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Tkhine as the Jewish Woman's Self-Expression

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Bizkhus fun Sore, Rivke, Rokhl un Leye:^{*}
The Tkhine as the Jewish Woman's Self-Expression

Tracy Guren Klirs

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1984

Referee, Prof. Wacholder

^{*}"Through the Merit of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah"

Dedication

Dedicated with love to my husband Elisha, who assumed the major responsibility for the maintenance of our home and care of our son so that I could have the time to complete my thesis, and whose constant encouragement and support, thoughtful advice and painstaking editing, typing and proofreading made this endeavor come to fruition. I also dedicate this work to our son Lior Bahir, who proved the greatest challenge to its completion, yet whose arrival afforded me a profound insight into, and appreciation of, the tkhine literature. Only a parent can fully understand the tkhines' emphasis on the nakhes and tsuris of raising children.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis referee, Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder, for his continual guidance of and enthusiasm for my project. I owe Dr. Ida Selavan my deepest appreciation for her exhaustive checking of my translations. I would also like to thank Dr. Werner Weinberg for his most patient and extensive advice on romanization, Dr. Herbert Paper for consultation on translation, Dr. Jakob Petuchowski for assistance in identifying liturgical sources, and Dr. Eugene Mihaly for consultation on midrashic sources. And finally, my thanks are extended to Penina Arsers, who graciously volunteered to type the Hebrew in the glossary and the bibliography.

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Digest

In determining that women's domestic duties exempted them from the vast majority of ritual obligations, the framers of Jewish tradition effectively excluded women from the important domains of Hebrew scholarship and daily prayer. Yet even in the rare case in which a woman learned enough Hebrew to understand the siddur (the Hebrew prayer-book) and had the leisure to attend the synagogue regularly, her deepest spiritual yearnings may well have gone unsatisfied. For the siddur was a male document designed for communal worship, and could not, therefore, reflect the most intimate needs and wishes of the woman's heart.

Gradually a devotional literature developed amongst Central and East European Jewry which catered to women's needs. These prayers, known as tkhines (supplications) were written in the vernacular, Yiddish, so that all could understand, and were designed for private use, so that even those unable to attend synagogue regularly would be able to pray frequently. Their subjects, too, tended to be more personal and immediate than those of the siddur. And, finally, unlike most other Jewish religious literature written for women, much of this literature was also written by women.

The tkhine style is warm, intimate and informal, yet tkhine authors borrowed extensively from the siddur and other classic Hebrew texts. Tkhines are petitionary prayers dealing with all the needs of daily life: sustenance, earn-

ing a living, health, the raising of children, protection from evil. They also reflect the special needs of women through prayers for marriage, birth, education of children, protection of one's husband, and the observance of the "women's commandments."

The object of my thesis is twofold: to provide translations of various tkhines or excerpts from tkhines in order to make this literature accessible to the general public; and to interpret these tkhines so as to discover what they teach about the outlook, religious views and self-perception of the pre-Emancipation East European woman.

An introductory chapter describes the historical background and process of development of this genre; its purpose, its style and dominant themes, and literary influences. Brief biographical information on the most popular authors of tkhines, all of whom were women, is also included in the introduction.

The body of the thesis, containing translations and analyses of tkhines, focuses on those tkhines which express the concerns of women or contain feminine motifs. Most of those selected for translation were written by women.

A final chapter summarizes the conclusions inferred from these Yiddish texts, focusing on the image of the Jewish woman which emerges from a study of women's tkhines. The major themes are grouped under the rubrics of three over-

arching concepts: Torah, prayer and family. Finally, I suggest that the tkhines could serve as models for the creation of new liturgy for Jewish women today.

Since this literature is not widely available, an appendix containing photostats of the original Yiddish texts is provided.

Preface

Hebrew learning has traditionally been the prerogative of men, while the Jewish woman was typically illiterate, or barely literate, in "loshn - koydesh," the language of Jewish scholarship and prayer. The exclusion from the language of devotion left a profound spiritual void which translations into the vernacular could not satisfy for the Jewish woman. The void came to be partially filled, amongst Ashkenazic women, by a devotional literature written for women in the vernacular--in "mame-loshn." These Yiddish prayers, known as tkhines, date from the middle ages, and continued to be composed, often by women, until the Second World War. Printed editions of tkhines have appeared since 1590, and grew into a vast literature over subsequent centuries.

Nonetheless, much of this literature remains unknown. While the tkhine literature was undoubtedly a major force in the evolution of the Yiddish language, there is a paucity of scholarly research and translations in this area. Amongst the various articles touching on tkhines, there is no complete survey or bibliography to date on this literature.

The object of my thesis is twofold: to provide translations of various tkhines or excerpts from tkhines in order to make this literature accessible to the general public; and to interpret these tkhines so as to discover what they teach about the outlook, religious views and self-perception of pre-Emancipated East European Jewish women.

Any translation work poses a number of technical and stylistic problems for the translator; when dealing with the Yiddish tkhines these problems are compounded. Being a folk literature, tkhines are written in an informal, conversational style with little or no punctuation. The translator must decide how to punctuate the text. This is a highly subjective decision--no two translators will punctuate a tkhine the same way. In my translations I have attempted to convey as much of the style and flavor of the original text as possible, while at the same time rendering it into literate, comprehensible English. Wherever a literal translation would produce nonsensical or less than proper English phraseology, I chose a more creative translation which better expressed the actual intent of the original. In general, I sought to avoid a stilted literalism, though I hoped to remain as faithful as possible to the meaning and flavor of the original Yiddish.

In order to do this, it was necessary to purposely do violence to certain idioms which cannot be rendered accurately in English. For example, I consistently chose to translate the expression *מ'פֿעד אים* as "may he (she) rest in peace" rather than the more literal "peace be upon him," since the former phrase is the English idiom which most closely parallels *מ'פֿעד אים*, while the latter phrase is practically meaningless in English. Likewise,

אויסער און or אויסער און are translated as "God forbid!" since this epithet expresses the same sentiment as the Yiddish terms (though the actual meaning is quite different).

My approach also required a degree of flexibility. I was not always consistent in translating the same terms. Depending on the context, or sometimes simply to avoid repetition, I chose to translate the same word in a variety of ways:

אומאטע is usually matriarchs, but sometimes foremothers;
 אויסער can be trouble, pain or sorrow; אויסער can be ask, beseech or pray.

Some words are simply untranslatable. Hence I chose to romanize words like Amoroyim, akeyde, Gemore, Geocynim, kavone, khale, kheyder, maftir, mekhitse, nakhes, nide, tane and Tanoyim, and tsadik. אויסער is rendered either khupe or marriage, depending on the context, and אויסער or אויסער are sometimes commandment/s and sometimes mitsve/s. Often an English approximation is given in brackets next to the romanized term. A glossary of Yiddish and Hebrew terms is provided in appendix 1.

Another translating difficulty was posed by the many Hebrew quotations which are followed by Yiddish translations or paraphrases. To render both the Hebrew and the Yiddish usually results in an unduly repetitive English translation. Yet if only one version is offered, which should be chosen? Furthermore, if each such quote is only translated once, the

richness of the original source is lost and the reader is not aware that the original text quoted the verse or phrase in Hebrew. After experimenting with various methods, I settled on an eclectic solution to this problem: wherever an exact Yiddish translation of a Hebrew quote was provided, I underlined the phrase to indicate that it occurs in Hebrew, and translated it only once. If the Yiddish translation diverged markedly, I generally rendered both the Hebrew and the Yiddish phrases with the Hebrew quote underlined. As much as possible I tried to indicate in footnotes when both Hebrew and Yiddish were given in the original. In some cases I simply collapsed the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of the quote into an amalgam reflecting the combined sense of the two. My aim was always to convey the richness of the text, while at the same time sparing the reader the tedium of unnecessary repetitions.

In translating biblical quotations, I relied largely on the old Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917) translation as a reference, though I often made slight changes. My talmudic quotations are based on the Soncino translation of the Talmud (1948).

Deciding on a method of romanization proved to be a complicated process. There was no difficulty for Yiddish words of non-Hebraic origin--they are all romanized in the standardized Yiddish pronunciation (klal Yidish) using the transcription method developed by Uriel Weinreich and described in his

Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary (1968).

However, the Yiddish terms of Hebraic origin, and particularly the full Hebrew quotations and Hebrew titles of tkhines, could be transcribed either according to the standard accepted Sephardic pronunciation, or the Ashkenazic pronunciation. I decided, in the interest of authenticity and faithfulness to the linguistic peculiarities of this literature, to use the Ashkenazic pronunciation for all Hebrew terms, titles, quotations and names appearing in the tkhines. This was, after all, the way Hebrew was pronounced by the authors and readers of tkhines. The question then arose as to which Ashkenazic pronunciation to use. Since the pronunciation of Hebrew differed from locale to locale, and the dialects of Yiddish were so varied, the only practical solution was to use a standardized system of pronunciation throughout my work, and hence I have chosen Weinreich's (1968) method.

However, names of biblical and rabbinic personages are spelled in their Anglicized forms, and a few very common terms (rabbi, Torah and shofar) are treated as English words when they appear in tkhines and hence are not rendered in Ashkenazic pronunciation. When using Hebrew terms outside of the translations, in my introduction, analyses and conclusion, I spelled them according to the standard accepted Sephardic pronunciation, assuming that this way they will be more recognizable to an informed readership. Therefore, while the word חַלָּה is spelled khale in the translations, elsewhere it is

spelled halah, and while נידה is rendered nide in the translations, elsewhere it is spelled nidah. The names of the authors of tkhines, and the titles of tkhines, even when these are completely in Hebrew, are always rendered in the Weinreich Ashkenazic pronunciation, since it is common practice to quote book titles in their original language. Hence the author סורבא טויב is spelled Sore bas Toyvim, and her book, שילוישע שיעורים is spelled Shloyshe Sheorim, even though both her name and the title of her book are in Hebrew. This simplifies matters as well when dealing with names and book titles which combine Hebrew and Yiddish, such as Yente bas Yitskhok and A Naye Tkhine Sharey Demoes.

While book titles are given in Yiddish (English transcription), the names of individual tkhines within each book or pamphlet are simply translated into English. This is done partly to avoid excessive romanization, which may be tedious for the reader not knowledgeable in Yiddish and Hebrew, and also because many times the individual tkhines are untitled, having instead an invocation which I use as a title, or a heading giving instructions to the petitioner.

One exception to the general rule of using the Ashkenazic romanization method in the text of my translations or for the name of a tkhine author is in the few cases where Aramaic names or phrases appear. In these few instances I chose to use the Sephardic method, although this is admittedly an arbitrary device. Examples are the pen-name Sams' de-Hayei and the prayer

Berikh Shemeih.

As regards the romanization of Hebrew, I have used the system developed by Dr. Werner Weinberg (1982) for the American National Standards Institute. Exceptions to this method are those Hebrew and Yiddish terms which have come into common usage in the English Language and therefore have a standard English spelling which varies from Dr. Weinberg's method. Such terms are: aggadah, Haggadah, Kabbalah, Kaddish, mitzvah, Bar Mitzvah and mitzvot, siddur/im, tzedekah, Yahrzeit and Yom Kippur. Keys to both Weinreich's and the American National Standards Institute's systems of romanization are provided immediately following the preface. Also, in addition to a glossary of terms which includes the Hebrew letters, both Ashkenazic and Sephardic pronounciations (where applicable) and an English translation, a separate glossary of Yiddish names with their Anglicized or Hebrew equivalents is included, in order to aid the reader in identifying unfamiliar names. These can be found in the appendixes 1 and 2.

I would also like to point out that I used the editions of the tkhines available to me in the Klau Library of the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. These were not always necessarily the earliest, or even the best editions. As discussed at length in my introduction, there are difficulties in dating and authenticating this literature. Every attempt was made to ascertain authorship. My translations are arranged according to author, from

the best-known to the more obscure, to anonymous works. But I am fully aware that some of these works may have been misattributed.

Another area that bears mention is the identification of primary sources upon which the tkhines drew. In doing so my primary aim was to give the reader an idea of the richness of this literature and the extent of its reliance on traditional Hebrew literature, as well as to explain aspects of the literature not readily apparent to anyone not well versed in the Jewish tradition. As much as possible, I sought to identify sources the first time they appeared. I did not annotate repeat occurrences of the same source. In cases where a source has a number of parallels or citations throughout Hebrew literature, I chose either the more immediate source (i.e., that most familiar to the tkhine's readership), or I listed a select few. I was not always able to locate sources, and I may have failed to recognize allusions to certain sources or misattributed others. Nevertheless, it is my hope that my annotation of the tkhine texts will be of some help to those interested in studying this field more extensively.

While aiming to provide original translations of works heretofore not translated into English, I did include a few works translated by others, because they represented particularly fine illustrations of my thesis. In every case, however, I offered my own translations, and noted at the beginning of

my analysis where other translations of the same work can be found. Also, I did not translate full tkhines in every case, but selected primarily portions which dealt with women's concerns and beliefs or which used feminine imagery.

Photostats of all the original tkhines translated in my thesis are provided in appendix 3 .

Key to Romanization of Hebrew

| Consonants | Vowels | Special Situations |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| א ' Except at the beginning of a word | א ' = 'א a | אָ ah |
| ב b | ב ' = 'ב e | בָ eh |
| בּ v | בּ = 'בּ = (e, é, or ei) ³ | בֿ av |
| ג, גּ g | (vocal) גּ e or disregard ³ | גַ ay |
| ד, דּ d | ד ' = 'ד i | דָ h |
| ה h | ה ' = 'ה o | <i>Makef</i> Hyphen |
| ו w ¹ or v ² | וּ u | <i>Dagesh forte</i> Doubling optional ⁵ |
| ז z | Silent <i>shva</i> is not rendered | Prefixes Connected |
| ח h | | Capitalization As one would in English |
| ט t | | Capitalization after ' Yes |
| י y | | Main stress (if desired) By ' on vowel |
| ך, כּ k | | General syllabification (if desired) By hyphen |
| ך, כּ kh | | Abbreviation symbols Single or double quotation marks or period, as in the Hebrew |
| ל l | | |
| מ, מּ m | | |
| נ, נּ n | | |
| ס s | | |
| ע ' . | | |
| פּ p | | |
| ף, פּ f | | |
| ץ, צ ts | | |
| ק q or k ² | | |
| ר r | | |
| ש sh | | |
| שׁ ś | | |
| ת, תּ t | | |
| גּ ġ or g' | | |
| זּ ž or z' | | |
| צּ č or ts' | | |

¹ Not meant to reflect an English pronunciation of the letter.³ Depending on pronunciation.² Adopted by the Library of Congress and American Library Association to have renditions which are alphabetically compatible with those of a previous style.⁴ *Kamatz katan*.⁵ Many avoid doubling after prefixes as well as the doubling of digraphs (*ts*, *sh*).

Key to Romanization of Yiddish/Ashkenazic Hebrew

| LETTER OR COMBINATION | SOUND EQUIVALENT | REMARKS |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--|
| א | <i>silent</i> | Written at the beginning of words or stems that would otherwise begin with א, א, ו, ו, ו, ו, or װ |
| א | [A] | Similar to <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , but shorter |
| א | [O] | Phonetically between the <i>aw</i> of <i>dawn</i> and the <i>o</i> of <i>done</i> |
| ב | [B] | |
| ב | [V] | |
| ב | [G] | |
| ב | [D] | On the phonetic value [dy] of the sequence וּב, see § 4e |
| ה | [H] | |
| ו | [U] | |
| ו | [U] | So spelled in the combinations וּב [-uv-], וּב [-vu-], and וּב [-uy-] |
| ו | [V] | |
| ו | [OY] | Shorter than <i>oy</i> in <i>boy</i> |
| ז | [Z] | On the phonetic value [zy] of the sequence וּז, see § 4e |
| ז | [zh]* | Like <i>s</i> in <i>measure</i> |
| ח | [Kh] | Like <i>ch</i> in German <i>ach</i> |
| ט | [T] | On the phonetic value [ty] of the sequence וּט, see § 4e |
| י | [I] | Medium in length and tenseness between the <i>i</i> of <i>fit</i> and the <i>ee</i> of <i>feet</i> |
| י | [Y] | Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> ; before or after another vowel |
| י | [I] | So spelled following a stressed vowel, or — under stress — adjoining a vowel. See §§ 5a5 and 5c7 |
| י | [EY] | Similar to <i>ey</i> in <i>grey</i> |
| י | [AY] | Similar to <i>i</i> in <i>fine</i> |
| כ | [K] | |
| כ | [Kh] | Like <i>ch</i> in German <i>ach</i> |
| ך | [Kh] | Word-final form of the preceding |
| ל | [L] | On the phonetic value [ly] of the sequence וּל, see § 4e |
| ל | [Ly] | For explanation see § 4e5 (ii) |
| מ | [M] | |
| מ | [M] | Word-final form of the preceding |
| נ | [N] | On the phonetic value [ny] of the sequence וּנ, see § 4e |
| נ | [N] | Word-final form of the preceding |
| ס | [S] | On the phonetic value [sy] of the sequence וּס, see § 4e |
| ע | [E] | Similar to the <i>e</i> of <i>bet</i> |
| ע | [E] | For explanation see §§ 5b6 and 5c6 |
| פ | [P] | |
| פ | [F] | |
| ף | [F] | Word-final form of the preceding |
| צ | [TS] | |
| ץ | [TS] | Word-final form of the preceding |
| ק | [K] | |
| ך | [R] | Produced by trilling either the tip of the tongue or the uvula |
| ש | [sh] | Similar to <i>sh</i> of <i>shoot</i> |
| ש | [S] | |
| ת | [T] | |
| ת | [S] | |

* To be distinguished from [z], which represents a sequence of sounds — [z] followed by [ʁ].

Chapter 1: Introduction

For many centuries, Jewish prayer was so dominated by its male creators and male readers that the Jewish woman's role in prayer has been obscured. The typical synagogue service of a century ago, or even the orthodox service today, might well give the impression that Jewish prayer is an exclusively male activity. Yet Jewish women have always prayed, and at one time, before prayer became standardized into a formal liturgy, Israelite women offered up spontaneous petitions and hymns to God as freely as men did. The Bible records several such prayers of women. Two of the best known examples are Miriam's song at the Sea of Reeds and Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of her son Samuel. After the redemption at the Sea of Reeds, the Bible relates:

Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea."
(Ex. 15:20-22)

I Samuel records two prayers of Hannah. In the first instance, she prays silently, "in her heart" (I Sam. 1:13), for a son, and vows that if God gives her a son, she in turn "will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head" (I Sam. 1:11). After Hannah's prayer is answered, she expresses her profound gratitude to God in a long poetic prayer (I Sam. 2:1-10). Subsequently

Hannah praying at Shiloh became the paradigm for sincere and correct worship in the Talmud:

R. Hamnuna said: How many most important laws can be learnt from these verses relating to Hannah! Now Hannah, she spoke in her heart (I Sam. 1:13): from this we learn that one who prays must direct his heart. (Berakhot 31a)

The passage continues, through the verso side of the page, to draw lessons from every detail of Hannah's prayer.

A beautiful example of a paean to God in the classic biblical poetic style can be found in Judith's prayer in the apocryphal Book of Judith (16:1-17), which reads, in part:

I will sing to my God a new song:
O Lord, You are great and glorious, wonderful in
strength, invincible.
Let all Your creatures serve You, for You did speak,
and they were made.
You did send forth Your breath, and it formed them;
there is none that can resist Your voice.
For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations
with the waters;
at Your presence the rocks shall melt like wax,
but to those who fear You, You will continue to show
mercy. (Judith 16:13-15)

But not everyone could be as eloquent as a Miriam, a Hannah or a Judith. Most needed to rely on fixed formulae for their devotions. And so, gradually, the prayers came to be collected, ordered and eventually recorded until the Jewish prayerbook, or siddur (literally "order") emerged. But in the process two elements in the nature of prayer were radically altered: one was the spontaneity of prayer, and the other was the language of prayer. Prayer was now no longer a matter of kavanah--of pouring out one's heart with the

sincerity of a spontaneous creation; but rather of keva^c- of a fixed, unchanging order. In addition, the language of prayer was frozen in Hebrew and Aramaic, the spoken languages in biblical and Talmudic times.¹ Ironically, by the time the siddur was committed to writing (by Amram Ga'on, in the ninth century), Hebrew had long since ceased to be a spoken language amongst the common people, and Arabic had already begun to replace Aramaic as the lingua franca in much of the Jewish world. By the middle ages, it is quite likely that Jewish prayers were no longer fully understood by many worshippers.

Jewish men continued to learn Hebrew in order to gain access to the primary documents of Jewish culture: the Bible, Midrash and Talmud. But minimally, all Jewish men were required to be able to read the prayerbook, for the recitation of prayers three times a day was an absolute obligation. Women, being released from this and most other ritual observances of halakhah, were not obliged to concentrate as intensively on Hebrew studies, and hence were less likely to be able to understand their Hebrew prayers. Yet, while the average Jewish man received a much more thorough education than his female counterpart, there were still many men who understood little of the Hebrew prayers they recited each day.

Origins and development of tkhines

In order for prayer to once again become immediate and vibrant, it had to be offered in the vernacular. This was especially true for women, who were, for the most part, less at home in the language of prayer than men. In fact, the halakhah provides ample support for prayer in the vernacular. Mishnah Sotah 7:1 permits the recitation of the Shema^c, the Amidah (the standing devotion, or central prayer of Jewish liturgy) and grace after meals in any language. Both the Babylonian (b Sotah 32b-33a) and the Palestinian (j Sotah 21b) Talmuds concur that prayers may be offered in the vernacular, and the authors of the medieval codes endorsed this view (Freehof, 1923). A statement from Sefer Hasidim offers an unassailable justification for prayer in the vernacular:

If people who do not know Hebrew come to you, tell them to study the prayerbook in the language which they can understand, for prayer depends upon the understanding of the heart. If the heart does not know what is uttered by the mouth, of what avail is it? Therefore it is better to pray in the language which one understands. (Freehof, 1932, p. 382; see also Idelsohn, 1932)

This was particularly true of women, about whom the sixteenth century Italian Rabbi Salomo Portaleone wrote: "When women pray in the language of the country they understand what they are saying, whereas now they only babble their prayers unknowingly" (Posner, 1970, p. 71).

Amongst Ashkenazic Jews, the first step towards remedying this serious deficiency in women's religious devotions was

to translate the siddur into Ivri-Taytsh (literally "Hebrew-German," the translation of Hebrew into German or early Yiddish). While some early manuscript translations appeared, the effort and expense involved in the production of books prior to the invention of the printing press necessarily limited their availability. Not until it was printed could the Ivri-Taytsh siddur be widely disseminated. In 1544, Yoysef ben Yoker edited and published the first printed translation of the siddur into Ivri-Taytsh (Freehof, 1923; Posner, 1970; Zinberg, 1975). By so doing, he made available the world of classical Jewish prayer, and through it, a large part of the rich Jewish religious heritage, to the masses of Yiddish-speaking Jewish women, as well as to many Jewish men. It bears noting that in the same year, the first two printed editions of Ivri-Taytsh Bible translations appeared in Augsburg and Constance (Zinberg, 1975), in response to the same forces and needs which led Yoysef ben Yoker to produce his siddur.

Yoysef ben Yoker was a passionate advocate of his endeavor, and went so far as to announce, in the introduction to his siddur:

I consider those who wish to pray in the holy tongue and do not understand a word of it empty fools. I would be glad to know merely what kind of kavvanah (inner intention, or devotion) they can have. Hence, we have decided to print the Prayerbook [in translation], and more books besides later.

Henceforth numerous editions of this and other Ivri-Taytsh

and Yiddish siddurim were published and widely disseminated amongst Central and East European Jewry, particularly women. Perhaps the most popular of these volumes, and one self-proclaimedly intended for women, was the Korbm Minkhe siddur (Posner, 1970). The title page mentions, among the contents: "And thirty-four tkhines, very useful for women..." In this way women began to reclaim part of their religious enfranchisement, and could justify their study of the Bible and prayerbook (in translation) against attackers. The Talmudic statements that women should not study "Torah" were interpreted by some as applying only to the Talmud itself, and not to Scripture and other Jewish works.³

Yiddish translations of prayers drawn from the siddur and other sources, including mystical works, continued to be circulated for many centuries. Undoubtedly the tkhine literature owes its origin, in part, to such translations. In fact, the title pages of many collections of tkhines proclaim that the contents have been drawn from "holy books" (Freehof, 1923; Zinberg, 1975).

While translations of the existing liturgy were an important first step, they still could not fully satisfy the spiritual needs of Jewish women. For one thing, women's duties in the home (and outside, for some were their family's breadwinners, as well) left little time for regular prayer, much less the thrice-daily statutory prayers. And for another, the prayerbook itself was so clearly a male document, written by

and for men, that it failed to take into account the special needs and feelings of women. The siddur spoke of the God of the patriarchs, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It addressed "Our God and God of our fathers," and used exclusively male pronouns, adjectives and verbs. The language of the siddur was also plural, designed as it was for public prayer (Waxman, 1933; Weissler, 1980). Yet, when women found time to pray, it was more likely to be at home and in private.

