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Communal Storytelling and Mythology in Jewish Liturgy, Ritual and Ceremony

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Communal Storytelling and Mythology in Jewish Liturgy, Ritual and Ceremony

Senior Thesis Paper
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2.15.07

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"It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back."

- Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces[1]

CHAPTER I: STORYTELLING IN JUDAISM

The Power of Communal Storytelling

For millennia, individuals have connected with one another through the power of story. Stories carry the power to create connection and give otherwise unrelated individuals a common history and narrative, transforming strangers into kin. Each culture relies on its own stories to transmit the central values and norms of its society. Babylonian legends, Native American and Hawaiian myths and Jewish storytelling all share a similar goal in this process. Even today, we Americans come from different countries around the world, yet are woven into a social fabric that emphasizes the generosity of the Thanksgiving pilgrims, the honesty of George Washington and the courage of Paul Revere. The power of these stories lies not in their historical truth, but rather in the memory and moral virtues which they bear. We are brought together through the power of story.

Cultural stories go through their own processes of evolution, as societies choose individual stories and emphasize the various parts that best connect with cultural values. Thus you can learn much about a given culture simply by hearing their legends and tales. Stories offer a mirror into the cultures from which they emanate, offering clues to the personality and codes of each society. The myths do not dictate the culture's values but

[1] Campbell, The Hero, 11

rather reflect the underlying morals already existing. As Robert Segal summarizes C.G. Jung's findings,

> "In every society myth makers invent specific stories that express archetypes, but the myth makers are inventing only the manifestations of already mythic material."[2]

In the Jewish tradition, the Torah includes countless stories, yet the narratives of Noah's ark, Abraham's journey to Canaan and Moses and Pharoah are emphasized because their messages support our modern beliefs and values. Thus what may be highlighted from a given text by one generation may be passed over by the next. The Channukah holiday remained a rather minor factor for centuries before the holiday was transformed into a season of utmost importance in 20th century America, mostly due to the influence of the Christian community. The priestly rites of Leviticus were of chief importance to the rabbis of the Talmud, whereas such stories are often ignored in the modern context. Even one of Judaism's most famous parables, the binding of Isaac, has undergone its own process of re-examination in an era of religious zealotry and interest.

Perhaps most importantly, stories support individuals through liminal moments when we may feel otherwise disconnected from our community. As mythologist Joseph Campbell explains,

> "Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance. We all need to tell our story and to understand our story. We all need to understand death and to cope with death, and we all need help in our passages from birth to life and then to death. We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are."[3]

It is for this reason that religion is created from the building blocks of story. We look to religion for answers in the form of prior examples. Where we find pain and

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[2] Segal, 16
[3] Campbell, The Power, 5

suffering in the Torah, we are able to locate the source of our own grief as well as the hope for redemption. Stories remind us that we are not alone; that even when isolated from the surrounding community, proof exists that someone else has felt the same way we do. As Jung writes,

> "A great deal of education goes through story-telling...And that is always supported by mythological tales. Our ancestors have done so and so, and so shall you. Or such and such a hero has done so and so, and this is your model."[4]

In short, storytelling is the lifeblood of a culture, communicating core values and norms while binding individuals to a common thread. We view ourselves in light of these stories and create our world in their images. Perhaps this is most evident in Judaism, the religion of the people of the book, who have been telling the same stories for over three thousand years.

Storytelling in Jewish Ceremony and Tradition

The Torah offers positive and negative examples of birth, adolescence, maturity, love, loss and death. We face the insurmountable armed with tales from others who have faced the paths on which we now embark. Every time we read, about the sadness of Sarah, her story gives us hope of redemption. When we feel outnumbered we remember David; underqualified, Moses; unappreciated, Joseph; overwhelmed, Jonah; and so on. Stories remind us that we are not alone, and that our feelings are legitimate. We define the stories of our culture and in turn they define us. As Campbell writes,

[4] McGuire and Hull, 292

> "Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and world...The mythmakers of earlier days were the counterparts of our artists. These people speak to the folk, and there is an answer from the folk, which is then received as an interaction."[5]

The Jewish religion and calendar are entirely built upon the power of story. Indeed, we receive our sacred festivals and rites directly from the narrative. We mark the year not only with ceremony, but with story. Take for example the calendar of megillah readings. In examining the megillot in their order as told throughout the year, we see a narrative emerging, through youth, maturity, loss, reconstruction and finally, wisdom. We begin the cycle each Spring, exploring birth and passion by reading the Song of Songs on Passover. As Spring shifts to Summer and the world comes into full bloom, this passion matures and we learn about love and commitment by reading Ruth on Shavuot. As Summer wanes and the days begin to darken, the high of love leads us to the despair of destruction and crisis, experienced through the reading of Lamentations on Tisha B'Av. These are indeed the dog days of summer. As we approach the Fall harvest and both reap and plant for the future, the wisdom of maturity and reconstruction is found in the Sukkot reading of Ecclesiastes. Finally, as Winter descends and our mutual interdependence grows, wisdom, self awareness and identification within the group are emphasized by the Purim reading of Esther. Esther realizes that she is a part of a larger community and that the story is not about her after all. We are all a link in the chain of Jewish tradition. Thus we look back upon the annual cycle with a final conclusion, that our true value is found in the contribution we make to the larger community. We are

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[5] Campbell, The Power, 85

walked through this narrative each year, from youthful exuberance to utter loss and finally wisdom, in the seasons which correspond to each stage of life.

And so each season is welcomed with narrative and ceremony that emphasize a given theme. We tell the story of our lives through biblical analogy at the specific times when comparison is most needed. As anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski comments,

> "The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity."[6]

Perhaps the best known example of story and ceremony in the Jewish tradition is the weekly readings from the Torah and Prophets on Shabbat morning. Each week we compare our lives with the story depicted in the weekly *parsha*. We begin each year by telling the story of God creating the world. Fall is about the patriarchs and matriarchs, Winter the Exodus from Egypt and construction of the temple. Spring takes us into the Temple rites and on through the desert. Summertime reminds us of the lessons of Bilaam, Pinchas and Korach. We enter the book of Deuteronomy at the precise time of Tisha B'Av, the moment of destruction when we pick up the fragments of our lives and start over again. The Greek name for the book, Deuteronomy, means "second telling" and so we too are given a second chance to tell our story following the season of destruction. We begin Deuteronomy precisely at the time of the year in which we naturally turn back and reexamine where we have come from. As the days shorten once again in Fall, we celebrate Simchat Torah and begin the process anew. Judaism utilizes story to give deeper meaning to the passing of time and the year's transitions.

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[6] Malinowski,107

Judaism creates opportunities for communal cohesion through storytelling at regular intervals. Take for example the *birkhat hamazon,* the after meal blessing. You would think that a post-meal blessing should simply praise God for the food that has been eaten. But in the Jewish tradition, communal eating bears the prospect for greater unity and connection. Therefore the inspiration of gratitude for sustenance unfolds into a lengthy excursion into Jewish history. The Babylonian Talmud discusses the structure of *birkat hamazon*, saying,

> "Rabbi Nahman said: Moses instituted for Israel the benediction 'Who feeds' at the time when manna descended for them. Joshua instituted for them the benediction of the land when they entered the land. David and Solomon instituted the benediction which closes 'Who builds Jerusalem'. David instituted the words. 'For Israel your people and for Jerusalem your city', and Solomon instituted the words 'For the great and holy House'. The benediction 'Who is good and bestows good' was instituted in Yavneh with reference to those who were slain in Beitar."[7]

Thus the *birkat hamazon* grows to four major sections, each exploring an era of Jewish history in chronological order. We begin with the Torah and the liberation from Egypt before entering the land, instituting the monarchy in Jerusalem, building the temple and finally, witnessing the exile of the people and the destruction of the temple at the hands of the Babylonians.[8] Clearly the subject matter has grown far beyond food. Like any other tribe or society, we utilize communal eating to tell our story and thus solidify our familial connection, transforming the mundane activity of eating into a sacred process of communal cohesion. Each member of the group is asked to partake in his or her common roots at the same time as s/he partakes of the food. The shared table indeed becomes the *mikdash me'at*, the small sanctuary in which individuals congregate. And so

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[7] Berachot 48b
[8] Notes from Dvar Torah by John Franken, HUC 1st Year in Israel Program, 2002

through prayer, we develop an awareness of our mutual dependence and shared consciousness with the environment and our community. As Reuven Hammer writes,

> "One who prays should develop sensitivity to all around him and should be highly aware of responsibility toward others." [9]

The *birkat hamazon* is not the only ritual to be augmented through storytelling. In fact, all of Jewish ritual and ceremony is based upon a fundamental story, communicated at regular events. According to Joseph Campbell, this kind of storytelling effectively serves four primary functions:

> "To instill and maintain a sense of awe and mystery before the world; to provide a symbolic image for the world such as that of the Great Chain of Being; to maintain the social order by giving divine justification to social practices like the Indian caste system and above all to harmonize human beings with the cosmos, society, and themselves."[10]

As the *birkat hamazon* is extended from a simple prayer into public storytelling, it fulfills all of these roles. The mundane object to be eaten is imbued with holy qualities. The food is connected to Jewish history and specifically the *Eretz Yisrael*, the Jewish homeland. The social practice of eating in groups is maintained through the call and response form of the ritual. Finally, those blessing the food locate themselves within a larger community and a larger sense of the world and its history by connecting storytelling with eating.

I would argue that storytelling's most important function is the last offered by Campbell: the harmonization of human beings with the cosmos, society and themselves. Communal prayer transforms a group of individuals from various backgrounds and with

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[9] Hammer, Entering, 4
[10] Segal, x

various perspectives into a community connected through common bonds. Together, the group experiences a sense of awe at being provided food and a sense of connection with the earth from which it came. This makes sense given the fact that both cooking and eating are communal events. We seldom if ever eat a meal which we are entirely responsible for producing. And so through action and ritual, the individual is brought into community.

Birkat hamazon is only one example of ritualized storytelling. The most famous of course is the Passover *seder*, where we are commanded to tell the story of our liberation from Egyptian slavery. We can analyze this ritual also according to Campbell's categories. The ritual of the Passover *seder* transforms the individual into a historical figure, the Egyptian slave. The seder commands us not to simply tell the story of slavery, but to *become* a slave. It is from this perspective that we approach the world, filled with the awe and mystery of freedom. As Noam Zion and David Dishon instruct in the introduction to their updated Haggadah:

> "We are all invited to take a leap of solidarity back into the founding event of Jewish nationhood – the Exodus. First we relive slavery and indignity and then we re-experience the exhilarating gift of divine liberation. Our goal is to return to the experiential sources of the Jewish values of freedom and justice. We make this journey as individuals, as families and as a worldwide community. In reliving our national autobiography we renew the covenant with one another and with God, who took us out of the house of bondage."[11]

Like the *Birkat hamazon*, the Passover *seder* connects the individual to the larger Jewish community, both in space and time. The Jew of today comes into contact with his ancestor of three millennia ago. The social order is maintained through the various responsibilities of parent and child. Children are not just allowed to ask questions of their

[11] Zion and Dishon, 21

authority figures; they are instructed to. Additionally, by locating our shared history as slaves, we acknowledge our equality: *we were all slaves in the land of Egypt*. Finally, the Passover *seder* harmonizes the individual with the cosmos and society by providing a transitional rite into the Spring season, the ongoing process of creation, and the universal responsibility to protect freedom and freewill for oneself and one's neighbor.

The *seder* is a sort of bibliodrama, with children acting out the part of the students and the adults the teachers. We read from the *Haggadah*, or "the telling". We even go so far as to play with our food, making odd sandwiches and mixtures in order to reinforce the story. After all, ritual works best when narrative is connected to action. The story is given in the first person – *My* father was a wandering Aramean. That is, my father was a member of the community connected by the common story told at this meal. The Torah uses the first person in instructing us:

> "And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what Adonai did for *me* when *I* went free from Egypt.'"[12]

> "Adonai wrought before *our* eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; and *us* He freed from there, that He might take *us* and give *us* the land that He had promised on oath to *our* fathers."[13]

Or as Nachman of Braslav explains,

> "The Exodus from Egypt occurs in every human being, in every era, in every year and on every day."[14]

In short, the *birkat hamazon* and Passover *seder* offer examples of how Judaism utilizes the power of storytelling to give meaning to ritual and ceremony, connecting individual participants with a communal thread. Prayer derives its meaning from these

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[12] Exodus 13:8
[13] Deuteronomy 6:22
[14] Zion and Dishon, 114

stories. And while communal prayer has multiple goals, the foundation of storytelling remains a if not the key function in a modern world of isolation and disconnection.

The Multiple Goals of Communal Prayer

The single most important communal rite in the Jewish religion is prayer. It is the thing we do most often - traditionally three times a day. It is necessarily communal, as most prayers are expressed in the first person plural – "Hear O Israel, Adonai is *our* God, Adonai is one." The communal aspect is further cemented by requiring a group of at least ten people in order to pray a full service. So much significance is placed on communal worship that if one is unable to attend a communal service, he is advised to pray privately at the same time as the congregation is praying. After all, the rabbis of the Talmud taught that God listens more readily to the prayers of a congregation than God does to those of an individual.[15] The Babylonian Talmud interprets the psalmists words, "As for me, may my prayer come to You, O Lord, at a favorable moment"[16] to say that God most welcomes prayer "when the congregation is praying."[17] The Talmud further says that when ten or more people pray together, the divine presence (*shechina)* resides amongst them.[18]

Personal prayer is the most ancient institution in our tradition, predating holidays and even some texts. While we Jews have been praying from a regular liturgy for over four thousand years, the corpus continues to grow.

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[15] Donin, To Pray, 14
[16] Psalm 69:14
[17] Berachot 8a
[18] Berachot 6a

> "[The prayer book] contains Biblical passages that date as far back as 3300 years; prayers composed by the Sages as long as 2500 years ago. While most of the prayers are hallowed by their Biblical and Talmudic origins, there also may be found some that have been written since."[19]

Prayer is the outlet for the communication and confirmation of our hopes, fears and dreams. It is the mechanism by which we ground our daily individual experiences into the communal fold. As Abraham Joshua Heschel writes,

> "Moral dedications, acts of worship, intellectual pursuits are means in the art of sanctification of time...Acts of worship counteract the trivialization of existence. Both involve the person, and give him a sense of living in ultimate relationships. Both of them are ways of teaching man how to stand alone and not be alone, of teaching man that God is a refuge, not a security."[20]

Historically, communal worship has provided a cohesive influence in the Jewish community. Jewish prayer has typically been formulated in the plural, stressing the responsibility that Jews have for one another. This structure alerted the community to the needs of the individual.[21] The process carries this power in the present as well. Prayer is the bridge between God and man, but it can also be the bridge between Jew and Jew.[22] As Reuven Hammer writes,

> "Prayer directs our attention to the goals and ideals that Judaism has set for us. It forces us to concentrate on the meaning of our lives and the values of our deeds. It helps us to focus on our place within the world and within the history of our people, giving us a sense of rootedness."[23]

The content of the prayer book is almost entirely communal. Even when we read the daily petitions of the *Amidah*, we are instructed to ask these things for others and not

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[19] Donin, To Be, 180
[20] Greenberg, 58.
[21] Donin, To Pray, 15
[22] Greenberg, 11
[23] Hammer, Entering, 36

for ourselves. Prayers for national matters and interests are inserted regularly, while petitions in the first person singular are rare.

While Jewish prayer is most often voiced in the plural, the opportunity nonetheless exists for personal contribution through a myriad of feelings and experiences. Though the content of prayer is communal, its application is personal and distinct based upon the emotional input of each member of the congregation. A well known midrash recalls that as over 600,000 people stood at Sinai, they each heard something different.[24] So too does communal prayer offer a distinct experience for each individual, depending upon where they are in their lives. Any individual experiencing feelings as diverse as joy, grief, mourning, thankfulness, anger and repentance can find an entry point into the prayer service. Communal prayer encompasses all of these emotions, drawing individuals with diverse motivations into the fold. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz summarizes,

> "Memories of the past, thanksgiving for present acts of kindness, and hopes for the future commonly refer to the entire world or, more specifically, to the people of Israel as a whole." [25]

For any given individual, no matter the age, gender, state of mind, etc. the service offers an entry point at which to connect. The individual overcome with joy meets the other overcome with sadness in a way that could not occur without an ordered structure. This structure remains the support mechanism as we change through time. Though the service remains static, we encounter it as a different person each day, so that one day a specific prayer may speak to us and on another day a very different one. We inherit the wisdom of our ancestors and pass on our own contribution to future generations through the ongoing augmentation of prayer. As Steinsaltz writes,

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[24] Exodus Rabbah, 19:16
[25] Steinsaltz, 19

> "The siddur is not a finished work produced by the efforts of a particular author, but rather a kind of treasury in which the people of Israel, generation after generation, have deposited things of exquisite beauty. Each generation chooses its own pearls of wisdom and emotion, stringing them together to form verses of prayer."[26]

Altogether then, communal prayer creates a middle ground, a meeting place for individuals to find belonging in a greater community. Yet we have only begun to skim the surface of the potency of Jewish prayer. Much like the earlier examples of the Passover *seder* and the *birkhat hamazon*, Jewish prayer achieves its greatest potency through mythological storytelling. By engaging in prayer, the members of a *minyan,* or prayer quorum, bring communal myth to life. Through chanting, choreography, text and custom, the group tells the story of the relationship of God and Israel, from the moments of creation to the future hope for redemption. In order to fully explain this process, however, we must begin first by outlining the mythological forces at work and the forms they take in Jewish liturgy.

[26] Steinsaltz, 5

CHAPTER II: MYTHOLOGY AND JUDAISM

Hero Mythology

As sociologists such as Carl Jung and Jason Campbell illustrate, the phenomenon of cultural mythology expands far beyond the Jewish milieu. Yet through these various cultures, common forms of myth and narrative emerge. Judaism is far from the only culture to explain the creation of the world through mythology. Indeed, every culture takes upon itself the task of explaining how the world came into being. For the ancient Hawaiians, the islands were pulled out of the water by the power of the demigod Maui. Or consider the Babylonian creation epic, Enuma Elish, which shares not only the theme of creation with the Torah, but many of the story's core facets as well. This 12th century BCE document was written in cuneiform on seven clay tablets. The God Marduk slays the evil deity Tiamat and then creates the universe out of her body:

> *He split her like a shellfish into two parts:*
> *Half of her he set up as a covering for heaven,*
> *Pulled down the bar and posted guards.*
> *He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.*
> *He crossed the heavens and surveyed the regions.*
> *He squared Apsu's quarter, the abode of Nudimmud,*
> *As the lord measured the dimensions of Apsu.*
> *The Great Abode, its likeness, he fixed as Esharra,*
> *The Great Abode, Esharra, which he made as the firmament.*
> *Anu, Enlil, and Ea he made occupy their places.*[27]

The Babylonian and Biblical creation stories follow similar structures. Like the Torah, the Enuma Elish describes the creation of the world as a division between heaven and earth with the setting of a firmament. The waters are controlled by the deity, allowing land to emerge.

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[27] Enuma Elish, Tablet IV, lines 137-146. Translation from Ancienttexts.org

Along with creation mythology, the story of the hero pervades all cultures. For Jung and Campbell, the hero myth represents *the* key myth from which cultures inherit their values. While individual sociologists disagree on the specific nuances of the hero story, the prototypical myth features several key steps. First, an individual embarks on a perilous journey or quest. Aided by a deity or greater power, the hero succeeds in acquiring the desired goal, whereupon he or she shares this gift with the greater world, thus making the boon a universal treasure.

