' הושיעה המלך יענו ביום קראנו כי הוא ידע יצורנו זכור כי עפר אנו.	Yes -but a variant (Removes line not from Tanakh, Psalm 123:3, and Hab 3:2 . Adds in verses Psalm 44:27, 130:3-4, 20:10. Some change in order of verses.)	Yes (except the line that is not from the Tanakh)
II Chron. 20:12 Ps. 25:6 Ps. 33:22 Ps. 79:8 Ps. 123:3 Hab. 3:2 Ps103:14 Ps. 79:9										

Table III: Tachanun for Monday and Thursday in Seder Rav Amram

Tanakh	Babylonian Talmud	Palestinian Talmud	Ben Baboi	Seder Rav Amram	Siddur Saadyah	Machzor Vitry
Jer 14:7 Ps 130:3 Joel 2:17 “ Ps 103:13 De 9:27				<p>אם ענינו ענו בנו ה' עשה למען שמך כי רבו משחיתותיך לך חטאנו סלח לנו אם עונות השמור יהי ה' מי יעמוד כי עמך הסליחו למען תורא חוסי ה' על עמך ואל תתן נחלתך לחרפה למשול בם גוים למה יאמרו בעמים איה אלהיהם ידענו כי חטאנו ואין מי יעמוד לכפר בעדנו כי אם שמך הגדול יעמוד לנו בעת צרה כי אין בנו מעשים צדקה עשה עמנו למען שמך וכרחם אב על בנים רחם עלינו והושיענו אמנם אלהינו רבו אשמינו און קץ ואין מספר לעונותינו רחום רחמנו וזכור לנו ברית אבותינו זכור לעבדיך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב אל תפן אל קשי העם הזה ואל רשעו ואל חטאתו שוב מחרון אפך והרחם על הרעה לעמך וחסר מעללי עול הוסיס כי כן דרכך פודה ומציל ואל ומושיע בכל דור ודור</p>		<p>All of these phrases are found within נחום רחום but not in the same order</p>
Ex 34:5-8				<p>אל הוריתנו לומר שלש עשרה. וזכר לנו היום שלש עשרה. שחל ענין לפיך מקדש וכן כתוב: וירד ה' בענן ויתיצב עמו שם ויקרא בשם ה' ושם נאמר ויעבור ה' על פניו ויקרא ה' ה' וגו' נושא עון ופושע וחסא ונקא</p>		
Ex 34:9 Ps 86:5 Ps 25:11 Ps 130:4 Nu 14:19 Nu 14:20				<p>וסלחת לעונותי ולחטאתי ונחלתני סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו מחל לנו מלכנו כי פשענו כי אתה ה' טוב וסלח ורב חסד לכל קוראיך למען שמך ה' וסלחת לעוני כי רב הוא. כי עמך הסליחה למען תורא סלח נא לעון עם הזה עגדול חסדך ובאשר נשאת לעם הזה ממצרים ועד הנה ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך</p>		
				<p>אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו תבא לפיך תפילתנו ואל תתעלם מתחינתנו כי רבו משחיתותיך מלמנות ואשמונותיך עצמנו מלספר שאנו עזי פניו וקשי עורף כדבר הזה שנאמר לפיך צדקים אנחנו ולא חטאנו</p>		
				<p>אבל חטאנו אשמונו בודנו גדלו דברנו דפי העבנו וחרשנו זדור חמסנו טפלו שקר יעצנו רע בזבנו לצנו מרדנו נאצנו סררנו עוינו פשענו צרנו קשינו עורף רשענו שחתנו תעבנו תעתענו. סרטו ממצותיך וממשפטך הטובים ולא שוא לנו. ואתה צדיק על כל הבא עלינו כי אמת עשית ואנחנו הרשענו</p>		

Table III: Part B

Tanakh	Babylonian Talmud	Palestinian Talmud	Ben Baboi	Seder Rav Amram	Siddur Saadyah	Machzor Vitry
Daniel 9:15-19				<p>ועתה ה' אלהינו אשר הוצאת את עמך מארץ מצרים ביד חזקה ותעש לך שם כיום הזה חטאנו רשענו ה' ככל צדקותיך ישב נא אפך וחמתך מעירך ירושלם הר קדשך כי בחטאינו ובעונות אבותינו ירושלים ועמך לחרפה לכל סביבותינו ועתה שמע אלהינו אל תפלת עבדך ואל תחנוני והאר פניך על מקדשך השמים למען ה' הטה אלהי אונך ושמע פקח עיניך וראה שוממותינו והעיר אשר כי על רחמיק הרבים נקרא שמך עליה כי לא על צדקותינו אנחנו מפילים תחנונינו לפנך ה' שמעה ה' סלחה ה' הקשיבה ועשה אל תאחר למענך אלהי כי שמך נקרא על עירך ועל עמך</p>		Yes, but broken up in the first 2 sections of <i>Vehu Rachum</i> .

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