The need for a more personal prayerbook which addressed the sentiments and needs of women came to be filled through tkhines. Tkhine is simply the Yiddish version of the Hebrew tehinah, whose primary definition in Even Shoshan's Hamilon Hehadash is "prayer, request for mercy, words of supplication." The word's usage as "petitionary prayer" or "supplication" was first recorded in the Bible (e.g., Ps. 55:2; Jer. 37:20). Later this became the dominant, if not exclusive meaning of tehinah. The term came to be attached to a particular form of piyut (medieval Hebrew poem) based on the Tahanun (supplicatory) prayers for Mondays and Thursdays, and later with the piyutim for Selihot (the penitential prayers recited on special occasions, such as the week before and after the New Year) (Habermann, 1972). These Hebrew and Aramaic tahanunim (entreaties) and tehinot had their origins in Talmudic times, as an attempt to allow for personal prayer during the standard prayer service (Weinreich, 1980). Much later, some of them were translated into Yiddish. Since the seventeenth century.

the word tehinot, especially in the Ashkenazic pronunciation, tkhines, has been clearly associated with the private Yiddish devotions so popular amongst Ashkenazic Jewish women.

The exact process by which this genre developed cannot be determined with certainty. As indicated above, the original tehinot were composed in Hebrew, and trace their beginnings at least to the early medieval period. There can be no doubt that they formed the model for the earliest Yiddish tkhines. But many, if not most of the Yiddish tkhines in existence today are original compositions with no parallel in the Hebrew prayer literature, and their tone and contents are unique. Some scholars believe that tkhines were originally created by the firzogerins (also called zogerkes), or foresayers, learned women who used to translate the prayers into Yiddish for the benefit of the rest of the women in the synagogue (Henry & Taitz, 1978; Zinberg, 1975). According to this theory, their loose translations wandered far from the text of the siddur, and became embellished and modified to suit the interests of women. Through this process, the original Hebrew forms underwent such change that the resultant Yiddish prayers emerged as virtually new creations.

It must be stressed that this theory is nearly impossible to verify, since the only evidence that remains is the written tkhines themselves, which, after all, represent the end product of a long process. Nevertheless, certain characteristics of the tkhine literature would seem to indicate

that such a process of development from translation, to paraphrase, to free composition, may, in fact, have occurred. For example, there are many instances of tkhines which copy the opening words or lines of a well-known prayer from the siddur, sometimes leaving it in the original Hebrew, but then digressing into a Yiddish paraphrase which becomes increasingly detached from the original. Or one can find linear translations which are really only paraphrases. The vestiges of this process can be seen in the many tkhines which open with yehi rotsen⁴ or a similar liturgical phrase, only to unfold an original composition with no relation to the standard prayers found in the siddur.

The role of the firzogerin in creating tkhines gains additional plausibility when one compares her role to that of the meturgeman. From the end of the Second Commonwealth through Talmudic times, when Aramaic was the mother tongue of Mesopotamian Jewry, a special post was held in the synagogue by the meturgeman, or translator. While the Torah was being read, the meturgeman translated it into Aramaic. Not satisfied with simply translating, the meturgeman took the liberty of explaining difficult words and passages, and gradually included stories, parables and analogies to enliven his discourse and instruct and entertain his listeners. The exegetical sermons which eventually emerged were handled down orally from one generation to the next. This process has been credited as the source of the earliest midrashic homilies (Eisenstein, 1903;

Zinberg, 1975).

Another theory traces the origins of tkhines to the mystical hymns written by the Kabbalists of Safed in the sixteenth century, some of which were translated into Yiddish. This theory holds that the kabbalistic prayers "served as a pattern for the tehinna literature with its unique manner and style" (Zinberg, 1975, p. 250). Solomon Freehof, in his seminal article in the 1923 CCAR Yearbook, "Devotional Literature in the Vernacular," went to great lengths to show the significant impact of the Kabbalah on tkhines. In the section entitled "The Tehinnoth and the Cabala," Freehof observed that:

From all the centuries beginning with the close of the Talmud we have only a handful of private prayers preserved, and now starting with the sixteenth century a large literature of additional prayer suddenly appears. (p. 405)

In seeking to identify "the new religious impulse" which fueled this sudden proliferation of private devotions, Freehof pointed to the revival of Kabbalah that began in Safed and rapidly spread throughout the Jewish world. He argued that the Kabbalah's influence most strongly manifested itself in the prayerbook, as a result of the basic mystical belief in the power of prayer. During the sixteenth century, many kabbalistic prayers and instructions found their way into the standard liturgy of both the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic rites. Freehof went further to claim that the tkhines "are decidedly Cabalistic in tone" (p. 407), being influenced by the prayerbook and produced by the common folk who were then

just discovering the Kabbalah. He cited as evidence the use of Psalm 67, written in the shape of the menorah, which appeared in many Ivri-Taytsh tkhine books. Both this particular Psalm, and its formation into a menorah, have special significance for Kabbalah. Its seven verses of 49 words each give it numerological power, and it "contains many great mysteries" (p. 407). Freehof also points out that other kabbalistic ideas, such as angels and the mysteries of God's name, permeate the tkhine literature. In addition, he traced the special tkhines written for each day of the week, and corresponding to the six days of creation, to the early kabbalistic prayerbooks. These latter contained special prayers for each day of the week, some of which were attributed to Isaac Luria, the sixteenth century mystic of Safed who was the chief figure in the great kabbalistic revival. Finally, Freehof maintained that "a great many T^ehinnoth are mere translations of original Cabalistic Hebrew prayers" (p. 414).

Freehof's arguments are based on the assumption that "the Judeo-German T^ehinnoth begin in the sixteenth century when the Cabala first conquered the prayerbook..." (p. 407). Yet, we have manuscripts of tkhines dating from before the sixteenth century. While Kabbalah clearly had an influence on the tkhine literature, there is no reason to treat it as the model for tkhines. It is no mere coincidence, however, that the tkhine literature began to blossom at the same moment that Lurianic Kabbalah was taking hold amongst the Jewish masses. One needs

to look for underlying common causes and impulses which sparked both phenomena. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this study, though a partial explanation is offered further on in this paper.

The whole question of the origins of the tkhine literature remains to be resolved. The above theories, namely, the translation of standard public prayers and private devotions into the vernacular, the oral paraphrases by the firzogerins, and the popularization of kabbalistic prayers, may indicate the direction for future scholarship on this matter. Another possibility, borne out by the fact that we have a considerable number of tkhines for which no Hebrew version can be found, is that many of these works are, indeed, original compositions, not merely the result of paraphrasing traditional texts.

Whatever their origins, tkhines rapidly gained enormous popularity, for they represented a genuine folk response to the aridity of standardized Hebrew prayers. "Their very existence," wrote Freehof (1923), "seems to imply an inadequacy in the regular prayer ritual" (p. 384). Tkhines breathed new life into Jewish prayer, and did more than any other liturgical form to restore it to its original condition of intimacy and spontaneity. For not only did tkhines return prayer to the vernacular, but they also returned it to the private domain. Tkhines were deeply personal, private devotions, expressing the pathos, fears and desires of ordinary people. Here was a genuine attempt to reinfuse religious devotion with true kavanah, which

had always been the aim of Jewish prayer. The Talmud strongly endorses private prayer, spoken from the heart. The locus classicus is Berakhot 4:3: "R. Eliezer says: If a man makes his prayer a fixed task, it is not a genuine supplication." This is reminiscent of R. Hammuna's comment about prayer from the heart, in the passage on Hannah, mentioned previously.

The Talmud records several examples of personal prayer composed by Tanaim and Amoraim (rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud). Personal prayers were included in the siddurim of the Geonim Amram and Saadia (early post-Talmudic halakhic authorities), were composed by medieval rabbis and philosophers (including Nahmanides), and were encouraged in the halakhic codes (Eisenstein, 1903). In the long run, however, the movement towards kavanah was overwhelmed by that towards keva^c, or a required, fixed liturgy. Nevertheless, even the established siddur made allowances for private devotion.

At no time in the history of the Jewish liturgy was the regular public service considered sufficient for the expression of the spiritual life. From the time of the Mishna, the Talmud and the Gaonim, there were definite places left in the regular service where private prayers were to be inserted. (Freehof, 1923; Idelsohn, 1932)

We may assume that the tkhine^{literature} enjoyed a long tradition of oral transmission before it was committed to writing (Posner, 1970). As mentioned above, a few manuscripts of tkhines from before the sixteenth century exist, but the enormous popularity of the genre, clearly evidenced by the sheer bulk of published texts, was facilitated by the invention of the printing press. The earliest printed tkhine apparently was Tkhine

Zo, published in Prague in 1590.⁵ It is an eight-page pamphlet, written by Avrom Apoteker, also known as Sama' de-Hayei, or Sam Khayim, i.e. "drug" (for "Apothecary"). It contains five tkhines, each in Hebrew and Yiddish, and each opening with a heading taken from the siddur or Bible: Ana' Adonay, Yehi Ratson (three times), and Melekh Malkhei Hamelakhim. The title page contains a rhymed advertisement in Hebrew and Yiddish. The Yiddish version begins: "Say ye this tkhine every day with much crying/ Thus shall ye be protected from all pain," and goes on to urge the reader to buy the book. The introduction to the first Hebrew tehinah proclaims: "Everyone who says this tehinah every day, I promise him that he will earn the world to come" (p. 1).

From this first edition, there was a huge proliferation of printed tkhines, growing to a flood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Part of this phenomenon can be explained by the invention of cheaper and faster printing methods in the sixteenth century. An equal, if not greater, share of the responsibility must be claimed by the enormous demand for this literature. It filled a deep human need, especially for women, that no other liturgical form had succeeded in satisfying. Furthermore, it has become almost a truism in Jewish history that periods of crisis and decline are accompanied by increased mysticism, inwardness and prayer. The period of decline of East European Jewry, starting with Chmielnitsky's cossack rebellion of 1648, was followed by the rapid spread of mystical

messianic movements (Sabbateanism and Frankism) and Hasidism, with their emphasis on prayer.⁶ It is not difficult to see that an expression of piety as intensely personal as the tkhine literature would find fertile ground in such a spiritual climate (Freehof, 1923).

Tkhines continued to be published until the 1930's, when the rise of Hitler's Third Reich silenced their authors in Europe, and assimilation and the decline of Yiddish claimed their readership in America. The literature was remarkably diverse, published in books of collected tkhines; in pamphlets containing just a few, or even one, tkhine; in the backs of prayerbooks like the Korbm Minkhe. Some also included sections on laws, usually pertaining to the special commandments for women; and some were printed together with musar, or moral reproof, for their female readership. At least one tkhine (A Yiddish and in Big Letters Very Beautiful Tkhine Written in A by an Important Woman, 1896) contains a magical cure for the evil eye, and another (Shas Tkhine Peninim Yekorim, 192?) includes marginal notes offering practical advice on raising children and guarding their health.

The earlier editions were all printed in a special type-face known as vayber-taytsh, or "women's German," because it was used almost exclusively in Yiddish books popular with women. The type-face, somewhat like a Hebrew italics, became so closely associated with tkhines that it was often called tkhine-ksov, or "tkhine-writing." By the mid-nineteenth cen-

tury, however, almost all printers of tkhines had switched to the standard square print which was used for most Hebrew books, and is the common type-face used in Hebrew and Yiddish books today.

A random sampling of collections of tkhines reveals a considerable amount of overlap, as the same prayers were reprinted over and over again. Each new edition brought its own slight variations in orthography or dialect, and over the years mistakes, additions and deletions crept in. The original authors were sometimes acknowledged in subsequent editions; more often they were not. Often the author or editor of the new edition even took credit for older works composed by another author. A fairly common practice, particularly in the nineteenth century, was for male authors to use a female pseudonym, or even to appropriate the name of a well-known woman author, such as Sore bas Toyvim (Weissler, 1980; Wiener, 1972; Zinberg, 1975). All of these factors make dating and authorship a particularly thorny business for researchers, but this problem is endemic to the nature of all folk literature. And as a folk literature, the tkhine books preserved the older forms (though in ever modified versions), while continually adding on new compositions. The clearest example of tkhines newly composed in response to particular events is Shas Tkhine Hekhadoshe, published by the Hebrew Publishing Company (New York) in 1916. In addition to old tkhines, this compilation includes new tkhines for those killed in the war

(World War I) or in pogroms, for those with children or relatives in the war, for a bride who marries far from home, and for a woman residing in a home for the aged.

The purpose and audience of tkhines

Although a great deal of this literature was written by men, and a small part was even intended specifically for men, it is obvious that tkhines, by and large, were written for a female audience (Freehof, 1923; Henry & Taitz, 1978; Idelsohn, 1932; Liptzin, 1972; Minkoff, 1952; Niger, 1919; Roseshansky, 1966; Waxman, 1933; Weissler, 1980; Zinberg, 1975). A sampling of excerpts from the title pages of tkhine books attests to this fact:

...Laws and muser concerning tahares hamishpokhe [family purity] and other laws that a Jewish woman needs to know. Also tkhines for different occasions... (Krausz, 1957, title page)

...Including all kinds of German prayers for pious Jewish women... (Seyder Tkhines Uvakoshes, 1839, title page)

...A prayerbook for educated womenfolk for the awakening of meditation on weekdays, holiday and fast days... (Meir, 1832, title page)

Prayer-and-meditation book for Israel's women and girls. (Di Frome Tsions Tokhter, 1907, title page)

For women, wives and girls (who by reading this tkhine will have)...good fine thoughts. (Tkhines, 1650, title page)

For pious Jewish women... (Seyder Tkhines Uvakoshes, 1850, title page)

This new tkhine was made by a modest woman who did not want her name to be revealed. It is full of the fear of heaven and prayers to God. Therefore, you women should buy it, and thanks to it may God, may He be praised, help you with your requests, and may the righteous redeemer

come speedily in our days. Amen. (Tkhine fun Erev Yonkiper, 1903, title page)

Some books included introductions addressed to women readers. A tkhine written by Matisyohu ben Horav Meyir Sibatki, published in Prague in 1718, begins with an introduction addressed to "My dear women." It continues:

I want you to know why I have made this tkhine in taytsh [Yiddish translation] for you, to honor dear God, and afterwards to honor all the pious women. There are many women who will gladly awaken their hearts by reciting many tkhines. Therefore I have made it [this tkhine] in order that one should recite it with meaning. With the tears that she will shed out of her eyes she will be saved from all evil.

The authors of tkhines sought to provide a vehicle for prayer in the home, since women's responsibilities precluded regular synagogue attendance. They included prayers dealing with women's concerns, especially the three women's mitzvot,⁷ in order to strengthen the observance of these commandments. The authors also were concerned with increasing feminine piety and sincerity (kavanah) in prayer, and many tkhine books promised women that regular reading would ensure a share in the world to come. We know that many of the early Yiddish Bible translations were the result of a calculated effort by rabbis to wean women away from the ever-popular Yiddish secular legends and romances, and to replace these with more pious fare (Zinberg, 1975); the tkhines, as well, surely benefited from this effort to "purify" women's literature. The preface of an English translation of a popular German tkhine book explains:

The domestic position of females, their numerous and arduous duties, particularly in married life and in reference to the physical and moral care of their children, render it a matter of great difficulty for them to recite all the prayers contained in the usual service with that undivided attention demanded by their solemnity; and this often leads to their being entirely neglected. Besides, many prayers which ought to be used on occasions incidental to female life, necessitate the avoidance of prolixity to enhance their soul stirring tendency... the object of this Publication is...to strengthen the inclination to frequent devotion... (Bresslau, 1852?, preface)

Women authors

Unlike the Yiddish Bible and prayerbook translations, the law and musar books written for women, and even secular Yiddish literature, a sizeable percentage of the tkhine literature was originally composed by women. It is, in fact, the only genre of Jewish religious literature in whose creation women played a decisive role (Waxman, 1933). Though we may assume that many of these works were written, or at least compiled, by men, they were almost all infused with a feminine style, and the male authors attempted to capture a woman's point of view. In fact, as already mentioned above, as the demand for new tkhines increased, male authors sometimes imitated the writings of popular women composers of tkhines, penning pseudonymous works under these women's names. These male authors frequently even derided tkhines as overwrought, sentimental pulp, and at times lampooned them in their own phony versions (Eisenstein, 1903). But this didn't deter Jewish women from eagerly consuming such books. For the most part, however, male authors of tkhines did an excellent job

of imitating the feminine style, so that many tkhines composed by men are indistinguishable from those by the classic women authors. "It was the woman as composer of tehinnot," writes Israel Zinberg, "who created the classic tehinna style--the uniquely diffuse and wordy, intimately tender, humbly feminine style" (1975, p. 251). Minkoff (1952) concurs that the tkhines written by women "created the classic prayer style and became the foundation of our Yiddish prayer poetry" (p. 156).

In light of these considerations, and in order to present an authentically female point of view, this study will focus mainly on works by women. A number of anonymous works are also included because they contain certain women's issues not addressed elsewhere. Though one can never be certain, it is probable that most of these anonymous authors were, in fact, women.

By far the most popular and well-known author of tkhines was Sore bas Toyvim, who was born in the seventeenth century in the Ukraine. The daughter and wife of rabbis, she was a well-educated woman, quite likely a firzogerin in the synagogue (Henry & Taitz, 1978; Weissler, 1980; Zinberg, 1975). Her tkhines are full of quotations from and allusions to the Bible and rabbinic literature. Her two books are Sheyker Hakheyne ("Grace is Deceitful," from Prov. 31:30), containing prayers for the reading of the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays, for fast days and for the High Holy Days; and Shloyshe Sheorim

("Three Gates") containing prayers and laws for the three women's commandments, for the blessing of the new moon (the first day of the new month constituted a semi-holiday for women), and for the High Holy Days (Weissler, 1980). The latter book, apparently the more popular of the two, was first printed in 1838, although it was well-known before then (Starkman, 1972).

Her tkhines are partly autobiographical, and they reveal a life of suffering and wandering. Sore interpreted her wanderings as God's punishment for her sins--namely for talking and laughing in the synagogue, and for coming bedecked in jewels to show herself off (Liptzin, 1972). She expressed hope that through writing tkhines her sins would be expiated.

Another popular woman writer of tkhines was Seril, daughter of Rabbi Yankev Halevi Segal of Dubno, and wife of Rabbi Mordkhe Kats Rapoport, Av Beys Din (the rabbi) of the community of Olesnica (Zinberg, 1975). It is assumed that she lived in the eighteenth century, as her work began to appear in print at the end of that century. Her booklet is entitled Tkhine Imohes ("Tkhine of the Matriarchs") and includes prayers for the month of Elul, for taking out the Torah on Rosh Hashanah and for blowing the shofar. It also includes a meditation on the thirteen attributes of God, based on Exodus 34:6. This last concept proved to be very popular amongst authors and compilers of tkhines.

Sore bas Rabbi Yukil Segal Horovits (Av Beys Din of

Glogau), was the wife of Rabbi Shabsay, Av Beys Din of Krasny (Zinberg, 1975). According to Zinberg, her full name included those of the four matriarchs: Sore Rivke Rokhl Leye. She, too, composed a tkhine named after the matriarchs, called "Tkhine of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah," which was published in her pamphlet, Tkhine fun Resh khoydesh Bentshn ("Tkhine for Blessing the New Moon"). Friedberg (1969) dates this tkhine to 1816.

Mamael was the daughter of Rabbi Tsvi Hirsh and wife of Rabbi Yitskhok of Belz (Henry & Taitz, 1978). In her tkhine Mamael invokes the merit of Hannah, who prayed for the birth of her son Samuel, to spare her (Mamael) from having trouble with her own children. Next to the matriarchs, the biblical Hannah was the single most revered figure in tkhine literature.

All four of these women were both wives and daughters of rabbis, which is not surprising when one considers that rabbis represented the scholarly elite in the old Jewish world, and were likely to take a keener interest in their family's (even wives' and daughters') educations than were laymen. The few Jewish women who managed to rise to any sort of prominence or recognition in past centuries almost invariably came from rabbinic families.

There were, as well, many other women composers of tkhines. The names of some have been lost, others chose to write anonymously, simply signing their works as "ishe tsnuet"--"a modest woman," or "a groyse tseydek"--"a distinguished pious

woman." In many later compilations of tkhines, the only hint of feminine authorship is a statement on the title page to the effect that these tkhines were taken from "noshim tsid-konies"--"pious women." In addition, this study will include works by Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil; a Rabonis Khane, granddaughter of Rabbi Borukh of Hebron; and a Rabonis Rokhl. All that is known of these women is their names. Occasionally, some vague autobiographical detail can be surmised from their tkhines. A careful study and comparison of early editions may yield approximate dates of authorship, as well as other clues about these unknown writers. But the difficulties in such a study are not insubstantial. In the first place, there may be no early editions extant (I have found books containing tkhines by unknown woman authors published from the late nineteenth century to the 1930's, but these are almost certainly new editions of earlier works). Secondly, it is possible that some of these names are merely aliases for men.

Subject matter and style

Precisely because they wrote in mame-loshn (Yiddish, the "mother tongue") as opposed to loshn-koydesh (Hebrew, the "holy tongue"), the authors of tkhines felt free to elaborate, to digress, in short, to follow the flow of their thoughts and feelings. Tkhines were typified by a free-flowing, rambling style. They were also highly personal and intimate (Roseshansky, 1966; Weissler, 1980). Through the tkhines women spoke

with "Liber Got," or the "Dear Lord" as with an intimate friend. This intimacy with God is reflected in the many anthropomorphisms, such as God's milde hant ("gentle hand"), and pleas for God to be kerakheym ov al bonim ("as compassionate as a father is to his children"). The warmth and humble style of the tkhines contrasts sharply with the more removed and elevated standard Hebrew liturgy. While the prayers of the siddur are collective, to be recited with a quorum of other Jews, those in the tkhine books were private, written in the first person.⁸ Where the prayers of the siddur were obligatory for men, the tkhines were optional for women, and could be individualized to suit the needs of different personalities (Weinreich, 1980). The siddur dealt with matters affecting the entire community, structured around the daily, Sabbath and festival calendar, while tkhines addressed deeply personal issues: childbirth, marriage, sickness, rearing and educating children, menstruation (Weissler, 1980). Men's prayers were more abstract, women's prayers tended to be concrete (Roseschansky, 1966). And, above all, tkhines (as their name--"supplications"--indicates) were exclusively petitionary, while the siddur consisted of both praise and petition (Idelsohn, 1932; Weissler, 1980). Their repeated, heart-felt pleas for protection of family from the various evils of the world reflect "the terror under which the whole people of Israel lived in those days in Europe" (Freehof, 1923, p. 378).

The subjects of tkhines were drawn from daily life, women's concerns and special occasions, and the religious calendar (Waxman, 1933; Weissler, 1980). "The Tehinoth," wrote Meyer Waxman (1933):

...were made to suit every phase of life. There are prayers for health, sustenance (Parnassah), for the giving of birth to children, for raising them as pious Jews, for brides, for pregnant women, for lighting the Sabbath candles and for numerous other occasions... The whole breathes the spirit of a private conversation with the merciful and all-forgiving God. (p. 641)

Influence on style and content

The tkhine literature owes more to the siddur than to any other work as a model of style, expression, form and content. The siddur exerts its strongest influence on the forms of address most commonly used in tkhines: Riboyne shel oylem ("Master of the Universe"); Yehi rotsen ("may it be Your will"); Liber Her Got ("Dear Lord God"--roughly corresponding to the Hebrew terms Adonay and Elohay); Ikh bet dikh ("I beseech You"--corresponding to the Hebrew Ana' Adonay); and Mayn Got un Got fun Mayne Eltern ("my God and God of my ancestors"--analogous to the Hebrew Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu: "our God and God of our fathers"). Note that the neutral term eltern is always preferred to a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase, which would require foters for "fathers." In addition, tkhines quote, paraphrase or translate phrases from the siddur frequently, and often end with Omeyn (Amen), Selo (Selah), or Keyn yehi rotsen (thus may Your will be). Some of the tkhines

also bear a close affinity to the medieval piyutim, many of which became incorporated into the siddur. Not only the siddur, but other liturgical works, such as the Passover Haggadah, the High Holy Day Mahzor, the grace after meals, and the berit milah (circumcision) ceremony, are amply represented in the tkhines.

The next most influential works for writers of tkhines were the Torah and the other books of Hebrew Scripture. They are quoted liberally, and biblical characters, especially the matriarchs, prophetesses and other heroines, are referred to repeatedly, their exploits serving as examples for the readers of the tkhines. (Waxman, 1933). At times one even detects an attempt to duplicate biblical syntax and idiom.