The basic structure of hero mythology finds resonance in the work of prominent cultural anthropologists, whose hero structures largely mirror Jung's. The first anthropologist to summarize the hero myth was the Englishman Edward Tylor, who wrote in 1871,

> "The hero is exposed at birth, is saved by other humans or animals, and grows up to be a national hero."[28]

Later, in 1876, the Austrian scholar Johann Georg von Hahn expanded upon Tylor's synopsis, writing,

> "In each case the hero is born illegitimately, out of the fear of the prophecy of his future greatness is abandoned by his father, is saved by animals and raised by a lowly couple, fights wars, returns home triumphant, defeats his persecutors, frees his mother, becomes king, founds a city, and dies young."[29]

Later in 1928, Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp sought to demonstrate that Russian fairy tales followed a common biographical plot, in which the hero goes off on a successful adventure and upon his return marries and gains the throne.[30]

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[28] Rank, et al, vii
[29] Rank, et al, vii
[30] Rank, et al, vii

All of these early writers sought to categorize rather than analyze the scheme of hero mythology. The major work in the analysis arena was performed by Otto Rank (1884-1939), Carl Jung (1875-1961) Lord Raglan (1885-1964), and the aforementioned Joseph Campbell (1904-1987). These later anthropologists reached at least a basic agreement on the structure of hero mythology. For instance, Joseph Campbell's basic structure of the hero myth largely resembles Jung's:

> "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder. Fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[31]

Through these examples we arrive at a general understanding of the hero myth. Our hero finds conflict almost immediately upon birth or even beforehand. The hero must journey and/or battle through maturity. Finally, the hero's victory is shared with the outside community. Such is the basic framework of all anthropologists cited, though each one has his own take on the central motifs of hero mythology and the values each story represents. For instance, Jung writes,

> "The universal hero myth, for example, shows the picture of a power man or god-man who vanquishes evil in the form of dragons, serpents, monsters, demons, and enemies of all kinds and who liberates his people from destruction and death."[32]

I will make the case that if we consider our hero to be the people Israel, then the story of the redemption from Egypt follows Jung's archetype quite well. The people Israel, with help from God, vanquish Pharoah and his army. Supernatural beings appear throughout the story, such as Pharoah's ministers' snakes, but they are always trumped

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[31] Campbell, The Hero, 30
[32] Segal, 95

by God. Aaron's rod turns into a snake which eats the snakes of Pharoah's ministers. Even the plagues themselves carry this feature. Egyptian mythology includes images of the Nile running red with blood. An Egyptian literary work by a certain author Ipuwer, mentions that "the river [Nile] is blood" and "people thirst for water". In another Egyptian text, supposedly centering on the exploits of a magician who is one of the sons of Ramses II, the young man tells his mother that should he be defeated in contest, the water she drinks would take on the color of blood.[33] Other examples of Egyptian plague imagery include:

> Frogs – A frog headed goddess named Heqt was the consort of the god Khnum, who was credited with having fashioned man out of clay.[34]
>
> Pestilence – Allusion to the importance of sacred animals in Egyptian religion is now followed by a visitation that exposes the inherent absurdity of such a notion. The God of Israel strikes the animals with pestilence.[35]

In the Torah, God uses Egyptian images of plagues as tools to God's end, proving God's unequalled power. We see that all other deities are mere puppets of God. Finally, the Israelites achieve their freedom, escaping destruction and death on all sides. Jung continues,

> "The narration or ritual repetition of sacred texts and ceremonies, and the worship of such a figure with dances, music, hymns, prayers and sacrifices, grip the audience with numinous emotions and exalt the participants to identification with the hero."[36]

We celebrate the mythological victory of redemption through religious ritual and liturgy, highlighted by the Passover *seder*. Judaism engages the story through all of the

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[33] Sarna, JPS Exodus Commentary, 38
[34] Ibid, 38
[35] Ibid, 38
[36] Segal, 95

devices listed by Jung, including sacrifice, which was the original rite for contacting God. Again, the Passover *seder* table is essentially a recreation of the temple altar, the *mikdash me'at.* Prayer, song, choreography and ritual are all employed in order to convey the narrative. In essence, religious practice is borne out of the ritualization of story.

Hero mythology is ubiquitous through both Eastern and Western religion. Obvious examples of hero mythology include the Prometheus, Jason and Aeneas, the Buddha, and the Biblical figures of Moses and later, Jesus. Each of these myths tells a similar basic story, providing a specific psychological function for the community. As Robert Segal writes,

> By transforming an indifferent, impersonal world into a world of responsive, divine personalities, myth harmonizes the outer world with the inner one – the gods 'out there' with the gods within.[37]

The explainable and understandable figures of Adam and Prometheus are utilized as substitutes for the unknowable entities such as creation and destruction. By humanizing the world around them, cultures recreate a world according to their own sensibilities. The hero myth is the key story for such a process, illustrating the core exalted values of the group in the idyllic figure of the hero. As Jung writes,

> "But myth is not fiction: it consists of facts that are continually repeated and can be observed over and over again. It is something that happens to man, and men have mythical fates just as much as the Greek heroes do. The fact that the life of Christ is largely myth does absolutely nothing to disprove its factual truth – quite the contrary. I would even go so far as to say that the mythical character of a life is just what expresses its universal human validity."[38]

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[37] Segal, 94

[38] Jung, Answer to Job, CW 11, par. 648 (in Segal, 220)

It is important to note that in Judaism, the hero myth assumes a relationship between God and man in which both support one another. God is limited in his ability to influence man which has been given freewill. Therefore, just as man is reliant upon God for creation and sustenance, God is reliant upon man for bringing his redemption into the world. As Henry Slonimsky writes,

> "Our theory of the correlation of God and Man, whereby they mutually reinforce each other in a mystic life-giving circle, growing together through each other's gift and enrichment...God is the source of inspiration, but man must do the work and give it back to Him enriched – fashioned, articulated, built."

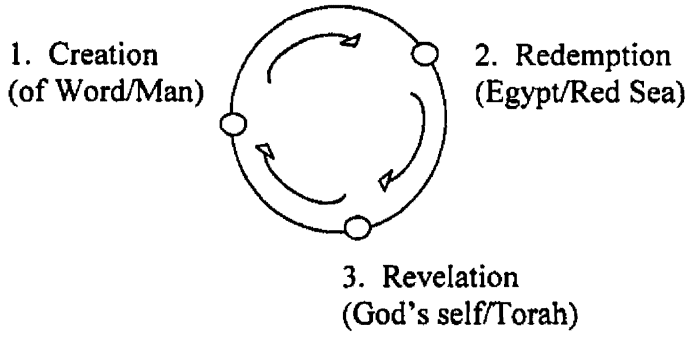
Such is the backdrop for our story, the journey of the hero Israel back to its original Creator and eventually onward to the world to come and to life everlasting. And here we arrive at the modern German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, who first categorized the stages of myth within Jewish theology.

Franz Rosenzweig's Theory of Creation, Redemption and Revelation

It was Franz Rosenzweig who best defined the key story being told through Jewish tradition. Rosenzweig identifies creation, revelation and redemption as the fundamental themes which link the primary elements of the universe: man, world and God. While these terms are taken from a pre-existing theological vocabulary, Rosenzweig uses them uniquely to construct a comprehensive view of reality and the basic Jewish myth:

> "In creation, God, hitherto hidden in the mythical beyond, appears and gives the world reality. In revelation, God reveals God's love to man, whom God calls by name. Through the act of love, humanity overcomes its isolation, its dumbness; now humans become able to speak and to respond to divine commandment: thou shalt love. Love, ever present, is the foundation and the meaning of revelation. Now man translates the love for God into love for one's neighbor – which is the first step towards redemption. Redeeming love liberates human beings from the finality of death. Complete redemption, the world in its perfection, eternity – this man encounters in prayer, in the rhythm of the holy days within the liturgical calendar."[39]

We may summarize Rosenzweig's tripartite Jewish history as follows:



Rosenzweig's theology actually constitutes a combination of both the creation and the hero myths. In act I (creation) God creates the environment in which the hero, Israel,

[39] Rosenzweig, xv

may exist and prosper. God and Israel commit to a covenantal agreement in which God will protect Israel and in return, Israel will act as the custodian of God's world. As Genesis reads,

> "God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it."[40]

From here, Rosenzweig's creation-revelation-redemption system closely parallels Campbell's hero structure. In act II (redemption), Israel falls into a quagmire which it then struggles to overcome. With the help of God, Israel is redeemed from Egyptian bondage and achieves its complete independence. The process of redemption transforms the relationship between God and Israel as God has proven the ability to fulfill God's side of the contract. Meanwhile, Israel itself is emerges from a nation of slaves into a free people, a nation of priests distinct from the rest of the world. Now that Israel has full faith in God's compliance, the story enters act III (revelation). The hero Israel and God enter into a state of honesty and transparency to the point of combining into a single one. Here, revelation may be seen as a romantic union between Israel and God; a wedding between the two parties with the Torah serving as the ketubah. As Rashi comments to Shir HaShirim 1:2, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,*

> "This is its literal meaning and, according to its allegorical meaning, it was said in reference to the fact that God gave Israel His Torah and spoke to them face to face; and that love is still sweet to them, more than any delight."[41]

And so in revelation, God is exposed completely in a rare moment of vulnerability. Having been elevated to an unparalleled position, the hero Israel now turns

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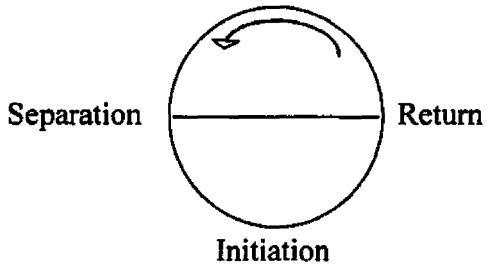
[40] Genesis 2:15
[41] Rashi Commentary on Midrash Rabbah 1:2

outward, sharing his bounty with the rest of the world. A utopian future follows, in which the world, led by the people Israel, is united under God's singular providence. National historical redemption in the form of Israel's liberation from Egypt leads eventually to redemption in the form of messianism.

The similarity between Campbell's hero myth and the theological narrative of Franz Rosenzweig is clear, as seen in Campbell's diagram of the hero myth below.[42]



Like Rosenzweig, Campbell divides the central myth into a tripartite structure. At the first stage, the hero is created and is immediately separated from the rest of the world (creation). The deity then initiates a relationship with the hero (revelation) and presents the task. Finally, the hero brings wholeness back into being in a return to the deity (redemption). Campbell calls these stages the "nuclear unit of the monomyth"[43] Or as he summarizes the stages, "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return."[44] Similarly, in the Jewish model of the story, Israel and God's original oneness is ruptured in Eden, and the chasm eventually widens to Egypt, where God is all powerful and Israel utterly powerless. The redemption from Egypt marks the return of Israel to God and leads to the reunion of the two in revelation.

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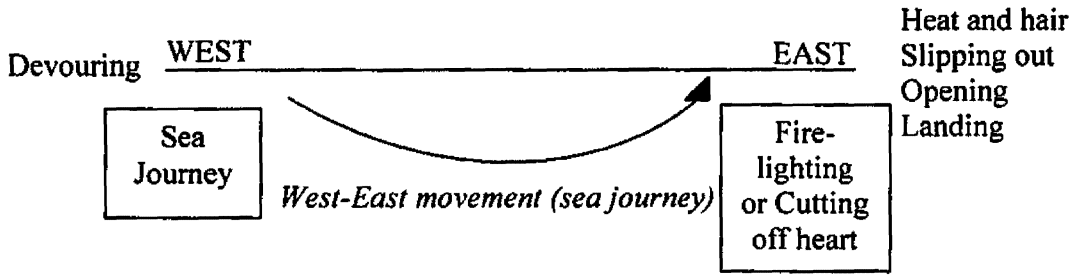
[42] Campbell, The Hero, 30
[43] ibid, 30
[44] ibid, 35

Rosenzweig calls these stages "The paths that link the elements of Man, World and God."[45]

Similar to Campbell, Jung employs another diagram to illustrate the hero myth structure as first given by Leo Frobeinius in looking specifically at sea journey hero mythology[46]:



Jung quotes Frobeinius' explanation:

> "A hero is devoured by a water-monster in the West. The animal travels with him to the East. Meanwhile, the hero lights a fire in the belly of the monster, and feeling hungry, cuts himself a piece of the heart. Soon afterwards, he notices that the fish has glided on to dry land; he immediately begins to cut open the animal from within; then he slips out. It was so hot in the fish's belly that all his hair has fallen out. The hero may at the same time free all those who were previously devoured by the monster, and who now slip out too."[47]

The idea of a water journey as purifier and cause for rebirth and renewal is found throughout the Bible. Moses enters the water as a Hebrew slave child and emerges an Egyptian prince. Jonah enters the water while fleeing from God and emerges with a restored faith. According to Midrash, although Noah's seed spawned the human race, he entered the ark and flood as a much maligned man:

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[45] Rosenzweig, xv
[46] Segal, 150
[47] Frobenius, 421 (Segal, 150)

> "For a whole one hundred and twenty years Noah planted cedars and cut them down. On being asked, 'Why are you doing this? ' he replied: 'The Lord of the universe has informed me that He will bring a flood in the world.' Said they [his contemporaries] to him: If a flood does come, it will come only upon your father's house!'...They despised him and called him, 'Contemptible old man!'"[48]

Finally, the Israelites enter the Reed Sea as slaves and emerge as a free nation. While Frobeinius' system is clearly intended for a specific genre of hero mythology, the basic tenets which fit in with Campbell and Jung's systems are found in the fundamental Israel myth. The hero is created, must battle to journey back to the source, acquire treasure and then share it with the rest of the world. Likewise Israel is separated from its creator, emerges from Egypt as a changed entity, and encounters revelation and receives the treasure of Torah. Israel's personal contact with God inspires it to share Torah with the rest of the world. And so as in Rosenzweig's system, the historical redemption points towards an eventual universal redemption for the entire world, as Frobenius' hero frees others who have been devoured by the monster. The journey is not complete until the larger community is incorporated. We modern day iterations of this people identify with this community. The hero has saved us directly. And so as in the Passover seder, history is transformed into biography.

In Frobeinius' water journey myth, the hero is separated from his original setting, faces various obstacles in journeying back to the beginning, and reaches a final revelation in which the hero's bounty is shared with a universal audience. The parallel with Rosenzweig is clear. Similarly, consider the hero myth as defined by Otto Rank, who deals with the hero as chosen persecuted child. While the description recalls the story of

[48] Genesis Rabbah, 30:7

Moses, Jesus and Odysseus, it relies upon the same basic hero structure we have defined to this point.

> "The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barreness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by a humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieved rank and honors."[49]

Similar to Campbell, Rank defines the hero myth as a journey from separation (here from parents), the initiation of a great journey through adversaries and/or obstacles, and finally revelation and acknowledgement. The most obvious biblical parallel to Rank's story is that of Moses. But the same could be said for the people Israel in general. God is the parent of Israel. Upon man's origin in Eden, difficulties are immediately encountered. Soon after, God prophesizes to Abraham that Israel will serve as slaves for 400 years. The prophecy eventually unfolds and Israel is saved and transformed through the purifying water journey. Israel eventually finds its parent in God at Sinai in the moment of revelation. Between revenge and acknowledgement, Israel finds the latter, receiving God's revelation and then turning to share it with the rest of the world. Honor and rank are bestowed on Israel as a people of priests and a holy nation.

Rank's scenario is further paralleled in the story of Abraham the patriarch. Abraham is separated from his birthplace and made to travel across his known world, from an established place to the frontier land. He is promised great things, yet arrives to

[49] Rank, et al, 57

find struggle and hardship, and is immediately forced to leave the land once again. But his sojourning eventually gives him great strength and wealth, which he then shares with the outside community upon his return to the land of Israel.

The alignment of Otto's hero myth and Rosenzweig's structure points to the fact that religion is largely based upon mythology. Communal prayer and observance are forms of communal storytelling; the transmission of the key myth of a given society. Such stories and rituals give universal meaning to individual tales. Mythology informs the society of not only its shared past, but also its core values and lessons. Nowhere is this more vital than in organized religion. As Jung summarizes,

> "In many primitive religions the telling of the creation myth forms an essential teaching in the ritual of initiation. They are told to the young initiates as the most important part of the tribal tradition. In many other ways also, as we shall see later, they refer to the most basic problems of human life, for they are concerned with the ultimate meaning, not only of our existence, but of the existence of the whole cosmos."[50]

Given that the fundamental story of the Torah follows a combination of the creation and hero myths of Campbell and others, it is necessary to now locate the rituals in Jewish tradition which bring this story to life. As we will see, the creation-redemption-revelation trope is hard to escape, creating a foundation for Jewish practice and ceremony on multiple levels.

[50] Jung, "Patters of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths" p5. (Segal, 240)

CHAPTER III: CREATION, REDEMPTION AND REVELATION IN JEWISH LITURGY AND RITUAL

Creation, Redemption and Revelation in the Three Festivals

Rosenzweig argues that together, creation, revelation and redemption constitute the fundamental story of the Jewish people, reiterated through prayer and ritual. We will begin our examination of how this story is transformed into ritual with the liturgical calendar. The order of the three major festivals, according to both the Jewish calendar (beginning with Rosh Hashanah) and Rosenzweig's myth structure is Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot. The festival calendar tells the stories of the creation of the world (Sukkot), the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery (Passover), and God's revelation at Sinai (Shavuot). Each holiday relies heavily on the biblical narrative in constructing its rituals and liturgy.

In the wake of the high holidays, Sukkot invokes the Fall harvest to celebrate God's power to create. Following the days of awe, we remind ourselves of our dependence upon God's generosity by eating and sleeping out in nature. As Jung has argued, we communicate this story through the rituals of prayer, song and dance. Rachel Adler teaches that signs of pantheism may still be seen in Sukkot practice. When a group comes together to chant *hallel* and rubs the *etrog* and shakes the *lulav*, it is almost like a spiritual rain dance. The rubbing of the citrus fruit makes the room smell like rain or fresh dew. And the chorus of beaten palms makes the sound of raindrops on the ground. God's creation is brought to life in ritual.[51]

[51] Adler, from class notes, HUC Liturgy 401

In addition to the movements of Sukkot practice, the ritual objects are significant markers of creation as well. The four species of the *lulav* and *etrog* are all found near water and act as symbols of fertility. The date palm often marks oases in the desert, providing food, shelter, shade and direction towards water. Overall, the Sukkot hallel prayer may be considered a reenactment of God's creation, bringing water and life into the world.[52]

The calendar also follows the Jewish tradition's schedule which records the creation of the world as occurring on Rosh Hashanah.[53] In the Bible, the world is created, then judged and born anew in the time of Noah. So too do we celebrate the creation of the world on Rosh Hashanah, endure the process of judgment on Yom Kippur, and celebrate the world's rebirth immediately after with the Sukkot festival. This connection of creation and judgment has long been a hallmark of the Jewish tradition and religion in general. For instance, the Babylonian festival of Akitu, based upon the creation story of the Enuma Elish, intertwines these currents through myth and ritual. This New Year festival mandates that the king show humility and subjugation to divine judgment:

> The fifth of Nisannu (the second day of the festival) saw the king's return to Babylon, accompanied by the statue of Nabû from Borsippa. The statue was left behind in the Uraš gate, and the king went to the Esagila to greet Marduk. He had to do this humbly, laying down his weapons, crown and scepter. The high priest listened to the king's words that he had not sinned against Marduk and hit him very hard on the cheek (the king had to have tears in his eyes). Perhaps, this was a punishment for sins that were unwillingly committed. Kneeling in front of the statue of Marduk, the king receives an oracle about the glorious future, and was given back his royal insignia.[54]

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[52] Adler, from class notes, HUC Liturgy 401
[53] Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 11a
[54] Livius articles on Ancient History. See http://www.livius.org/aj-al/akitu/akitu.htm

The connection between creation and judgment is even clearer in the shofar service, which we will discuss later. The duration of the holiday is itself a reflection of the story of creation. Sukkot is an eight day festival, actually made up of two separate festivals, a seven day celebration mirroring God's seven day creation of the world, followed by an eighth day celebration. As the Torah instructs:

> And on the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkot, seven days unto God. The first day shall be consecrated and you shall not perform any type of laborious work; for seven days you shall offer burnt offerings to God. And the eighth day shall be consecrated to you, and you shall offer a burnt offering; it is a day of assembly and no laborious work shall be performed.[55]

Therefore both in theme and duration, the Sukkot holiday is meant to echo the original miracle of God's creation. Sukkot also delves into the theme of redemption, as Leviticus commands that *sukkot* be built because the children of Israel slept in them on their way out of Egypt and in the wilderness.[56] But this theme comes later to the Jewish tradition[57] and is not fully fleshed out until the next holiday in the calendar, Passover. On Sukkot, God gives the world its sustenance in the form of rain. As the original creation provides the environment and rain the sustenance for man to survive, both are seen as signs of God's positive judgment and man's inherent worth. Now that God has created the setting in which people may thrive, we move to the next rubric, redemption, and the Passover holiday.

The connection between Passover and the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt requires little explanation. The holiday is entirely dedicated to the historical liberation from slavery and the subsequent obligation of all Jews to act on the experience of being

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[55] Leviticus 23:34-36
[56] Leviticus 23:42-43
[57] Class Notes, Bible II – Prophets, Dr. Tamar Eskenazi.

subjugated. As we have seen, the Passover *seder* allows us to partake in the mythology of the holiday through food, prayer, liturgy and even the dialectic process of asking questions. As only free people are allowed to question authority, so do we exercise and flaunt our freedom through the Passover *seder*. As the world emerges from winter and is born anew each Spring, we celebrate our own redemption and transformation from individual slaves to a holy community.

In the Passover story, God and Israel are reunited through God's spectacular power of redemption, proving God's ability to protect Israel as promised. The episode of Egypt is a universal moment. God hardens Pharoah's heart from acquiescing in order to create a cataclysmic event in which the whole world will witness God's singular power.