The Talmud (especially the aggadic sections), the Midrash and the halakhic codes also had a bearing on tkhines, which are peppered with stories and anecdotes from these ancient rabbinic sources (Weissler, 1980). This reliance on rabbinic literature indicates a high attainment of traditional Jewish learning on the part of the author. Yet midrashic embellishments of biblical texts invariably are quoted in a very serious manner, and most likely were believed, if not by the authors, then certainly by the average woman reader of tkhines, to be literally true.

Finally, as already mentioned above, the style of the tkhines has been traced by some to the Kabbalah. Occasionally one even finds direct quotations from, or references to, the

Zohar. In short, almost every genre and stratum of Jewish literature finds an echo in the tkhine corpus.

Significance of the tkhine literature

The tkhines constitute an invaluable source of Jewish folklore. As a genuine folk literature, the tkhines reveal the hopes, aspirations, fears, beliefs and values of the ordinary old world Jew (Freehof, 1923; Waxman, 1933). Not only Jewish folklorists, but social historians, too, would do well to include tkhines in their research, as Freehof (1923) points out:

To discover the actual theological beliefs of the people, one must look into their prayerbooks. There when the individual is alone with God he speaks to Him in terms in which he actually conceives Him, he prays for things that he believes God will grant, and expresses hopes which really move his heart...Yet even in prayerbooks we must make a distinction. It may frequently be that an old traditional book will contain ideas that are no longer vital to the worshipper, and are retained merely through the preserving force of tradition. The actual living theology of a people can be found only in contemporary books of devotion. And it is precisely such naive simple contemporary books, written by the people for their own religious needs which we have before us in the Tehinnoth. (p. 379)

In addition, tkhines provide an important component in the study of Yiddish language and literature. The earlier editions, in particular, with their great variety of Yiddish dialects, are virtual treasures of rare idioms, foreign words and archaic expression. The information they contain as sources of the different forms and dialects of Yiddish may well be without parallel. Tkhines have made a not inconse-

quential contribution to the development of Yiddish literature as well. And they are responsible, together with the Bible and prayerbook translations, for much of the preservation of Hebrew terminology in spoken Yiddish (Weinreich, 1980).

The association of women with tkhines deserves special attention. Much of Yiddish literature was written especially for women to fill the void left by their limited literacy in Hebrew, and this was particularly true in the case of tkhines. Indeed, if it were not for women's practical exclusion from much of Hebrew culture, Yiddish writing is not likely to have received the impetus which called forth a vast and richly varied literature (Beck, 1975). But the particular value of the tkhines for the Jewish woman is that they represent the only significant body of Jewish liturgy created (at least partly) by women, and addressing a variety of uniquely feminine concerns.

The purpose of this study

The present study translates a number of tkhines, primarily by women authors, most of which have never been translated previously into English. An analysis of the tkhines will uncover the values, beliefs, world-view and self-image of the traditional Eastern European Jewish woman. The tkhines have been selected for their representation of women's concerns and their use of feminine motifs. These aspects, I believe,

constitute the genre's uniqueness in Jewish liturgy.

While the tkhines contain dozens of diverse themes, nine recurrent themes best represent the values, beliefs, world-view and self-image of women authors and readers of this literature:

1) The benefit of the merit of the matriarchs and Jewish heroines, versus the unworthiness of the petitioner (Waxman, 1933; Weissler, 1980):

Dear God, let the merit of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah stand by us.. ("Tkhine of Gates of Peace," from Shas Tkhine Mirusholayim, 1922, p. 125)

May the merit of our mother Hannah protect their daughters that they may correctly observe their mitsves... (Tkhine Shloyshe Sheorim by Sore bas Toyvim, 1865, p. 2)

I am not worthy of what You have done for me until now and still do for me. (A Naye Tkhine: Sharey Demoes by the Rabonis Khane, 1902, p. 2)

2) The power of the merit of the Torah, and of little children who haven't sinned, to grant efficacy to the petitioner's prayer:

I know, because of my unworthiness, what I have done, but I rely on the merit of my little children who will learn Torah, and through their merit may You help, so that I will never have any sorrow... (Tkhine Imohes min Reshchoydesh Elul by Seril bas Rabbi Yankev Segal, 1874, p. 2)

3) The strong desire to have children, and once one has them, to succeed in raising them as good, pious and learned Jews (Freehof, 1923; Henry & Taitz, 1978; Waxman, 1933; Weissler, 1980):

...You have not merited me to have children. Oh woe is me! My life is bitter to me. I am comparable to a tree which is fully grown but bears no fruit... ("Tkhine About Having Children," in Shas Tkhine Peninim Yekorim, 192?, p. 53)

And give me good and pious children who will be righteous and pious and scholarly men, and may I and my husband live to raise them to Your holy service... ("The New Jerusalem Tkhine," in Shas Tkhine Peninim Yekorim, 192?, p. 21)

4) God's mercy (as opposed to His justice) and power to forgive sins (Freehof, 1923; Waxman, 1933):

...I beseech You dear Lord God, help me, do this for the sake of Your dear name, and judge me with the attribute of mercy. ("Tkhine of Gates of Tears," in A Nave Shas Tkhine Rav Peninim, pub. by Aaron Flohr, 193?, p. 20)

Forgive me my sins as the verse says: "And as for me, may my prayer to You, O Lord, be in an acceptable time. O God, in Your great mercy answer me, in the truth of Your salvation."⁹ (Psalm 69:14). (Tkhine fun Reskhoydesh Bentshn by Sore bas Yukil Horovits, 1894, p. 7)

...rise from the throne of justice and sit on the throne of mercy. Dear God, incline Your mercy towards me, (so-and-so, the daughter of so-and-so), and towards my husband and children and wash away our sins with Your great mercy, but not through sufferings and bad sicknesses. (Tkhine Khadoshe al Haparnose, bound together with Tkhine fun Reskhoydesh Bentshn, 1894, p. 5)

5) The health, sustenance and well-being of one's household (Weissler, 1980):

May You give me, my husband and children grace and mercy in Your eyes and in people's eyes, and years to live and wealth and honor. (Sharey Demoes, 1902, p. 3)

...may You prolong my life, my husband's life and my little children's lives, that we may live in nakhes [pleasure], not, God forbid!, with sorrow. May You send down bounty, blessing, livelihood and success to us and to all Israel, through these open gates. ("A New Tkhine: Fair Judgment" from Peninim Yekorim, 192?, p. 29)

6) Deliverance from all kinds of evil, including various demons, evil spirits, the evil eye, the evil inclination, Satan, enemies, etc. (Freehof, 1923).

...May the evil urge not lust within me, and may You protect me from thieves and sickness and bad punishments, and may You save me from false accusations and from sheydim, rukhes, lilin and mazikin [various kinds of evil spirits] and all evil encounters, and from hunger and from mishaps... (Tkhine fun Reskhoydesh Bentshn, 1894, p. 1)

7) Defenders, such as good angels and one's deceased relatives and ancestors, who have the power to intercede with God on behalf of the petitioner:

We also beseech our mother Rachel to pray for us that we may be inscribed and sealed for a good year [in the Book of Life]Therefore have pity on our sorrow and anguish and trembling before the judgment, and pray for us that we may be inscribed for a good year, that we may never have any sorrow. Amen. (Tkhine Imohes, 1874, p. 12).

8) The strong desire to be self-sufficient (Freehof, 1923) and to live in dignity, and its converse, the fear of the shame incurred by being forced to receive charity (this seems to have been the worst calamity one could suffer, next to childlessness):

We also beseech our foremothers to pray for us that we need not depend upon human charity, God forbid, for the shame incurred is greater than the gift. May we be nourished by Your beloved, holy hand. Amen. (Tkhine Imohes, 1874, p.)

...the charity from a person is very small, but the shame is very great... (Rokhl Mevake al Boneyho. A Naye Shas Tkhine, by Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil, 191?, p. 50)

...And may You give us dignified clothes so that we may go in dignity amongst the pious, and not shamefacedly.

(Tkhine Khadoshe al Haparnose, 1894, p. 1)

9) The performance of the three special commandments for women (Henry & Taitz, 1978), and the rewards for doing so (childbirth without pain, having scholarly children, etc.):

As I light candles to honor the Sabbath, Lord of all the worlds, give me children who should shine in the Torah... (Tkhine fun Reshkhoydesh Bentshn, 1894, p. 8)

If you will faithfully observe the three commandments your delivery will be near without pain. The merit of these commandments will protect [you] when the day of your labor comes. (Tkhine Shloyshe Sheorim, 1865, p. 4)

The tkhines also reflect other important values and beliefs of traditional Judaism, such as acknowledgement of God as Creator and Master of the Universe, the reward of the righteous, the immortality of the soul, the performance of good deeds, the giving of charity, the study of Torah, and the belief in the coming of the messiah. In particular, the hope for the messianic advent figures in the closing words of a great many tkhines, though it often bears little connection to the foregoing prayer, and frequently lacks the urgency of impassioned petition which marks the tkhines as a whole. This is not because the tkhine authors were paying lip service to an irrelevant concept. It is simply a reflection of the needs and priorities of their largely female readership--messianism was abstract, future and general, while women's primary concerns were concrete, immediate and personal. The nine themes identified above reverberate repeatedly throughout the tkhines with the kind of passion which can only come from deeply held convictions, values and beliefs.

In the following eight chapters excerpts from the works of a number of tkhine authors are translated. Each chapter is devoted to the work of one author or editor. Chapter nine includes the works of a number of anonymous writers. The individual translations are numbered to correspond with the photostats of the originals in appendix 3. The translations are numbered from number 2; number 1 in the appendix is a photostat of the title page of Tkhine Zo, mentioned previously in the Introduction.

Sources and allusions to sources in the translations are identified in the footnotes to each chapter, which also provide explanations of Jewish beliefs and practices mentioned in the texts. Following each translation is an analysis of that tkhine's contents and themes.

Chapter 2: Shloyshe Sheorim ("Three Gates") by Sore
bas Toyvim

2) Preface

I, Sore bas Toyvim, do this for dear God's sake, praised is He and praised be His name! I have arranged for a second time another beautiful new tkhine on Three Gates. The first gate was based on the three mitsves that we women have been commanded: their initials spell out נ"ך ; khale, nide and lighting of candles. The second gate is a tkhine [for] when one blesses the New Moon, and the third gate is for the Days of Awe.¹

Analysis

Exactly what the author meant by the "second time" is not clear. Either she means that this tkhine, Shloyshe Sheorim, is her second book (the first being Sheyker Hakheyn), or she means that she wrote two versions with the same title. This sort of preface, which served both as a table of contents and as an advertisement for the book ("another beautiful new tkhine"), was common in tkhine books. A translation of the rest of Sore bas Toyvim's preface, in which she invokes the merits of the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, and the supreme loyalty of Abraham, to put an end to her wanderings, can be found in Israel Zinberg's (1975) A History of Jewish Literature (Volume VII, pp. 255-256).

3) At the Lighting of Candles on Sabbath Eves

The lighting of candles for Sabbath is referred to as "their commandment is two"²--that means it is one mitsve to light two candles to honor the Sabbath. The two candles symbolize the words "observe" and "remember"; that is, in the first [set of] Ten Commandments it says: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,"³ and in the other [set of] Ten Commandments it says: "Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy."⁴ The sum of two times 7 [candle] adds up to 500--as many as the limbs of the man and the woman.⁵ By virtue of this [i.e., lighting candles] will God, may He be praised, hallow the limbs of man and woman. Therefore one should also light candles very earnestly. God, may He be praised, will enlighten the eyes of your children in the holy Torah.⁶ At the hour of lighting one must pray to God that the children be able to learn. If you will faithfully observe the three commandments, your delivery will be near without pain. The merit of these commandments will protect [you] when the day of your labor comes. God, may He be praised, will protect you from death and calamity and you will attain happiness and joy.

Analysis

Sore bas Toyvim's Shloyshe Sheorim consists not only of tkhines, but also of laws and musar for women. As such her book is at least partly pedagogic in aim, while at the same

time retaining a supplicatory tone: "By virtue of this will God, may He be praised, hallow the limbs of man and woman." Her frequent quotations from Bible and rabbinics reveal a solid grounding in Hebrew literature. The request to "enlighten our children's eyes in the Torah," based on a similar phrase in the siddur, is one of the most popular in tkhine literature. The idea that proper observance of the three women's commandments will protect a woman from pain and death during childbirth, is reiterated throughout tkhine literature. Its basis is the statement in Mishnah Shabbat 2:6-- "For three sins women die during childbirth: for not being careful about nidah, halah, and the lighting of candles."

This section is based on a Hebrew rhyme, which is quoted in Hebrew and then paraphrased in Yiddish. Throughout Shloy-she Sheorim Sore bas Toyvim reveals a poetic flare, frequently ending a prayer or a section of her tkhine in a rhymed couplet.

4) Rules of Nide

"How very famous are the daughters," this means the Jewish women, for their garden is locked against harlotry.⁷ They even separate themselves from their own husbands for one full day before expecting the menses⁸--they may not have intercourse with their husbands. Nevertheless we have mention-

ed this rule, for the general benefit, because common people are not aware of this rule, and many people would thereby stumble and suffer, God forbid!, a great punishment. For this reason we have included this rule in the tkhine, so that every woman may be forewarned. Through its merit they will have a good reward in this world, and they will have good and pious children and wise males who will teach many [i.e., will become rabbinic scholars], and how much the more so that they will receive a great reward in the world to come!

May the merit of our mother Hannah protect their daughters that they may correctly observe their mitsves; especially the mitsve of nide they shouldn't treat lightly, lest when they are about to have a child they will be, God forbid!, condemned. But if they will properly take care, they will deliver very quickly and soon. Amen.

Analysis

In the section entitled Rules of Nide, Sore bas Toyvim explicitly states her pedagogic intentions. She feels a moral duty to enlighten the common womenfolk of their religious obligations, so that they will be spared the punishment meted out to transgressors. Sore puts forth the idea that the tkhine itself is efficacious in granting the petitioner rewards: both in this world, through "good and pious children," and in the world to come.

The biblical Hannah is invoked to protect Jewish daughters

in their correct observance of the laws of nide. In calling her "our mother Hannah," Sore bas Toyvim accords her the prestige and reverence due the four matriarchs. In fact, aside from the matriarchs, Hannah is the only traditional figure who consistently merits the title Muter (Mother) in the tkhine literature.

5) Rules of Khale

...May my khale be accepted as a sacrifice on the altar was accepted [in former times]. May my mitsve be accepted just as I have correctly fulfilled it. In former times this [expiation of sins] belonged to the priest and he used to forgive them their sins. Thus may I, too, be forgiven of my sins, that I may be like a newborn child.⁹ Enable me to honor my dear Sabbaths and holidays. May He protect me, that I, my husband and my children may be nourished. May my [observance of the] commandment of "taking khale" be accepted, that my little children may be sustained by dear God, praised be He, with great compassion and with great mercy. May my [observance of the] commandment of khale be as if I had given the tithe. Just as I observe the commandment of khale with my whole heart, so may God, praised be He, protect me from pain and aches.

Analysis

The "Rules of Khale" show the profound degree to which

Jewish women had internalized the rabbinic model of piety, even though it was clearly an exclusively male model.

To the extent that the intricacies of halakhah were intended as a substitution for the priestly sacrificial cult, the observant Jew viewed each commandment as a vicarious offering to God. The priest was now replaced by the pious common-born man who observed the commandments with priestly devotion and purity. In like manner, Sore bas Toyvim sought to elevate the three special women's commandments to this symbolic level: a woman's sincere performance of her mitzvot potentially carried with it the holiness and atoning power of the priestly sacrifice at the Temple altar. Furthermore, in Sore's "Rules of Khale," the mitzvah of "taking khale"--removing a small piece of dough from the unbaked loaf, and burning it in remembrance of the biblical grain offering--becomes a substitute not only for sacrifices, but also for the biblical tithe.

6) Rules for Lighting Candles

...And through the merit I gain through "laying thread"¹⁰ for our mother Sarah, may God, praised be He, remember us for the merit of her pain when her beloved Isaac was led to the Akeyde [binding].¹¹ May she defend us before God, praised be He, that we should not be left widows this year, God forbid!, and our children should not, God forbid!, be taken away while we are still alive in this world. Enable us to provide

for our children's needs, that we may be able to keep them with a rabbi, so that they may become accustomed to Your service, to respond "Amen. May His great name..."¹² May the merit of my [observance of the] commandment of candles be accepted like the candles of the High Priest, which he lit in the Temple, so that it may enlighten our children's eyes in the holy Torah.

I also beseech dear God, through my mitsve of blessing candles, that my prayer be accepted by dear God, praised be He...as I "lay the thread" for our mother Rebekah's sake, who caused the blessings to our father Jacob, that the blessings would be fulfilled through us...¹³

...May we have a good judgement, together with our husbands and our children, to good life. May we, God forbid!, not be left widows and our children orphans. Through the merit [that we gain] when we "lay a thread" for our mother Rachel's sake, and through her merit, may You fulfill the verse "and the children will return to their borders."¹⁴ That means, through Rachel's merit will God, may He be praised, return us to our land. May her merit protect us, for she would not permit herself to be comforted until God had promised her that "your children will be returned to their land."¹⁵ Dear God, let it be fulfilled that the righteous redeemer [i.e., the messiah] should come quickly and speedily in our days. Amen. So may Your will be.¹⁶

Master of the Universe,¹⁷ I beseech You, merciful God, that You accept the candles that we make for the sake of the holy pure souls. For each thread that we lay, may You add life. May the holy souls awaken out of their graves and pray for us, that we should be healthy. Now we turn to pray for those who died in our generations and for those who died since [the time of] Adam and Eve. Today we make candles for all the souls' sakes, and for the sake of the souls who lie in fields and in the forests and for all the martyrs and for those who have no children and for all the little children, that all their dry bones may be awakened and become alive quickly and soon. May we merit to witness the resurrection of the dead this year. Amen, selah.

Analysis

These selections from the Rules of Lighting Candles combine the theme of kindling candles in observance of the commandment, with making candles, especially in connection with Yom Kippur. In this tkhine, the matriarch Sarah is asked to defend the petitioner and her children against an untimely death. The biblical Sarah's credentials in this regard are her own experience with her son Isaac, who was taken from her and nearly offered up as a sacrifice to God. Sore bas Toyvim imagines the biblical Sarah's pain (tsar), and identifies strongly with her presumed agony. She then goes on to pray for the sustenance and education of her children. The education

of one's children, as will be seen, formed one of the supernatural values for Jewish women; nonetheless, Jewish mothers were not entirely lacking in ulterior motives. In this case, the children are being educated in order to learn the response to the Kaddish prayer. Here kinder must refer to boys only, since girls were neither sent to study with a rabbi nor required to recite the Kaddish. Ultimately, one presumes, the boys will learn to recite the entire Kaddish, so that they will be able to fulfill correctly the obligation of mourning for their parents.

Once again the idea of the mitzvah as a surrogate priestly act is expressed, and the candles become metaphors for the enlightenment of God's word. Here, too, Sore employs the popular phrase "enlighten our children's eyes in the Torah."

Sore bas Toyvim's desperate plea that she not be left a widow, and her children not be left orphans "this year" reflects the real terror of God's judgement of souls on Yom Kippur--of "who shall live and who shall die" during the coming year, as the dramatic Unetaneh Tokef prayer asks on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, the request "may we have a good judgement, together with our husbands and our children, to good life," is apropos to the Yom Kippur theme.

Sore bas Toyvim invokes the merit of the matriarchs Rebekah and Rachel in this tkhine. Rachel, in particular, is connected with a request to bring the messiah, for it is through her merit that the Jews will be returned to the Land

of Israel. Tradition holds that the return will only happen when the messiah comes.

Sore also expresses the hope that the dead (presumably her deceased relatives) "may awaken out of their graves and pray for us, that we should be healthy." The practice of going to the cemetery to beg the deceased to intercede on one's behalf was especially popular before Yom Kippur. In return for this kindness, the petitioner performs a charitable act on behalf of the deceased: She "lays thread," or measures their graves with candle wicks. She then makes the wicks into candles, which she donates to the synagogue or Besmedresh (house of study). Donating candles to provide light for the scholars in the Besmedresh was a favorite act of charity, particularly amongst women. In this manner, candles are made not only for one's ancestors, but for all the martyrs, those in unknown graves, those "who have no children," and for "all the little children." Many of the dead so honored have no regular mourners, since the primary obligation to recite Kaddish devolves on one's children. In some cases, the circumstances of death are unknown, and the graves are unmarked, so that the survivors cannot properly observe the yahrzeit (anniversary of the death). By including all these in her memorial prayers, the petitioner performs the righteous act of assisting more holy souls in their quest for eternal rest. She, in turn, receives both the advocacy of the souls of the dead, and the reward of having performed

a vital mitzvah (Trachtenberg, 1939). For attending to the dead who were improperly buried was considered one of the noblest of deeds.

7) Moral Reproof for Women

I, the woman Sore, am beseeching the young women not to converse in the dear, holy synagogue, for it is a great sin. I recall that the Tane (Tana¹⁹) Rabbi Elazer the son of Rabbi Simon met officials who were leading two donkeys laden with punishments. He asked the officials, "On whose account are these?" They answered, "On account of the people who converse in the synagogue from after Borukh Sheomar²⁰ until after the Shimenesre."²¹ Therefore I am warning you that you should not, God forbid!, be punished as I have been, with wandering. You should take me as an example and confess your sins to God, blessed be He. I am also beseeching you, have pity on widows, orphans, strangers, captives and on all old and sick people. Just as fasting embitters and pains your heart, so you should believe the poor man [when he tells how] pained and embittered [he feels] because he does not have food to give to his wife and children. Therefore I constantly pray that you should beseech God, blessed be He, that He should strengthen your hearts to be able to fulfill the mitsve of giving charity to the poor with great diligence. In virtue of this act, God, blessed be He, will watch over you. I also constantly pray that through it [your giving of

charity] God, blessed be He, will carefully watch over me in my old age.

Just as I have arranged for you another version of this beautiful tkhine, so may I be saved from my great sin. By virtue of the fact that we remember our sins, may God grant us life.

I constantly remind myself of all the things [I used to do]--when I used to come in the dear synagogue wearing expensive jewelry, I used to come late and even laugh. Today I remind myself and remember that God, blessed be He, does not forgive. Hence it is written: "His wrath is brief and His patience is long,"²² which means "He waits long and pays quickly." Today I am a wanderer; my heart murmurs in me when I remember that God forgives no one. Therefore I am requesting that you comprehend my words and take it to heart so that when you come into the dear synagogue you should feel great awe. You should know before Whom you have come and to Whom you pray and Who will give you an answer concerning your life. I am also beseeching you to have great compassion for widows, orphans, strangers, and captives, and for old and sick people. For when you fast, your hearts are in pain, so should you believe that not only is the poor man in pain, but he has even greater pain when he sees his wife and children [hunger] and has nothing with which to refresh them. Therefore am I, the woman Sore, asking you to do this for dear God's sake, blessed be He, and may you have great protection. Therefore

I am hoping, along with all the poor people, for God's promise. I am also praying that dear God watch carefully over my old age, that our children may not be driven away from us. I have also arranged the other new, beautiful tkhine for you so that we may be rescued from our sins and from the Angel of Death this year, and thanks to it may God, blessed be He, grant us life.

Analysis

In "Moral Reproof for Women," Sore admonishes her readers to avoid the sins for which she was punished, and in addition, to give tzedakah (charity) to the poor, sick and unfortunate. The Bible and Talmud are especially conciliatory concerning the needs of those most vulnerable in society, and therefore demand that special care be taken to guarantee that justice be done to widows and orphans, who may be left without means of support, and to strangers: "You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (Ex. 22:21). "A stranger you shall not oppress, for you know the heart of a stranger, seeing you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). In addition, the redeeming of captives, respect for the aged, and visiting the sick, were considered amongst the highest moral obligations. In this tkhine, as in many other tkhines, there is a strong sense of compassion for, and identification with, the poor. Undoubtedly the poor made up a considerable percentage of the consumers of tkhines--they, more than any-

one, were in need of the comfort and solace offered by such books.

Again, one finds the common theme that the writing or recitation of tkhines has atoning power. This particular edition of Sore's "Moral Reproof for Women" is highly repetitious--in fact, it seems to be composed of two separate versions of the same work. Israel Zinberg (1975) translates a much shorter version of this work. Presumably he used the earliest edition available to him (Shloyshe Sheorim was first published in 1838, whereas the edition available to me was printed in 1865). It is possible, however, that Zinberg only provided a partial translation, or that Sore bas Toyvim did, in fact, write two versions of "Moral Reproof for Women," the second being an expansion of the first.