> "Israel as well as the Egyptians must 'know' YHVH. This is made explicit in Exodus 10:2, 'And you may recount in the hearing of your sons and of your sons' sons how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I displayed my signs among them – in order that you may know that I am Adonai.'"[58]

The universal nature of the historical redemption points towards the eventual messianic redemption which will liberate the entire world. As we will see, this messianic redemption finds its roots in the historical redemption from Egypt. This redemption is transmitted through time in the Pesach ritual, in which we identity with former slaves and future liberators for the weak and powerless throughout the world.

The Jewish tradition makes a clear connection between Shavuot and revelation at Sinai. The holiday revolves around the mythology of Sinai, where God was revealed to Moses. This revelation was made eternal through the giving of the Torah, through which

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[58] Sarna, 38

revelation occurs on a daily basis. We gather on Shavuot to study, praise God for revelation, and celebrate the legacy of the Torah. As Eliyahu Kitov writes,

> "The Festival of Shavuos [weeks] is an allusion to the seven weeks which are counted from Pesach, the fiftieth day being celebrated as a holiday marking the date when the Torah was given."[59]

The connection between Shavuot and the historical moment of Sinai and theme of revelation are further supported by Rabbi Chayim ben Atar, author of the *Or haChayim*, who wrote in his *Tur Barekes*:

> "The name should be pronounced Shevuos (vowelized with a sheva under the sin, meaning 'oaths'] rather than Shavuos [with a kamatz under the shin, meaning 'weeks'], for Shevuos is the festival that celebrates the two oaths: the oath that God took that He would never exchange Israel for another nation, and Israel's oath that she would never exchange him for another God."[60]

While the theme of redemption is found in the Sukkot holiday through the tradition of living in booths like in the desert, Shavuot's connection is much deeper. As Rosenzweig explains, through the love and honesty which can only be fostered through total redemption, man overcomes his isolation and truly encounters God for the first time. In turn, God reveals Godself with complete honesty and transparency. The relationship of God and Israel reaches its zenith, and the two characters unite in spirit. Love, ever present, is the foundation and meaning of revelation.[61] It is this love which we celebrate on Shavuot. We rejoice in the knowledge that God loves us enough to bequeath his Torah and with it the sacred mission of a unique people.

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[59] Kitov, 772
[60] Kitov, 774
[61] Glatzer, xv

Creation, Redemption and Revelation in the Three Services of Shabbat

As we have seen, the three major themes of creation, redemption and revelation are found in Torah and the *shalosh regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals. Moreover, they form the basis for the Shabbat liturgy as well. Shabbat worship is comprised of three major services: evening (*kabbalat shabbat* and *ma'ariv*), morning (*shacharit* and *musaf*) and afternoon (*minchah*). As we will see, each of these services tells a chapter in the story of God and Israel, from creation to revelation to redemption. Thus by the end of the Sabbath, the key myth of the Jewish people has been demonstrated and God's holy day imbued with the power of story. We emerge from Shabbat renewed and invigorated to approach the coming week, armed with the communal history that keeps us together.

The evening service ritualizes the story of creation, in which God constructs the world and appoints human beings to be its curator. In the *kabbalat shabbat* service, we celebrate God's creation of the world by reciting six psalms, each marking a day of creation. This tradition is ascribed to Rabbi Moshe Cordovero[62], who along with several other prominent 16th century kabbalists constructed the *kabbalat shabbat* service. However, it is possible that the recitation of six psalms before the start of the Sabbath can be traced as far back as Talmudic times. The practice of reciting six psalms, not necessarily the same ones we say today, was instituted in Babylonia to commemorate the long discontinued practice of blowing six shofar blasts to signal the approaching Sabbath. This would be done at regular intervals every Friday afternoon during the days of the Temple.[63]

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[62] Donin, To Pray, 257
[63] Shabbat 35b

Today we replicate these six shofar blasts by reading psalms 95, 96, 97, 98, 99 and 29. If the *kabbalat shabbat* service ritualizes the act of creation, the psalms give us clear stage direction of the procession. As Rosenzweig argues, the process of creation is a process of God making Godself known to us, one step at a time. The chanting of the six psalms ritualizes this emergence day by day.

These six psalms themselves illustrate the wondrous and terrifying conditions of the creation of the world. The serenity of Shabbat is preceded by the strife and turmoil that marks the earth's creation. As Psalm 29 recounts:

> "The voice of Adonai thunders over rushing waters. The voice of Adonai roars with might. The voice of Adonai echoes with majesty. The voice of Adonai shatters the cedars. Adonai splinters the cedars of Lebanon, making mount Lebanon skip like a calf, compelling Siryon to leap like a ram. The voice of Adonai splits rock with lightening. The voice of Adonai stirs the wilderness. The voice of Adonai strips the forest bare, while in God's sanctuary all chant: Glory!"[64]

The service climaxes with *Lecha Dodi*, the union of Israel with the Sabbath bride on the 7th day:

> "Come, my friend, to greet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath."[65]

This union is later echoed in the Friday evening sanctification of the day, which quotes Genesis 2:1-3:

> "The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done."[66]

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[64] Psalm 29:3-9
[65] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 244
[66] Genesis 2:1-3

Just as the creation of the world achieves completion with the appearance of human beings, so too does the week end with the meeting of God and Israel. As Reuven Hammer writes,

> "We greet the Sabbath with six psalms, Psalms 95-99 and Psalm 29. The number six represents the six days of creation and the six days of the workday week, which lead up to the seventh day, the Sabbath. The theme running like a thread through them is the kingship of God. Since the Sabbath celebrates creation, it is indeed the day of God's coronation."[67]

The meeting of God and Israel is further ritualized in the greeting of the *shechinah* or Sabbath bride during the Friday evening service. As the Talmud recounts:

> "Rabbi Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of Sabbath eve and exclaimed, 'Come and let us go forth to welcome the queen Sabbath.' Rabbi Jannai donned his robes, on Sabbath eve and exclaimed, 'Come, O bride, Come, O bride!'"[68]

This tradition was further expanded upon by the kabbalists of Sfat such as Isaac Luria, who would dress in their finest whites and enter the fields to greet the Sabbath queen in the late afternoon.

In each ritual, creation reaches a climax with the much anticipated meeting of God and Israel, bride and groom. God has brought about the creation specifically for the sake of Israel. And Israel brings God's creation to fruition by observing and celebrating it. Lecha Dodi quotes Genesis Rabbah, calling the Shabbat, "Last in thought but first in intention."[69] Although the Sabbath is the last part of the work of creation, the Sabbath was planned before creation even started. The Sabbath is not merely the absence of

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[67] Hammer, Entering, 214
[68] Shabbat 119a
[69] Genesis Rabbah 10:9

further creation, but the very goal toward which all creation is moving.[70] As the Sabbath requires human beings in order to be observed and celebrated, their emergence marks the final creation before Shabbat rest. And so the process of creation climaxes weekly with their meeting each Friday evening.

As the Shabbat is given the royal title of "Queen", the themes of creation and royalty or *malchut* are connected in the *kabbalat shabbat* liturgy. This connection will appear again when we examine the High Holiday shofar service of *malchut* and its connection to creation. For now, suffice to say that the creation theme mythologizes God as the ultimate ruler, who has constructed the kingdom on which we all depend to survive.

Following *kabbalat shabbat* and *ma'ariv*, the Shabbat morning service ritualizes the mythological theme of revelation. This connection is found most potently in the reading of the weekly Torah portion. After all, Torah is the symbol of God's eternal revelation and the historical moment upon Mount Sinai. The choreography of the Torah service reenacts the revelation at Sinai. Like Moses ascending Sinai, receiving the text and bringing it to the people, the rabbi ascends the bimah, brings out the Torah and marches it around the synagogue for all the people to see. The tradition of the *hakafa* (marching with the Torah) and *hagbah* (lifting the Torah for all to see) is allows us to relive the moment that Torah was brought down and displayed for the people.

Rosenzweig writes that in revelation, God reveals Godself to man, becoming vulnerable and completely honest. Through this act of love, man overcomes his isolation and becomes able to trust in God and fully enter the covenant. This trust endures as we undress the Torah and reveal the scrolls. We carefully cradle the Torah in our arms, kiss

[70] Hammer, Or Chadash, 21

its cover, and read its text with awe and honor. The Torah service allows us to partake in the eternal process of God's revelation. This revelation transcends time and space, as the Torah instructs,

> "I make this covenant, with its sanctions, not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day before Adonai our God and with those who are not with us here this day."[71]

In addition to the choreography of the Torah service, the liturgy is imbued with revelation imagery. We proudly herald God's revelation of the Torah both in deed and word. As the ark is opened, the leader says:

> "Whenever the ark was carried forward, Moses would say, 'Arise, Adonai! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes be put to flight. Torah shall come from Zion, the world of Adonai from Jerusalem. Praised is God who gave Torah to Israel in holiness."[72]

Although this quote is from the book of Numbers, it carries the imagery of Moses bringing the Torah to the people from Sinai, just as the rabbi in the service brings the Torah to the congregation. Here Torah is the source of revelation *and* redemption, both connecting Israel to God and emboldening the people to face their enemies.

As on Friday evening, the *kedushat hayom* of the Saturday morning service provides us with a direct quote from Torah which directly relates to the service's theme. On Friday evening, Shabbat served as a symbol for creation. On Saturday morning, Shabbat stands for revelation:

> "The Israelite people shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time. It shall be a sign for all time between me and the people of Israel. For in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God ceased from work and was refreshed."[73]

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[71] Deuteronomy 29:13-14
[72] Numbers 10:35
[73] Exodus 31:16-17

This quote is introduced by a line of liturgy which furthermore introduces the theme of revelation:

> "Moses was pleased with the gift bestowed on him, for thou didst call him a faithful servant. A glorious crown didst thou place on his head as he stood before thee on Mount Sinai. He brought down in his hand the two tablets of stone upon which was engraved the command to observe the Sabbath, as it is written in thy Torah."[74]

Thus through both ritual and liturgy, the Shabbat morning Torah reading and surrounding service constitute a reenactment of the original revelation at Sinai. We have moved from God's creating the world on Friday night to a communal celebration of God's revelation on the following morning. As both creation and revelation are historic and ongoing, we celebrate our ability to partake in each process.

Finally, the theme of redemption permeates the *minchah* or afternoon Shabbat service. The service recalls the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and foretells the messianic era in which the entire world will be redeemed. Rosenzweig's rubric of redemption pictures God reuniting with his creation and extending his unique relationship with Israel to the rest of the world. This redemption is then projected forward, into a messianic era where Israel will turn outward and share God's redemption with the rest of the world, creating a period in which all is one and God's name is one.

The connection between the afternoon service and the theme of redemption goes back to ancient times. We know that in the time of the Jerusalem temple, the Shabbat afternoon service had a particular poem designated for it, the Song of the Sea, divided into two parts, the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-10; 11-18) and the Song of the Well

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[74] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 354

(Bemidbar 21:17-18). These were sung on Sabbath afternoons alternately in a three week cycle.[75] According to the Torah, the Israelites sang The Song of the Sea as they were marching out of Egypt. The poem conceives of God as a "man of war"[76] whose "right hand smashes the foe."[77] The poem opens,

> "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spoke, saying: I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."[78]

Both the Song of the Well and the Song of the Sea are written in the future tense, prophesying God's redemption in the coming messianic era. The congregation joins in song, recreating the experience of walking through the parted Reed Sea, experiencing the miracle of redemption. Just as the morning Torah service reenacted the revelation on Mount Sinai, the Song of the Sea reenacts the redemption from Egypt.

The theme of redemption carries into the messianic age. The afternoon service invokes this theme with the hope for future redemption and universal peace. While the Shabbat has been symbolized as creation in the evening service and revelation in the morning service, here it comes to stand for ultimate redemption. The Mishnah calls the Sabbath a "foretaste – a sixtieth part - of the world-to-come."[79] Or as the Talmud explains,

> "On the Sabbath they used to say, a psalm, a song for the Sabbath day: a psalm, a song for the time to come, for the day that will be all Sabbath and rest for everlasting life."[80]

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[75] Rosh Hashanah, 31a
[76] Exodus 15:3
[77] Exodus 15:6
[78] Exodus 15:1
[79] Berachot 57b
[80] Tamid 33b

The *minchah* service is highlighted by the reading of the next week's Torah portion. By reading ahead in the Torah, the congregation looks ahead to the next week, anticipating eventual redemption. While the other services are concerned with past events such as creation, revelation and even historical revelation, the Torah reading clearly intends to point us towards the future.

The connection between *minchah* and messianic redemption continues with the reading of Psalm 145. According to the Talmud, anyone who chants this prayer three times a day merits entrance into the world to come.[81] Following the typical chanting of Psalm 145, the congregation adds the messianic language:

> "A redeemer shall come to Zion and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord."[82]

According to Ismar Elbogen, the Shabbat *minchah* service historically began with several messianic verses from the books of Prophets which were later deleted from the liturgy.[83] These passages include:

> "If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, From pursuing your affairs on my holy day; If you call the Sabbath 'delight,' Adonai's holy day 'honored'; and if you honor it and go not your ways nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains - then you can seek the favor of Adonai. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob -- For the mouth of Adonai has spoken."[84]

> "How welcome on the mountain are the footsteps of the herald announcing happiness, heralding good fortune, announcing victory, telling Zion, 'Your God is king!'"[85]

> "Rejoice greatly, fair Zion; raise a shout, fair Jerusalem! Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass."[86]

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[81] Berachot 4a.
[82] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 440
[83] Elbogen, 99
[84] Isaiah 58:13-14
[85] Isaiah 52:7

"Behold, I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek shall come to his temple suddenly. As for the angel of the covenant that you desire, he is already coming."[87]

"Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of Adonai. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction. Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of Adonai."[88]

Another hint of messianic redemption comes in a tiny change to the liturgy at the very end of *the kedushat hayom*, the sanctification of the day. The *kedushat hayom* usually consists of two paragraphs: a biblical proof text of Shabbat rest and praise for God for allowing us to rest on this day. However, the Shabbat *minchah* service lacks this biblical proof text, perhaps because the rest alluded to in the *minchah* service is the eternal rest of the world to come.[89] No proof text can be offered for a period that is yet to come. The siddur lies unfinished, awaiting the messiah to finish this section.

Finally we must focus on a minute detail in the second paragraph of the *kedushat hayom.* The final line before the *chatima,* or final blessing reads,

"O Hashem, our God, with love and favor grant us Your holy Sabbath as a heritage and may Israel, the sanctifiers of Your Name, rest on them."[90]

The final two words of this sentence carry special significance. In the evening *ma'ariv* service, the prayer reads "rest on *her*."[91] The morning *shacharit* service reads "rest on *him.*"[92] And now in the *minchah* service the prayer reads "rest on them". This

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[86] Zechariah 9:9
[87] Malachi 3:1
[88] Malachi 3:23-24
[89] Class notes from Richard Levy, Entering the Shabbat Siddur, Summer 2006.
[90] Scherman, 519
[91] Ibid, 340
[92] Ibid, 424

subtle difference is filled with theological significance. If the Sabbath is the marriage of God and Israel, then in the evening, when we welcome the Sabbath bride, we read "rest on her." When we welcome the groom to the *chuppah* on Shabbat morning, we read "rest on him." This marriage is completed in the *shacharit* Torah service, with the Torah acting as the *ketubah* between God and Israel. So here in the afternoon we read "rest on them." The union of God and Israel is complete and their two identities have merged into one. This change is liturgy is ascribed to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyady, a kabbalist who wanted to hint at the two supreme aspects (God and Israel) that are both revealed at this hour.[93] The Artscroll Siddur further elaborates,

> "The plural form *them* appears only in the *minchah Shmonei Esrei (Amidah),* because in the ideal life of the World to Come, all days will have the serenity and holiness we now sense only on the Sabbath."[94]

And so once again the connection between the *minchah* service and messianic redemption is made clear. By invoking both the redemption of the ancient past and the messianic future, the liturgy of the *minchah* service returns full circle to where we began in *kabbalat shabbat.* For six days the world is created. We enter *kabbalat shabbat* as this process is completed and man and God meet for the first time. God reveals himself to Israel in the Shabbat morning service and then both redeems Israel and challenges Israel to bring about the world's ultimate redemption in the afternoon service. By the end of the service, we have arrived at the world to come, which is based on the garden of Eden, where our story first began. As Maimonides writes,

> "The world to come is the world of souls, which is often referred to as the garden of Eden."[95]

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[93] Steinsaltz, 117
[94] Scherman, 517
[95] Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 8:8

Though *minchah* is the final service of the day, the theme of redemption may carry into the rituals of *seudah shlishit*, the third meal of the day. It is customary to have a light meal following *minchah* as the Talmud instructs us to eat three full meals on the Sabbath.[96] This meal is unique in that is it usually taken on the synagogue premises so that the worshippers need not go home and have to return for the *ma'ariv* service. Thus the meal may be considered an extension of the *minchah* liturgy. It is fitting then that the meal includes several rituals corresponding to the theme of redemption.

In kabbalistic literature, the time of the third meal is referred to as "the time of favor of favors," that is, the time when God is most kindly disposed to Israel.[97] This moment is the closest we will get to reaching the actual world to come.

The Talmud delves into redemption imagery in discussing the reward for eating the *seudah shlishit* meal. The Talmud says that those who eat three meals will be saved from three *pur'anuyot* (misfortunes): *chevlei mashiach* - the birth pangs of the messiah, *dinah shel gehinom* - the judgment of gehinom, and *milchemet Gog u'Magog* – the war of Gog and Magog which will precede final redemption. Rabbi Yochanan says that the reward for shalosh se'udot is a portion of the world to come without boundaries.[98]

It is customary to serve fish at *seudah shlishit.* This tradition may be connected to the leviathan, the great sea monster which will be slain in the world to come. According to the great Torah commentator Rashi, on the fifth day of creation, God created male and female sea monsters, or leviathans. God then killed the female and salted it for the

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[96] Shabbat 117b
[97] Scherman 588
[98] Shabbat 118a-b

righteous, for if the leviathans were to procreate the world could not stand before them.[99] In the world to come, the male leviathan will be killed as well. As the prophet Isaiah says,

> "In that day the Lord will punish, with His great, cruel, mighty sword leviathan the elusive serpent -- leviathan the twisting serpent; He will slay the dragon of the sea."[100]

After leviathan is killed, its body, along with the salted female leviathan will be eaten by the righteous in the world to come. Psalm 74 records:

> "Thou didst crush the heads of the leviathan, thou didst give him for food to the creatures of the desert."[101]

Thus a tradition has emerged that the great sea monster, which is mentioned six times in the Tanach, will be slain and its body served as food. The custom of eating fish at the *seudah shlishit* table serves as a foretelling of the actual meal of the leviathan's body during the period of redemption. As Abraham Chill writes,

> "According to the kabbalistic view, the Jew partakes of a great fish, the leviathan, when the messianic period arrives. By its tranquility, our Shabbat serves as a preview of the messianic era with its total serenity."[102]

The theme of redemption is also found in the prayers and *zmirot* or songs which are traditionally sung at the *seudah shlishit* table. For example, it is customary to read Psalm 23, an ode to God's power of redemption. The Psalm reads:

> A psalm of David. Adonai is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to water in places of repose. He renews my life; He guides me in right paths as befits His

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[99] Rashi, comment to Genesis 1:21
[100] Isaiah 27:1
[101] Psalm 74:14
[102] Chill, 112

name. Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff - they comfort me. You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant. Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Adonai for many long years.

The *piyut* (poem) *Tsur Mishelo* is also traditionally sung at *seudah shlishit.* The poem praises God for the miracle of creation and anticipates the coming redemption of the world. It reads,

> "Our God, have mercy on thy people; On Zion thy shrine and our splendid home; May David's scion come to redeem us, The Lord's anointed, the breath of our life. Let the shrine be restored, Zion refilled; That we may come up singing a new song."[103]

And so with *seudah shlishit* the mythological cycle of Shabbat observance is completed. We have moved from the creation of *kabbalat Shabbat* to the revelation of *shacharit* and finally the historical and future redemption of *minchah* and *seudah shlishit.* It is important to note that the order of the Shabbat services does not match that of Rosenzweig's system. For Rosenzweig, redemption precedes revelation – only after God fulfills God's promise is Israel prepared for absolute dedication at Sinai. But in the Shabbat service order, revelation (morning) precedes redemption (afternoon).

There are two ways of making sense of this discrepancy. First, we must remember that redemption relates to two separate moments, the historical redemption from Egypt and the future redemption of the world in the messianic era. Given that the redemption alluded to in the *minchah* service is almost entirely the latter, it makes sense for revelation to take place first. The messianic era completes the story, following upon

[103] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 436

the heels of redemption. Rosenzweig's thematic order may be augmented to read Creation - Redemption I (historic) - Revelation- Redemption II (messianic).

But we need not go this far. The point of mythological storytelling is not to communicate an entire narrative in unedited form. The motifs of the Jewish story need not be given in order or even in their complete state. The three themes of creation, revelation and redemption serve as the basis for Jewish liturgy and ritual. At various times various parts of the story are told. It doesn't matter if everything is included in the correct order; actually it seldom is. What matters is that this mythology is so basic to Judaism, that there is no single holiday or ritual which does not partake in at least one of its themes.

We have seen that the reenactment of the creation-redemption-revelation myth forms the basis of the liturgy for the three festivals and Shabbat. As these processes are all ongoing, we recount these myths on a daily basis as well. The themes of Jewish storytelling overlap one another in concentric circles. As the *Yotser Or* prayer says, "In your goodness you renew the work of creation every day, constantly."[104] Or as the Talmudic dictum goes, "There is no early or late in the Torah."[105] Like the stories of the Torah, the themes of creation, redemption and revelation are so omnipresent in the Jewish tradition that they live concurrently in past, present and future. As Jews we live in a world where all three are taking place simultaneously, and in which we take part in all of them. And so we arrive at the daily prayer service and its central rubric of the Shema and its blessings, which is similarly built upon the foundation of Rosenzweig's mythology.

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[104] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 338
[105] Pesachim 7a

Creation, Revelation and Redemption in Daily Tefilah: The Shema and Its Blessings

The themes of creation, revelation and redemption are observed on a daily basis through the rubric of the Shema and its blessings. Here the mythological structure is so clear that the Reform movement's *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook* labels the prayers of this section under the titles CREATION, REVELATION and REDEMPTION. Indeed, the rubric of the Shema and its blessings served as an inspiration for Rosenzweig's tripartite theology. As in the festivals and Shabbat services, this rubric of prayer takes the congregant on a mythological journey of creation and heroism.

Just as we rise to meet the Sabbath bride during *kabbalat shabbat*, so too do we act out the rubrics of Jewish mythology through movement. This section of liturgy begins with the call to worship, the *barechu*. We begin by first acknowledging God's royalty or *malchut*. We have already seen a connection between creation and royalty in the *kabbalat shabbat* service. This trope will be magnified in the Rosh Hashanah shofar service, to be expounded upon later. And so we open the rubric by reciting the *barchu*, introducing ourselves and bowing before our creator.

The prayer *yotser or* (for morning) and *ma'ariv aravim* (for evening) belong to the creation theme. The *yotser or* prayer reads:

> "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who formest light and createst darkness, who makest peace and createst all things. In mercy thou givest light to the earth and to those who dwell on it; in thy goodness thou renewest the work of creation every day, constantly."[106]

[106] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 338

Both prayers praise God for the miracle of creation and the transformation from dark to light and day to night. Like the themes of redemption and revelation, creation is defined as an ongoing process, transcending its historical roots. As Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin explains,

> "The first blessing before the Shema emphasizes a basic tenet of Jewish faith: God is the Creator of the universe and everything within it, and creation, instead of being just a one-time event, is an ongoing process in which God's creative role is maintained."[107]

Or as Lawrence Hoffman succinctly states,

> "The service moves directly to the first of the three blessings that surround the Sh'ma, the 'Blessing of Creation' (Yotser) which affirms God's formative role in all existence."[108]

Following the creation prayers of the *barchu, yotser or* and *ma'ariv aravim,* we arrive at the theme of revelation as found in *ahavah raba* (morning) *ahavat olam* (evening). *Ahavah rabah* reads:

> "With a great love hast thou loved us, Lord our God; great and abundant mercy hast thou bestowed upon us. Our Father, our King, for the sake of our forebears who trusted in thee, whom thou didst teach laws of life, be gracious to us and teach us likewise."[109]

According to the prayer, the act of revelation was based upon mutual trust between God and Israel. Having experienced the acts of creation and redemption (in the Torah's chronological order) the two characters have experienced a shared journey, allowing for greater intimacy. God's closeness is translated into laws and teaching, gifts which are bestowed upon the people Israel. Again, Rabbi Donin writes:

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[107] Donin, To Pray, 157
[108] Hoffman, Vol I, 45
[109] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 344

"The second blessing before the Shema in both the morning and evening service moves on to the next theological stepping stone. In this blessing, we relate not to the exalted Creator whose relationship is with all mankind, but to a Father and Teacher who, by giving us His Torah, established a special relationship with us."

And again, Lawrence Hoffman states,

"The Blessing of Creation (Yotser) is followed by the Blessing of Revelation (Birkat HaTorah) which affirms God's gift of Torah to Israel."[110]

The recitation of the *shema* is designated by the sages as an act of acceptance of God as sovereign and of the observance of God's decrees, the mitzvoth. The recitation of the first line is the formal declaration of allegiance to God.[111] Thus in the *shema* we demonstrate our status as witnesses of God's revelation. This is one interpretation of why the *shema* is written with the letters *ayin* and *dalet* emphasized. Together, these words spell *eid* or witness. When we say the *shema,* we are witnesses to God's revelation. Building on this interpretation, it is customary to emphasize the final *dalet* of *echad* at the end of the *shema*. There are two reasons for this. First of all, the *dalet* might be confused for a *reish* as they are very similar. If it was indeed a *reish*, the *shema* would read, "Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is another (or elsewhere)". In order to emphasize our certainty in complete monotheism, we emphasize the *dalet.*

Secondly, according to the Talmud, the words of the *shema* were the final utterances of Rabbi Akiva when being tortured to death by the Romans. In an act of faith, Akiba called out the words of the *shema* as he was tortured to death. The Talmud reads,

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[110] Hoffman, 69
[111] Hammer, Or Hadash, 112

> "When the Romans took out Rabbi Akiba for execution, it was the precise time for the recitation of the Shema. They combed his flesh with iron combs and (at the same time he was enduring such excruciating pain) he recited the Shema, accepting upon himself the yoke of the heavenly kingdom. His disciples said to him, "Does the almighty expect dedication even to such an extent, in such a state of extremity?" He replied, "All of my life I was pained by the words 'You shall love the Lord your G-d... with all your soul - even to the extent of giving up your soul.' When would I have the opportunity of fulfilling this command? And now that the opportunity has arrived for me, shall I not fulfill it?" And he recited the Shema, lengthening the word "one" (echad) until his soul expired."[112]

Thus we emphasize the *dalet* as a symbol of our faith in God, recalling Rabbi Akiba who professed this faith even in the face of torture. We ritualize this oath by closing our eyes or sometimes even bringing one hand to our eyes and extending three fingers, to form the letter *shin*, symbolizing the word *shaddai*, one name for God. We demonstrate the importance and earnestness of this oath by meditating on each word.

The *veahavta* spells out the ways in which we will transmit God's revelation to our future generations. As God's revelation is an ongoing process, we take part by teaching our children and making God a part of our daily lives. And so the statement of revelation, the *shema,* comes with this handy reference guide, the *veahavta,* an instruction manual on how to make others the witnesses of God's revelation as well. Thus all of Israel is invited to take part in the process of revelation. In both action and spirit, we are partners with God.

Following the reading of the *shema* and *veahavta*, the *geulah* shifts to the theme of redemption. Like the Shabbat *minchah* service, the *geulah* invokes both the historical and messianic visions of redemption, as illustrated in the liberation from Egypt and the coming of the messiah. As we have seen in the Shabbat *minchah* service, the Song of the

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[112] Berachot 61b

Sea is again quoted. This is the song sung by the Israelites as they were marching across the split Reed Sea on the way out of Egypt. The liturgy reads:

> "Who is like You, Adonai, among the celestials; Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders!"[113]

The liturgy continues:

> "The redeemed people sang a new song of praise to thy name at the seashore; they all, in unison, gave thanks and proclaimed thy sovereignty, and said: 'The Lord shall reign forever and ever.'[114,115]

The traditional liturgy introduces this quote from the Song of the Sea with a lengthy excursus on the liberation from Egypt. This section is omitted from the Reform liturgy in part because of its violent nature. In this introductory paragraph, the prayer book reads,

> "From Egypt thou didst redeem us, Lord our God, and from the house of slavery thou didst deliver us; all their first-born thou didst slay, but thy first-born thou didst redeem; thou didst divide the Red Sea and drown the arrogant, but thy beloved people thou didst take across; the water covered their enemies, not one of them was left."[116]

Again, Donin explains:

> "The blessing immediately after the Shema, both at the morning and evening service, touches upon still another basic tenet of Jewish faith. In it we acknowledge God's deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt and the wonders He wrought when they cross the Sea of Reeds."[117]

In short, the *geulah* clearly intends to remind us of the miracle of redemption from Egypt. But the liturgy also continues a hint of the promised redemption to come as seen in the afternoon Shabbat service. The prayer book continues,

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[113] Exodus 15:11
[114] Exodus 15:8
[115] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 350
[116] Ibid, 348
[117] Donin, To Pray, 162

> "Stronghold of Israel, arise to the help of Israel; deliver Judah and Israel, as thou hast promised. Our Redeemer, thou art the Lord of hosts, the Holy One of Israel. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who has redeemed Israel."[118]

Again, Donin summarizes the connection between the liturgy of the *geulah* and the historical and messianic themes of redemption. He writes,

> "The Talmud rules that 'Tefilah (meaning the Amidah) should be joined to geulah ('redemption') (Berachot 4b, 9b)...One reason for this ruling is to connect the theme of Israel's redemption in the past, as reflected both in the Shema and in the Blessing of the Geulah which follows it, with the theme of Israel's redemption in the future, as reflected in the very first blessing of the Amidah" 'Who will bring a Redeemer with love to their children's children for His name's sake.'"[119]

In conclusion, like the three festivals and the Shabbat services, the rubric of the Shema and its Blessings is also based upon the themes of creation, revelation and redemption. Thus the rubric extracts meaning from each of the key transformative Biblical moments: God's creation of the world, the subsequent redemption from Egyptian servitude (which also hints at the future redemption to come) and finally revelation of God and the Torah at Sinai. The archetypal myth of the Jewish people imbues Jewish practice both on a macro and micro level, within the daily liturgy, the weekly liturgical structure and even the annual order of the festivals. We tell the story daily, weekly and yearly. But we are still not done! Surely the key story must be invoked in the High Holidays, the most important point of the Jewish year. And so it is at the very climax of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy in the shofar service.

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[118] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 350
[119] Donin, To Pray, 162

Creation, Revelation and Redemption in the Rosh Hashanah Shofar Service

While the greatest part of High Holiday liturgy is a variation on weekday liturgy, the shofar service of Rosh Hashanah features a unique structure. The origin of the shofar service lies in the blowing of the ram's horn at the beginning of each Jewish month. As the book of Psalms commands, "Blow the horn on the new moon, on the full moon for our feast day."[120] The book of Numbers echoes this idea, saying,

> "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded."[121]

The shofar is blown to wake up the congregation and urge the people to change their ways. Maimonides describes the shofar as a moral alarm clock, saying,

> "Wake up, wake up, you sleepers, wake up from your sleep! Sleepers, wake up from your napping and examine your deeds, return in teshuvah, and remember your creator! Those of you who forget the truth in your playing around with the latest frivolousness, spending all year in vanity and meaningless things, which neither profits nor saves you, you, look to your souls, improve your ways and works. Abandon the path which is bad and get rid of all your vain goals."[122]

The shofar is also blown to remind the congregation of the covenant at Sinai, where the shofar was originally heard. As the book of Exodus recounts:

> "All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance."[123]

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[120] Psalm 81:4
[121] Numbers 29:1
[122] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4
[123] Exodus 20:15

While the Torah only mandates that the shofar be sounded, a comprehensive liturgy has evolved around this practice. Like the rubric of the *shema* and its blessings, the shofar service is broken into three distinct sections: *Malchuyot* (kingship), *Zichronot* (remembrance) and *Shofarot* (the shofar). Each section includes 10 verses from the Bible, each testifying to the theme of the service. As Rabbi Daniel Kohn explains:

> These three collections of 10 verses each speak respectively about (a) the proclamation of God as sovereign of the Jewish people and the universe, (b) God remembering the covenant and merit of our ancestors, and (c) the sounding of the shofar during the revelation of the Torah Mount Sinai and the coronation of God as king, proclaiming God's awesome power to all of the inhabitants of the world.[124]

Or alternatively, Reuven Hammer explains,

> "The order of the three themes, and the relationship with them, are therefore explained as follows: we accept God as our ruler, we ask to be 'remembered' by God (that is, we ask that God fulfill His assurances and help us), and we declare our desire for redemption – for individual and national freedom – symbolized by the sounding of the shofar."[125]

I will argue that each of these sections may be linked to the historical themes of Rosenzweig's theological system of creation, redemption and revelation. Each of the three shofar services is composed of four parts: an introduction, a series of proof texts from the Hebrew Bible, a specific blessing for the service theme, and finally the blowing of the shofar. These introductions, proof texts and blessings may be linked to a particular historical theme, thus creating mythical basis for each of the three services. Like the liturgical movements covered already, the shofar service utilizes the creation and hero myths in Rosenzweig's tripartite system in order to imbue ritual with meaning.

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[124] Website: Myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Rosh_Hashana
[125] Hammer, Entering the High Holy Days, 78

The theme of *Malchuyot,* or kingship, is based upon the creation of the world. It is God's creation of the world which crowns God as the ultimate sovereign, as all depends upon God's work. As Reuven Hammer was quoted earlier as saying, "Since the Sabbath celebrates creation, it is indeed the day of God's coronation."[126]

The Malchuyot service begins with the Aleinu prayer, which extols God for the deed of creation. The prayer opens:

> "It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the universe, who has not made us like the nations of the world and has not placed us like the families of the earth...We bend the knee and bow and acknowledge before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, that is it he who stretched forth the heavens and founded the earth."[127]

The choreography of the service instructs the individual to bow before the ark when saying "bend the knee", as if we were bowing to a sovereign. As with the *barchu*, we bow to God because God is the creator of heaven and earth. We acknowledge this on the day of the world's creation, Rosh Hashanah. The prayer continues by asking God to *Letaken Olam,* to perfect the world.[128] Thus God's power of creation is reaffirmed in the present. It must be noted that perfecting the world alludes to the theme of redemption as well. Indeed, redemption can be found throughout all three of the shofar services, as this is what we are asking for during the season of judgment. After all, this is the holiday on which all of life receives divine judgment:

> "There are four periods of judgment: Passover for produce, Shavuot for the fruit of the trees; on Rosh Hashanah all creatures of the world pass before Him as a troop of soldiers, as it is said 'He who fashions

[126] Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, 214
[127] Birnbam, Ha-Machzor, 378
[128] ibid, 382

the hearts of them all, who discerns all their doings'[129]; and on Sukkot for water."[130]

"All are judged on Rosh Hashanah and their sentence is sealed on Yom Kippur. So taught Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Judah says: All [fruits, produce, humans, and water] are judged on Rosh Hashanah and their sentence is sealed at its appropriate time [as above]...so that the sentence of human beings is sealed on Yom Kippur."[131]

The existence of the motif of God as redeemer in the *malchuyot* section clearly points to God's abilities as creator of the universe. God's status as creator allows us to address the needs of the world by going back to the source. Who better to ask for help in the work of creation than the original creator itself? The best redeemer is the original creator.

The ten proof texts given from the Hebrew Bible for the *malchuyot* service speak to God's glory and unique role as sovereign over the earth. As Zechariah is quoted,

"The Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day shall the Lord be One and his name One."[132]

As we have already seen with the ritual of donning a *tallit*, the image of God as being robed is another reference to creation. And so we find these quotes from the book of Psalms:

"The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, girded with strength; the world is set firm and cannot be shaken."[133]

"Bless Adonai, O my soul; Adonai, my God, You are very great; you are robed in glory and majesty, wrapped in a robe of light; you spread the heavens like a tent cloth. God sets the rafters of God's lofts in the waters, makes the clouds God's chariot, moves on the wings of the wind.

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[129] Psalm 33:15
[130] Rosh Hashanah 1:2
[131] Rosh Hashanah 1:13
[132] Zechariah 14:9
[133] Psalm 93:1

> God makes the winds messengers, fiery flames into servants. God established the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never totter. You made the deep cover it as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. They fled at your blast, rushed away at the sound of your thunder -- mountains rising, valleys sinking -- to the place you established for them.[134]

While the *malchuyot*, or sovereignty section of the shofar service, is connected to the theme of creation, the second section, *zichronot*, or remembrance, is connected to the theme of redemption. After all, what are we constantly urged to remember throughout the Torah? That we were slaves in the land of Egypt. This history gives us the impetus for all of our mitzvot and our entire approach to the world. As the Torah instructs:

> "Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and Adonai your God redeemed you; therefore I enjoin this commandment upon you today."[135]

> "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and take care to obey these laws."[136]

The Zichronot service offers multiple proof texts from the Hebrew Bible which point towards God's redemptive power. A few examples include:

> "God heard their moaning; God remembered the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."[137]

> "In their favor I will remember the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in sight of the nations, to be their God; I am the Lord."[138]

Likewise, the last service, the *shofarot* (shofar) service, is connected to the theme of revelation. This service features perhaps the most obvious connection of any of the

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[134] Psalm 104:1-8
[135] Deuteronomy 15:15
[136] Deuteronomy 16:12
[137] Exodus 2:24
[138] Leviticus 26:45

shofar services, as the entire spectacle of the shofar blowing originally comes from Sinai. Furthermore, the prophetic quotes of the shofar service allude to the future redemption of the messianic era. Thus as we have seen continually throughout the liturgy, the theme of redemption is split between past and future, historic and messianic. But first we begin with the multiple references to the revelation at Sinai found throughout the service:

> "On the third day, in the morning, there was thunder and lightning, a dense cloud over the mountain, and a loud shofar blast; all the people in the camp trembled."[139]

> "God ascended amid the blasting of the trumpet; the Lord revealed himself amid the sound of the shofar."[140]

And then the prophets extend the theme of redemption into the messianic future:

> "All who inhabit the world, all who dwell on earth, look when the signal is raised on the mountains, hark when the shofar is sounded."[141]

> "On that day a great shofar shall be sounded; those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were cast away in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem."[142]

> "The Lord God shall sound the shofar and march amid the storms of the South. The Lord of hosts shall defend them."[143]

Thus we can view the entire shofar service as a recapitulation of the creation, revelation and redemption cycle already seen throughout Jewish liturgy. As the Talmud recounts,

> "The Holy One, blessed be He, said, pour out water before me on tabernacles, so that your rains this year may be blessed. Also recite before me on the New Year [texts making mention of] kingship, remembrance, and the shofar: Kingship, so that you may proclaim me king over you;

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[139] Exodus 19:16
[140] Psalm 47:6
[141] Isaiah 18:3
[142] Isaiah 27:13
[143] Zechariah 9:14-15

> remembrance, so that your remembrance may rise favorably before me; and through what? Through the shofar."[144]

In essence, this key story of the Jewish people is told in concentric circles: daily (in the weekday service and especially the Shema and its blessings rubric), weekly (in the three Shabbat services), yearly (in the megillah readings) and now restated here in the holiest season of the year. The fundamental myth upon which Judaism is built, describing the relationship between God, Israel and the world, is constantly communicated in a process of communal integration and confirmation. In order to better understand the nuances of this process, we are going to focus on the Shabbat morning tefillah as an example of standard liturgy.

This prayer service offers the most comprehensive view of the creation and hero myths as played out in liturgy through Rosenzweig's tripartite theology. It is my hope that by the end of the section, prayer will be understood with an additional meaning: group storytelling in order to create cohesion and a shared history. Given that the word religion comes from the Latin re (again) + ligare (to connect, as in English ligament), group cohesion seems to be one of the main goals, if not the main goal. This goal is achieved through the power of story, step by step and prayer by prayer.