8) When one blesses the New Moon one says this:

May it be Your will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, that You renew upon us this month for good and for blessing.²³ And may You give us long life, that this life may be a life in the world to come; a life of goodness, a life of blessing--may we be sustained by God; a life of good livelihood--with nakhes [pleasure, satisfaction], not with sorrow. Clothes in accordance with my status,²⁴ a life of bodily vigor--may our bones be strengthened. A life marked by the fear of heaven--and may our children believe in God, praised be He; may they go in God's way, may they succeed in every step of

their way. A life without shame or reproach--may we not be shamed in this world or in the world to come before the celestial court. Grant us a life of wealth and honor--may we raise our children to Torah, marriage, and good deeds, as King David, may he rest in peace, requested.²⁵ Master of the Universe, let me die like a king, not like a pauper. Grant us a life in which we shall have a love of Torah and a fear of heaven--may my children believe in God, like the children of Jacob our father, may he rest in peace. When Jacob our father, may he rest in peace, was about to die, he wanted to reveal the end of redemption, but the power of prophecy failed him. He became frightened and said to them [his sons]: "Perhaps, God forbid!, there is some unfitness in my bed, as [was the case] with my parents. That is to say, perhaps there is a wicked son amongst my children, just as my grandfather Abraham had a wicked son Ishmael and also my father Isaac had a wicked son Esau." They answered: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," which means: "Listen, our father Israel, the God who is your God is our God, too. God, blessed be He, is one,"²⁶ Why did they call him Israel, when he was named Jacob? When he was pursuing worldly matters he was known as Jacob, but when he was pursuing Torah and good deeds, he was known as Israel.²⁷ Dear God, may You give us a life in which He fulfills the desires of our hearts for good. Amen.

Analysis

The portion of the tkhine for blessing the New Moon translated here takes the form of an exegetical midrash. Just as the ancient rabbinic midrashim commented on biblical passages verse by verse, this tkhine comments on a liturgical passage, namely the Birkat Hahodesh, or Blessing of the New Moon, phrase by phrase. The true midrashic nature of the tkhine's interpretation is evidenced in Sore bas Toyvim's various references to the world to come, which is conspicuously absent from the original Birkat Hahodesh. The request to be enabled to raise one's children to Torah, marriage and good deeds is echoed repeatedly in this literature. "Torah" refers to the study of Torah, or the attainment, for boys, of Bar Mitzvah at the age of thirteen. Jewish parents regarded it as their duty to find suitable marriage partners for their offspring, and to do so as early as possible, for they were responsible for all aspects of their children's lives until the latter were married. The hope that the children would live to perform good deeds reflects the desire of all parents to see their children live worthwhile and virtuous lives. Presumably, an adult is able to perform more good deeds than a child, and so this traditional expression also contains the parents' desire to live to see their children reach maturity.

The end of this tkhine is drawn from the Midrash.

9) (continuation of above)

Master of the Universe, I am praying to You just as Queen Esther prayed.²⁸ Lord of the whole world, with Your right and left hands with which You created the whole world, with Your two hands may You spread Your lovingkindness over me. There are six chambers in paradise in which there are several thousand righteous women who have not suffered the anguish of gehenna. Queen Bitya, the daughter of Pharaoh, is there. There is a place in paradise where there is a curtain which is readied to be opened where she sees the form of Moses our teacher; thus she bows three times and says: "How worthy is my strength and how skillful is my power that I have drawn out such a light--a beloved light--from the water."²⁹ This they do three times a day.

In the other chambers there are also thousands of myriads of women, and Serah, the daughter of Asher, [who] is a queen. Every day they announce three times that the form of Joseph the righteous is coming. She bows before him and says: "Praised is my strength, and worthy is my power, that I merited to tell the good news to my lord Jacob that my uncle lived,"³⁰ (and in the uppermost room he studies Torah)."

In the third chamber our mother Yocheved, the mother of Moses our teacher, resides with many women, and [they] praise dear God, may He be praised; every day three times a day, they praise God and recite the Song of the Sea with great joy. Miriam the prophetess is there, and she herself recites the

verse: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand,"³¹ and many holy angels praise God with her.

In the fourth chamber sits Deborah the prophetess with many thousands of women and they praise God and sing the Song of Deborah.³² One cannot describe the chamber where the matriarchs are. No one at all may come there, where the matriarchs are. Dear women, when the souls are together in paradise, what nakhes [a pleasure] it is there! Therefore I beseech you to praise God, praised be He, with great kavone [sincerity] and to pray, [and] you will come to be where our matriarchs are.

Analysis

This fantastic vision of paradise speaks volumes about the beliefs and values of the traditional East European Jewish woman. Not surprisingly, the paradise described here, while based on rich aggadic traditions, shares a number of characteristics with this-worldly East European Jewish life. Just as Jewish life was insulated and restricted, so is paradise divided up into separate chambers. Just as Jewish women were kept separate from men in the public domain and cloistered in the private domain, six of the chambers in heaven are reserved for "the righteous women." Just as, on earth, women's status was derived vicariously through the males in their families (fathers, husbands and sons), so, too,

in heaven, most of the heroines achieve their merit only through their association with pious heroes (Bitya and Yochaved with Moses, Serah with Joseph). The prophetesses Miriam and Deborah are exceptions (although even Miriam's glory is greatly enhanced by virtue of the fact that she is the sister of Moses and Aaron). Notice how Miriam continues to re-enact her part in the drama of the Sea of Reeds, eternally repeating the song she sang in Exodus 15:20-21.

The place of greatest honor among the righteous in paradise is given to the four matriarchs. They are provided with an exclusive chamber to themselves, which no one else is even permitted to enter.

How do all these righteous women spend their blessed hours in paradise? They do nothing but sing songs of praise to God, according to Sore bas Toyvim. But in another version of this tkhine, printed under the title "New Tkhine for Livelihood," in a pamphlet containing Sore bas Yukil Horovits' Tkhine fun Reshkhoydash Bantshn ("Tkhine for Blessing the New Moon," 1894), the women in paradise are also engaged in the study of Torah! In the Vilna edition, translated here, it is Joseph who studies Torah in paradise; but the Lemberg version (the 1894 version cited above) reads: "In the third chamber people study Torah and recite songs and praises." Since the third chamber is one of the six reserved for women, it must follow that the "people" studying Torah are women. In this instance, at least according to the Lemberg version of the

tkhine, life in the world to come is radically different for women than life in this world. The one aspect of Jewish life which was clearly valued above all others was Talmud Torah--the study of the Torah.³³ And yet this was precisely the realm from which women found themselves excluded. Even if men were to have been more liberal in allowing women to study Torah, what woman could find the time to study? This alternate reading, implying that women study Torah in heaven, may simply be the result of a corruption of the text, an innocent printer's error. Or it may reflect the projection of a woman's desire to study the holy books onto an idyllic paradise, in which women had none of the earthly duties to occupy their time, and could therefore spend their leisure in prayer and study.

Perhaps the most alarming feature of this feminine view of paradise, is that the sexes are even more strictly segregated in heaven than they were on earth. For, at least in the home, which was the woman's primary domain, the sexes mingled. But in heaven a woman would be separated from the male members of her family. Similarly, in a tkhine for immersion in the mikveh [ritual bath] in the collection Rokhl Mevake al Boneyho ("Rachel Weeps for her Children"),³⁴ the women in heaven sit behind a mehitsah--a divider or barrier separating the sexes, generally used in synagogues and at community religious and social functions. Is it possible that prayer (and the study of Torah) claimed ultimate supremacy, in the

eyes of women no less than of men, even over the sanctity of the family? Perhaps the answer is that, while the family must demand all of a woman's attention and energy in this world, her reward is to be freed of its burdens in the next world.

10) (continuation of above)

Lord of the whole world, listen to my cry!³⁵ Answer me; make us happy this year, that we may be free of troubles, for we are just like sheep without a shepherd,³⁶ and like a ship without a rudder, and like orphans without a father, like sucklings and small children ^{without} a mother. I hope to God, praised be He, that He will accept my great petition,³⁷ as He accepts all the petitions of all downcast people with broken hearts. May God, praised be He, accept the prayer of my broken heart, for I have great trouble from my children. May the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob support us. May our little children who died young before their time pray for us, and also may the pure, holy and merciful angels pray for us on the Judgement Day that when You judge us You will judge us with mercy and not with anger. And may my prayer not return empty. Lord God of hosts,³⁸ You probe all the chambers and all the thoughts of all hearts.³⁹ You heavens, open your windows,⁴⁰ let the merciful angels bring my prayer before God, may He be praised. The merciful angel will surely go before me. He will bring me grace and mercy from before

God, may He be praised. May the charm of righteous Joseph and of Queen Esther be put in my mouth. Good is the man who trusts in God,⁴¹ may He be praised, for He abandons no one who trusts in Him. Amen, selah.

Analysis

This next section contains a number of biblical allusions, including references to the three patriarchs, to Joseph, and to Queen Esther. If this tkhine is autobiographical, Sore's punishment was far more tragic than homelessness--here she beseeches "our little children who died young, before their time" to pray for her. Sore also invokes the "pure, holy and merciful angels" to act as good intercessors with God, turning His anger to mercy. Notice Sore's wonderfully rich metaphors for people in need of God--especially "sucklings and small children without a mother." As in so many tkhines, broken-heartedness is the condition which most readily calls forth sincere and urgent prayer--especially when one's heartache is caused by "groys mi fun mayne kinder"--"great trouble from my children." The metaphor of broken-heartedness is common in the Selihot, or penitential prayers, whose style is often copied in tkhines.

11) Last paragraph of Shloyshe Sheorim

May I, the woman so-and-so daughter of so-and-so, and all

the righteous women, pray that the merit of our foremothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah [support us] and may my mother Leah also pray for me and for all Israel, for she knows that I am well-acquainted with troubles. May God, bless His name, say to the troubles: enough!⁴² speedily in our days. Amen.

Analysis

The last few lines of Sore bas Toyvim's Shloyshe Sheorim return, appropriately, to the primary theme of the merit of the matriarchs. The translation presented here is the last paragraph of the "New Tkhine for Livelihood," which is a variant text. The most notable difference between the two versions is that this one asks for protection from suffering, and makes use of a midrash (see footnote #42). These two elements are lacking in the Vilna edition, upon which the rest of my translations of Shloyshe Sheorim are based. In addition to being a richer text, the version translated here offers excellent testimony to the major role played by midrashim in the formulation of this literature.

Chapter 3: Tkhine Imohes min Reshkhoydesh Elul (Tkhine of the Matriarchs for the New Moon of Elul) by Seril bas Yankev Segal

12) Treat me according to Your great mercy¹

Treat me with lovingkindness and judge me with great mercy. I do beseech You to accept my pleas; I have no defender before Your holy name, but only Your holy attribute of mercy. I pray that You accept my confession and open the gates of repentance and the gates of the seven heavens, just as You opened the gates of heaven when Israel received the Torah on Mount Sinai.² And I do beseech You to accept my bitter tears, just as You accepted the tears of the angels who wept when Abraham our father brought his beloved son Isaac to the Akeyde [binding]. The angel's tears fell on Abraham's knife and did not let him slaughter his son Isaac.³ So, too, may my tears fall before You, and prevent me or my husband or my children and all my good friends from being taken away from the world. And I beseech You that You may have mercy on me and that You Yourself should be my defender in the trial in which You will judge me. Accept my plea and forgive me for my sins. Amen.

13) We will all stand before Your judgement⁴

Before Your judgement seat will we stand. Therefore do

I weep and cry before Your holy name that You will respond with grace and mercy and that You Yourself will preside over my judgement. And do not punish us, God forbid!, with cruel decrees, and let us raise our children to be good. And may our children live to raise their children. You are the God who is merciful to little children.

Analysis

The month of Elul is the last month in the Jewish calendar before the New Year. Elul ushers in the season of repentance, and hence repentance, forgiveness and atonement of sins constitute the dominant themes of Seril's book.

A partial translation of the first of these two tkhines can be found in Zinberg (1975, Vol. VIII, p. 257). In it, God's attribute of mercy is emphasized. The rabbis of the ^{two} Talmud spoke of God's [^]complimentary, yet opposing, midot, or attributes: midat hadin, the attribute of justice, and midat harahamim, the attribute of mercy. Both are absolutely essential to divine governance of the universe, yet it is to the latter, the attribute of mercy, that people have always appealed to in prayer. This rabbinic concept pervades all of tkhine literature--the assumption that God will respond with mercy is one of the pillars of the genre.

In the first of these tkhines, in particular, Seril demonstrates her knowledge of both Bible and Midrash. The tears are no mere literary device--weeping during prayer was

considered a sign of true womanly piety, as the introduction to the tkhine by Matisyohu ben Rabbi Meyer Sabatki indicates (see Introduction).

Interestingly, Seril expresses the desire to have God alone defend and judge her. These particular tkhines are much closer to the classical Jewish outlook than most other tkhines, which express dependancy on a variety of defenders and intercessors, such as good angels, the souls of the deceased, and the Torah scrolls, to bring the supplicant's prayer before God. Elsewhere, Seril herself asks her ancestors to pray on her behalf.

The frequency and urgency of pleas for the protection of one's family, especially young children, in these tkhines and throughout the literature, reflects the prevalence of sickness and infant mortality in past centuries.

14) "Let my cry come near before You"⁵

May my plea come near to You, and may no evil angels or accuser be able to come between my plea and the Throne of Glory. May You Yourself stretch out Your hand for my prayer [so that] it should not have to go through the angels created by my wicked deeds. May they not take away my prayer or prevent it from reaching You. And I do beseech You to put Your sword back into its sheath and to keep Your hand over our little children. Amen.

Analysis

While Seril does not invoke good angels or intercessors here, she is very much concerned about escaping the clutches of evil angels and accusers who can spoil or intercept her prayers before they reach God. In rabbinic literature, the accusing angel (mekatreg or satan) acts as prosecutor of the souls brought before God for judgement. The origin of the concept of evil angels created when one sins is considerably more obscure. The closest parallel I have been able to find is in a statement from the kabbalistic work Kitsur She-nei Luhot Haberit quoted in Joshua Trachtenberg's (1939) Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion: "the sins of men are 'written' on their bones, and after their death the bones so inscribed are transformed into demons" (p. 275). As found repeatedly in the works of Seril and other tkhine authors, here, too, is the familiar plea for protection of children.

15) Remove from me Your anger and Your wrath⁶

...I will observe Your mitsves, and beseech You to strengthen my heart to fulfill Your mitsves that You have commanded. Their acronym is נ'ח [Khale, Nide, Hadlokes neyres (lighting of candles)] . And may You strengthen my hands to give charity, to give candles to be lit, and strengthen my feet [so that I may] go to the synagogue to praise You. Amen.

Analysis

As indicated previously, the three women's commandments figure prominently in this literature. Often they are abbreviated into the acronym חַנּוּךְ, which also spells the name of Hannah, the supreme model of feminine piety. In this tkhine the obligations to give charity (tzedakah)--including donating candles to the synagogue--and to attend the synagogue, receive as much emphasis as observance of halah, nidah and candle lighting.

16) What shall we say and what shall we request?⁷

What shall we say and what shall we request? I know because of my unworthiness, what I have done, but I rely on the merit of my little children who will learn the Torah, and through their merit may You help, so that I will never have any sorrow...

Analysis

The tradition of denying personal merit is well-established in Judaism, as reflected, for example, in the siddur. The Birkhot Hashahar (morning blessings) include the prayer:

...Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before You, but because of Your abundant mercies. What are we? What is our life? What is our piety? What is our righteousness? What is our salvation? What is our strength? What can we say in Your presence, O Lord our God and God of our fathers? Are not the mightiest as naught before You, men of reknown as if they were not, the wise as if without knowing, the intelligent as if lacking in understanding?...the days of our life are as vanity before You...

But while the petitioner can claim no worthiness of her own, she hopes that her innocent children will gain merit through their study of Torah, so that the mother will be (vicariously) deserving of God's help.

17) Remove Your anger from me⁸

Take away Your anger from me. May You silence Satan who is constantly accusing us through the sound of the shofar.⁹ And forgive our sins through the sound of the shofar.¹⁰ Just as the shofar is bent, so will we bend our hearts to repent for our sins. And with the sound of the shofar may You remove the spots which we have made in our souls. With the breath which is blown into the shofar may You blow on the scale of mitsves so that they outweigh the sins. And may we merit to hear good tidings this year.

Analysis

In this tkhine, Satan plays his classic role of accuser. Seril's multi-faceted interpretation of the shofar yields some contradictions: the shofar is at once the instrument of accusation and of forgiveness. It represents repentance and is the agent of purification from sins. Sin becomes personified as "the spots which we have made in our souls." Each person's soul is created pure, according to Jewish tradition, and only becomes sullied through the individual's sins. The High Holy Days offer the opportunity to repent, thereby res-

toring the soul to its original pristine state. The concept of mitzvot outweighing sins comes from the Talmud.

Kiddushin 40b states:

Our rabbis taught: A man should always regard himself as though he were half guilty and half meritorious: if he performs one precept, happy is he for weighting himself down in the scale of merit; if he commits one transgression, woe to him for weighting himself down in the scale of guilt...

"Good tidings" means the happy news of the arrival of the messiah.

18) Indeed, I desired Your mercy¹¹

...For You are our Father and we are Your children
How can You listen to [our] crying? Be merciful to us¹² and
listen attentively to our plea. Amen.

19) With Your righteousness may You wash out spots¹³

With Your righteousness may You erase the spots that I
have made in the garment of my soul with my great sins...

Analysis

Here a mother's compassion for her children is projected onto God. And, again, one finds the idea of "spots" in the soul--only now it is further personified: "the garment of my soul." Seril has injected into her prayer an image from the familiar, work-a-day world of the typical woman of her day--what woman had not struggled to remove stains from clothing?

20) This tkhine is to be recited when the Torah scroll is taken out. On Rosh Hashanah one should say it three times.

...Just as we have dressed Your holy Torah scrolls in white mantles, so may You make white the spots in our soul, that we have stained with our sins, as the verse says: "Though your sins be like scarlet threads I will make them white."¹⁴ Master of the Universe, just as we are now taking out the Torah which is called "book," so may You inscribe us today in the Book of Life and the Book of Blessing. And we shall also be reading now in Your scroll how You heard Sarah's prayer on Rosh Hashanah.¹⁵ And today we will also read in the maftir how You heard the prayer of Your righteous Hannah.¹⁶ So may You also hear our prayers today...

And may You not take us away from the world, God forbid!, before [we are] seventy years [old] so that we will not leave behind young orphans, God forbid! May we be able to raise them so that they will study Your holy Torah for Your holy name's sake And may You also not take our children away during our lifetimes. You have also written for us in the Torah that one should honor father and mother in their old age.¹⁷ Therefore, dear merciful Father, we weep and beseech You not to take away our little children in our lifetimes, God forbid! Father, merciful God, we fall on our faces and beg You not to take away our husbands, for You have written: "I will mourn very bitterly, as a woman mourns for her husband."¹⁸ Therefore, Master of the Universe, I beg You not to

separate us. And also, merciful Father, we beg You not to take away our brothers and sisters, God forbid!--for our tears would tear a hole under Your holy throne. May our prayer come into Your hand.

We are also asking the Torah scrolls which are now being taken out, to be good defenders for us. And may Satan not accuse us, and may the attribute of mercy support our deeds... For You, merciful Father, we now break up our hearts into thirteen pieces in accordance with Your thirteen attributes. We will sin no more. Forgive our sins. Your holy prophets said to Israel [that] there will be a time when the righteous messiah will come and will redeem [us]. Therefore we pray that You affirm their words. And may You give us bounty and blessing from Your holy hand, so that we, God forbid!, will not need to depend upon mortals. Amen, Selah.

Analysis

On the High Holy days the regular Torah mantles are replaced by white ones, symbolizing purity. Seril hopes that her soul that she has "spotted" may be made as "white" as the Torah mantles. She refers to the Sefer Hayim, the Book of Life, a traditional symbol of God's judgement of souls on Yom Kippur, when the meritorious are inscribed for another year of life, while the wicked are inscribed in the Book of Death. Both the Torah and prophetic readings for the first day of Rosh Hashanah contain important women characters who became

paradigms of feminine piety and valor for generations of Jewish women. Both Sarah and Hannah were barren, but because of their merit God made it possible for them to conceive. To the extent that the measure of her worth was determined by her ability to have children, barrenness was the most dreaded curse for the woman of the eighteenth-century shtetl, no less than for her biblical foremothers. Hence, many tkhines were written for barren women.

The fear of death seemed to be a constant companion of pre-modern Jews, as, indeed, it probably was for all people. The Jewish mother is concerned primarily for the safety of her family. She thinks of her own well-being only insofar as it is necessary to that of her children. And her children are to be spared, not for their own sake, but so that they can study God's Torah.

Seril makes frequent use of personification. Throughout the tkhine literature, this device serves to intensify the reader's identification with the prayer. Personifications such as "tears tearing a hole under God's throne," may be overly maudlin for modern tastes, but at the same time their naive sentimentality is touching. Many a woman must have wept sincerely on reading these and similar phrases.

Here Seril introduces the idea that the Torah scrolls themselves (not merely the merit one gains through studying and practicing Torah) can defend one before God. To this day the Torah scroll is treated with unparalleled respect and ve-

neration by Jews. In past centuries it was not uncommon for Jews, both men and women, to run to the synagogue in times of crisis, throw open the ark, and pour out their urgent pleas to God before the Torah scrolls. Once more the exaggerated use of personification ("we break up our hearts into thirteen pieces in accordance with Your thirteen attributes") would be comic were it not for the intended pathos of the image. The "thirteen attributes" is the name attached to the part of the theophany at Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:6) which is recited before the Torah is taken out of the ark on holidays. The liturgy quotes only that part of the verse emphasizing God's mercy:

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

The tkhine ends with pleas for the advent of the messiah and for sustenance through God, so as to avoid the shame of accepting charity. One of the most dominant themes in all of tkhine literature, the metaphor of being sustained by God's hand is borrowed from the Birkat Hamazon (Grace After Meals), which contains the following plea:

Let us not be in need of the gifts of human hands, or of their loans, but only of Your hand, which is full, open, holy and ample, so that we may not be ashamed nor blush with shame forever and ever.

21) (continuation of above)

Master of the Universe, merciful Father,¹⁹ have mercy on us, accept our plea. You have commanded Your people Israel

to blow the shofar to confuse Satan so that he will not be able to accuse [us].²⁰ You have commanded Your people Israel to blow Tekiyo, Shevorim, Teruo. The first is Tekiyo: Tekiyo is made very smooth and bowed. Thus do we bow before You and pray, merciful Father, that Satan may not accuse us.

The next one: one blows Shevorim. That means "broken." Therefore we are breaking our hearts, just as it says in the Psalms: "God does not reject a broken heart."²¹ And we accept the obligation to break the evil inclination.

The third is Teruo.²² That means "cry and lament." Therefore have mercy on us; confuse Satan who accuses us, so that he will not accuse us anymore. And may a lamentation and outcry not be decreed in our home, God forbid! Do not take away our little children. Have mercy in judging us, for today You reveal the sentence.

Analysis

This tkhine employs a rather imaginative interpretation of the three types of blasts blown on the shofar during the High Holy Days. The most prominent feature is the effect of the shofar in thwarting Satan's efforts to accuse people on Yom Kippur. The "lamentation and outcry" most feared is that heard at the death of young children.

22) (continuation of above)

...May the merit of the four matriarchs and the merit of

the three patriarchs and the merit of Moses and Aaron (who make nine) help us at [the time of] judgement. First of all we beseech our mother Sarah that she pray for us at the hour of judgement so that we may be judged innocent...Have mercy, our mother, on your children. Make a special plea that our children not be separated from us. You know full well that it is very bitter when a child is taken away from its mother, as happened to you: when your son Isaac was taken away from you, you yearned [for him]. And today is the time to pray, when a shofar of a ram's horn is being blown, that He should remember the merit of Isaac who allowed himself to be bound like a sheep for the Akeyde [binding] ; thereby Satan becomes confused and cannot accuse us. Therefore now is the time to plead for us so that [God's] attribute of mercy will be roused for us.

I am also beseeching our mother Rebekah to pray for her ^{and} children, [^] for our father and mother that they should not be separated from us, God forbid! You know well what it is like to yearn for father and mother, for when Eliezer the slave took you away from your father and mother to your husband Isaac,²³ you, too, wept very much, so you know how bad it is to be without a father and mother. Therefore, pray for our father and mother that they have [many] years of life [and] a good year [and] that I, my husband and children may make a living.

We also beseech our mother Rachel to pray for us that we

may be inscribed and sealed for a good year ²⁴ and that we may never have any sorrow. We know well that you can't [bear to] hear of any sorrow, for when your beloved son Joseph was led to Egypt, the Ishmaelites caused him great anguish.²⁵ He fell on your grave and began to cry: "Mother! Have pity on your child! How can you watch my anguish? You loved me so much, and today I am so unhappy, and no one has mercy on me!" Thus you could not bear to hear the anguish of your child and so you answered him: "My dear child, I hear you weeping and your bitter cry. I will always have mercy and pray for you and will hear your anguish."²⁶ Therefore have mercy on our sorrow and anguish and trembling before the judgement, and pray for us that a good year may be inscribed for us, that we may never have sorrow. Amen.

We also beseech our mother Leah that she, too, plead for us... We also beseech our foremothers to pray for us that we need not depend upon human charity, God forbid!, for the shame incurred is greater than the gift. May we be nourished by Your beloved hand. Amen

Analysis

A partial translation of this tkhine appears in Zinberg (1975, Vol. VII, pp. 257-258). In this tkhine, while the merits of the patriarchs and of Moses and Aaron are invoked, the four matriarchs receive special attention. Each one, in turn, is reminded of her personal history as a basis for em-

pathy with her Eastern European descendant. Throughout this literature the matriarchs serve as profound sources of identification for tkhine readers. At the same time, the tkhines had a tendency to make the matriarchs (and all biblical characters) over in the image of their Yiddish-speaking descendants, just as rabbinic tradition imposed its own values and behaviors on biblical characters. As will be seen in other tkhines, Rachel is generally the favorite of the matriarchs. In this tkhine, by contrast, Leah receives the least attention.

Once again, Seril expressed the belief that the blasts of the shofar will so confuse Satan that he will be unable to accuse people before God. Seril draws on biblical stories and on Midrash, and concludes with the familiar request to be spared the shame of receiving charity.

23) This tkhine should be recited after the memorial service

...May You turn away from your people all wrath and destruction, and may You grant life and peace and good livelihood, wealth and honor and length of days and years²⁷ to me, my husband and my children... And may Your grace reach all the holy souls and the soul of my father and mother so that they may arise and come. Let them be mentioned before Your holy, merciful throne, and may their rest be there. And may You bind up their souls²⁸ and the souls of my father and mo-

ther, and also the souls of my relatives, in the innermost sanctuary²⁹ in the palace which no eye can comprehend, excepting You alone. And may You make purity shine on their souls, and may You satisfy them with the bounty of Your house,³⁰ and may You let them drink from the river of paradise.³¹ I beseech You, Dear God, shed light on the earth, and [on] the people who live on the earth. May Your Shkhine shine forth, and may You tell the angel who is appointed over them, to lighten their sentence, and may each find his rest and be at peace, and may they rise from stage to stage under the wings of the cherubim. Amen. So may Your will be.

Analysis

This tkhine reflects the symbiotic relationship between prayer and the deceased. The deceased require the prayers and memorials of the living, who, in turn, benefit from the gratitude of the souls of the dead. Seril's clear vision of paradise, replete with angels, a heavenly palace, and cherubim, emerges out of a tradition of aggrandising and glorifying the world to come as a psychological corrective to the bleakness and poverty of life in this world.

The image of the Shkhine (Shekhinah), the divine presence on earth, represents the feminine aspect of God, and is generally portrayed as protective, nurturing, deeply empathetic with the pain and trials of Israel. As we have seen already, the God of the tkhines is a profoundly compassionate, mothering

God. Indeed, one would be surprised not to find mention of the Shekhinah in the pages of this literature. In addition to her use of the Shekhinah, which the Kabbalists identified with the lowest rung of divine emanation, Seril's references to the celestial sanctuary, to light and to the ascent of the souls "from stage to stage" all reflect kabbalistic influence.

Chapter 4: Tkhine fun Reshkhoydesh Bentshn ("Tkhine of
Blessing the New Moon") by Sore bas Yukil Horovits

24) Title page

This new tkhine was arranged by the woman the Rabonis Mrs. Sore, daughter of the great, famous genius and rabbi, our teacher and our rabbi, the master Rabbi Yukil Horovits (the Levite) of the holy community of greater Glina; wife of the great, brilliant rabbi, our teacher and our rabbi Shabsay (may his memory be for a blessing), Av Beys Din¹ [the rabbi] of the holy congregation of Krasny...

Analysis

The title pages of Hebrew and Yiddish religious books reveal much about the attitudes and values of both author and reader. The seeming exaggerated adulation of the rabbinic father and husband of Rabonis Sore is typical of traditional Jewish literature. Such flowery praise continues to be perpetuated to this day in the title pages of religious Hebrew books and in the salutations of the letters of devout Jews. This type of highly laudatory personal title implies an assumption, on the part of author and reader alike, that piety and scholarship (particularly rabbinic) merit special praise and attention. The woman's merit is vicarious--through the yikhes (illustrious pedigree) of her father and husband, she gains worthiness. In almost every case, women authors of

tkhines were identified (or identified themselves) through their husbands, fathers, or even grandfathers. (Exceptions are Rabonis Rokhl and Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil, whose works are included in this study.)

The title page of Rabonis Sore's Reshkhoydesh Bentshn also includes the common notion that the reading of tkhines confers merit--in this case, the reader "will merit to come to the Land of Israel," where all Jews are to be gathered in the messianic age, "speedily in our days."

25) I entreat You

...May the evil inclination not lust within me, and may You protect me from thieves and sickness and bad punishments, and may You save me from false accusations and from sheydim, rukhes, lilin and mazikin [various kinds of evil spirits], and all evil encounters, and from hunger and from mishaps, and may You grant me grace and mercy in Your eyes and in people's eyes²....

26) May it be Your will³

May it be Your will, God, and God of my ancestors, that my prayer rise up before the Throne of Glory betimes and be crowned with my prayers. And may no evil inclination and no accuser assault me, [but] only a good defender who says good [things] and sets out my righteousness and remembers my mer-

its. And may I be protected from a bad name, from harm and from the evil inclination, and from all evil people, and from evil deeds and evil rumors, and evil and harsh decrees which come forth in the world...

27) May it be Your will

...Enlighten my children's and children's children's eyes in the Torah, may they not forget what they have learned. And may You give clearness, beauty, felicity and grace to my speech, in everything that I do request and present and do...

Analysis

The first two tkhines reflect the all-pervasive fear of evil, including a plethora of malevolent spirits. The third tkhine upholds the standard and importance of learning (that is, Torah learning) for one's offspring. This time the familiar request to "enlighten the children's eyes in Torah" includes grandchildren, as well.

28) Tkhine of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah

Master of all the worlds,⁴ You Almighty God, You have created heaven and earth and all creatures with great compassion in the six days with only ten words.⁵ And on the seventh day, which is Sabbath, You rested from Your work. And You have also commanded Your beloved people Israel, of whom You

boast, as the verse states: "You beloved people Israel, I take pride in you,"⁶ that they, too should rest on the holy Sabbath from all work, and also from words which one shouldn't speak, but only words of Torah, which each [person] should study according to his ability, and whoever cannot, must study in Yiddish, and so know and understand how to serve God. And women should know how to perform their mitaves that God has commanded.

...May we not be orphans and like sheep who have gone astray without a shepherd; therefore we beseech You, Master of all the worlds, behave toward us for the sake of the merit of the patriarchs and matriarchs. You, God, just as You answered our forefathers, so may You answer us this month, [through] the merit of our mother Sarah for whose sake You commanded and said--"Don't you dare touch my righteous ones!"⁷ Thus, too, may no offender have the power over your children for evil. And may the merit of our mother Rebekah, who caused our father Jacob to receive the blessings from his father Isaac, cause the blessings to be fulfilled through her children Israel. And may the merit of our dear mother Rachel, to whom You promised that through her merit will her children Israel be delivered out of exile, [cause the promises to be fulfilled] . For when Israel was led into exile, they were led not far from the grave in which our mother Rachel lies. Israel begged the enemy to be allowed to go to Rachel's grave, and they began to weep and to cry out: "Mother, Mother, how

can you watch us being led into exile?"⁸ Then Mother Rachel went up to God, may He be blessed, with a bitter cry and said, "Master of the Universe, your compassion is certainly much greater than a human's compassion. I had compassion for my sister Leah when my father substituted her and gave her to my husband Jacob instead of me. I taught her [my] 'signs' in order that he believe that it was I."⁹ Yet I had compassion for my sister--all the more so, You, God, who are certainly a merciful and gracious God, are supposed to have compassion." God answered her, "You are right. I will fetch your children out of exile!" Thus may all the blessings be fulfilled soon through the merit of our mother Leah, who wept day and night that she should not fall to Esau's lot. Her vision became dim.¹⁰ Through her merit may You enlighten our eyes from darkness. We are yet called the children of Abraham. May we be rid of lowliness. Wash from us the sins for which we have already been punished. Therefore bring us the [new] month for joy. May evil be turned to good through the merit of our pious holy forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Analysis

Additional translations of this tkhine can be found in the Jewish Women's Resource Center Newsletter, (1981, Vol. II, #2-3, pp. 7-8), and in the article by Chava Weissler in the Jewish Almanac (1980, p. 542). Here one finds ideas from

Mishnah and Midrash, as well as extensive biblical quotations. Sore endorses the idea that all are duty-bound to learn Torah, including women, and that lack of facility in Hebrew should not be an impediment: "whoever cannot, must study in Yiddish.. And the women should know how to perform their mitsves that God has commanded." Like Seril, Sore bas Yukil Horovits invokes the four matriarchs separately, emphasizing the peculiar merits of each in turn. Rachel, traditionally portrayed as perpetually bewailing the exile of her children, is a favorite of tkhine authors. More than any other of the matriarchs or biblical heroines, Rachel symbolized the yearning of centuries of Jewish women. It is hardly surprising, then, that Rachel receives more attention in this tkhine than do Sarah, Rebekah and Leah combined.

29) (no title)

Master of the worlds, You call us sgulosi¹¹-- that means "You are my beloved people." And we call you "Dear Father" and pray that You grant us, all who occupy themselves in Your holy Torah, and those who compose holy books, and who arrange prayers and supplications [tkhines] to merit to have kosher children who will live and endure and will be scholars and will serve God with a pure heart and with love, like the first pious ones.

Analysis

Note Sore's use of standard rabbinic and liturgical forms of address in her prayers: May it be Your will, Master of the Universe, Master of [all] the worlds. These forms appear widely throughout tkhine literature. Interestingly, the most popular rabbinic name of God--"The Holy One, Praised be He"--is rarely used in the tkhines. One cannot help but view the pious sentiment that those who write prayers and supplications (tkhines) deserve reward, as self-serving. But even in this instance Sore stands on firm traditional ground--the rabbis of the Talmud erected an enormous edifice of regulations elevating the talmid hakham--the scholar, i.e., the rabbi--and demanding he be treated with deference and respect.

30) May it be Your will

May it be Your will, God, my God and God of my ancestors that You purify my thoughts and prepare for me a good answer to the speech of my mouth, and purify my heart.¹² And may it be Your will at this time when I beseech You with my hand and with my feet and with all of my 248 limbs, not to say before You an inappropriate word, that it should not discomfort Your beloved will. I beseech You, merciful one, that You warn Satan that he not assault me or my children or children's children. May You help me for Your name's sake,¹³ that no bad dreams come to me. May no evil inclination, evil eye, or evil thought assault me, my husband, my children or my child-

ren's children for all time.

31) May it be Your will

May it be Your will, God, my God and God of my ancestors, that You humble the evil inclination in me. May You keep it far from my 248 limbs so that it cannot distract me from the right way. Put into my heart, in my husband's heart, and in my children's hearts a good inclination, to uphold Your commandments, and Your beloved will and to serve You with our whole heart.¹⁴ Dear God, may You accept my prayer, as it is written.¹⁵ Lord God, may You accept my heartfelt prayer and my tears; when I weep, may You not be silent. I am a faithful long-time servant. Forgive me my sins as the verse says: "And as for me, may my prayer to You be in an acceptable time; O God, in Your great mercy answer me, in the truthfulness of Your salvation,"¹⁶ and accept my plea. You are the God who hears the prayer of all mouths.¹⁷ Amen, Selah.

Analysis

As indicated in the Introduction, the tkhines almost invariably refer to "my God and God of my ancestors" rather than "our God and God of our fathers" as found in the siddur. These tkhines reflect the deeply Jewish concept that God is served with the entire body and being of an individual. The rabbis assigned the number 248 to the "limbs," or parts of the human body--obviously the number has mystical significance.

Again, the petitioner seeks protection for herself and her family from Satan and other evil influences, including evil dreams, the evil eye, and evil thoughts. Here we also find reference to the rabbinic concept of the two yetzers, the good and bad inclinations inherent in every human personality.

32) May it be Your will

...May You protect those who walk on the road, and those who travel on the road in the wilderness may You protect from wild animals, and from all creatures and from thieves and from robbers on the road or at home. And may You command Your angels to protect us [on] all the roads and [in] all the cities. And may no enemy, whether human, sheydim, or rukhes, be able to harm us, so that I, my husband, and children and children's children, [and] Your people Israel, may remain Yours with mercy and with grace. Praised is the One who hears all pleas. Amen and amen.

Analysis

The section of the tkhine translated here is modelled on the Tefilat Haderekh, the prayer recited when one is travelling. The tkhine, like the Hebrew prayer on which it is based, asks for protection from every evil and mishap which may befall one on a journey. Unlike the Hebrew original, however, the Yiddish version includes evil spirits amongst these dangers. Also, the tkhine invokes the protection of the

angels and beseeches God not only on behalf of the petitioner, but on behalf of her husband, children and grandchildren, as well. The "seal," or closing benediction of this tkhine parallels that of the Tefilat Haderekh: "Praised are You, O Lord, who hearkens unto prayer."

The following selections are excerpted from a different version of the Tkhine fun Reshkhoydesh Bentshn. Much of the contents of the two versions overlap, but there is also considerable material unique to each. This version was published in a pamphlet in Vilna in 1869, and bound together with an 1865 edition of Sore bas Toyvim's Shloyshe Sheorim. Which, if either, version of Reshkhoydesh Bentshn represents Sore bas Yukil Horovits' complete original work, may be determined by comparing all extant manuscripts and editions. Such a study is beyond the scope of the present endeavor, though I have chosen to present some of the additional material in this section on Sore bas Yukil Horovits.

33) Master of the Universe

...just as You heard our pious mother Hannah, so I, poor woman, want to tell You what lies on my heart. I beseech You just like a child beseeches his father, as it is written: "As a father has compassion for children:"¹⁸ May You also treat me as a father does his child.

Master of the Universe, just as You have helped me until now, so continue to help me. May You send me good angels to

lead me in the right path in order that I and my children should be sustained by Your hand and not, God forbid!, by people. May I not descend to a lowly state, may no evil eye befall them [my children]. And save us from all wickedness, and may I live in peace.

Analysis

All of these themes recur repeatedly in the tkhine literature: the piety of biblical forebears (especially "Mother Hannah"), prayer as a means of unburdening one's heart to God, God's mercy, protection by angels, sustenance by God, and the avoidance of the evil eye.

34) Master of the Universe

...Dear God, You have commanded us to take khale to light candles and to check [to see if one] is in nide, so that the soul remain pure. May I go to the synagogue with my feet to praise You and to walk in Your way, may my breasts suckle children so that they may be strong.¹⁹ Therefore, I beg You, dear God, that no unnatural death may befall them. And may You strengthen my children's hearts in the Torah, and may their hearts be open like the gates of the porch and sanctuary [of the Temple], and may we live to see them have sons who engage in Torah and mitsves...

Analysis

A version of this tkhine is translated in Chava Weissler's

(1980) article in the Jewish Almanac (p. 542). Here one finds a cogent summary of the traditional Jewish woman's attitude towards her body--far from being a burden or source of shame, the body is a gift from heaven. Each limb was created by God with its own unique purpose. If used in accordance with that purpose, the various limbs help a person to serve God. In this regard, the woman's breasts are as essential to her God-given purpose as are her hands and feet. This tkhine is based on Hannah's prayer in the Talmud, which is reproduced in the footnotes to this chapter.

35) Master of the Universe

...heal the broken hearts and give me grace and mercy in Your eyes and in people's eyes so that no one should have [cause] to talk about me. I lift my eyes to heaven,²⁰ and I say to You from my broken heart, just as King David, may he rest in peace, wrote: "A broken heart and a rejected heart God will not despise."²¹ And fulfill all the wishes of my heart for good,²² for You are a compassionate God.²³ May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.²⁴ Amen.

Analysis

Though Sore does not use the expression herself, it is clear that one of the themes of this tkhine is loshn hore-- critical or slanderous talk. The pervasive fear of loshn

hore and the concomitant desire for a sheym tov--a good name--were products of the general desire for dignitiy, for verdekayt, and the abhorrance of personal shame, or shande.

36) Tkhine for Lighting Candles: She says this with kavone [sincerity, devotion] when she lights candles on Sabbath and holidays:

God, You are holy and have hallowed Your people Israel and have hallowed the Sabbath. You are alone, and You chose our ancestors only, out of all the poeples, to Your service. And You have chosen the Sabbath alone for rest, for honor and for blessing, for lighting candles and for joy and cheer in Your service. Today in Your holy Sabbath which we are obliged to maintain with all [good] things as a groom does the bride, I repeat what our sages said who called the Sabbath "Bride."²⁵ And I have already lit the candles... Almighty God, give me and my husband and my children and my whole house the holy Sabbath to rest for holiness and blessedness, and protect us from all evil events which are happening nowadays because of the unlucky conjunction of the planets. As I light candles to honor the Sabbath, Lord of all the world, give me children who should shine in the Torah, and send us blessing with the good angel who goes beside the right hand of a person, and may the evil angel respond "Amen" to it. And may we merit that You may cause us to inherit the day which is entirely Sabbath;²⁶ that means that we should live

until the time of the resurrection of the dead. Praised are You, God, who lives forever. Amen.

Analysis

Just as, in the siddur, there was a fixed place (at the end of the Amidah), for personal prayer, so, too, in the religious life of the Jewish woman, custom had established the time of lighting Sabbath and holiday candles as the most appropriate for the offering of prayers of her own invention. The writing of tkhines for this occasion was a natural outgrowth of a long-established tradition, which, in turn, may well have been strengthened and revived through tkhines for "likht bentshn," such as the present tkhine.

This is the only mention I have encountered of "the unlucky conjunction of the planets." While astrology was rigorously condemned by classical Judaism--one of the most common rabbinic appellations for idolators was the acronym מ"לכ"ס which stands for "worshippers of the stars and constellations"--nevertheless belief in the power of the stars persisted amongst the masses.

The Sabbath bride, is, of course, a particularly evocative feminine image. The good angel sits at a person's right hand, the hand of strength and of rectitude. In being forced to answer "Amen" to the good angel's blessing, the evil angel is rendered impotent. The tkhine ends with the hope for the messianic age.

Chapter 5: A Naye Tkhine: Sharey Demoes ("A New Tkhine:
Gates of Tears") by Rabonis Khane

37) Title page

Written by the modest woman, the Rabonis Mrs. Khane, granddaughter of the saintly rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Borukh from Hebron, may his righteous memory be for a blessing in the world to come... When one says this prayer with kavone [devotion, sincerity], this prayer will be accepted along with the prayers of all the righteous men and women. Amen.

Analysis

Frontispieces such as these were in all likelihood the work of the editor or printer, rather than the author, who often had died long before her work ever saw print. Typical is the identification of the author ("the modest woman") by her male ancestor, and the importance of kavanah, or sincere intention, in prayer.

38) May it be Your will

May it be Your will, God, that you forgive me all my sins and that You remember me, my husband and my children for good. Dear Lord God, I confess before You that I have turned aside from Your beloved name,¹ and this has done me no good. I beg You, God, make me pure from my sins which I have sinned,² which I have done either willingly or unwillingly.³ I be-

seech You to shield me from the evil inclination and from all [evil] people. And may You comfort me for good, and give me that which I have prayed for of Your beloved name: that no cry should be heard in my house and no devastation or disruption should occur in my lifetime. And provide for me, Dear God, in my old age. Do not abandon me; may You sustain me from Your hand, and may I be able to nourish myself without people's charity.

Dear God, when a person has nothing to eat, he must sin, he must rob, steal, do all [kinds of] evil. Therefore I beseech You, dear God, help me, do this for the sake of Your dear name, and judge me with [Your] attribute of mercy. Grant freely the gift of health for me and my husband and children, and may our livelihood come from Your gentle hand. And may You bless us so that Your name be not profaned through us. Protect us from all evil and help me at all times. Amen.

Analysis

Rabonis Khane's first two prayers incorporate a number of the most common themes and attitudes found in tkhine literature: forgiveness of sins, protection from evils and from suffering, the desire to be sustained by God alone, rather than by humans, reliance on God's mercy, and health and livelihood for one's family. In keeping with the venerable Jewish tradition of challenging God, Rabonis Khane's second prayer employs talmudic logic in the following argument: It is God's responsi-

bility to provide nourishment. If He fails, people are forced to steal in order to eat. So, to keep people from sinning, God must supply them with adequate food!

39) (untitled)

Dear God, let me be gladdened that I shall be protected from sorrow, that I should have no sorrow from my children, and let my enemies not rejoice over me. And let no Satan, and no accuser influence me when I pray, so that I should not be able to pray as much as I need to. Dear Lord God, for what shall I ask You first? Should I request first that You should forgive my sins or that You should sustain me from Your gentle hand? I know that I am not worthy to ask so much of You. You only desire from man that he should repent of his sins.⁴ Therefore I beseech You, gracious God, have mercy on those who praise You. Dear Lord God, You know well my secrets and what I carry in me, and You know what I need. And the evil inclination dwells inside a person and tempts him on to evil. But You do know what is in all the broken hearts, even that which cannot be told to people, but only to You alone. You know my sighs and my wounds that I carry in my heart, so help me!

Analysis

In this tkhine the supplicant acknowledges the superfluity of prayer: God already knows everyone's deepest sec-

rets and knows what each person needs. The overall tone, as is typical in so much of this genre, is tragic--the world is full of sorrow and pain, often inflicted on people by those whom they love best (children or parents). Evil spirits interfere with one's good intentions, and many people are broken-hearted and burdened. But this is not a literature of despair--rather of supplication; and hence the hope which provides the *raison-d'être* of all tkhines: God in His abundant mercy will help.

40) (untitled)

Dear God, where can I find a doctor who will know [the cause of] my pain, and if he were to know, would [he be able to] help me? But You, Dear God, You do help when people call You. You are a Father of orphans and a Judge of widows. You can make a poor man rich, and set a lowly one up on high.⁵ You do no one any injustice. You give each one according to his desserts. Dear God, have mercy on me, and let me not stumble in my middle years, and especially in old age, that my enemies may not find satisfaction in my misery, as King David, may he rest in peace, requested.⁶ There is no greater pain than when an enemy rejoices over people, God forbid! Therefore I beseech You, dear God, let my request not fall down, and may You grant me success in all my acts so that I can benefit poor people. May my charity be heaped up so that I will have no trouble from my children; may I not need

their charity. I know well that I ask too much of You. I am not worthy of what You have done for me until now and still do for me. Therefore I pray You not to cast me off in my old age.⁷ Let me not be shamed in this world. May I have my portion with good, pious people on the right side⁸ when You draw me out of this world with joy.

Analysis

Here God is compared to a doctor, who can heal if he understands the ailment. Prayer, then, becomes the suppliant's way of making the divine Healer "understand my pain." This view of prayer seems to be in direct contradiction to that expressed in the tkhine immediately preceding, namely, that prayer is superfluous, since God already knows all. But such self-contradictory statements are to be expected in a folk literature of this type, particularly a Jewish folk literature, for consistency was never a hallmark of the classic Hebrew religious works.

In this tkhine, God is both just and merciful. Protection from enemies, particularly the revenge of enemies, is a fairly common theme. We have already encountered the theme of giving tzedakah in Sore bas Toyvim's "Moral Reproof for Women". Here the giving of charity is calculated to bring prosperity to the charitable, so that she will never need to be dependent on her children. And this great shande (i.e., dependence on one's children), we learn from Rabonis Khane, is the true source of "trouble from my children." A theme which we have

not encountered heretofore is the fear of being abandoned in old age.

41) (untitled)

Dear Lord God, how fine the world is, but it has little worth when one has no good luck in this world, [for then] one cannot have the other world, either. Therefore I beseech You, dear Father, not to reject my prayer, and may You gladden my heart. My wounds are [so] great that I cannot express [them]. If I speak to a person, how can he cheer me up even if he does have pity for me? But suppose he's my enemy--then he may rejoice over me and my pain. And before whom should I complain more than before You?

Analysis

As in one of her previous tkhines, here, again, Rabonis Khane employs her irresistible logic to subtly remind God of His responsibilities. Her tkhine implies that, if things go badly, one cannot perform the requisite mitzvot and refrain from sinning, in order to earn the world to come. Therefore, if God wants people to enjoy eternity, He had better see to their basic needs! The tkhine ends with an affirmation of trust in God--only God can be trusted not to gloat over a human being's misfortunes. One can never be certain with humans--anyone may turn out to be an enemy, and so it is best not to entrust secrets to any mortal.