[144] Rosh Hashanah 16a

Creation, Revelation and Redemption in the Rituals of Donning the Tallit

Throughout the rubrics of the morning liturgy, storytelling is enhanced through ritual. Nowhere is this more evident then the use of the tallit. The tallit is first introduced in the opening rubric of Birkhot HaShachar, in which it is blessed and adorned. The liturgy of Birkhot HaShachar is laden with images of creation. The donning of the tallit alludes to the act of creation as recorded in Sifre:

> "Blue in the tsitsit resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the throne of glory."[145]

The Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai described the holy feeling of donning a tallit and its connection to creation when he wrote:

> "Whoever puts on a tallis when he was young he will never forget;
> Taking it out of the soft velvet bag, opening the folded shawl,
> Spreading it out, kissing the length of the neckband (embroidered
> or trimmed in gold.) Then swinging it in a great swoop overhead
> like a sky, a wedding canopy, a parachute. And then winding it
> around his head as in hide-and-seek, wrapping
> his whole body in it, close and slow, snuggling into it like the cocoon
> of a butterfly, then opening would-be wings to fly.
> And why is the tallis striped and not checkered black-and-white
> like a chessboard? Because squares are finite and hopeless.
> Stripes come from infinity and to infinity they go
> like airport runways where angels land and take off.
> Whoever has put on a tallis will never forget."[146]

Later in the Shema and its blessings, the mythological storytelling is enhanced through ritual. The service is carefully choreographed, creating movements imbued with religious significance. The image of the tallit carries great significance regarding creation, as we have seen in the shofar service and as alluded to in Psalm 104:

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[145] Sifre Numbers 15
[146] Amichai, 44

"Bless Adonai, O my soul; Adonai, my God, you are very great; You are robed in glory and majesty, wrapped in a robe of light; you spread the heavens like a tent cloth."[147]

When we put on the tallit, we our emulating our creator, even dressing up like God before entering into the theme of creation. As we say *va'havi'einu l'shalom* (And bring us in peace) at the end of the *ahavah rabah* prayer of revelation, we gather the four corners of the tallit and bring together all of the fringes. As the fringes represent the 613 mitzvoth, we recall the commandments transmitted at Sinai in the moment of revelation. We bring together the mitzvoth in preparation for the the *geulah* prayer for redemption. By holding the *tsitsit* in our hands, we merit the salvation of our redeemer by what we hold in our hands.

As we enter into the *geulah*, the prayer for redemption, it is important to note that in bringing together the fringes of the garment, we have also brought together the four corners of the tallit, symbolizing the four corners of the world. As the prayer for freedom in the weekday *Amidah* states,

"Sound the great shofar for our freedom; lift up the banner to bring our exiles together, and assemble us from the four corners of the earth."[148]

And the *havieinu l'shalom* passage of the *ahavah rabah* prayer reads,

"O bring us home in peace from the four corners of the earth, and make us walk upright to our land, for thou art God who performs triumphs."[149]

We later release these fringes after offering the *shema.* While our mitzvoth have protected us up to this point, we now enter into the realm of God's protection. Therefore

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[147] Psalm 104:1-3
[148] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 88
[149] Ibid, 344

we do not need to present our mitzvoth any longer. Whereas we are ordered to perform mitzvoth in this world, there is no such requirement in the world to come. Indeed, there are no mitzvoth in the world to come. As Rabbi Soloveitchik once wrote,

> "The halachah is not at all concerned with a transcendent world. The world to come is a tranquil, quiet world that is wholly good, wholly everlasting, and wholly eternal, wherin a man will receive the reward for the commandments which he performed in this world. However, the receiving of a reward is not a religious act; therefore, halachic man prefers the real world to a transcendent existence because here, in this world, man is given the opportunity to create, act, accomplish, while there, in the world to come, he is powerless to change anything."[150]

Perhaps we demonstrate our faith in the redeemer by letting go of our *tsitsit,* confident that we will be protected under the wings of God's presence.

Therefore the choreography of the tallit ritualizes all three themes of the great Jewish myth into liturgical movement. The rituals of the tallit in this section are in themselves a reiteration of the creation-redemption-revelation themes in physical rite and a connection with the texts of Psalm 104, *havienu l'shalom* from the *ahavah rabah* prayer, and the text from Numbers connecting *tsitsit* with mitzvoth:

> "Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of Adonai and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am Adonai your God."[151]

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[150] Soloveitchik, 32
[151] Numbers 15:38-41

SECTION II: THE JEWISH SHABBAT MORNING LITURGY AS COMMUNAL STORYTELLING

"We affirm that the Jewish people is bound to God by an eternal בְּרִית *(b'rit), covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation and Redemption."*

- Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism Adopted at the 1999 Pittsburgh CCAR convention[152]

CHAPTER IV: THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE

The Rubrics of the Shabbat Morning Service

The morning service can be divided into six sections or rubrics. They are:

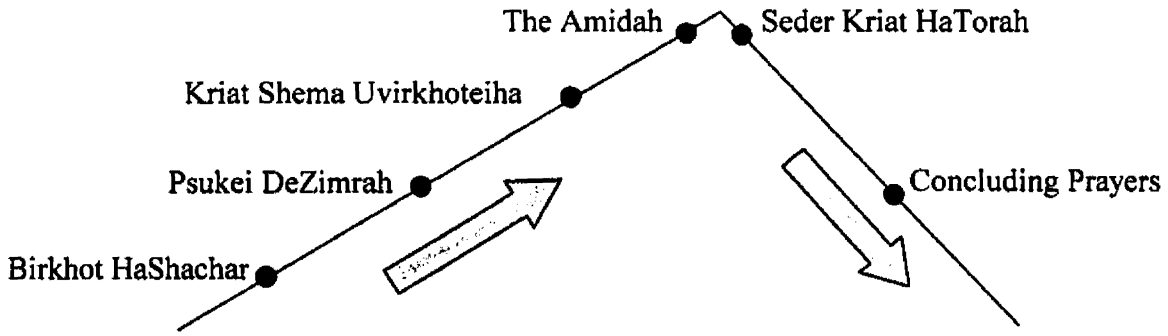
Title	Description
1. Birkhot HaShachar	Morning Blessings
2. Psukei DeZimrah	Songs of Praise
3. Kriat Shema Uvirkoteiha	The Shema and Its Blessings
4. The Amidah	The Standing Prayer
5. Seder Kriat HaTorah	The Torah Service
6. Concluding Prayers	Concluding Prayers

This list purposely omits the *musaf* service, an entirely separate section added to the Shabbat morning liturgy in order to parallel the additional Shabbat sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple. The service has been omitted as *musaf* is essentially a reiteration of the *amidah* prayer, that is, it is redundant by nature, and is not practiced in Reform congregations.

Combined, these rubrics may be seen as a spiritual journey; an ascent and descent with God awaiting at its summit. The congregant is prepared for prayer through the

[152] 1999 Pittsburgh Convention Central Conference of American Rabbis May 1999 - Sivan 5759.

Morning Blessings and the Songs of Praise, begins the official service with the Shema and its Blessings, reaches the summit with the Amidah and the Torah service, before descending once again with the Concluding Prayers. This journey runs parallel to a journey up and down Mount Sinai, with God encountered on the way up and met directly at the top, where the Torah is received and brought down to the people. In all the ascent and descent of the rubrics of the shacharit service may be illustrated as follows[153]:

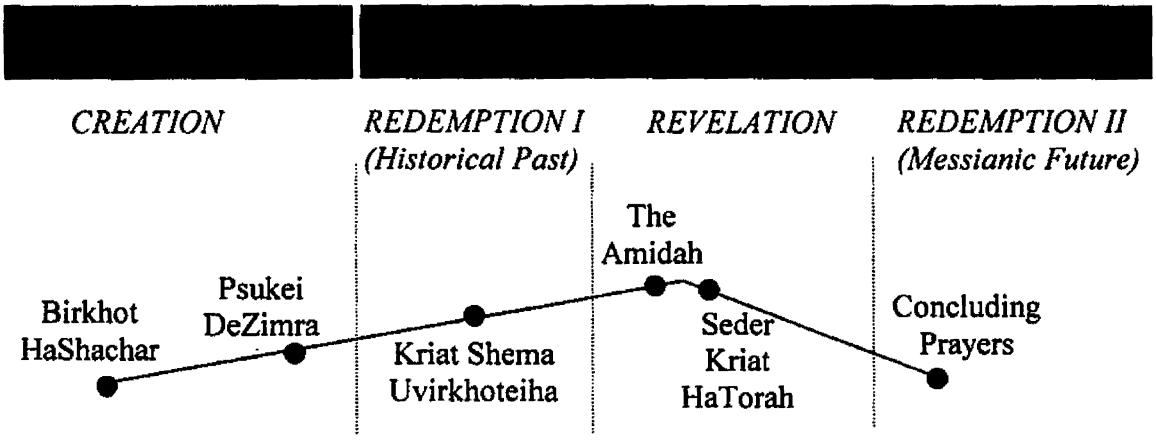


I will argue that each rubric of the morning Shabbat service may be considered a section in the creation-redemption-revelation foundational myth of Judaism. I will also argue that this narrative fits the broad definition of the creation and hero myths as outlined by Campbell, Jung and others in the preceding sections. Thus the service constitutes a mythological journey, from the Creation of the world and the positioning of man within it (Birkhot HaShachar and Psukei DeZimrah), to encountering God and the creation of a *brit* (covenant) with Israel in Kriat Shema Uvirkhoteiha. In the second half of this rubric, the brit is tested and God proves God's side of the pact through the Redemption of the Israelites from Egypt. With suzerainty affirmed through God's protection, Israel submits entirely and with full transparency to God (Amidah). God responds with full Revelation at Mount Sinai, and the Torah is given to the Israelites as

[153] Hoffman, Vol I, 18

an enduring record of this revelation. Finally, the hero Israel turns outward and shares the treasure of God's revelation with the rest of the world, with utopian hopes for universal peace and prosperity pointing towards a messianic era (Concluding Prayers).

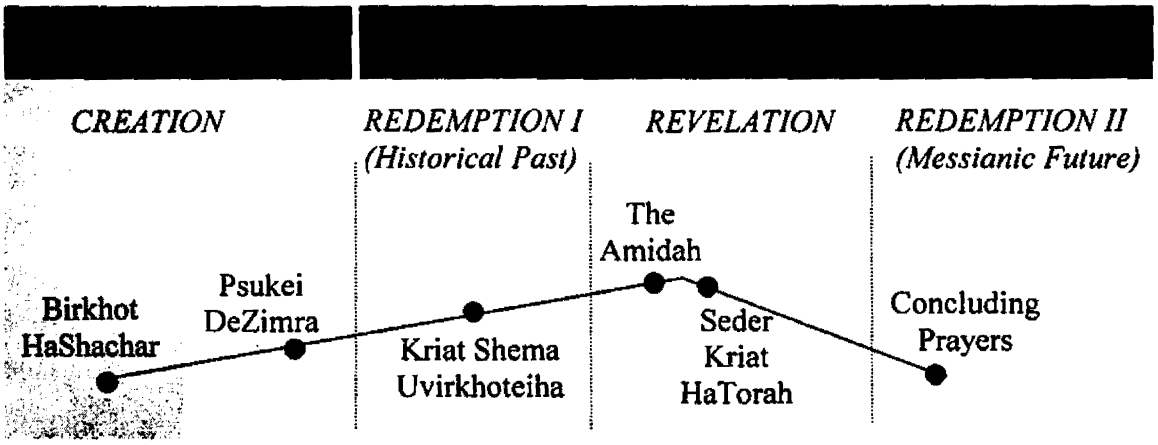
Taking a step back, the story of creation is followed by the hero myth, which includes the themes of redemption and revelation. Israel is initially united with God, is then separated and challenged with a perilous journey back including a voyage through water (the Reed Sea). Reunited with God, the hero attains the bounty from heaven and brings it down for the rest of the world. And so the rubrics of the Shabbat shacharit service may be viewed in mythological terms as follows:



Having said quite a bit in the preceding paragraphs, we will now examine the sections of *shacharit* dealing with the mythology of creation, redemption and revelation, one rubric at a time.

CREATION I: BIRKHOT HASHACHAR

Morning Blessings: Spiritual Preparation for Storytelling



As we are essentially telling two stories here, combining the creation and hero myths, the opening rubrics which tell the story of creation may be considered separate from the rest of the service. Indeed, traditionally the morning service is considered to be comprised of the last four rubrics, Kriat Shema Uvirkhoteiha through the concluding blessings.[154] This is because the official service does not begin until the *barchu*, the opening prayer of Kriat Shema Uvirkhoteiha.

Birkhot HaShachar is further estranged from the rest of the service as it originally was intended to be said privately within the home. These are blessings for the private processes of waking up and preparing oneself for the day to come.[155] Nevertheless, the Birkhot HaShachar play an important role in the development of creation mythology and for that reason, I will argue, have become added to the normative morning service as a companion to the Psukei DeZimrah. The rubric stresses self awareness and the daily miracles of being alive. This creates a fitting beginning to our story: Here we are, the

[154] Hammer, Or Hadash, xviii
[155] Steinsaltz, 88

modern iteration of Israel, survivors, searchers and joiners, coming together to tell our story once again. The Birkhot HaShachar lays out the gifts from God necessary to telling our story.

The *ma tovu* prayer thanks God for creating God's house as a place of glory. This house, *ohel,* can be interpreted as the world in which we live. We praise God for creating this environment for us to survive. This sentiment is then continued in the morning reading of Psalm 36, which says,

> "How precious is your constant love, O God. Mortals take shelter under your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your stream of delights; with you is the fountain of life; in your light we are bathed in light."[156]

The traditional hymn of Adon Olam further praises God for creation:

> "He is the eternal Lord who reigned before any being was created. At the time when all was made by his will, he was at once acknowledged as King. And at the end, when all shall cease to be, the revered God alone shall still be King."[157]

We then thank God for the creation of our body and soul, which eventually will be directed by the gift of Torah and utilized to perform mitzvoth. We thank God for our bodies in *asher yatzar*. These bodies are then brought to life through the entrance of spirit in *elohai neshama*, just as the dust was brought to life as Adam through God blowing the *neshama* soul/breath into him.

Birkhot HaShachar prepares us for communal storytelling by moving us from our natural inclination towards self-absorption towards communal awareness. We begin the morning thinking of our needs: *I* need to eat, *I* need to shower, *I* need to get dressed. In

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[156] Psalm 36:8-10
[157] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 62

order to break this pattern of vanity, we begin by praising God for making us who we are. We realize that we are truly fortunate for all that we have and admit that we are not responsible for our positions in life. We all rely upon the mercy of the ultimate creator. And so we begin by praising God for:

- Not making me a heathen.
- Not making me a slave.
- Not making me another gender or of another identity.

We then move from personal prayers voiced in the negative to positive praise for the bounties shared by our community. As God has saved us from the plagues of slavery or poverty, we think of those specific groups of people in need of God's miracles, thanking God for:

- Opening the eyes of *the blind.*
- Clothing *the naked.*
- Freeing *the captive.*
- Lifting up *the fallen.*

Thus we move from our personal riches to the needs of the community. Our transformation from vanity to thoughtfulness has begun. Finally, we move to our entire community of Israel, thanking God for:

- Making firm *each* person's steps.
- Girding *Israel* with strength.
- Crowning *Israel* with glory.

As the blessings of Birkhot HaShachar were originally said at home upon arising, each blessing corresponds to a specific action of waking up. The Talmud lists these blessings in order of our emergence from sleep to being fully alert.[158] Thus we say the blessing over God opening the eyes of the blind as we open our eyes, and clothing the

[158] Berachot 60b

naked as we get dressed. The blessing over making each person's steps firm is said while putting on shoes and the blessing for girding Israel with strength while putting on a belt. In this way, individuals dress themselves in blessing and in the image of God. They also cloth themselves in thoughtfulness and awareness of their community's needs. We are also made aware of the many steps of creation that went in to each of our body parts. We realize the miracle of creation within each of us. As Rabbi Donin summarizes these prayers,

> "They recognize God's role in everything a person does and in the satisfaction of every human need."[159]

In essence, the Birkhot HaShachar prepare us for the story to come by moving us from rugged individualism to communal identity with Israel. If Israel is to be the hero of our story, then it is important that we identify with the community from the very outset. The opening rubric of the morning service has moved our spiritual compasses from ourselves to our community, and we are now prepared to share our common mythology.

As an interesting side note, the morning blessings cited above can also be viewed as a preview of the creation redemption revelation story to come. In the first section of the blessings, we thank God for our creation, as a free people, in the divine image of God. We then move to the power of God's redemption to those in need. God lifts the fallen and clothes the naked. The message is that God's redemptive powers have no limit.

Finally, Israel is crowned with God's unique redemption, separating them from the rest of the world. Thus Israel is strengthened and honored through the distinct revelation of God to the community at Sinai. In sum, the Birkhot HaShachar both lays

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[159] Donin, To Pray, 191

the foundational groundwork for the storytelling to come, while also preparing us for the creation-redemption-revelation trope which will underpin the mythology to come.

Finally, the introductory section of the Birkhot HaShachar concludes with a restatement of God's unique holiness as the fashioner of creation:

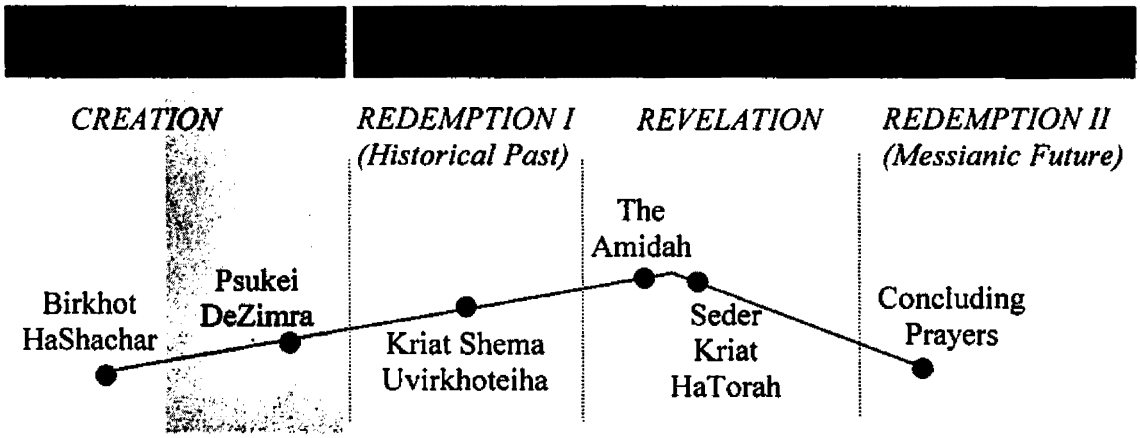
> "Thou wast the same before the world was created; thou hast been the same since the world has been created; thou art the same in this world, and thou wilt be the same in the world to come. Reveal thy holiness to those who sanctify thy name; manifest thy holiness throughout thy world."[160]

Like the psalms of *kabbalat shabbat*, a Psalm is then read for each particular day of the week, reminding us of the daily stage of creation. These psalms act as a final reminder of our complete dependence upon God's creation before moving on to our second rubric, Psukei DeZimrah. Here we will move past extolling God for creation to actually telling the story of God's construction of the earth. In Psalm 92, we praise God for ending the work of creation with humanity and the Shabbat. As the prayer Lecha Dodi recounts, this is the *sof ma'aseh b'machsheva techilah:* creation's final step yet its original inspiration.