42) (untitled)

Dear Lord God, I beseech You, remember for me the merit of my ancestors that I should have no pain because of my children while I am alive, and they also should have no pain, and should be sustained by Your gentle hand with honor, and never need anything from others. Dear Lord God, let me benefit from the merit of Mother Hannah. She entered the Temple to pray before Eli the priest. She spoke with her lips, whereupon the prophet said to her: "Get out, you drunken woman! What are you doing in the Temple?" She answered: "No, my Lord, I am such a woman who has a heavy heart." And You answered her.⁹ Therefore I pray that You should also answer me, and that You treat me with the attribute of mercy, not with the attribute of justice, [just] as Jacob our father requested when his children would, God forbid!, be guilty.¹⁰ You should remember what trouble he endured before he had raised them. All the more so, how shall I not beseech You that I have not any trouble from my children? I know that I am asking too much. I am not worthy to stand before You. But You desire that a person should beseech You, then You have mercy over him. I beseech You not to cast me off in my old age when my strength will cease.

Analysis

Zinberg (1975), who translates this tkhine (Vol. VII, p. 259), attributes it to Mameal. Assuming there is a firm

basis for this identification, Rabonis Khane's authorship of the rest of Sharey Demoes is suspect. By now the standard elements have become familiar. The biblical Hannah, once again, is the model suppliant. She is "such a woman who has a heavy heart"--indeed, from the outlook of tkhines, heavy-heartedness would seem to be the condition, if not the very prerequisite, of prayer. Here, for a change, the patriarch Jacob, rather than one of the four matriarchs, is identified with in his role as a parent who undertook considerable pains in raising his children. As we find repeatedly in this literature, the suppliant is not worthy to stand before God; but here we find a new justification for prayer: God Himself desires it.

43) (untitled)

Dear Lord God, let me not fall into a human's hands, for there is no greater anguish than when one person depends upon another. Therefore I pray to You that You should protect me from this. May You give me, my husband and children grace and mercy in Your eyes and in people's eyes, and may we live out our years in wealth and honor. And may our children [remain true to the] Torah. Amen.

44) (untitled)

Master of the Universe, since I am not worthy that You

should do it for my sake, do it for the sake of the merit of our ancestors, and the merit of the children who have not yet sinned, and the merit of the pious people who daily recite Amen, may His great name..., for upon them the whole world stands. Dear God, hear me out, and accept before You my heavy heart. You know [that] my heart weeps in me; thus I beseech You, dear God, protect me from my enemies so that they will not be able to do me any evil. And may I not come [for help] to a mortal in my old age, God forbid! Accept my prayer, let me have good defenders before You. Treat me as You did my ancestors and sustain me from Your hand. For a bitter leaf from You is better than a sweet one from human beings.¹¹

Analysis

Again the petitioner insists on her own unworthiness, and relies instead on the merit of her pious ancestors and of "the children who have not sinned"--presumably she is referring to her own children--as well as on the merit of those who pray in the synagogue daily. One required God's protection against enemies, who had the power to do one great harm, particularly through the use of magic. As a result of the enormous potency assigned them by the popular imagination, the evil eye and maledictions were greatly feared.

45) (untitled)

Dear God, I repent of my sins which I have done before You. Therefore I beg You that I may appease You with prayer, which I now do, and prostrate myself before You like a slave before his master. In this way do I beseech You with my eyes, for You desire that we pray and weep and cry. My heart and my breath are beating in me for fear. Therefore I pray You, dear Father, have mercy on us and forgive our sins and take away Your wrath from me, and treat me with mercy, as is Your custom, and protect me from sin, as it is written: "after our repentance."¹² Dear God, how long will You be angry with us,¹³ yet we remain steadfast in our beliefs?¹⁴ The nations say [that] You cannot help.¹⁵ Dear God, show us Your power and help us as You have promised us, to lead us to the Holy Land. For You are truth, and Your word is truth;¹⁶ but we ask You that it should be soon, in our days, that You deliver us out of exile, and may the children not be driven away from their fathers. Father, King,¹⁷ when we sinned in the wilderness,¹⁸ Moses our teacher (may he rest in peace) prayed for us. Father, forgive Your people Israel the sin which they did, [concerning] which You Yourself had mercy and said: "Israel is My first-born son."¹⁹ So, too, Dear God, forgive us and hear my plea, as You heard the voice of our ancestors [when] they prayed to You. Hear me today, for You are an examiner of hearts. I beg You, God, do not cast me off in my old age, so that I may serve You with all

my heart. Forgive me that I have sinned, and protect me from sinning further, and let not my enemies rejoice, as King David (may he rest in peace) requested. Stop the mouths of the enemies²⁰ so that they should not be able to hurt me. And may the merciful angels remember my prayer and may You, God, make me justified before You, and may You treat me with mercy and compassion, not with anger, God forbid! Thus my speech flows forth like water. I have no other friend before whom I can unburden my heavy heart. Dear God, You know all: therefore I beseech You that You should look at my pain. You are righteous, who has made everything... Dear God, have mercy on me and let me live out my years. May I not need to be further reincarnated in this world. And I beseech You to do with me as is written: "When I call upon You, You will answer me." Amen.

Analysis

This tkhine reiterates the idea that God desires people to pray, and not merely to pray, but to "beg and weep and cry." The author draws liberally on biblical expressions and imagery. God is addressed as the petitioner's only intimate friend "before whom I can unburden my heavy heart." The tkhine ends with the wish not to be reincarnated. According to popular belief, largely influenced by the Kabbalah, the transmigration of souls (gilgul) was a harsh punishment, intended to purify the soul of its sins. In the case of sexual

transgressions, the soul, upon death, might even transmigrate into an animal, plant or inanimate object (Scholem, 1978). The author of this tkhine takes it for granted that her soul has already been punished with transmigration, for she asks not to be "further reincarnated in this world."

Chapter 6: Tkhine fun Eyner Ishe Khashuve (Thkine of an
Important Woman) by Rabonis Rokhl

46) (Introduction): A very beautiful Tkhine

One should pray from it with kavone at least once every week and especially on the eve of every New Moon. This tkhine was arranged by the righteous woman, the wise Rabonis Mrs. Rokhl, may she rest in peace.

Analysis

The full title of this manuscript is: "A very beautiful Tkhine, written in Yiddish and in big letters by an important woman, for Sabbath and blessing the New Moon, together with a remedy against the evil eye." Her tkhine, which calls upon the patriarchs to arise out of their graves and intercede with God on behalf of the Jews who are scattered in the Diaspora, is borrowed almost directly from Sore bas Toyvim's tkhine for blessing the New Moon.

47) An incantation against the evil eye

A known cure for the evil eye, from the great wisdom of the Gemore:¹ The formula is: one must wash the hands and lay one's hand on the head of the sick person, be it a small child or an old man or woman. Also one can take a cap or kerchief from the sick person and hold it not far from his head, and afterwards lay the cap or kerchief under the head of the

sick person.

With the help of Almighty God who heals all the sick, may He remove from you all suffering and evil encounters. When you encounter an evil glance, whether from a man or a woman, whether from old or young, may neither your body nor life, nor your lung nor heart, be harmed. Elijah the prophet encountered the angel Ashtribuda, so Elijah the prophet says to him: "Where are you going?" Thus he replies: "I want to go to the house of so-and-so the son of so-and-so, or the daughter of so-and-so, and want his limbs and flesh, and want to drink his blood." Whereupon Elijah the prophet says to him: "Just as you have no right to drink all the water in the sea, so, too, you have no right to harm him, his body, or any of his limbs anywhere in the whole world!" If someone gave him an evil eye, may it not harm him by day or night. Just as one could not give an evil eye to the children of Joseph the righteous, so, too, may it not harm you.² And before you can count nine, may God (may He be praised) heal you, and in this hour may you be healthy, and let this be true in God's name. Amen, selah.

Extinguish the coals: And the sick person should inhale the smoke from nine colors of woolen clothes and should extinguish the glowing coals in fresh water three times, and count backwards from nine to one, and wash the face and both sides of the heart. And then, drink three times from the water [which was used to] extinguish [the coals] and scatter

the coals into the four corners of the room. The remaining water should be poured out on the door leading to the outside. God will surely send a complete healing.

Analysis

If for no other reason, Rabonis Rokhl's pamphlet is valuable for its contribution to the study of Jewish magic and folklore. Even though it is not a tkhine, I have included her "incantation against the evil eye" because it reflects the centrality and vitality of the power of magic and superstition in the lives of pre-Emancipation Jewish women. I have been unable to locate any other mention of the blood-thirsty angel Ashtribuda. Perhaps he was only known locally in the environs of Budapest, where this pamphlet was published. It should be noted here that, while a magical praxis is prescribed, its ultimate efficacy is due to the will of God.

Chapter 7: Di Naye Yerusholayim Tkhine ("The New Jerusalem
Tkhine")

48) The New Jerusalem Tkhine

...give me good and pious children who will be righteous and pious and scholarly men. And may my husband and I live to raise them to Your holy Torah and may they have grace in Your eyes and in people's eyes. And may we live out our years in great joy. May we live to give our children in marriage with great honor. I beg You, Almighty God, merciful Father, King of the world,¹ Lord over all the lords, that You should hear all my prayers and petitions and should protect me and my husband and my children from all evil. May You hear me for good, as You heard our mother Hannah, may she rest in peace. And You made her rejoice with what she desired from Your holy name. Merciful King, You merciful Father, King of the world, I call upon You day and night² all the days of my life. Don't abandon us! Give us livelihood and all our needs from Your gentle hand and not, God forbid!, through people's charity. And give us all our needs with contentment and not with anxiety,³ and may I merit to sit at my table with my husband and children until [the age of] a hundred.⁴... And protect me and my husband and children from an unnatural death, and may You remember to inscribe us at all times for good years, for long life, for a sweet life. I and all those who live on the entire earth hope for Your help...

Analysis

From the title page we learn that "this new tkhine was written by a great, pious woman in Jerusalem. One should recite it every day before praying and after praying." This prayer contains many of the themes and ideas already discussed in connection with other tkhines. It is typical of the entire genre in almost every respect. The section translated here ends on a universalistic note, reminiscent of the sentiment expressed in the morning service for Sabbaths and holidays: "The breath of every living being shall bless Your name, O Lord our God, and the spirit of all flesh shall ever extol and exalt Your fame, O our King" (Nishmat Kol Hai, from Pesukei de-Zimra).

49) This prayer should be recited every day after the prayer service:

May it be Your will, God, my God and God of my ancestors, that You lead me all the time in the right path and that You protect and shield me from evil people: those who flatter, those who tell lies, those who speak foolishness and obscenity, and those who speak mockery and slander. May You protect and shield me from all kinds of harm, from all evil troubles, from all evil encounters and from sword and hunger, from water, from fire, from thieves, both in the town and in the field. Do not afflict us, and protect us from sorrow and do not in-

flict upon us the evils that my heart dreads. And may You give us our livelihood with honor,⁵ without pain and without worry. May You not send us any worry or any anguish or any sickness, God forbid!, that usually come here on the earth. Not, God forbid!, on me, not on my husband, not on my children, God forbid!, and not on all my friends. May I merit to raise them [my children] to Torah, to marriage, and to good deeds...

Analysis

Foremost on the list of various evils and calamities from which the author seeks protection is the harm caused by careless tongues. The Jewish community placed a premium on modesty in all matters, including speech. In his private prayer, subsequently addended to the end of the 'Amidah, Rav asked: "My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking falsehood." Once again, one finds the request for honorable livelihood, and to raise one's children to "Torah, marriage and good deeds." For further discussion of the idea of parnose bekoved (livelihood with honor), see the analysis of "Tkhine when the husband is travelling," below.

Chapter 8: Seyfer Rokhl Mevake al Boneyho: A Naye Shas
Tkhine (Rachel Weeps for Her Children: A New Collection of
Tkhines) by Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil

While the following selections are drawn from a book compiled by Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil, the title page indicates that these tkhines are "from holy books," and in most cases, therefore, the original author remains unknown.

50) A Tkhine for before a woman goes to [observe] the mitzve
of immersion in the mikveh [ritual bath]

Great God! Through water You have shown great miracles many times: the righteous Noah was saved from the flood, our teacher Moses was pulled out of water, Miriam's well went with the Jews in the desert.¹ Show Your miracle today, too, that I may be helped through water to bear a son who will be completely righteous, will study Torah day and night, and will light a path directly to paradise for me after I have lived a long life. May I, through his merit, deserve to sit with the matriarchs behind a mekhitse in the world to come. Amen.

Analysis

This brief tkhine is rich in multiple layers of meaning. The mikveh takes on added significance beyond the symbol of and vehicle for purification. Women attended mikveh to purify themselves in order to be able to resume sexual relations

with their husbands, and so the ritual bath was closely associated with sexuality. Mikveh is also the vehicle of a wondrous spiritual transformation, from a state of impurity to one of purity, from sexual restriction to sexual permission, and so the waters of mikveh themselves become the agents of the divine. Hence, the tkhine to be recited before immersion begins with a listing of miracles performed by God "through water." The particular miracle requested here can be shown to be legitimately connected with mikveh--conception is a matter of sexuality, and a woman attends mikveh for the purpose of becoming sexually fit.

Naturally, simply requesting a child is not sufficient. The child must be male so that he "will study Torah day and night." For Jewish women, the preference for sons was a function of the ultimate value placed on Talmud Torah--the study of Torah. Girls and women were exempt from this obligation, and so a girl could not be the means of upholding this holiest and greatest of values for her mother. Only a son could justify the barren woman's request for special treatment, for a "miracle." For through the merit he will achieve in the study of Torah, the unworthy mother can hope to see paradise, upon which, not surprisingly, she imposes the categories of her familiar earthly world. Even there, in paradise, women will be separated from men by a mehitsah (a physical barrier), just as they were on earth in the synagogue and at religious functions.

51) Tkhine about having children (a tkhine for a woman who has no children)

May it be Your will, God, my God and God of my ancestors, who has created me from clay and has given me a soul² and gives me my life in the world and everything with His great grace and mercy. I have done but little good in the world, so You have not allowed me to bear children. My life is bitter to me! I am comparable to a tree which is fully grown but bears no fruit; a great sadness is upon me. I will beseech heaven and earth to lament over me for my years are passing me by like smoke... Oh, woe is to my life! My eyes run with tears, and my heart is sad within me; I cannot be happy, I must lament and cry over my years that I was born. Woe is me! What will I say? I shall cry over my bitter sin, Dear God! Who can heal my misfortune? Only You, God, can repair it. When I am no longer in this world, let me merit the next world, that my soul be not shamed in the world to come!

52) The women who have bad luck with children should recite this tkhine:

I come to You to beg You, dear God, to quickly remove from me the pain that I carry in my heart, concerning which I have bad luck with my children. I beg You, dear Lord God, act towards me as a father to a child, and remove Your anger far

from me.³ Let all the children I have live, and may no child die, that we may live to lead them to Torah, to marriage and to good deeds with the fear of heaven. Amen and amen.

Analysis

God is the ultimate cause of everything that befalls humans: if a woman is barren, God willed it so. If her babies die, it is because God is angry with her. This is the traditional Jewish Weltanschauung--everything is seen in terms of reward and punishment. The first of these tkhines for barren women reaches an unparalleled pinnacle of melodrama. Nonetheless, despite its clichés, this tkhine very effectively dramatizes the real despair of a barren woman in traditional Jewish society--she would rather not have been born at all. Though God is the ultimate source of her barrenness, He does not punish her without cause. Rather than impugn God's justice, the barren woman assumes that she must have committed some offense. Her last hope is that she achieve eternal life.

53) Tkhine [for] when the husband is travelling

Dear God! I beg You, listen to the voice of Your maid-servant, who stands before You with a broken spirit, with a bitter soul; incline Your ears to me. Give us livelihood with honor, out of Your dear, gentle hand, that we should not need

any human charity, for the charity from a person is very small, but the shame is very great. Protect my husband from all evils which are in the world, protect him from bad associates, from bandits, from murderers, from thieves, and from wild animals, [and] most of all, from enemies who speak and think evil about him. Confound their thoughts, stop up their lips, send a fright and a trembling in their bones!⁴ And give my husband power and strength, grace and mercy in Your eyes and in all people's eyes. Give him luck, blessing and success, make smooth all his paths before him. May his going out and his coming in be with peace,⁵ that he may merit to come back to his house with happiness, with health. And now, since he is not at home, may You let me hear good tidings from him, and let him hear the same good tidings from me and my children in return. Let us be well, and may no evil happen to us. Make me and all Israel happy, just as all who hope for Your help should be blessed with everything good, to find grace in Your and in my husband's eyes, that we not have quarrel and strife, but always a good, content life, with health and luck [and] blessing, to raise our children to Torah, to marriage and to good deeds, and to see and hear many happy occasions with them, that we may in the end merit that You should send Messiah the son of David,⁶ Your annointed, who will redeem us from the exile, speedily in our days. Amen.

Analysis

This tkhine expresses the deep-seated anxiety that one not be shamed through economic dependency on others. One must not merely earn a living, but have parnose b'koved--an honorable livelihood. Over and over again, the tkhine authors, as, indeed, all framers and transmitters of Jewish tradition, insist on human dignity as the sine qua non of earthly existence. And conventional Jewish wisdom placed a premium on economic independence as one of the pillars of human dignity.

Typically, much of the language of this tkhine is borrowed from the siddur. The by now familiar refrain of leading one's children to Torah, marriage and good deeds, together with the plea for the advent of the messiah, closes this prayer. The messianic hope was so pervasive a liturgical theme that it was seen as an appropriate seal to almost any prayer, no matter how tenuous its connection with the substance of that prayer.

54) Tkhine for when the husband is away seeking a livelihood

Almighty God! You are a King of the whole world, a Helper over helpers--I beg You, great merciful Father and King, to have mercy on me and my husband and children. Protect us and shield us from all evil, lead us in the right path that we may make an honorable living, that we should, God forbid,

not need to be sustained through a human's charity, and not, God forbid!, be shamed. Only You, with Your gentle hand, sustain us, just as You sustained the wife of the righteous Obadiah through Elisha the prophet.⁷ Lead my husband in the right path, send him good angels that they may accompany and be with him. Protect him wherever he goes; as You sent angels to our father Jacob,⁸ may he rest in peace, that he may be brought back in health and peace, joy and happiness, to his wife and children, that the merit of his little children, who are free from sin, should assist him, merciful God! I beseech You, merciful God, keep far from him all evil decrees, do not treat him with the attribute of justice, but only with the attribute of mercy. Examine him only when he goes in a dangerous place.⁹ [May] the merit of our pious ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the merit of our little children protect us at that time, that we should, God forbid!, not be separated, that we may grow old with honor, to live out our years and days in contentment. Strengthen our power in Your holy service, that we may serve You in love and in fear¹⁰ [to perform] Your holy commandments. May we be able to strengthen the hearts of our children, too, so that they shouldn't trespass [even] the slightest of Your commandments, but only serve You with a whole heart. Confound the evil thoughts of our enemies, that they should not see any revenge against us [i.e., may we not suffer misfortune, in which our enemies would find satisfaction]. Keep far from

us the evil inclination [but let us] serve our Lord God with submission and humility. Almighty merciful Father! Have mercy on us, as a father has mercy on his children. Open for us the gates of mercy;¹¹ let that prayer from me, a sinful person, come to You, holy God, which I have prayed before You, that the righteous redeemer should appear to us, that we may be redeemed from exile soon. Praised are You, God, who hears the prayers of all the oppressed people who call upon You with truth, as the verse states: "God is close to those who call upon Him with truth." It says further: "He will hear their crying and save them."¹² He hears their crying, and stands ready to help them at all times, when one calls to You with the whole heart. Amen.

Analysis

The same themes featured in the previous tkhine are reiterated here: protection from evil, the desire for an honorable livelihood and for the advent of the messiah. The author also requests angelic protection for her husband during his travels. Here, too, the concept of the special merit of one's young children is voiced, and God's mercy is emphasized. As regards influences on the language and style of this tkhine, the author relies on the Talmud and the siddur, and quotes directly from the Bible.

55) Tkhine for a pregnant woman, that she not miscarry

I entreat You, Lord,¹³ God of Israel: I beg You, the God of Israel, that You should accept my prayer, as You accepted the prayer of our mother, the prophetess Hannah, which she prayed for her son, the prophet Samuel. And may her merit assist me, that I, Your maidservant, may bear to full term this child that I now carry in my womb (Your creation). May it come out a healthy child, may he be a pious Jew, may he serve You with all his heart and soul, may he be a lover of Torah and a fearer of heaven, according to Your holy will. And may he be a beautiful seedling in the Jewish vineyard for the glory of Israel. Amen.

56) A tkhine for a pregnant woman when she is about to give birth

Dear and good God! I am not worthy of the lovingkindness that You always show to me. Let the merit of the three mitsves which You have commanded every woman, "nide, khale, lighting candles," which one must keep, may these three mitsves protect me, that I may not be punished, God forbid! for Eve's sin,¹⁴ and may I not endure any great sufferings, God forbid! And may I give birth to a child [who is] a servant of God in truth and faith, a son who fears God.

Analysis

It is a rare tkhine which asks for children without ex-

pressing the hope that they will be pious, God-fearing, scholarly and worthy Jews. Women who wrote and recited tkhines were soberly aware of the seriousness of their responsibilities in rearing children. Hence, unlike Yiddish lullabies, in which mothers' material dreams for their children were often emphasized--particularly that they become rich--tkhines spoke of a mother's concern for the spiritual welfare of her children. In the first of these two tkhines, as elsewhere, Hannah, here elevated to the status of "prophetess," is upheld as a model. In the second tkhine, the observance of the three women's commandments is viewed as an antidote to birth pangs, which, the Bible teaches, are the punishment for Eve's sin.

57) Tkhine for a woman who is about to have a child

Merciful and gracious God! Mighty Creator, have compassion on the woman so-and-so, the daughter of so-and-so (one should mention here the name of the one giving birth and the name of her mother), that she may have this child safely. May the merit of our holy matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, and the merit of our prophetesses, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah [and] Huldah, and the merit of Yael,¹⁵ sustain her in the time of danger, that she may have this child easily, without suffering. Then You, God, can show such a miracle, through the merit of the righteous women from among our ances-

tors, that the child should be born a pure spirit for Your service, a righteous person, and should occupy himself with Torah and mitsves. And if it is a female, may she be a modest woman, a woman who fears God. And may she have good fortune. May the mother and child be healthy, and may she come into the world to salvation and comfort for all Israel. May Jews merit a true redemption in her time. Amen.

Analysis

The greater the danger or the potential for danger, the greater the individual's need for additional zkhus, or merit, to see her through the difficult period. Childbirth was usually the most dangerous event in a woman's life, and so this special tkhine, to be recited by others on behalf of a woman in labor, invokes the merit not only of the four matriarchs, but also of four prophetesses, and even of Yael, who was a military heroine. The expectations for a son and a daughter are very different--if a son is born, he is expected to engage in the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot; if a daughter, it is hoped that she grow up to be "a modest woman." Again, the tkhine closes with an expression of the messianic hope.

58) A tkhine for a woman after her childbed when she goes to the synagogue

Lord of the whole world! When the Temple stood in Jeru-

saalem, a woman who had just arisen from childbed had to bring a sacrifice. Now, because of our many sins, that our Temple is no more, we fulfill our obligation with prayer in the "small Temple" [i.e., the synagogue]. I go to the synagogue to thank and praise You, dear God, for all the lovingkindness You have done for me until today. And I also ask You to continue not to remove Your lovingkindness from me, Sore bas Toyvim.

Analysis

Although the synagogue and the standard liturgy afforded few opportunities for a woman to voice uniquely feminine concerns, one significant occasion in a woman's life did receive formal expression in the synagogue: after having recuperated from childbirth, women came to the synagogue to recite the Birkat Hagomel, the prayer of gratitude for having been healed of a serious illness or having escaped danger. This little tkhine fulfills the same function as the Birkat Hagomel, though its contents diverge completely from the latter. Notice the explicit acknowledgement of the substitution of prayer and synagogue ("the small Temple") for sacrifice and the Temple. This must be a pseudonymous work, as it appears in neither of the two collections, Sheyker Hakheyen or Shloyshe Sheorim, for which Sore bas Toyvim was known. Her name was often borrowed in order to enhance the esteem, and hence the marketability, of the works of later authors.

59) A tkhine for a mother to say after the bris

Great, merciful God! We have obeyed Your holy commandment, to circumcize on the eighth day. I beseech You, dear God, send Your angel Rafael. Just as You sent him to our father Abraham to heal his circumcision,¹⁶ so may he also quickly heal the wound of my son, may he recover quickly. And give everyone health so that people can always do Your holy command. Hannah, the wife of Elkanah.