[160] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 26

CREATION II: PSUKEI DEZIMRAH

Songs of Praise: Celebrating the Creation of the World



By the year 200 CE, when the Mishnah was edited, two major sections of liturgy – the Shema and its blessings (Kriat Shema Uvirkhoteiha) and the Amidah, the central prayer – had been formulated. It was common, however, for individuals to recite Psalms and other sections of the Bible as preparation for worship. Eventually these were included in the official service as well.[161] The Talmud records that some sages made it their daily practice to recite the book of Psalms before praying.[162] Elsewhere, it records that the sages would contemplate for an hour before praying in order to direct their hearts appropriately to God.[163]

Over time, the practice evolved into reading the final six Psalms, thus concluding the book and mirroring the six days of creation. Through the centuries, additional readings and prayers were added, all geared towards praising God for the miracle of

[161] Hammer, Or Hadash, 83
[162] Shabbat 118b
[163] Berachot 5:1

creation and the ability of humanity to take part in it on a daily basis. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz writes,

> "All of Psukei DeZimrah are words of poetry that appeal mainly to the emotions. Beyond their descriptive contents, they are hymns of praise for all of God's creation and for His loving kindness to Israel. The recital of these passages is meant to sweep the worshipper into also participating in this song of thanksgiving."[164]

The major mythological distinction between Birkhot HaShachar and Psukei DeZimrah is that while the former defines and explains God's role in creation, the latter unabashedly celebrates it. Birkhot HaShachar is ideological whereas Psukei DeZimrah is emotional. Hence the abundance of regaling Psalms and acrostical poems. Birkhot HaShachar constitutes a form of blessing and Psukei DeZimrah poetry. As Reuven Hammer explains,

> "[Psukei DeZimrah] has acquired its own character and purpose, well expressed in the blessings that open and close it. It is intended to be a unit of praise, adoration, melody, song, based on the legendary 'sweet singer of Israel'...There was a need for a unit of prayer that dealt not with the needs of Israel, nor with the dogmas Israel must accept and believe, but with the enthusiasm of worship, the wonder of the world, the appreciation of God's deeds in nature and in the history of Israel – an unrestrained affirmation of the beauty of life itself."[165]

Thus the entire rubric may be considered a celebration of creation, a necessary response to wonders outlined in the Birkhot HaShachar. It is fitting then that the rubric begins with the prayer *baruch she'amar*, saying,

> "Blessed be he who spoke, and the world came into being; blessed be he. Blessed be he who created the universe."[166]

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[164] Steinsaltz, 89
[165] Hammer, Entering Prayer, 119
[166] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 52

Rabbi Janet Marder comments on the connection of *baruch she'amar* to the story of creation, writing,

> "Baruch She-amar, composed by the rabbis, reflects God's ongoing presence in the ever-renewing creation. 'Blessed is the One who spoke' links to Genesis 1, where the world came into being through divine speech. But God doesn't then withdraw from creation and let it fend for itself; God nourishes and sustains all life with compassion. 'Compassion' in Hebrew is ovrn, from ovr, meaning 'womb'. Like a mother's enduring love for her child, so is God's care for all creatures."[167]

Creation is transformed from a historical incident to a constant force in the world. Just as in the Pesach seder, where historical slavery is depicted as ongoing servitude, so is the event of creation brought into our own lives. We celebrate our role in creation with a series of Psalms which extol God for this distinct role. On Shabbat, the Ashkenazi custom is to recite Psalms 19, 34, 90, 91, 135, 136, 33, 92, 93, 145-50. In the Sephardi tradition, the order is somewhat different and Psalms 98, 121-124 are added.[168] In the updated Reform prayer book, Mishkan T'filah, Psalms 100, 145 and 150 are recited. The modern shift towards Psalm 100 is understandable, as the content is clearly imbued with creation imagery:

> "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us, and we our His, His people, and the flock of His pasture."[169]

The final Psalm, Psalm 150 ends with the words, "Let every living thing that has breath praise the Lord, halleluyah."[170] The word for breath or soul, *neshamah,* is then drawn upon in the following prayer, *nishmat kol chai.* This prayer, called the Blessing of

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[167] Mishkan T'filah, 29
[168] Hammer, Or Chadash, 87
[169] Psalm 100:2-3
[170] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 332

Song,[171] depicts God as the source of eternal creation. We consider what it would be like to have the creative powers of God. The prayer reads,

> "Were our mouth filled with song as the sea [is with water], 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 moon; were our hands spread out in prayer as the eagles of the sky, and our feet as swift as the deer – we should still be unable to thank thee and bless thy name, Lord our God and God of our fathers, for the one thousandth of the countless millions of favors which thou hast conferred on our fathers and on us."[172]

Even if we had all of these creative powers of God, still we would not be able to fathom the greatness of creation in its totality. We ourselves are recipients of God's constant power of creation; not creators ourselves. Thus like every other part of creation, we owe God our thanks and praise for including us in the process of creation.

The rubric of Psukei DeZimrah ends with the prayer *yishtabach,* a final word of praise to the creator of heaven and earth before moving into the formal service and the next section of mythology. The section ends,

> "Praised are you, sovereign of wonders, crowned in adoration, delighting in song, majesty, the life of the universe."[173]

This last verse contains fifteen words, following the traditional opening of *Baruch atah Adonai.* The prayer itself contains fifteen expressions of praise for God. Both may be seen as allusions to a divine name for God (י"ה) with the numerical value of fifteen. Thus we pack this last moment of praise with all of the emotion and exuberance that can possibly fit. Such is the only fitting response to the wonders of creation and our place in the world.

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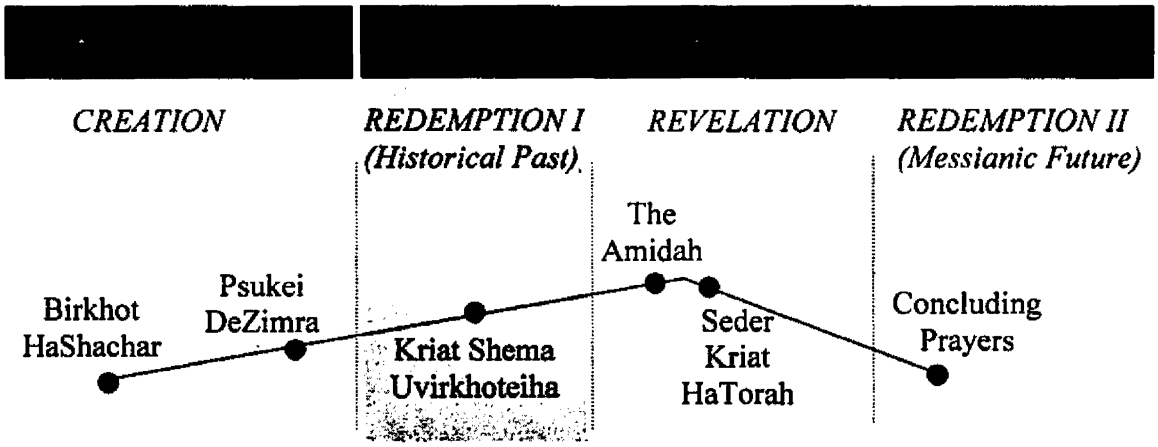
[171] Pesachim, 118a
[172] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 332
[173] Mishkan T'filah, 56

We are now ready to move past creation and into the heart of hero mythology. The stage has been set: The world is created, forming the environment in which life may thrive and humans may act. Yet human action comes with the price of morality and responsibility. The separation from the creator is inevitable, whether it be in Eden, the Nile river or elsewhere. The next part of our story will tell of the hero's (Israel's) struggle to return to the creator and the original purity which was fostered through creation. Yet like any hero, Israel must play its part in this journey. And so we descend into Egypt, to tell the story of God's redemption of our people, and to foreshadow Israel's role in the future redemption of the world.

REDEMPTION I: KRIAT SHEMA UVIRKHOTEIHA

The Shema and Its Blessings: Israel's Redemption from Egyptian Bondage



The rubric of the Shema and its Blessings marks a transition in the Shabbat morning liturgy. It is preceded by a *chatzi kaddish*, a sort of bookend marking the end of one section and the beginning of another. The Shema and its Blessings details the process of acquaintance between God and Israel. Although God has created man, their relationship has not been established. The hero and the God are still foreign to one another. It is fitting then that we begin with the *barchu* prayer, a sort of introduction between strangers. After acknowledging the miracle of and Israel's complete dependence upon God's creation, the two sides strive to know one another. It is in this section that this relationship is first clearly defined.

Israel celebrates the gifts of knowledge and ability in the *ahavah rabah* and pledges to use them to glorify God's name. In the *veahavta,* God pledges to guard and cherish Israel as a sacred people. God will protect the people from external threats and will bless the people with abundance, health and prosperity, so long as they remain loyal to him. In return, Israel will observe God's commandments and swear complete

allegiance to their one and only God. A system of reward and punishment is meted out, as God pledges to protect Israel so long as the mitzvoth are observed. Should Israel stray from the pact, it will be punished accordingly. Both sides agree to the pact and the stage is set.

Though clearly defined, the agreement between God and Israel lacks support, as God's power of suzerainty has yet to be illustrated. Thus we reach the second part of the rubric, *emet v'yatsiv* and the *mi chamocha,* where God's redemption of Israel from Egyptian servitude proves God's unique power as protector. In Israel's greatest moment of need, God does not fail to act upon the agreement, rescuing the people from bondage. With God's power confirmed and the pact enforced, we move eventually to the next rubric, the *amidah,* in which mutual trust is transformed into transparent and vulnerable dedication. But for now, we will examine the liturgical turns to our story, as the pact is defined and God's redemption witnessed by the entire world.

As was covered in the earlier section on the Shema and its Blessings, the *barchu* introduces our two characters to one another. As Rosenzweig has illustrated, creation provides the initial impetus for our action in the world. The hero's journey begins with recognition of God's power of creation and humans' utter dependence upon this life source. Israel instantly recognizes God's magnificence, bowing to the sovereign responsible for the wonders of creation as experienced in the first two rubrics of prayer. And so we enter into a series of prayers acknowledging God as the creator of the universe, and extolling God for these many deeds of wonder. One example of such praise is *El Adon:*

> "God is the Lord of all creation;
> Blessed and praised is he by every soul

His greatness and goodness fill the universe;
Knowledge and wisdom surround him.
He is exalted above the celestial beings,
And adorned in glory above the chariot.
Purity and justice stand before his throne;
Kindness and mercy are in her glorious presence."[174]

Similar praise for creation is found in the prayers *yotser or, la'el asher shavat* and *la'el baruch ne'imot yiteinu.* Having praised God for the act of creation, the liturgy moves towards defining the relationship between God and Israel with the *ahavah rabah* prayer. The prayer thanks God for the faculties necessary in order to perform mitzvoth. Even our ability to keep our end of the pact is ultimately dependent upon God's power. And so we ask God for help in fulfilling all of God's commandments. The text reads,

"Our father, merciful Father, thou who art ever compassionate,
have pity on us and inspire us to understand and discern, to perceive, learn
and teach, to observe, do, and fulfill gladly all the teachings of thy Torah.
Enlighten our eyes in thy Torah; attach our heart to thy commandments;
unite our heart to love and reverence thy name, so that we may never be
put to shame."[175]

The prayer ends by praising God for choosing the people Israel with love. Performing the mitzvoth is an honor, a form of service to a royal sovereign. This love is echoed in the evening service with the prayer *ahavat olam,* in which God is similarly praised for caring for Israel with love, rewarding the people with the yoke of the commandments. These prayers are similar as they are essentially two versions of the same prayer, one designated for evening and the other for day by the Talmud.[176] And so God enables the people to fulfill God's laws, which they happily agree to observe. Yet

[174] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 340
[175] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 344
[176] Brachot 11b

full confirmation of Israel's sole loyalty to God comes with the following prayer, the *shema.*

According to the Talmud, the recitation of the *shema* represents fulfillment of the paramount commandment of acceptance of God's absolute sovereignty, the yoke of heaven.[177] By declaring that God is one, unique and indivisible, we subordinate every facet of our personalities, possessions – our very lives – to His will.[178] Thus the *shema* signifies the point at which Israel officially agrees to the pact with God. Total allegiance is declared and the yoke of heaven is fitted on our hero. As mentioned before, the enlarged *ayin* and *dalet* of the *shema* identify all of Israel as *edim* or witness to God's sovereignty. The *shema* is Israel's signature on the dotted line. As Maimonides writes,

> "In the Shema, we declare our acceptance of the yoke of Divine rule. This consists of three elements: an affirmation of belief in His unity and His sovereignty over the world; a deep, abiding, and unconditional love of God; and the study of His teachings."[179]

Lawrence Hoffman comments on this idea, writing,

> "The central feature of the Sh'ma and its Blessings is the Sh'ma itself, the first section of which (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) is called 'accepting the yoke of the kingdom of heaven' (*kabbalat ol malkhut shamayin).* Its first verse (Deuteronomy 6:4) 'Hear O Israel...' and the response, 'Blessed is...' stand out liturgically as an apt summary of Judaism's basic monotheistic principle and the hope for all humanity that flows from it."[180]

This acceptance of God's yoke is then followed by the *veahavta.* As previously mentioned, this prayer may be considered an instruction manual on how this yoke will be passed on to future generations. While the *shema* obligates the speaker, the *veahavta*

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[177] Brachot 14a
[178] Scherman, 90
[179] Maimonides, Hilchot Kriat Shema 1:2
[180] Hoffman, Vol 4, 88

obligates their progeny, creating a legacy of servitude to God. Israel adorns itself with signs of obedience to God, from frontlets between the eyes to mezuzot on their doorposts. This pact with God is not an ancillary relationship in their busy lives. Rather, it is the determining factor towards how they will identify themselves and their greater community.

The second paragraph of the *veahavta,* often identified by its first words *ve haya im shamoa,* defines the system of reward and punishment between sovereign and people. If Israel keeps the commandments then God will bless them with fertility, abundance and protection. Should Israel fail to fulfill their responsibilities, God will punish them with curses otherwise reserved for their enemies. In essence, Israel will become the enemy, with God's anger blazing against them. This reaction is due to God's identity as a caring and loving God who desires to be in relationship with his people. As Rabbi Donin writes,

> "Judaism's belief in reward and punishment is also tied in with still another basic Jewish concept: Divine Care or Providence (*Hashgahah Pratit).* God didn't just create the world and the people in it and turn His back on them, unconcerned with that happens. He is very much concerned with the world and cares for mankind. He wants people to meet His highest expectations; He is sorely grieved when they do not."[181]

It is this grief which turns to rage when Israel fails to fulfill its contractual obligations.

As noted earlier, the chanting of the *veahavta* is accompanied by the rituals of gathering the *tsitsit* of the *tallit,* as the third and final paragraph of the *veahavta* commands the people to wear *tsitsit.* The *tallit* represents the 613 mitzvoth of the Torah: the numerical value or *gematria* of the word equals 600 and the individual strings are divided into eight strands with five knots. The sum of these numbers is 613. And so we

[181] Donin, To Pray, 153

conclude the fine print of God's contract with Israel, sealed with the *shema* and confirmed through rituals such as *mezuzot* and *tsitsit*. Israel learns how to wear its love for God upon its sleeve. As the Talmud says,

> "Beloved is Israel to God, for the Holy One, blessed be He, surrounded them with the commandments of tefillin for their heads, tefillin for their arms, tsitsit for their clothing, and mezuzot for their doors."[182]

We now reach the second half of this rubric, where we move from the contract to God's fulfillment of his obligations. Israel attests to God's singular ability to save the people from peril, as exemplified in the escape from Egypt. The second begins by testifying to God's redemptive powers. The liturgy reads:

> "True it is that the eternal God is our King, the Stronghold of Jacob and our saving Shield...True it is that thou are the Lord our God and the God of our fathers, our King and the King of our father, our Redeemer and the Redeemer of our father, our Maker and saving Stronghold, our Deliverer and Rescuer. Thou art eternal; there is no God besides thee."[183]

The liturgy continues by extolling God for coming to Israel's aid in the past. God is the rock and shield of Israel, continually rescuing Israel and protecting the people from imminent danger. Egypt is just one example among the many times that Israel faced sudden peril. Thus the protection of Israel was not a one time event. Just as Israel observes the mitzvoth from moment to moment, so too does God protect Israel with equal fervor. Like creation, redemption is an ongoing process, occurring moment by moment. God's redemption is an omnipresent force in our lives.

We ritualize our dependence upon God's protection by kissing the *tsitsit* at two points during this section, on the words *emet* (truth) and *kayamet* (forever). The *brit*

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[182] Menachot 43b
[183] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 348

between God and Israel is an eternal truth and we acknowledge that without the mitzvoth and yoke of heaven we would not merit God's divine safeguarding. We kiss the *tsitsit* to show that we carry this eternal promise to adhere to Israel's agreement with God. We release the *tsitsit* after *kayemet* and before the *geulah*, showing that we have faith in God's redemption and our place in the world to come, where we will no longer need our mitzvoth to protect us.

The liberation from Egypt receives unique status as the scene of Israel's redemption by the grace of God. This incident was God's opportunity to display God's unparalleled abilities and singular relationship with Israel to all the other nations of the world. It is for this reason that God hardens Pharaoh's heart and brings forth all ten plagues. As the Torah recounts,

> "But I will harden Pharoah's heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt...And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst."[184]

And so we arrive at the *mi chamocha,* in which God is praised as the greatest deity among a chorus of false pretenders. The liturgy here is monolatrous and not monotheistic. That is, it professes the greatness of one God over many others versus the sole existence of a singular God. Just as God's might is the greatest of all Gods, so too is his relationship with Israel more steadfast than that of any other deity and their people. The liturgy quotes the Song of the Sea from Exodus, reading,

> "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the mighty? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, awe-inspiring in renown, doing wonders?"[185]

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[184] Exodus 6:3, 6:5
[185] Exodus 15:11

The chanting of *mi chamocha* itself constitutes a ritual as the congregation reenacts the exodus from Egypt. Just as the Song of the Sea was sung by the Israelites, so is it traditional to chant this section fervently, as though we ourselves were walking out of Egypt. As is the Passover seder, each individual sees themselves as personally liberated from servitude to man and passed into servitude to God.

In the *mi chamocha,* the hero Israel is saved from great danger and reunited with the creator God. Israel has now faced the great depths of hazard and has survived unscathed. God has proven his ability to carry out his end of the contract and thus has reinforced his status as our sovereign. If the *shema* voiced our belief in God, the *mi chamocha* shows that God can walk the walk. Israel is protected because of its faith in God. It is for this reason that Israel is asked to commemorate the Passover holiday before the actual event of liberation takes place. Complete redemption is only merited by the true believer. It makes sense then that the *shema* and its following paragraphs precede the *mi chamocha.* Loyalty must first be professed in order to secure divine protection and providence. And so our hero Israel survives the threat of destruction, due to the power of faith in a redemptive God.

The liturgy now makes a sharp turn from historical redemption to future redemption with the rubric's final paragraph, *tsur yisrael.* The liturgy reads,

> "Rock of Israel, arise to the help of Israel; deliver Judah and Israel, as thou hast promised. Our Redeemer, thou are the Lord of hosts, the Holy One of Israel. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who has redeemed Israel."[186]

[186] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 350

As we have shown through this rubric that we preserve ancient Israel's faith in God and accept the eternal yoke of heaven, so too do we ask God to maintain the promise of redemption. As we are the modern iterations of the Israelites, God's promise to Israel applies to us. We call for the future redemption of all of Israel in the messianic era. The expression "Rock of Israel" is borrowed from Isaiah 30, which illustrates an apocalyptical vision. Isaiah says,

> "Behold Adonai Himself comes from afar In blazing wrath, With a heavy burden -- His lips full of fury, His tongue like devouring fire, and his breath like a raging torrent reaching halfway up the neck -- To set a misguiding yoke upon nations And a misleading bridle upon the jaws of peoples. For you, there shall be singing as on a night when a festival is hallowed; there shall be rejoicing as when they march with flute, with timbrels, and with lyres to the ***Rock of Israel*** on the mount of Adonai. For Adonai will make His majestic voice heard and display the sweep of His arm in raging wrath, in a devouring blaze of fire, in tempest, and rainstorm, and hailstones."

When we call upon God as the Rock of Israel, we are asking for a specific attribute of the deity; like the one we call a *man of war*[187] in the Song of the Sea. This is the warrior God who has come to our defense and will do so again in the messianic era. We foretell this future redemption to which we will return in our final rubric, the closing prayers. There, the final redemption of the world will occur, bringing the hero's bounty to the rest of the world in an act of universal salvation.

Just as the theme of creation found in the first two rubrics carried into the beginning of the Shema and its Blessings, so too does the theme of future redemption carry into the next rubric, the *amidah*. The Talmud tells us that the blessing of redemption should be said immediately before the *amidah*, since *tefilah* (meaning the

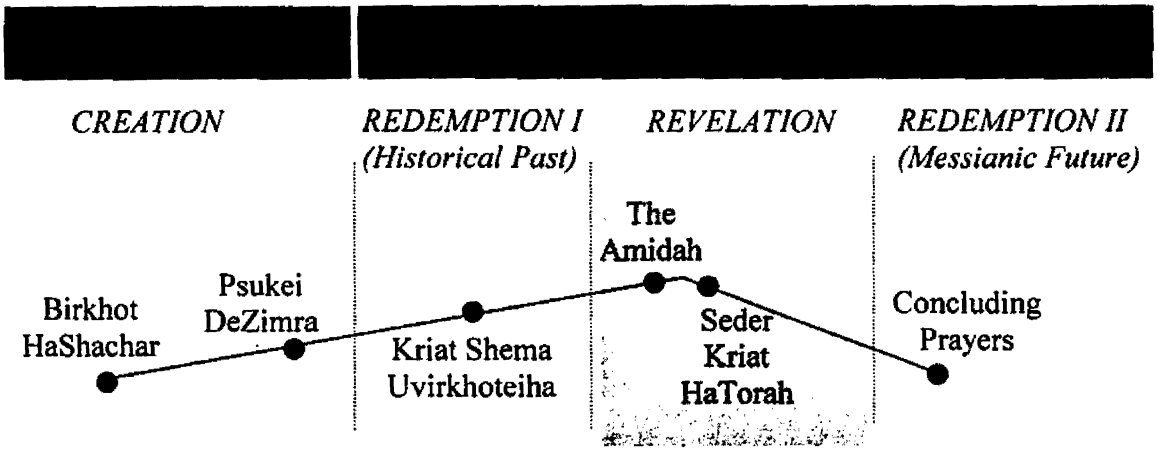
[187] Exodus 15:3

amidah) should be joined to *geulah* (redemption).[188] Likewise, we rise during this final paragraph of the Shema and its Blessings in anticipation of the *amidah* and before entering direct conversation with God. We stand at the words "arise to the help of Israel." Just as the Israelites showed their faith by commemorating the Passover holiday before the act of redemption, so too do we profess our faith by standing here on the eve of future redemption. Like our ancient ancestors, we stand with God and profess God's holiness even before the act of redemption has taken place. The faith we first professed in the *shema* lives with us, meriting not only past and future redemption, but also the unmitigated presence of God, which we address in the next rubric, the *amidah*.

[188] Berachot 4b, 9b

REVELATION I: AMIDAH

The Amidah: Israel Meets God Face to Face



Having experienced God's power of redemption, the hero now enters into a new era with the deity. The sovereign contract has been fulfilled and God has demonstrated the ability to shield Israel from the most destructive threats. At the same time, Israel has proved its loyalty to God, singing God's praises through the separated Reed Sea, adorning itself with the commandments, and swearing allegiance to God's complete sovereignty. Both characters have built trust in one another; so much that a new era of transparency and integrity now dawns. God and man reach out to one another in a moment of ultimate revelation.

The *amidah* or standing prayer, often referred to simply as the *tefilah,* represents the pinnacle of the liturgical experience. Everything covered up to here has been said with this moment in mind. Only now are we prepared to engage God from a standpoint of openness, honesty and appreciation. Reenacting the Israelites at Sinai, we reveal ourselves and in turn, God reveals his true nature to us. The name *amidah* reflects our

having stopped to stand in the presence of God.[189] We enter into God's royal court and address God directly as his royal subjects. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz writes,

> The worshipper has, so to speak, ascended from world to world, entering from one room to another until he reaches the innermost sanctum, standing now face-to-face with the Utmost Holiness itself. This is the moment for direct communion – to plead and give thanks, to praise and make supplication. The *amidah* is thus the meeting point at which man stands before his Divine Father, Creator, and Ruler."[190]

Entering into God's court, we take three steps forward in order to show our new approach and our respect for God's majesty. The idea that one approaches God to pray is found throughout the Bible, such as, "And Abraham approached,"[191] and "And Elijah approached."[192] From a mythological perspective, the *amidah* represents the real meeting of the hero Israel and God. Having witnessed the process of redemption, Israel's faith and awareness of God's power have grown. Israel is enlightened to God's true nature and is overcome with awe and emotion. Whereas Israel once acted from faith, now Israel moves with knowledge of God's sovereign power. Both God and Israel are exposed and vulnerable to one another in a way that could not have been possible before the redemption. Israel has entered the wilderness, utterly dependent upon God's providence. At the same time, God has staked his entire reputation as *the* God on this stiff-necked people. As Moses argued to God after the Israelites built the golden calf,

> "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying: For evil did He bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people."[193]

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[189] Donin, To Pray, 70
[190] Steinsaltz, 91
[191] Genesis 18:23
[192] Kings I 18:36
[193] Exodus 32:12

Israel has been pushed to its limits at the edge of the Reed Sea, looked into the eyes of death in the pursuing soldiers, and recognized God as the ultimate truth in the universe. In return, God has revealed himself through the process of redemption in a way never seen before. The sea was split and the foreign soldiers vanquished. Redemption has ushered in a new era between God and Israel; one of transparency and intimacy. Truly meeting each other for the first time, God and Israel interact directly. This interaction will eventually lead to the next rubric of the Torah service, which symbolizes the marriage of God and Israel and the intertwining of our two characters into one.

Like the rubric before it, the *amidah* begins by recalling the theme of the previous section. Here, the section begins with the theme of future redemption. The *amidah* begins with the line, "O Lord, open thou my lips, that my mouth may declare thy praise."[194] This line is taken from Psalm 51, in which King David, having realized his transgressions regarding Bathsheeba and Uriah, repents directly to God. The Psalm begins,

> "For the leader. A psalm of David. When Nathan the prophet came to him after he had come to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, as befits Your faithfulness; in keeping with Your abundant compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity, and purify me of my sin; for I recognize my transgressions, and am ever conscious of my sin."

Why do we begin this prayer by quoting David's confession? Having just implored God as the "Rock of Israel" to bring about redemption, we immediately quote David, the seed of the messiah. The liturgy acts like a call and response, asking for a redeemer and then answering with David. Furthermore, the Davidic quote illustrates a member of Israel communicating with God directly in open expression of feelings.

[194] Psalm 51:17

David's words serve as an example for our own prayers. Finally, the fact that David repents for sinning serves as a helpful guide in dealing with our own transgressions. Though Israel has committed to a pact with God, laden with severe rewards and punishments, God allows for human error. Even the great King David makes mistakes. The important lesson is to confess our sins openly and address God from a position of submission and piety. True revelation demands the integrity of both parties. We take advantage of this opportunity through the prayers we offer now. As Marc Brettler writes,

> "'*Adonai, open my lips*' Psalm 51:17, recited by David after being confronted by Nathan the prophet about his affair with Bathsheba. Its invocation here establishes the absolute dependence of human beings (who are fundamentally sinful) upon a beneficent God (see Psalm 51:7 – 'I was brought forth in iniquity; my mother conceived me in sin.')"[195]

It is customary to take three steps back, three forward during this introductory line to the *amidah.* This choreography allows us to approach God as if for the first time and begin our prayers with proper *kavanah* or intention. Before entering into the royal court, we pause and prepare ourselves so that we may appear our best. Daniel Landes writes,

> "Say the sentence in an undertone while taking three short steps backward, beginning with the right foot, and then three steps forward, as if approaching a sovereign."[196]

The ritual of taking three steps forward is also connected to the rubric's theme of revelation. As we have been climbing Sinai throughout the liturgy, we reach its summit here in the *amidah.* The mythological act of revelation occurs on Mount Sinai, where Moses ascended to meet with God and receive the Ten Commandments. It is the point of ultimate revelation. And so our taking three steps forward also symbolizes the path of

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[195] Hoffman, Vol. 2, 52
[196] Hoffman, Vol. 2, 56

Moses, who advanced through three levels of holiness when he went up to Sinai.[197] Before reaching the summit of revelation, we take the final three steps and bask in God's divine presence. Finally, as we begin the *avot* prayer, we bow low to God. We have already bowed at the *barchu* before retelling our history with God. We now bow once again facing the future, and so reintroduce ourselves as the keepers of God's promise.

Traditionally, the *amidah* is separated into three parts: praise, petition and thanksgiving.[198] On Shabbat we omit our petitions to God. One reason for this is that even God gets to rest on the seventh day. The introductory prayers of praise in the *amidah* are meant to introduce God to Israel in a radically honest way. We create a setting for direct communication with God through affection and praise. A midrash explains this sentiment through allegory:

> This may be compared to an advocate, standing on the podium, who opens not with the needs of his client but with the praise of the king. 'Happy is the world because he is king! Happy is the world because he is its judge! The sun shines on us for his sake. The moon shines on us for his sake.' The audience joins him in praising the king...So too with the eighteen blessings (*amidah),* which the early prophets ordained that Israel should recite daily, commence not with the needs of Israel but with the praise of God."[199]

And so we now play the part of the hero, having witnessed God's power of redemption and thus fulfillment of his covenantal oath, entering into dialogue with the other. We ascend from Buber's *I-it* to the *I-thou* relationship, in which we address God not as a means towards our personal ends, but as an end in itself. Even the weekday petitions only ask for those things which will allow us to best fulfill God's commandments and bring about God's ultimate redemption. As Reuven Hammer writes,

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[197] Scherman, 98
[198] Hoffman, Vol. 2, 23
[199] Sifre Deuteronomy 353

> "There are two ways of looking at these thirteen blessings. One can understand them either as discrete requests pertaining to the good of the individual and of all Israel or as a progression of requests for the steps that lead to redemption."[200]

From a mythological standpoint, we play the part of the hero Israel, interacting directly with God. Our models for this interaction are the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; as well as Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel. All of these characters encountered God directly through moments of revelation. It is for this reason that we begin the prayer by hearkening back to the individuals who first earned God's oath of protection. We introduce ourselves to God through these ancient heroes. We are the modern inheritors of their legacy, and therefore of their relationship with God.

According to *Sefer Ha-Eshkol* and *Shibolei Ha-Leket,* thirteenth-century works reflecting earlier midrashim, the three introductory paragraphs of praise are meant to correspond to each of the three patriarchs. The first paragraph – God's greatness – is connected to Abraham, the first to recognize this greatness. The second, God's miraculous powers in sustaining life and restoring the dead, was first recited by Isaac and the angels at the time of the binding of Isaac. In fact, there are midrashim that even tell that Isaac was actually slain and then came back from the dead.[201] He was the patriarch who experienced in his flesh the meaning of death and resurrection, and so blessed God who gives and restores life. The third, God's awesome holiness, was the creation of Jacob and the angels when he experienced this transcendent aspect of God in his dream of the ladder to heaven.[202] Thus we utilize these archetypal models of the hero in communicating with God.

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[200] Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, 174
[201] Spiegel, xviii
[202] Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, 173

Perhaps the most powerful archetype of Israel as hero is found in Moses. Again, if we consider the service as a journey to Sinai and back, then we have indeed taken Moses' final three steps up Sinai where we will encounter God directly. The Torah recalls that after the incident of the golden calf, Moses asks God to reveal himself. The text reads,

> "And He answered, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name Adonai, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. But,' He said, 'you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live.' And the Lord said, "See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."[203]

Having ascended Sinai, the congregant plays the part of Moses during the *amidah*, entering into direct contact with God. In this way, all preceding liturgy is but preparation for this moment. We stand facing East, towards the seat of God's presence on earth, the temple in Jerusalem. And like Moses, we come into direct contact with God in a moment of mystical exultation. Just as Moses wore a veil to shield the radiance on his face from speaking with God, so may we consider the custom of bringing one's *tallit* over one's head a parallel ritual, enshrouding the individual in privacy before beginning the *amidah*. We recall Moses' journey and shield ourselves from the power of God's direct presence.

Finally, the narrative of the hero's communication with God is found in the final prayer of the opening praises of God, the *kedusha* (sanctification). This prayer is highlighted by quotes from two prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel. It reads,

> "We sanctify thy name in the world even and they sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by thy prophet: 'They keep calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his

[203] Exodus 33:19-23

glory.[204] Then with a loud sound, mighty and strong, they make their voice heard; upraising themselves toward the Seraphim, they respond by exclaiming: Blessed – Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his abode.[205,,206]

This prayer alludes to two distinct moments of revelation in the Hebrew Bible. The first moment depicts the prophet Isaiah witnessing God's presence in his holy court. The text reads,

> "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one called unto another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

At the point of reading the line from Isaiah, the congregant is instructed to stand with his feet together and rise on his toes with each calling of *kadosh.* While this tradition may be attributed to God's holiness in heaven, on earth and in time,[207] it is also associated with the Seraphim themselves. The book of Ezekiel describes the Seraphim as single legged beings, hovering around God in a cloud of smoke and fire:

> "In the center of it were also the figures of four creatures. And this was their appearance: They had the figures of human beings. However, each had four faces, and each of them had four wings; the legs of each were fused into a single rigid leg, and the feet of each were like a single calf's hoof; and their sparkle was like the luster of burnished bronze."[208]

The Talmud understands Ezekiel to say that the Seraphim have a single foot.[209] Therefore the choreography of this section indicates that we ourselves become Seraphim

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[204] Isaiah 6:3
[205] Ezekiel 3:12
[206] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 352
[207] Hoffman, Vol 2., 89
[208] Ezekiel 1:5-7
[209] Berachot 10b

in this prayer, joining God's royal court in the moment of revelation. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner and Nechmia Polen write,

> "The Isaiah passage goes on to describe how the prophet saw a seraf (a fiery angel) 'fly' with a pair of wings. 'And with two the seraf would fly.' Thus, through our own sacred choreography we literally 'fly' just like the angels themselves! And this is the origin, suggests Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, of 'fluttering' on one's feet, standing on our tiptoes with each mention of *kadosh* 'holy.'"[210]

The idea of joining God's heavenly chorus is found elsewhere in the liturgy as well. The second line of the *Shema*, "Blessed be the name of his glorious majesty forever and ever"[211] is often attributed to the angels upon Mount Sinai. A famous midrash attests to how Moses stole the blessing from the angels:

> When Moses went up on high (to receive the Torah), he overheard the attending angels saying to God: 'Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity', and he brought this prayer down to the Jewish people. Why do we not then say it publicly? R. Asi said: 'That which was stolen from the palace of the King, we do not adorn ourselves with it in public; but rather (wear it) in the house. But on Yom Kippur, when we are as pure as the attending angels, we say out loud, Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom for all eternity.'"[212]

Thus as in the *kedusha,* we mimic God's adorning angels in the moment of revelation. In doing so, we also celebrate Isaiah as the witness of this revelation, much like Moses and the patriarchs before him. Only in the *amidah* do we reach close enough to God to join his holy court in praise.

Like Isaiah, Ezekiel describes a momentary revelation of God as joining the ranks of the winged Seraphim. Ezekiel writes,

> "Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound: 'Blessed is the Presence of the Lord, from His place,' with the sound of the wings of the creatures beating against one another, and

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[210] Hoffman, Vol. 2, 89
[211] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 344
[212] Midrash Devarim Rabba 2:36

> the sound of the wheels beside them -- a great roaring sound. A spirit seized me and carried me away. I went in bitterness, in the fury of my spirit, while the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.[213]

And so we encounter a third choral blessing of God, offering praise in a moment of revelation. Through all of these moments, the congregant assumes the position of the hero, from Abraham to Ezekiel, witnessing God in his full unobstructed Glory. We have ascended to the ranks of God's holy legions, regaling God directly. The following praises of the Shabbat *amidah* are thus offered from the perspective of a member of God's inner court.

Thus the hero has made the full journey from creation to revelation. This journey is made all the more clear in a famous midrash about the creation of human beings. In the midrash, the angels argue over the merits of creating man. Finally, God overrules any protests and creates man. The midrash reads:

> "Rabbi Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, 'Let him be created,' whilst others urged, 'let him not be created.' Thus it is written, 'Love and Truth fought together, Righteousness and Peace combated each other'[214] Love said, 'Let him be created, because he will dispense acts of love'; Truth said, 'Let him not be created, because he is compounded of falsehood'; Righteousness said, ' Let him be created, because he will perform righteous deeds'; Peace said, 'Let him not be created, because he is full of strife' What did the Lord do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou despise Thy seal? Let Truth arise from the earth!' Hence it is written, 'Let truth spring up from the earth.'[215]...Rabbi Huna the Elder of Sepphoris, said: 'While the ministering angels were arguing with each other and disputing with each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, created him. Said He to them: "What can ye avail? Man has already been made!"".[216]

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[213] Ezekiel 3:12-14
[214] Psalm 135:11
[215] Psalm 135:12
[216] Bereshit Rabbah 8:5

Thus the human being, whom many angels doubted in the moment of creation, has ascended here in the *kedusha* of the *amidah* to the court itself! The hero has ascended to an equal position with the ministering angels, sharing a full view of God's revelation. Through the journey from creation to redemption to revelation, the hero has proved his merit through love and righteous deeds, as foreseen by some of the angels. The hero has promised to love God in the *veahavta* prayer and to perform the mitzvoth in the *veahavta* and *ahavah rabah* prayers. At the same time, he has avoided the perils of falsehood and strife. Thus he now merits full membership into God's royal court. So it was for our patriarchs, as well as Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel. When we pray the *amidah*, we join the ranks of these heroes, having ascended to the point of God's complete revelation.

We then move from praising God's own *kedusha* in heaven to God's sharing the *kedusha* with us through Shabbat *kodesh*. We first quote the Torah in order to illustrate our merit as keepers of God's Sabbath. The *veshamru* prayer, taken directly from Exodus 31, features God's wish that the Sabbath be an everlasting sign between God and Israel.[217] By citing this passage here, we demonstrate our status as custodians of God's glory; the modern iterations of the heroes of the *kedusha*. Our prayers and actions today attest to God's sovereignty and our mutual interdependence. Just as God sustains us through his providence, so do we remain witnesses and evidence of his power by our fulfillment of the mitzvoth, as highlighted today on the Sabbath.

Finally, we extol God for those capacities we may indeed utilize on the Sabbath: the power to rest and enjoy the Shabbat, to pray, to offer thanks and praise, and to make peace. As a foreshadowing of the final rubric's theme of universal redemption, we praise

[217] Exodus 31:16-17

God here for those qualities which we hope that all will share one day. As the Sabbath is foretaste of the world to come, these qualities of peace and rest are celebrated as hints of the ultimate redemption.

We close the conversation with God by returning to where we started: the lips we asked God to open for us. As the *amidah* comes to a close, we say, "My God, guard my tongue from evil, and my lips from speaking falsehood."[218] As we merited the ascent to God's court through the avoidance of falsehood, we ask God to help us continue on our path. We close the lips which we opened in David's words from Psalm 51. Thus as we open as though addressing a sovereign, we close in the same way. It is customary to take three steps backwards at the very end of the *amidah*, before reciting the words "May he who creates peace in the heavens."[219] After stepping back, we bow slightly from the waist three times. So do we as subjects take leave of our king and so do we exit from the presence of the Sovereign of the universe.[220]

The hero descends, having taken in God's full revelation. But like Moses, the hero returns a changed person, forever imprinted with God's divine mark. So Exodus tells us,

> "So Moses came down from Mount Sinai. And as Moses came down from the mountain bearing the two tablets of the pact, Moses was not aware that the skin of his face was radiant, since he had spoken with Him. Aaron and all the Israelites saw that the skin of Moses' face was radiant; and they shrank from coming near him. But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the chieftains in the assembly returned to him, and Moses spoke to them."[221]

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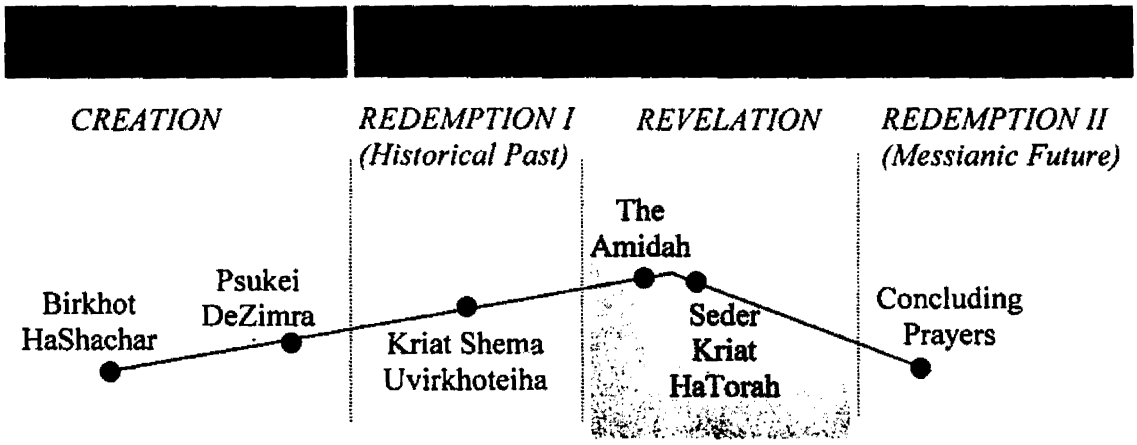
[218] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 360
[219] Ibid, 360
[220] Donin, To Pray, 72
[221] Exodus 34:29-31

Moses' transformation is not limited to his physical appearance. Moses descends from Sinai with a renewed faith, inspired by his direct contact with God. Moses leaves God's presence and enters his community, ready to contribute the gifts he has received from above. So too does the congregant exit the fervently personal prayer of the *amidah* and reemerge with a new sense of purpose and dedication. The hero is transformed, eager to devote his new sense of purpose to a world awaiting redemption.

REVELATION II: SEDER KRIAT HATORAH

The Torah Service: The Union of God and Hero



Having undergone turbulent times in redemption, leading to a period of honesty and openness in revelation, God and the hero unite as one in the Torah service. With the Torah serving as the *ketubah* and heaven and earth as witnesses, God and Israel are bound in everlasting covenant. In making this marriage public, the wedding contract is brought for each individual of Israel to examine and testify to its holiness. At the same time, as we take three steps back at the closing of the *amidah*, we recall Moses' descent down Mount Sinai. And so we take the Torah from its lofty position on the bimah and bring it down to the people, just as Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai. The Torah is paraded around the synagogue, giving each congregant the opportunity to touch or kiss it as it passes by. The Torah is then read before the congregation, according to the commandment found in it,

> "Assemble the people, men and women and little children, and the stranger within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn and thus revere the Lord your God and observe to do all the words of this Torah."[222]

[222] Deuteronomy 31:12

The reading of the Torah again hearkens to Moses' descent from Sinai. As Exodus recalls, "And Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people."[223] Thus the Torah service may be seen as a reenactment of the Sinai moment and a transfer of power from private to the public domain.