Analysis

The angel Rafael is the angel of healing (Rafael means "God heals"). The signature of this tkhine is clear evidence that some tkhine authors sought to validate their writings by assigning them to the most ancient and venerable origins. Using the "signature" of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah (and the mother of the biblical Samuel), may have been an attempt to shore up the worthiness and authenticity of tkhines against accusations detracting from their merit.

60) A tkhine for a mother who leads her child to kheyder for the first time

Master of the Universe! You have commanded in the holy Torah that parents should teach their children Torah.¹⁷ However, since we have no time to teach our son, we have hired a teacher for him. Therefore I beseech You, God, accept our money as if we ourselves were teaching him. May the merit of

the Torah protect us, that we may have nakhes [pleasure] from him. Amen.

61) Tkhine for a mother who leads her child to kheyder

Creator of the worlds! With great wisdom have You created the world, as we know, and the evil inclination which makes man sin. [But] You created the holy Torah for a remedy. Therefore we have delivered our son over to study Torah. I beseech You, God, strengthen his heart so that he may learn easily, that he should heed Your mitsves and our advice. Lead him in the path of Torah and mitsve. May we live to see him become a great scholar in Torah and a fine Jew. Amen.

Analysis

Considering the unrivalled importance which Jewish tradition attached to Talmud Torah, especially for boys, a mother of sons could hardly find a more appropriate subject for a tkhine than this one. Just as God is asked, in other tkhines, to accept prayers as a substitute for sacrifice, here He is asked to accept the parents' tuition money as a substitute for teaching their son themselves. But, as we have seen elsewhere, the study of Torah is not an end in itself, but only a means to the performance of mitzvot--and the following of parents' advice! Only through Torah and observance of the commandments can the evil inclination be controlled.

62) A tkhine for a bride before the khupe

Mighty God! Today, through my khupe, I take upon myself [responsibility for] three important things: to be a wife only to my husband; a housewife to a house; and, with time, a mother of children. And even [though] I feel [too] weak for these three things--nide, khale and lighting candles--nonetheless I know that this is Your holy command for our own benefit. Therefore I will fulfill this. Strengthen me and give me power, dear God, that I may have strength to fulfill your requirements [and] to serve You with my whole heart. Amen and amen.

Analysis

This tkhine summarizes the traditional women's role--wife, housewife and mother--while tying them in with the three women's commandments, through the hupah, or wedding canopy. For it was only through marriage that a woman could fulfill all three of the roles assigned her by traditional society, just as she was only obliged to observe the three women's commandments (especially nidah) after she was married. The hupah, then, became the true symbol of a woman's maturity--sexually, socially and religiously--whereas, for the man, Bar Mitzvah marked his entrance into the social and religious adult spheres.

Chapter 9: Selected Anonymous Tkhines

The following works, "New Tkhine for Livelihood" and "Tkhine of Sweet Hymns"¹ were published in the back of the 1894 Lemberg edition of Sore bas Yukil Horovits' Reshkhoydesh Bentshn, but are almost certainly by a different author. In fact, part of "New Tkhine for Livelihood" duplicates a section of Sore bas Toyvim's tkhine for blessing the New Moon.

63) New Tkhine for Livelihood

...May You give [us] all our needs [and] livelihood so that I, my husband and children will not need to [go] to a mortal, but [be sustained] only from Your open, full, generous hand. And may You give us dignified clothes so that we may go in dignity amongst the pious, and not shamefacedly. Let me live with my husband and children amongst other pious people without shame.

May it be Your will, God, my God and God of my ancestors, that my request ascend with mercy and with grace before Your holy throne now and everytime, evening and morning. When I beseech You, may my prayers accompany the pure prayers of the righteous men and women who have no defect in their prayers. But as the prayer goes out of my mouth, may a good defender stand by [who mentions] only good things, and may he recite true testimony and remember us for good. And You, dear God,

may You protect me and my husband and children from a bad blemish, from evil encounters, from the evil inclination, from an evil meditation, from an evil thought, from evil people who say [one thing] with their mouths, but in their hearts mean something different, from unwarranted hatred, from justified hatred, from evil decrees, from evil deeds, from bad times in this world.

Analysis

Here "dignified clothes," as well as economic independence, are considered requisite to a dignified life. As elsewhere, the petitioner relies on a "good defender." Among the various evils from which she seeks protection is hypocrisy ("evil people who say [one thing] with their mouths, but in their hearts mean something different").

64) Tkhine of Sweet Hymns (last paragraph)

Master of the Universe, let the beloved holy Sabbath protect us so that You may let me merit to have sons who are scholars and worthy. May they be pious and masters of Kabbalah, masters of the secrets of the Torah, and may no unfitness go out from me, God forbid, and not from my children. And may the verse, "Happy are you in this world and it is good for you in the world to come,"² be fulfilled through me. And may we merit to keep the holy Sabbath appropriately and

may You save us from sins and from all worries. And may You hear me, so-and-so daughter of so-and-so. So may You hear us and may You accept our prayers. Amen and amen.

Analysis

The last paragraph of Tkhine of Sweet Hymns introduces the idea that the Sabbath itself offers protection and confers merit on those who keep it. Again, the goal is to have children, and not only children but scns, and not only sons but pious and scholarly sons. But here, for the first time, it is not simply Torah which the author hopes her sons will study, but "the secrets of the Torah," in other words, the Kabbalah. While the Zohar is mentioned and quoted, and Kabbalistic ideas find their echo in tkhine literature, this is the first explicit indication I have found that the study of Kabbalah was as much encouraged as was that of the Torah.

65) Tkhine of Gates of Peace (one says this new tkhine when the cantor recites the priestly benediction)

Master of the Universe, we beseech You, because of the merit of Abraham our father. May we also benefit from the Akeyde [binding] of Isaac;³ nourish and clothe us through the merit of Jacob who requested bread to eat and raiment to wear.⁴ Dear God, let the merit of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah stand by us, and send us all the holy angels that they may protect us from all evil, and give me and my husband and child-

ren good fortune and livelihood and health. Mighty on high,
who dwells in power--You almighty God who rests in Heaven,
You are peace and Your name is peace--You and Your name are
 only peace. May it be Your will that You grant us and Your
entire people, the house of Israel, life and blessing for the
preservation of peace.⁵--that You may give us and all Israel
 good livelihood and health and pure peace.

Analysis

As is found frequently in this literature, here a liturgical passage is quoted in Hebrew, and then translated or paraphrased, phrase by phrase, into Yiddish. The standard themes of requests for sustenance and protection from evil, and the merits of the patriarchs and matriarchs, are reiterated. And, as in many other tkhines, angels play an important role.

66) Tkhine of accepting the yoke of the kingship of God⁶

Every woman should say this tkhine every day before all the tkhines. It is taken from the holy Tanoyim and Amoroyim [rabbinic authorities of the Talmud], and also from the greatest of the Geoynim, may their merit protect us: ... We weak women must be forewarned not to weaken our knowledge, for upon us women lies the holy obligation of home life, the running of the house, of educating our children; thus we are called mistress of the house. We must be prudent at every step,

everything must be done with wisdom...may the Eternal fortify my strength. May He give me understanding that I may be able to conduct my house and educate my children to be God fearing and to be good human beings and to find grace and good wisdom in the eyes of God and man. This is the correct purpose of the creation of every woman, that through this merit I will merit to enjoy both worlds, nakhes, wealth, health and strength, and good children in this world, and I shall not need, God forbid!, to fear the punishment of the other world. May I always find favor and have bright fortune and may I grow old together with my husband. Amen.

Analysis

Just as prayers in the siddur are often accompanied by instructions, many tkhines bear captions instructing the reader as to the proper time and setting for their recitation. Not infrequently one finds the admonition to read a particular tkhine every day. Were a woman, in the possession of a large collection of tkhines, to feel obligated to follow all of these instructions, she might well spend all her time praying! In all likelihood, women did not take these pious admonitions too literally. Considering the glut of tkhines on the market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is most probable that instructions promising reward for faithful recitation, or urging frequent reading of individual tkhines, represented gimmicks to advertise the merits of the work.

Interestingly, while the themes of motherhood and the raising and educating of children comprise a significant portion of this literature, the duties of a housewife receive far less attention. Both the "Tkhine of accepting the yoke of the kingship of God" and "A new tkhine for arising in the morning" (see below) are exceptional in this regard. The self-deprecating remark "we weak women" is also somewhat unusual, although in Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil's anthology, a bride fears that she may be too weak to uphold the religious obligations of a married woman. These atypical features may be explained by the tkhine's heading, which indicates that the work was based on the Talmud and later rabbinic works. If this is so, the original sources for this tkhine were written by men, which accounts for the uncomplimentary view of women, and the emphasis on housework.

67) A new tkhine for arising in the morning

I entreat You, Lord God--I beseech You dear God who is merciful in judgement--into whose hand I place my soul when I go to sleep and when I awaken.⁷ I ask from You loving-kindness and mercy,⁸ that You may bless me today and every day, that my conduct may find grace and lovingkindness in my husband's eyes and in my children's eyes, and also in the eyes of all whom I serve; may my cleanliness, and the tidiness of my home have the result that no sickness may enter my house, God forbid! And although, Master of the Universe, You are our

guardian, yet You have written in the holy Torah that man shouldn't rely on miracles,⁹ and on condition that man looks out for himself, God watches over him, too. And since it is well-known that many infectious diseases come from uncleanness, therefore I pray from You strength and wisdom to know how to polish and to keep my home clean and my whole household healthy. May You also send me understanding, that I may know how to care for my health and my strength and my husband's health and strength and the health and strength of my whole household: both by means of cleanliness, and healthy, tasty food, that at every meal, every dish should be ready on time, in order that we have strength to serve the Creator, just as the chapter says: "If there is no bread, there is no Torah."¹⁰ The Rambam says that in a healthy body the mind and the understanding can be steadier, and less apt to err than in a weak body.¹¹ Especially nowadays when, because of our many sins, the burden of earning a livelihood is very heavy, one must remind oneself constantly to fortify one's strength, and the important thing is to be contented with one's lot. May I, God forbid!, not envy another woman her good food or her expensive clothes or her jewelry. May I only look jealously at good Jewish conduct. And may I rejoice with that which the Eternal will grant me so that it should always be merry in my home. May I, God forbid!, know nothing of evil, may no curse come into my home. And since, in most cases, women have weak minds which cause them, God for-

bid!, to delude themselves with sicknesses until they become truly weak, I beseech You, Master of the Universe, to strengthen my understanding and my fortitude so that I can drive away such weak thoughts from me, that my husband and my children may become gladdened whenever they come into the house. Enable me to make them happy with good, loving, wise speech, and in this way blessing, abundance, livelihood and success will abide in my house, that I may be able to give charity with a joyful heart, and pray with pure thoughts, that You may fulfill all our requests for good.

Analysis

The connection of cleanliness with health, and particularly of uncleanness with infectious disease, is a thoroughly modern idea. The volume from which this tkhine was taken (Shas Tkhine Peninim Yekorim) was published in the 1920's, and one would be justified in assuming that this particular tkhine was composed not long before then. The emphasis on self-reliance, and on knowledge as a means to health (as opposed to as a key to piety, God's service, or eternal life), would seem to further support a more recent date of composition. Furthermore, the more obvious archaisms which abound in earlier works, such as angels, intermediaries, evil spirits, the world to come, and miraculous intervention, are all absent here. The focus, instead, is on ethical conduct, on knowledge, on family welfare and on material well-being, all of

which are viewed as being within the individual's power to achieve. The tkhine merely asks God to enable the supplicant to achieve these goals for herself.

The quotations and references to Talmud and the Rambam (Maimonides) also indicates a greater familiarity than usual with traditional literature. At the same time, the misogynistic remark about the weakness of women's minds and their proclivity towards hypochondria casts some doubt on the author being a woman.

68) Tkhine "I give thanks"

I give thanks before You,¹² God, my God, and God of my ancestors; I stand before You a poor woman with a bowed head and a broken heart, for my life is in Your hand and my death is also in Your hand. I stand before You with nothing but trembling. I desire from You that You may forgive me my sins that I have sinned and have been guilty of from the day of my birth to this day. And if I have sinned concerning the three mitsves that You have commanded us women--khale, nide and lighting candles--I beseech You not to remember it today and not to cut short my life, God forbid!, but I beseech You to permit me to live until I perform mitsves that are written in Your Torah. When my time will come to die, may my death be an atonement for my sins¹³ and if I have not earned it from Your beloved name, I ask it of You as a free gift. You hear the plea of all people, may You hear my plea also. Amen.

Thus may Your will be.

Analysis

Frequently the title of a tkhine bears little, if any relation to the contents. That is certainly the case here-- there is no immediate connection between this tkhine, which asks for forgiveness of sins, and the "Modeh Ani" prayer, which thanks God for returning the petitioner's soul each morning. Once again, the three women's commandments are singled out for special attention.

69) A new tkhine: Fair judgement

(To say every Monday and Thursday at the time the Torah is taken out before [the prayer] Berikh Shemeih):¹⁴ [You are the] God of truth, and Your holy Torah is true. We find in the holy Zohar a saying by the holy Tane, the tsadik Rabbi Simeon ben Yohay,¹⁵ that at the time one takes out the Torah scroll to read before the congregation, all the gates of mercy and love are opened in heaven.¹⁶ And just as the gates of mercy are still open, I, the woman so-and-so the daughter of so-and-so, come before You with a burning plea that You may prolong my life, my husband's life, and my little children's lives, that we may live in nakhes [pleasure], not, God forbid!, with sorrow. May You send down bounty, blessing, livelihood and success to us and to all Israel through these open gates. Let not our trust in You be shamed, God forbid!,

for You are my Sustainer and the Sustainer of the entire world. And through the merit of the holy Torah may I be worthy to raise a generation of good scholars whose eyes will shine in the Torah. The holy Torah is our only consolation in the bitter exile. She is for us a good pledge of Your beloved name, that we will be redeemed speedily in our days. Amen.

Analysis

Here is further evidence of the pervasiveness of Kabbalah: the Zohar (the most important Kabbalistic work) is spoken of in highly reverential terms. The merit of the Torah, the wish for scholarly children and for redemption "in our days" are all familiar themes. The bitterness of exile (goles), here stated explicitly, is implicit everywhere in this literature.

70) Prayer of life: One should say this tkhine every day

...Protect me and my husband and children and all my good friends from all evils. May we not need to come to a mortal soul [for help], God forbid!, but that You alone should bless us from Your holy hand that we should not be shamed in this world or in the next world; and protect me and all Israel from [evil] encounters and from sorrow. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Master of the Universe, I want to confess my sins before You, just as it is written in the holy Torah that if one confesses one's sins oneself, one is released.¹⁷ Therefore I want to acquaint [You with] my sins in the month of Elul, so that the Satan and the evil inclination will not do so and not be able to do so on Yom Kippur, when You will sit on Your throne, and angels will stand on both sides... You do not desire the death of a person, but as soon as he turns from his evil deeds,¹⁸ Your right hand is already open to receive his repentance. You do not reject the cry of the poor man, and do not hide Your face when he cries, but You answer him.¹⁹ Therefore may it be Your will not to judge your maid-servant harshly. Accept my repentance--Your habit is to keep Your temper [literally "to lengthen Your wrath"] and to have mercy on Your creatures. You are good to forgive with much grace those who call upon You with all their heart. Answer me in this difficult time.²⁰ And may my blood, which becomes diminished through my fasting, be as if I would leap onto Your altar, and may [it] repair that [part] of Your Oneness to which I have been faithless, and have broken with my sins.

...What You, God, have built I have broken and can not repair. Therefore, see, God, how fright and trembling have come over me when I begin to remember my sins which I have committed in my youth, and did not think about illuminating my old age. And today, when I am reminded, I tear my flesh off me, that my soul not be shamed on the day of judgement

before the Throne of Glory. Therefore, Dear God, answer me today! Today I am in great trouble. I know all my sins - they are like deep water, already going over [my head] and they are too heavy for me to bear. Now come the days when I must give an accounting of all my sins to You and all Your angels who stand at either side, and all Your books will be open. What will I answer and how shall I make amends? Therefore, Master of the Universe, with Your right hand may You support me. Incline Your ear to me²¹ as I confess my sins before You, Dear God. Stop up the mouth and the ears of Satan, that he should not accuse me. Against You alone have I sinned--to You alone will I confess.

Analysis

In this tkhine the author includes her friends, together with her self, her husband and her children, in her pleas for protection from evil. The themes, style and references of Prayer of Life have all been discussed in reference to other tkhines. Some of the themes that bear underscoring are the forgiveness of sins, God's mercy, and protection against Satan and the evil inclination. As we have encountered in a number of other tkhines, the contemplation of Yom Kippur as the Day of Judgement evokes sheer terror: "fright and trembling have come over me," "When I remember, I tear my flesh off me." The tone is one of urgency, almost desperation, yet it is tempered by a constant hope in God's mercy and forgiveness. Clearly, the author identifies with the poor man--der oriman. The

phrase "You do not reject the cry of the poor man" reflects a recurring theme in the Bible. This tkhine is also typical in style and syntax, as it is strongly influenced by biblical and liturgical phraseology, and contains talmudic ideas, as well.

Notice, as well, how the Yom Kippur fast is interpreted as a symbolic sacrifice of self: "as if I would leap onto Your altar!" The escalation of the seriousness and profundity of an individual's acts of piety is one of the trademarks of this genre (remember the significance that Sore bas Toyvim attached to her observance of the three women's commandments).

Again, typically, the author avails herself of some of the favorite symbols of tkhine literature: angels, an anthropomorphic deity ("You will sit on Your throne," "Incline Your ear to me," "Your right hand is already open"), and the heavenly tribunal on Yom Kippur, with its open books (the Book of Life and the Book of Death).

Even though this tkhine is, for the most part, devoid of explicitly feminine motifs and imagery, it is animated by the same spirit of sincere, effusive piety which infuses the tkhines as a whole. It was this "stream of consciousness" style of writing, duplicating the folksy intimacy and exaggerated piety of the speech of everyday people, which constituted the unique contribution of women to Jewish liturgy.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The tkhines represented in this study are filled with requests for health, livelihood and sustenance, for God's compassion and forgiveness, for safety, and for protection from evil and disgrace. In the pages of these works the Jewish woman gave expression to her anxieties for her husband's and children's welfare, found encouragement to uphold her domestic and religious duties, and sought solace in times of despair. Tkhines celebrated and solemnized the important events in her life, both the joyful and the tragic. They also recorded the rhythms of her daily life, with its mundane needs and cares.

While their domestic themes and sentimental style may no longer speak to the contemporary Jewish woman, the tkhines are far from having outlived their usefulness. They afford us an intimate first-hand view of the values, world-view, beliefs and self-identity of our Yiddish-speaking foremothers. The tkhines studied here also show that Jewish women accepted the values taught by Jewish tradition. Foremost among these was Talmud Torah (Jewish learning). The enormous esteem for Talmud Torah led to inordinate reverence for rabbis, scholarship, and "holy books." It also led to obedience to God's will through observance of the mitzvot, living the ethical life, and the performance of good deeds. One of the primary ethical imperatives was modesty, particularly in behavior and speech. And chief among the good deeds was the giving of cha-

city. Paradoxically, the poor were objects of great compassion, even of identification, yet at the same time the high value placed on human dignity caused Jews to view the receiving of charity with opprobrium.

Ultimately, the entire enterprise of writing and reciting tkhines was constituted by prayer. From the point of view of tkhines, prayer was more than mere petition--it served as a vicarious offering to God through which the various sacrifices prescribed in the Torah were symbolized. Hence prayer must be treated with utmost seriousness and importance. Thus kavanah (in Yiddish, kavone), or true sincerity, in prayer, was highly valued. Prayer was also the primary vehicle for "doing tshuve," or modifying undesirable behaviors through repentance. The things sought in prayer also represented important values to the petitioner; among other things, health and material well-being were requested in tkhines.

Finally, one major value which tkhines emphasized far more than did the standard liturgy was family. The importance of having children, the preciousness of children, the love of family, and the duty to honor parents--these values lie at the very core of the tkhine literature.

In short, all of the significant values reflected in tkhines can be shown to flow out of the three major rubrics of Torah, prayer and family.

The world-view which emerges from the tkhines often appears bleak. The world is a dangerous place, full of evil

spirits, enemies, and hazards of every sort. Life is marked by suffering and tragedy. Yet life is far from cursed. Despite its dangers, the world was created with great wisdom and beauty, and life brings its moments of joy. Ultimately, though, this world is merely a threshold to the next, which is more blessed, true and permanent than this one.

A study of the tkhines has yielded for us an understanding of this belief system of Jewish women. Again, their beliefs were essentially the same as those of Jewish men, the difference being in emphasis. The central belief, as has been true in every Jewish religious system throughout history, is theism. Almost everything else in traditional Judaism, and certainly in the theology implicit in tkhines, is dependent on it. The God of the tkhines is both compassionate and all-powerful, nurturing and all-knowing. The liber Got (dear God) of the tkhines is intimate and immediate. He is a dear friend--in fact, the only true friend--of the devout Jewish woman. Only God fully understands the heartaches of a Jewish mother. This intimacy is further reflected in the various anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms by which God is invariably described.

God is also just, and so the world operates on the basis of reward and punishment. Chief among the punishments for women are childlessness, difficult labor, the death of loved ones (particularly of babies or young children), and destitution. Rewards include having many children (especially sons),

enjoying economic independence, and seeing one's offspring grow into scholarly, devout Jews. The ultimate reward, however, is eternal life.

A corollary of the belief in eternal life is the belief that the souls of one's ancestors (all of whom, naturally, were pious and saintly), retain a degree of consciousness and are able to communicate with the living, as well as petition God. It seems that the practice of visiting the cemetery to consult with, or seek the advice of, the dead, was more common among women than among men.

Other beliefs frequently voiced in the tkhines, and which stand, as well, at the core of the siddur and of traditional Jewish theology, are the messianic advent and the efficacy of prayer.

But while prayer was the primary (and the only officially sanctioned) means of trying to persuade God, magical practices were resorted to as an adjunct to prayer. Amongst women, especially, belief in magic, as well as in demons, Satan and various angels and spirits, was widespread. Furthermore, as caretakers and educators of small children, women were, in all probability, the primary transmitters of these beliefs. And as guardians of the health and wellbeing of their families, women were more likely than men to gain expertise in the "practical" magical arts, such as sympathetic magic, cures for curses and magical healing. "We must regard women," writes Trachtenberg (1939), "as the folk-magicians, healers

of wounds, prescribers of love-potions..." (p. 17).

The basic self-identity of the Jewish woman, as reflected in tkhines, was that of wife, mother and housewife. She saw herself as the educator and rearer of her children, and as the guardian of her family's welfare. She saw herself as a humble and modest soul, who could claim no worthiness of her own, but only through the merits of her pious ancestors or her children. Yet, at the same time, she was able to achieve a level of priestly purity through sincere and devoted observance of God's commandments. The woman who spoke through tkhines also saw herself primarily as God's servant, in both mind and body, and as such the spiritual equal of her male counterpart. In her daily struggles and burdens, she saw herself as carrying on the holy task of the beloved biblical matriarchs.

Although we know very little about the individual authors of tkhines, we can draw this general portrait, based both on the title pages of tkhine books, and on their contents and style: almost all of these women came from rabbinic families, or were married to rabbis, or both. They were well-educated, being not only literate in Yiddish, but fairly familiar with Hebraic sources, as well, such as the Bible, Talmud and Midrash, the siddur, the Zohar, medieval poetry, etc.¹ It is a fair assumption, as well, that these women probably composed their tkhines in their later years, when the demands of caring for young children and a large household had subsided. Two

authors featured in this study, Seril and Sore bas Yukil Horovits, were widows when they wrote their works.² In contrast to the pattern for women, male authors of tkhines were often young Yeshiva students, seeking a means to supplement their meagre incomes (Eisenstein, 1903).

There remains, still, a wealth of knowledge to be gained from the tkhine literature. There are volumes yet to be translated.³ The Yiddish tkhines could generate a wide variety of linguistic studies. Manuscripts and printed editions need to be collected, catalogued and compared to determine the original version of each work. Variant readings need to be studied for the information they yield about local dialects and influences. Is there any pattern or tendency in the changes introduced over the years? Are there any clues that may help us determine more precisely when the authors lived, or who they were?

The works of many obscure, yet accomplished women authors of tkhines lie waiting to be rediscovered. For example, Yente bas Yitskhok wrote several short works, including a "Tkhine for the Eve of the New Moon." Her works are described by Noah Prilitzky in the YIVO Bleter (1938), but because his article is in Yiddish, it is not accessible to the general public.