As Campbell and Jung have shown us, an integral stage of the hero's journey consists of the sharing of the deity's boon with a larger audience. As the Torah represents God's presence, this treasure is handed down from the individual to the immediate community. The reading of the Torah is the bequeathing of the hero's boon to his surrounding family. As the opening of *Pirke Avot* (The Sayings of the Fathers) reads,

> "Moses Received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the great synagogue."[224]

By placing the Torah service directly following the *amidah,* we not only trace Moses' steps down Sinai. The congregation is also given the opportunity to prove their own merit. We remember that on his first ascent up Sinai, Moses looked down to see the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. Now that we the congregation have had the opportunity to connect with God individually through the *amidah,* any lingering doubt of God's revelation has been erased. And through the experience of the redemption from Egypt, we know first hand of God's power to protect us. The Torah is accepted unanimously as it is marched through the congregation and kissed by each individual. And thus the Torah reading necessarily follows the Shabbat prayers, as conversation between God and man. Or as Rabbi Donin writes,

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[223] Exodus 24:7
[224] Mishna Avot 1:1

> "It was only natural that with the evolution of congregational worship, Torah reading would be joined to the service and become an integral part of it. It completed the circle – creating a dialogue. In prayer, man talks to God; through the Torah reading, God talks to man."[225]

Finally, the *hakafah* (circling with the Torah) allows the congregation to prove its merit in light of yet another famous midrash. According to midrash, the Torah was originally offered to many other nations.[226] The children of Esau rejected the Torah because it prohibited them from committing murder. The children of Ammon and Moab rejected the Torah because it prohibited them from committing adultery. The children of Ishmael rejected the Torah because it prohibited them from stealing. Finally, God offered the Torah to the Israelites. They accepted it, saying, "We shall do and we shall hear."[227] The Torah service allows the community to renew this acceptance of Torah on a regular basis, and to prove our communal value through our commitment to the Torah. And so we hold the Torah and accept it publicly, quoting the Zohar as we say,

> "I am the servant of the Holy One, blessed be he, before whom and before whose glorious Torah I bow at all times. Not in man do I put my trust, nor do I rely on any angel, but only in the God of heaven who is the God of truth, whose Torah is truth and whose Prophets are truth, and who performs many deeds of goodness and truth."[228]

And so the Torah service may be seen as an elaboration of earlier call and response motifs, such as the *barchu, shema,* and *kedusha.* Moreover, by quoting God's words in the Torah we create a living dialogue. God's words are eternal. In prayer, we hope to offer our own fleeting words in response to God's divine revelation. As the everlasting symbol and record of this revelation, the Torah is the ultimate treasure handed

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[225] Donin, To Pray, 234
[226] Mechilta on Exodus 20:2; Avodah Zarah 2b, Shemot Rabba 27:8
[227] Deuteronomy 33:2
[228] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 366

down to humanity. Through the Torah, man may bring godliness into the world, in order to bring the rest of the world a bit closer to Mount Sinai. And so we read the Torah as a celebration of God's revelation, and a symbol of our responsibility to bring God into our lives. As Louis Jacobs writes,

> "If man believes in God he cannot help but see that it is in *this* book, or, better, collection of books, that He has revealed himself to man. It is this book, or collection of books, He has chosen as that vehicle."[229]

In reviewing the Shavuot holiday and the revelatory quality of the morning Shabbat service in earlier sections, much has been said about the wedding of God and Israel each Shabbat. In this scenario, the Torah serves as the *ketubah* (Jewish wedding contract) between the bride (God) and groom (Israel). In fact, Rabbi Yochanan goes so far as to say that if a non-Jew studies Torah, the act may be considered a form of adultery.[230] Following the intimacy of the *amidah*, the hero Israel unites in matrimony with God in the Torah service, their individual attributes combining as one. Thus the Torah service may be likened to a wedding service. As a Jewish wedding features a public reading and display of the *ketubah*, so do we read and hold up the Torah each Shabbat morning.

Again, we have already said much about the Shavuot holiday's connection to the revelation on Sinai. In many Sephardic communities, it is customary to read a *piyyut* by Rabbi Yisrael Najara, a mystic from sixteenth century Safed entitled *The Ketubah.*[231] It speaks of the love of God – the groom – for his bride, the people of Israel. God promises to betroth Israel unto eternity, and assures her that he will forsake all others. In return,

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[229] Hammer, Or Hadash, 139
[230] Sanhedrin 59a
[231] Kitov, 780

the bride expresses her willingness to enter the *chuppah* (Jewish wedding canopy) and echoes the words from Sinai, "We shall do and we shall hear."[232] God presents the Torah as a gift to His bride, and summons Heaven and Earth to serve as the two witnesses necessary for Jewish matrimony. The wedding of God and Israel is complete, as alluded to some playful punning in the Talmud:

> "'Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance (*morashah*) of the congregation of Jacob' – read not 'inheritance (*morashah*)' but 'betrothed (*m'orasah*).'"[233]

The Zohar goes so far as to as to portray the study of Torah as a form of primping the bride before her wedding day. This process climaxes in the *tikkun leil Shavuot,* the all night study of Torah which precedes Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the giving of the Torah. According to the kabbalists, such prayers and hymns allow the congregation to regale the bride on her way into the chuppah:

> R. Shimon was sitting and studying the Torah during the night when the bride was to be joined to her husband. For we have been taught that all the 'members of the bridal palace,' during the night preceding the Shekhinah's espousals, are in duty bound to rejoice with her in her final preparations for the great day: to study all branches of the Torah— from the law to the prophets, from the prophets to the writings, and then to the deeper interpretations and the mystical wisdom— for these represent her adornments. The bride with her bridesmaids comes up and remains with them, adorning herself at their hands and rejoicing with them all that night, and on the following day She enters the chuppah in their company.[234]

We have already viewed the early sections of the Shabbat morning service as preparation by the hero to encounter God in the moment of revelation. Here, the notion is flipped and we see that God is preparing for us! The preceding rubrics of the prayer

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[232] Deuteronomy 33:2
[233] Berachot 57a
[234] Zohar I, 8a

service have brought bride and groom together now, here under the *chuppah* on the *bimah,* ready to combine as a single entity. This is the ultimate goal of the hero, to cleave to God as in the mystical idea of *dveikut,* in which one's spirit completely combines with God's presence. The hero, once separated from God, is now fully reunited with his creator. God already noted that "It is not good for man to be alone."[235] In the wedding of hero and deity, man's fundamental fear of loneliness is eternally answered through God's ultimate revelation. It is for this reason that the Torah service closes by quoting the Book of Lamentations' petition[236] to return us to the ancient point of unity. We long for the days in Eden, when the world was new and we had yet to leave God's garden. We say:

"Turn us to thee, O Lord, and let us return; renew our days as of old."[237]

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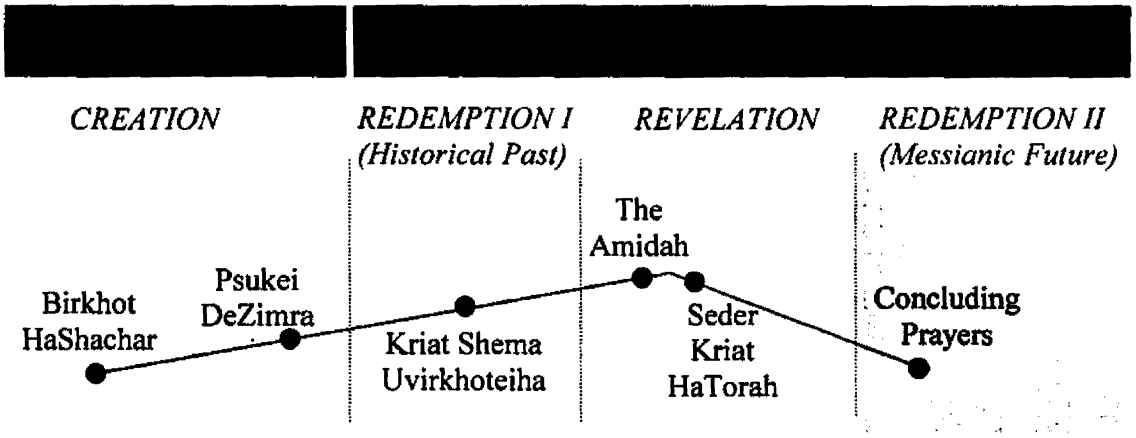
[235] Genesis 2:18
[236] Lamentations 5:21
[237] Scherman, 461

REDEMPTION II: CONCLUDING PRAYERS

The Messianic Future: God's Universal Redemption in the World to Come



The hero's journey has been made, the trek up and down Sinai accomplished. And so we descend from the lofty heights of the *amidah* and Torah service into the ordinary world. This descent is marked by a gradual immersion into the mundane and the practical needs of the community. We move from solitude with God to our immediate responsibilities as recipients of God's great gifts. As Rabbi Steinsaltz writes,

> "The rest of the service is a kind of egress from the realm of holiness, a gradual descent from the supernal world of encounter between human and the Divine back to the World of Creation – parallel to the route of ascent, but in the opposite direction."[238]

The last rubric ended with Israel standing in unique relationship with God, bound by covenant and strengthened by the trust built through the experience of redemption and revelation. All Israel celebrates in God's presence as inheritors of the hero's bounty. However, the task has not yet been completed. According to Jewish tradition, the Torah portion *kedoshim* (holy) is preceded by *acharei mot* (after death) for a specific reason[239]:

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[238] Steinsaltz, 94
[239] Class Notes, Entering the Shabbat Siddur, Richard Levy, Summer 06

to remind us that God told Israel they *would* be holy rather than they *were* holy[240]. Only after death (*acharei mot)* may the people approach holiness (*kedoshim*). The Israelites will become a holy people only when they have fulfilled their destiny to become a "light unto the nations."[241] This is a lifetime mission.

Following the archetypical course of the hero's journey, the final stage requires that the hero's gift be distributed universally. Prometheus must bring fire to all human beings and the Hawaiian god Maui must regulate the path of the sun so that all peoples' crops may grow adequately. And so Israel commits itself to heal the world (*letaken ha'olam)* in anticipation of a messianic redemption. Just as Israel and God have been made one, so now do we seek to make the world one under God's sovereignty. As Rabbi Elliot Dorff writes,

> "Because God is the creator of the universe who also singled us out from all the nations of the earth, it follows here that we can expect the world to be perfected under God's reign."[242]

And thus we arrive at the central prayer in this final rubric: the *aleinu.* The *aleinu* prayer originates in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, as a prelude to the shofar service of *malchuyot* (sovereignty). As we have already seen in our discussion of the shofar service, the congregant praises God for making Israel a distinct nation and petitions God to heal the world, looking forward to the day when the world is one and God's name is one. The historical redemption of the *shema* and its blessings is now echoed in our future aspirations. Though we praise God for releasing us from tyranny, we look forward to the day when all will enjoy such freedom. The prayer reads,

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[240] Leviticus 19:1
[241] Isaiah 49:6
[242] Hoffman, Vol. 6, 134

> "We hope therefore, Lord our God, soon to behold thy majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth, and the false gods exterminated; when the world shall be perfected under the reign of the Almighty, and all mankind will call upon thy name, and all the wicked of the earth will be turned to thee."[243]

The hero Israel represents the potential for ultimate redemption that lies awaiting. The prayer first deals with the present, before turning to the distant future, the messianic era.[244] Just as we have been healed, we now call for the world to be healed. It also expresses a theology of monism; that all is one and this one is God. Or as Yitschak Isaac Epstein of Homel taught:

> Not only is God the only God, but God is all there is; only God is real; besides God, there is literally 'nothing else'; in Yiddish, *als is Gott* (all is God)...Now [the prayer] becomes a yearning that all people see through the apparent brokenness, confusion, contradiction, and discord to the ultimate divine unity that is the true source of reality."[245]

It must be noted that the messianic theology of this prayer has undergone a massive shift. The prayer remains ambiguous at to who exactly is left with the task of healing to the world, voicing its request passively:

> "We hope, therefore, Lord our God, soon to behold thy majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth, and the false gods exterminated; when the world shall be perfected under the reign of the Almighty."[246]

But due to mystical influences, specifically the work of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the power of redemption is been brought down from deity to man. Lurianic *kabbalah* teaches that God himself is in need of healing, through the mitzvoth performed by us, his

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[243] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 414
[244] Donin, To Pray, 213
[245] Hoffman, Vol 6., 142
[246] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 136

creations. Luria gave the phrase *tikkun olam* a different meaning, according to which human beings who observe commandments thereby fix the brokenness of the world, and even "fix" God who is broken as well.[247] Thus the hero, and not God, is responsible for the ultimate redemption of the world. In the liberation from Egypt, God proved his dominance over all over deities. Now in the future messianic redemption, it is up to Israel to erase these deities altogether, and bring the world together as one. As the prayer concludes by quoting scripture,

> "As it is written in thy Torah: 'The Lord shall be King forever and ever.'[248] And it is said: 'The Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One, and his name One.'[249,,250]

Finally we reach the mourner's *kaddish,* the prayer recited in remembrance of loved ones whose *shloshim* or *yahrtzeit* take place during the week. From a mythical perspective, it is customary for the hero to give thanks to his recent ancestors at the end of the journey. All Israel remembers those loved ones who have made this moment possible by serving as links in the chain of Jewish tradition. We bow in homage to those who have made this moment possible.

However, the prayer also hints at the coming messianic era of universal redemption. The opening words *yitgadal v'yitkadash* are inspired by the prophet Ezekiel, who envisions a time when God will become great and hallowed in the eyes of the nations, when they shall learn that Adonai is the Lord.[251] Marc Brettler writes,

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[247] Ibid, 138
[248] Exodus 15:18
[249] Zechariah 14:9
[250] Birnbaum Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 414
[251] Ezekiel 38:23

> "By opening the *kaddish* this way, we are put on notice that the prayer anticipates eschatological redemption."[252]

Kaddish is a hymn that praises God and yearns for the speedy establishment of God's kingdom on earth.[253] The prayer reads:

> "May he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire house of Israel, speedily and soon."[254]

We offer here a final call and response, as last seen in the *kedusha* when we emulated God's adoring angels. The congregant answers the prayers of the mourner, saying "May his great name be blessed forever and to all eternity".[255] The Talmud illustrates the redemptive nature of the response, *yehei shmei rabba*. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says that anyone who responds with these words merits that any evil decrees against him be abolished.[256] Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba says that even if one has a taint of idolatry, he is forgiven upon mentioning these words.[257] Raba adds that the world itself is sustained by the religious merit accrued by the recitation of these words.[258] Elsewhere, the Talmud says that when Israel enters its synagogues and says these three words, the Holy One, blessed be he, responds, "How fortunate is the King who is thus praised in his own house."[259] Finally, we are told that anyone who mentions these three words is worthy of the world to come.[260] Thus the response of the *kaddish* offers us another opportunity to prove our merit and profess our faith in God's universal redemption. It is

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[252] Hoffman, Vol 6, 150
[253] Donin, 216
[254] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 138
[255] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 280
[256] Shabbat 119b
[257] Ibid, 119b
[258] Sotah 49a
[259] Berachot 3a
[260] Berachot 57a

for this reason that these words *yitgadal v'yitkadash* are so important. It takes enormous faith to praise and sanctify God's name in the face of great loss.

Rabbinic literature also teaches that saying *kaddish* has a redemptive effect on troubled souls of the dead. In one *aggadah* (rabbinic legend), Rav Judah gathers a minyan together to say *kaddish* over a neighbor's death. After seven days, the man appears to Rav Judah in a dream, saying, "May your mind be at rest for you have set my mind at rest."[261] Another *aggadah* from the French *halachic* work *Machzor Vitry* portrays Rabbi Akiba as encountering the spirit of a dead man in great distress. When Akiva asks the man about his torment he says "I heard it said that if my little son, whom I left behind, were to say in public *yitgadal v'yitkadash* and the others would answer *Yehei Shmei rabba mevorakh,* I would be set free from this judgment." Akiva finds the child, teaches him Torah, the *shema*, the *amidah*, the *birkat hamazon*, and prepares him to stand before the congregation to recite *yitgadal.* When the boy does this, the father's soul is delivered from its judgment and permitted its eternal rest. The man then appears to Akiva and in dream, saying, "May it be God's will that you rest in peace for you made it possible for me to rest in peace."[262]

Kaddish is also portrayed as a direct calling for the messiah and God's redemption in a final *aggadah*:

> "For the time has already come that the wicked kingdom should be torn up from its place and the sound be heard from the synagogues and houses of prayer where they say with all their force, 'Amen, may His great Name be blessed forever and ever and ever.' Then, the Holy One, blessed be He, will shake all the heavens and cause two teardrops to fall into the ocean. The righteous will enter and the messiah will enter into the heavenly tabernacle."[263]

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[261] Shabbat 152a
[262] Machzor Vitry, 112ff
[263] Otsar ha-Midrashim, Gan Eden ve-Gehinnom, 10

And so we say *kaddish* with all of these aspirations: that we may be healed, that our ancestors may be healed, and most importantly, that the entire world be healed of its grief and pain. In step with this notion, the Sephardic version of the *chatzi kaddish* adds, "And make His salvation spring forth, and bring nigh the Messiah."[264]

Finally, it merits being noted that the second prayer of the *amidah,* the *gevurot,* praises God for the power to give life to the dead. This prayer follows upon the heels of the *avot,* in which we introduced ourselves as the living legacy of our ancestral fathers. Now having completed our journey, we return to the forefathers who have brought us to where we are. As we asked that God heed our prayers based upon his past relationship with our forefathers, we now hope to return the favor by extending God's acceptance of our prayers to revive these ancestors as promised. As our ancestors got us through the door of God's court, we now seek to hold the door open so that they may pass as well. And so we conclude the mourner's kaddish with words from the prophet Isaiah, a final promise of eternal redemption:

> "Even to your old age I will be the same; when you are gray-headed, still will I sustain you; I have made you, and I will bear you; I will sustain you and save you."[265]

The rubric concludes with variations upon a common theme: a final statement of faith in God's uniqueness. Several prayers are selected in extolling God's nature: *adon*

[264] Donin, To Pray, 220
[265] Isaiah 46:4

olam, ein keloheinu, or Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith.[266] The prayer *yigdal* is basically a poetic rendering of Maimonides' principles of faith, often credited to Daniel ben Judah, a fourteenth century sage from Rome.[267]

Similar to the *nisim b'kol yom* found in the first rubric, *birkhot hashachar*, these thirteen principles of faith may also be seen as a final restatement of Rosenzweig's tripartite theology and the mythical tale of the hero Israel and God. As the *nisim b'khol yom* foretold the hero's journey through the three stages of creation, redemption and revelation, so now does *yigdal* summarize what we have seen. The Talmud teaches that if a person does not believe in the *creator* God, or that the Torah was *revealed* from heaven, or that the *redemption* will resurrect the dead, he does not merit the world to come.[268] And so the congregants testify to their faith in these themes one last time, and in doing so summarize the journey of the hero Israel.

Maimonides thirteen attributes of faith can be categorized as follows[269]:

Creation:

1. There is a Creator
2. He is One
3. He is incorporeal
4. He is eternal
5. He alone must be worshipped

Revelation:

6. The prophets are true
7. Moses was the greatest of all prophets

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[266] Mishnah Sanhedrin 10
[267] Hammer, Or Hadash, 53
[268] Sanhedrin 10:1
[269] Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem, 154

8. The entire Torah was divinely given to Moses
9. The Torah is immutable

Redemption:

10. God knows all the acts and thoughts of man
11. God rewards and punishes
12. The messiah will come
13. The dead will be resurrected

The hero's journey is summed up through the three major stages of myth. The unique creator of the world creates and saves man who in turn worships God and embraces the yoke of heaven. God makes himself known to Israel through the Torah in a process which unites both parties eternally. This *dveikut* serves as an example of the potential for redemption in the rest of the world and the hero's bounty is finally given universally, leading to a messianic era in the world to come.

The story has been communicated through text, prayer and ritual, disseminated throughout the congregation for all to hold as their own. The congregant exits the sanctuary, connected to God and one's fellow congregants through the foundational myth of the Jewish religion. Each Shabbat we sit together as heroes, our mission renewed for the week to come. Such is the power of communal storytelling. As Rabbi Larry Hoffman writes,

> "The concluding prayers complete the standard Jewish service that began with the Morning Blessings. The Morning Blessings are highly individualistic. They deal, largely, with the individual state of arising and preparing for a new day. We awaken solitary and begin the day that way as well. By the end of the service, however, we shift our attention to the common aspiration of humanity: *Aleinu* requests the coming of the universal reign of God; so too do the *K'dusha D'sidra* and the *Kaddish.* Judaism is a religion for individuals and the world entire. Beginning with one but ending with the other, the liturgy affirms the ultimacy of both."[270]

[270] Hoffman, Vol. 6, 11

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