The biographical details of even the better known tkhine authors, such as Sore bas Toyvim and Seril, are extremely scant. But if we can at least determine the period and locale

in which they lived, a study of Jewish history of that time and place should furnish us with background information about these women's environments. In turn, having discovered the historical conditions under which these women lived, we can turn to their tkhines to see if these works responded at all to either specific historic events (as in the case of the tkhines for those who lost family members in wars or pogroms) or to the general realities of a particular era.

Finally, a serious and thorough study of the field would require a rigorous comparison of the tkhines primarily with the siddur and secondarily with all the other Hebrew sources which are quoted or alluded to in the tkhine literature.

I believe that the value of the tkhines for us today goes beyond scholarship. If they are modified to suit modern tastes and needs they may yet retain spiritual usefulness. As a matter of fact, in his book Jewish Liturgy (1932), Abraham Zevi Idelsohn maintains that the old Union Prayer Book (the prayerbook of American Reform Judaism) incorporated "numerous" meditations whose origins lay, ultimately, in the tkhines (p. 267).

The tkhines represent the creative outpourings of the feminine spirit in a time when women's lives were severely circumscribed, and their participation in the religious life of the community was even more restricted. Women responded to this religious isolation by creating their own spiritual

world, one which was every bit as rich as the men's religious world, and in many respects more immediate, more spontaneous, more vibrant, and hence, more authentic.

Jewish women today, freed from restrictions and isolation in the secular, and increasingly in the religious spheres, find themselves in a spiritual desert. Assimilation has created a widespread sense of alienation from Judaism. For Jewish women, this alienation is often even more acute than it is for men, for the symbols and language of their religion are not merely archaic, but almost exclusively masculine, as well. Perhaps if Jewish women had a hand in creating new liturgy, liturgy which speaks of their experiences, they would begin, once again, to see themselves in the pages of their prayerbooks, just as their grandmothers and great-grandmothers read themselves into the pages of their tkhines. Perhaps then modern women will begin to feel more at home in Judaism.

Appendix 1Glossary of Personal Names

| Ashkenazic Hebrew/ <u>Yiddish</u> | Sephardic or Anglicized <u>Hebrew equivalent</u> |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Avrom Apoteker | Abraham Apotheker (= apothecary) |
| Borukh | Barukh |
| Leye | Leah |
| Matisyohu ben Horav Meyir | Mattitiah (Mattathias) ben Harav |
| Sabatki | (son of Rabbi) Meir Sabatky |
| Mordkhe Kats Rapoport | Mordecai Katz Rapoport |
| Rabonis Khane | Rabanit Hannah (Rabanit is the title of a rabbi's wife) |
| Rabonis Rokhl | Rabanit Rachel |
| Rivke | Rebekah |
| Rokhl Ester bas Avikhayil | Rachel Esther bat (daughter of) Avihail |
| Seril bas Yankev Segal | Seril (diminutive of Sarah) bat Jacob Segal |
| Shabsay | Shabbetai |
| Sore bas Toyvim | Sarah bat Tovim (Sarah, daughter of good people) |
| Sore bas Yukil Horovits | Sarah bat Yukil (probably diminutive of Jacob) Horowitz |
| Yitskhok | Isaac |
| Yoysef ben Yoker | Joseph ben Yakar (son of pre- cious one) |

Appendix 2
Glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish Terms

| <u>Sephardic Hebrew</u> | <u>Ashkenazic Hebrew/ Yiddish</u> | <u>In Hebrew letters</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| aggadah | | אַגָּדָה | Non-legal narrative traditions in the Talmud containing stories, legends, parables, etc. |
| 'Akedan | Akeyde | עֶקֶדָה | "Binding"--referring to the near-sacrifice of Isaac. |
| 'Amidah | | עֲמִידָה | "Standing" prayer or silent devotion--central prayer in Jewish liturgy. |
| Amora' / Amora'im | —/ Amoroyim | אַמּוֹרָאִים / אֲמוֹרָא | Rabbinic sage of the post-Mishnaic Talmudic period. |
| Bar Mitzvah | | בֶּרֶךְ מִצְוָה | A ceremony marking a boy's entrance into full adult religious responsibility at the age of 13. A boy who has reached this age is called a Bar Mitzvah. |
| berit | bris | בְּרִית | Circumcision ceremony. |
| | firzogerin/s | פִּירוֹזְגֶּרִין / ס | "Foresayer"--a learned woman who translated the Hebrew prayers into Yiddish for the women in the synagogue. |
| Gemara' | Gemore | גְּמָרָא | Talmud, or that part of the Talmud which comments on the Mishnah. |

| <u>Sephardic Hebrew</u> | <u>Ashkenazic Hebrew/ Yiddish</u> | <u>In Hebrew letters</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Ga'on/ Ge'onim | —/ Geonim | גאונים / גאון | Title given to the heads of the Babylonian rabbinical academies during the 6th-11th centuries. |
| Haggadah | | הגדה | Book containing the service for Passover <u>seder</u> (ceremonial meal). |
| halakhah | | הלכה | The corpus of Jewish law. |
| ḥalah | khale | חלה | A piece of dough removed from an unbaked loaf of bread as a symbolic sacrifice. (Also the braided egg bread eaten on Sabbath and festivals.) |
| Hasidic/ Hasidism | | (חסידים / חסידות) | Referring to a mystical pietistic and popularist sect which swept European Jewry in 17th century. |
| heder | kheyder | חדר | Traditional Jewish school for young children (especially boys). |
| hupah | khupe | חופה | Canopy under which Jewish marriage ceremonies take place, often used as metaphor for marriage. |
| | Ivri-Taytsh | עברי-טייטש | Lit. "Hebrew-German" or "Hebrew translation." Archaic Yiddish used especially in the translation of Hebrew texts. |
| Kabbalah | | קבלה | Jewish mystical tradition. |
| kavanah | kavone | כוונה | Sincerity, intention, devotion. |

| <u>Sephardic Hebrew</u> | <u>Ashkenazic Hebrew/ Yiddish</u> | <u>In Hebrew letters</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| kasher | kosher | כָּשֵׁר | Ritually fit--in reference to people, pious, observant. |
| Kedushah | | קְדוּשָׁה | "Sanctification"--section of the <u>'Amidah</u> which sanctifies God. |
| | kinder | קינדער | Children. |
| maftir | maftir | מפטיר | Prophetic reading for Sabbaths and holidays. |
| Mahzor | | מחזור | High Holy Day Prayerbook. |
| mehitsah | mekhitse | מחיצה | Partition used to separate men and women in the synagogue. |
| menorah | | מנורה | Seven-branched candelabrum, symbolic of Judaism. |
| Midrash/im | | מדרש / ים | Homiletic interpretation of the Scriptures. |
| mikveh | | מקוה | Ritual bath used (especially by women) to purify oneself. |
| Mishnah | | משנה | Earliest document in the Talmud; compilation of oral legal traditions, redacted ca. 200 C.E. |
| mitzvah/ mitzvot | mitsve/s | מצוה / מצוות | "Commandment," i.e., the divine commandments in the Bible and as interpreted in the Talmud. |

| <u>Sephardic Hebrew</u> | <u>Ashkenazic Hebrew/ Yiddish</u> | <u>In Hebrew letters</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| musaf | | מוסף | Additional prayer service on Sabbath and festivals corresponding to the additional Sabbath and festival sacrifices in biblical era. |
| musar | muser | מוסר | Moral lesson or reproof. |
| nahat | nakhes | נחת | Pleasure, satisfaction, joy--especially derived from children. |
| nidah | nide | נדחה | Menstruation, or the laws regulating separation of the sexes during menstruation and the process of purification afterwards. |
| piyut/im | | פיוט / פיוטים | Medieval liturgical poetry. |
| Rabanit | Rabonis | רבנית | Title of the wife of a rabbi. |
| Rosh Ha-shanah | | ראש השנה | "Head of the Year"--the Jewish New Year. |
| Shema' | | שמע | "Hear!" Referring to Deut. 6:4, the central liturgical confession of faith, recited by observant Jews thrice daily. |
| shofar | | שופר | A hollowed-out ram's horn blown like a trumpet as part of the ritual on the High Holy Days. |
| | shtetl | סטעטל | Jewish small town in Eastern Europe. |
| siddur/im | | סידור / סידורים | The Hebrew prayerbook. |

| <u>Sephardic Hebrew</u> | <u>Ashkenazic Hebrew/ Yiddish</u> | <u>In Hebrew letters</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Talmud | | תלמוד | The massive compilation of Jewish law and lore, in the form of a 60-trachtate commentary on the Mishnah, completed ca. 500 C.E. |
| Talmud Torah | | תלמוד תורה | "The study of Torah"--i.e., Jewish learning in general. |
| Tana'im | Tane/Tanoyim | תנאים / תנאים | Rabbinic sage of the Mishnaic period. |
| Torah | | תורה | Strictly speaking, the Five Books of Moses, which are read from a scroll in the synagogue. In a broader sense, all sacred Jewish literature. |
| tsadik | | צדיק | Exceptionally righteous, or saintly individual. |
| Yom Kippur | Yonkiper | יום כיפור | Day of Atonement. |
| Zohar | | זוהר | "Splendor"--a medieval Kabbalistic work in the form of a biblical commentary. The most famous document of Kabbalah. |



#6 (cont.)

שלשה שיעורים

10

פון עטל וולכן און וואלסטא אונז העלפן פון דעם השפחותים וסמקסרנים
 וואו נאלי און גיט קענען פאפאד זיין צוא דעם היינטיגן יום העדן
 אונזער משפס ואל אויט גיין פאר דיר לסוכה מיט גרויס רחמנות
 מיר ואלן האבן איין נאטן השפס מיט אונזער מאנען און מיט
 אונזער קינדער לחיים טובים מיר ואלן חלילה מיר אלסנות גיט
 בלייבן און אונזערע קינדער מיר וואסן בוכות וואס מיר לייגן
 איין פאדים פון אונזער בוסר רחל וועגן און אין איר זכות ואלסטא
 פאדים זיין וועבן גיט לבוא דאט און בייקט אין רחלש זכות וועט
 אונז השי' אום קערן אין אונז לאנד ארץ אמן איר זכות ואל איה
 אונז מיט זיין וואס זי האט זי גיט גלאם מנהם זיין ביי גאט האט
 איר צוא נאמט און ביינע קינדער וועלן זי אום קערן אין זייער
 לאנד ארץ לייבט גאט לאו דאט פאדים ווערן זי דער גאל צדק
 ואל קענען ניד און פאלד אין אונזערע מענן און ביי ויר רצון :

#6 (end)

רבשע' איה בעט דיר דר בארמיר גאט און וואלסטא און נעמען
 די ליבט וואס מיר מאכט וועגן די הייליגע ביינע נשמות
 פון איסליבן פאדים וואס מיר לייגן וואלסטא אונז מסופ' זיין חיים די
 הייליגע נשמות ואלן זי דער וועגן אויט וייערע קברים און ואלן
 בהפלה זיין פון אונז און מיר ואלן נאנד זיין און מיר קערן סתפלה צו
 זיין פון די פתים וואס זייען נשטארבן אין אונזער דורות און פון די
 פתים וואס זייען נשטארבן פון אדם וזיה און היינט מאכט מיר ליבט
 פון די אלע נשמות וועגן און פון די נשמות וועגן וואס זייען אין
 פעלדער און אין די וועלדער און פאר אלע קרוישים און פאר די וואס
 האבן מיר קינדער גיט און פאר אלע קליינע קינדערלייג און זייען ואלן
 זי דיר וועגן די דארע בייט און ואלן לעבדיג ווערן זי און פאלד
 מיר ואלן וועבן זיין צוא וועגן קהילת הפתים דאט איר און פלה :

#6 (beginning)

שלשה שיעורים

ה

פאדים פון דיא קייסדעק פאר אונזער פאסער אברהם וואס דוא
 האסט אים בעיל ניווען פון דעם באקף אויבן און וואלסטא און
 ביינ מאכט פון דיא גטות וסמקס אונזער נשמה ואל ביינ קענען
 לעדעם הבא און וואס קען האט זי און נעבען ביי אן שולד בלי
 שום מירא וסמק און וואס זי איז גיקעט אין אונזער נאף ארץ און
 אי נדעם זכות וואס איה לייג דעם פאדים פאר אונזער מוסער שיה
 ואל גאט ביה אונז נדייקען דעם זכות פון איר צער און קען האט
 איר ליבן וון וועק צוא דער עקדה נשדס ואל זי פאר אונז
 סתפלה זיין פאר השי' ביה האט און מיר ואלן דאט זי דיר מיר
 אלסנות גיט ביי און און קען ואל גיט דיר אונזער נעמען אונזערע
 קינדערלייג בייא אונזער לעבן פון דער וועלט און אין דעם זכות
 וואס מיר לייגן דעם פאדים פון אונזער פאסער וועק וועגן וואלסטא
 זי איה אונז פאדים זיין דוא האסט און גבאסן מיר ואלן בלאוין
 שיפר אום ראש השנה מיט איה שופר של איל זיב למסדת וועק
 וואלסטא און נדייקען דעם זכות מיר ואלן קענען צוא אונזער קינדער
 האט וייערע ברעקפעיט מיר ואלן וואס קענען ביי איין רבי האלטן
 זי ואלן זי ניווען אין ביי דעם גאט צו וואן און וואס נשמה רבא
 דיר זכות פון מיר סענות פון די ליבט ואל אן גיטען ווערן זי דאט
 ליבט פון דעם ביה גדול וואס זי האט גיטען אין פתים און עט
 ואל לייבט אונזערע קינדערש אויגן אין דער תורה הקדושה
 אויף וואס איה בעט דעם ליבן גאט ביי מיר סענות פון ליבט בענעטן
 און עט ואל אן גיטען ווערן ביינ געט ביי דעם ליבן גאט ביה מיר
 סענות פון די ליבט וואס לייג דעם פאדים פון אונזער מוסר רבקה
 וועגן וואס זי האט גיטען זי ברכות צו אונז פאסער נעקב און
 די ברכות ואלן אין אונז פאדים ווערן און פאר דעם פאדים וואס
 מיר לייגן פון אונז פאסער נעקב וועגן און זי דוא האסט אים נהאלפן

#9

רבונו של עולם איך טוא תפלה צוא דער וויא אסתר תפלה האט
תפלה נישטאן הער פון דער נאנצער וועלט מיט דיין רעכטע
האנט און דא לינקע האנט וואס דא האסט נישטאפן דיין
נאנצע וועלט מיט דיא צוויי הענט וואססטו פאר שטרייטן ריינע
הסדרים אויף מיר אויף איז פאר האנדן וועקט חדרים אין גן עדן
וואס דרינגען וויינען נשים צדקניות בזה אלפים האמין גאר מין
צער פון דעם גיהנם נים גליטין דארטין איז פאר האנדן בתיה
בת פרעה תפלה דארטין איז פאר האנדן איין ארט אין גן עדן
וויא איין מיר האנט וואש איז אן גיברייט אויף צוא סאקין וויא
יא ועהט דיא צורה פון משה רבינו אזוא בוקט יוא ויף אונז
ואנט וויא ווערדיג איז מין בל און וויא וויסן שאפט איז מין
בראשט אן איך האב אויש נוציקן אזוא איין ליכט אויש דעם
וואסער איין ליכט ליכט אזוא מוט פער דרייא מאל אין טאג און
אין אנדערין חדר וויינען אויף אלפי רבבות נשים און סרה בת
אשר איז איין תפלה און אלע קאן רופט מען אויש דרייא מאל
און וויא עט קוקט די צורה פון יוסף הצדיק אוי בוקט יו ויך העגן
איש און נאנט ניוויכט איז מין בל און וויא ווערדיג איז מין קראפט
דאס איך האב ווכה ניווען צוא ואגן איין בשורה מין הער וועקט
דאס מין שטיקער יוסף לעבט און אין אייפרסטן חדר לערנט ער
תורה און אין דעם דריטן חדר איז אונזער מוסער ויכער די מוסר
פון משה רבינו מיט פיל נשים און לויבן דעם ליבן נאם ביה אלע
טאג דרייא מאל לויבן ניי השיי און ואגן דיא שירה פון דעם ים
מיט גרויס פרייד און דארטין איז ברוס תבואה און ואנט דעם פסוק

ותקח סוס תבואה אחת אחרון את החוף ביה דעם פסוק ואנט יו אליין
און פיל הייליגע בלאבים מיט איר און לויבן פאר דעשי און אין
פערטן חדר וועט דבורה תבואה מיט פיל טויזנט ווייכער און
וויא לויבן השיי און וויא וויינען דיא שירה פון דבורה און אין
דעם חדר וויא דיא אהבת וויינען דארטין קען קען נים דער
שטייבן עט קען אהין גאר היינער נים קוקען דארטין וואו דיא
אהבת וויינען ליכט ווייכער ווען דיא נשמות וויינען ביי מאנאד
אין גן עדן וואש פאר איין גתת איז דארטין קען בעם איך
איך איר וואלט נאם פרוך הא לויבן מיט גרויס פונקט און איר
ואנט תפלה קאן וועט איר ווכה ווי דארטין צוא וויא אונזער
אבהות וויינען:

#10

הער פון דער נאנצער וועלט הער שוין צוא מין נשדרי ענטפער
מיר דער פרייא אהין שוין דאט יאר מיר וארין שוין אויש
גרייט ווערן פון צדק ווארים מיר וויינען גלייך וויא יסאף אן איין
פאסטאד און וויא איין ישיף אן איין דודער און וויא יתוסים אן
איין פאטער וויא וויינדיגע און פלייגע קינדער אן איין בוסער איך
האפ צוא נאם ביה אונז וועט אן נעמען מין גרויסע בקשה וויא
ער נעמט אן אלע בקשות פון אלע יסועקע ניוויין מיט צוא
בראכניג הערצער דאט נאם ביה ואל שוין אן נעמען מין ניוכט
מיט מיינעם צוא בראכניגע האנדן וואש איך האב גרויס מיה פון
מיינע קינדער עט ואל אונז בייא שוויין דער זכות פון אברהם
צדק וועקט אונזער קלייגע קינדער וואש וויינען נישטאדבן ויגער
הייד פאר ווייכער צייט וארין וויא פאר אונז בעטן און אויף דיא
ריינע און דיא הייליגע דער פארדיקניג סדאקים ואלין פאר
אינו בעטן ביום הרון ווען דו וועסט איין שטעטן וואססטו אונז
שטעטן מיט תחמטת און נים מיט רוגי יו מין ניוכט ואל נים

לעזר וויכער קערן השם אלתי צבאות דא פירכט אלע האנדערין
און אלע גידאנקען פון אלע הערצער איר הייכל עפנט איינער
פענצער לאזן דיא דער בארדיקניג בלאבים בריינגען מין תפלה
פאר השיי דער בארדיקניג בלאג וועט ניוויס פאר מיר גיין ער וועט
מיר בריינגען חן וחסד פון פאר השיי דער חן פון יוסף הצדיק און
דער חן פון אסתר תפלה ואל מיר נעמען ווערן אין מין מויל
טוט איז דעם מענטשן וואש ער האט וויין בייטון אויף השם תפלה
דען ער פאר לאוט גיס מיינעם דער וואש פאר ויכערט יו ואל אין
איש אמן סרה:

#11

אין אויף אשה סבים מיט אלו נשים צדקניות ולון מוד מתפלל נין זכות
אונזער אמהות שרה רבקה רחל ולאה און מין מוסר לאה ואל
אויף בעטן פאר מוד און ס' כל ישראל האנדן ווא ווייכט אן אויף פון
טוט וואנט קיין צדק נאם ביה נאנט צו דו צדק טוט במדה
בימטו אמן:

#28 (beginning)

[רבין עולמים העי סין אלו תעלשין דיא אלשעטגור נאם דוא האקט באשטאטן מוט גרוס רחמנות דומיל איז עקד איז אלו באשעטגורט איז דוא נעקט טאג נאר מוט צעהן נועטור איז דעם מוטטן טאג דאס איז שבת האקטו נורמאט איז דין נועקט און אוף האקטו נוקאטן צוא דין לוב פאלק ישראל וואס דוא מוט דוך פרוטן מוט נייא ווי דער פסוק נאמט (ישראל אשר בק ארץ) דאס איז טייטש און לוב פאלק ישראל מוט אייך טיא אויך סוף באדומין אז וויא זאלן איך אים שבת קודש רואין סין אלו ארבים איז אויך סין נועטור וואס קען דאך נוט קערן נאר דער תורה איז צוא לערנען איסלובור נאך דין יכולת איז דך וואס קען נוט זאל טייטש לערנען איז זאל נוסח און פאר טייטש וויא נאם צוא דיטן איז דוא ווייבאר זאלן נוסח וויא צוא האלטן ווייטו מצות וואס נאם האט נוקאטן אויך האקטו איז נעכטן חרשים וואס דוא סתדרין פלעגן נייא הייליגן און הייגט זיגט אונזר בית המקדש איז חרוב קווארן איז איז נאר נוקלובין וואס מיר נעטן סקדש התודש און מיר בענטשין דעם שבת וואס פאר ראש הודש איז און דעמילט אים צייט קען זאל בעטן דעם טון מיר פאר שפריטן אונזר הענט צוא הש"י און תשלח טואן אז דוא זאלקט דין שבינה נידה קערן צוא ירושלים און זאלקט דער גייראן אונזר טעג אז וויא צום ערשטן קארן מיר זעטן גלייך אז דו שפעטליך און עס זאל גיט פאר שפעטטן דין אונזר שבתים איז ימים טובים איז חדשים און זאלן נוט דין יחוסים איז וויא דוא יטאק וואס נעטן פאר אורט אן אפטיק טון מיר דוך בעטן רבין כל עולמים טו איז סין נעטן

#28 (cont.)

זכות אבות ואמהות דוא נאם אלו ווי דו האקט נענטקט אינזר אבות אז זאלקטו אונז ענטפערן און דעם חודש איז דעם זכות סין אונזר מוטור שרה וואס האקט פאר אידט וועטן נוקאטן איז האקט נוקאט (אל תנעו במשיח) און זאלט אייך נוס דער נועטן אן רורן אן מיט צדיקים אזו אויך זאל קיין בליידנור קיין טאקט האבן אן אונז קנדור צוא גייר איז און זכות סין אונזר מוטור רבקה וואס ווא האט גורם גייען אז אונזר פאטור יעקב זאל דוא ברכות מקבל דין סין זיין פאטור יצחק אז דו ברכות זאלן מקיים ווערן אן אונז קנדור ישראל און זכות סין אונזר נוסרייא מוטור רחל וואס דוא האקט און צוא נוקאט אז איז און זכות זאלן אונז קנדור ישראל אים דעם גלות אים גילייט ווערן דען אז קען האט דוא ישראל איז גלות אריין נוסריט האט קען וויא נוסריט נוט ווייט סין דעם קבר וואס אונזר מוטור רחל לונט האבן ויך דוא ישראל אים נעכטן ביא דעם טונא אז וויא זאלן דין אויך דעם קבר סין רחל און וויא האבן אן נורובין צוא ווייטן איז צו שרייען מוטור מוטור ווי קאנטש דאס צוא זען אז קען זאל אונז סורון און גלות אריין איז רחל אויף נוקאטן צוא הש"י יתברך מוט אבטור נוסרייא און האט נוקאט רבטיע דין רחמנות און דאך פול גרעסור ווי דס רחמנות סין אפענטשן דער צוא האב איך דאך רחמנות נוקאט אויף מין שפעטטור לאה ווען סין פאטור קט ווא ער פוטן און האט וו נעכטן צוא סין טאן יעקב און יטאט מיר האב אויך נאך און סינים נוקאט בדי ער זאל סייען אז אויך בן דאס האב אויך דאך רחמנות נוקאט אויף מין שפעטטור מכל שכן דוא נאם פוקט דאך איין רחום וחנן קעקטו אונז צוא האבן רחמנות האט נאם און נענטקט דו האקט פיי מיר דעקט איך וועל דיינו קנדור אים צורון סין דעם גלות אזו זאלן אלו ברכות בארד מקיים ווערן און זכות סין אונזר מוטור לאה וואס ווא האט טאג איז נאקט קרייט דא זאל נוט זאלן און גורל סין עשו אונז אונטן נעטן טוקול גייראן איז און זכות זאלקט אונז דער לייקטן אונזר אונטן סין מוקטור (אנהט) מיר ווערן דייך גורטן (בני אברהם) דוא

קנדור סין אברהם זאלן מיר בישלות דין (הרב) טוא אס וואשטן סין אונז דוא ווער דען מיר נעטן פירר טיילאטן נוקאטן דורך אונזר ווער דרום קענג אויף אונז דעם חודש צוא קרייר עס זאל פאר קערש ווערן דאס ביז צוא נוסח און דעם זכות סין אונזר פרוטו אבות הקדושים אברהם יצחק יעקב

[illegible][illegible]

35

[illegible]

וְהָיָה זֶה לְאִזְכָּרָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם וָעוֹלָם

[illegible]

הדסה יוסף

36



פיר ראש חדש בענשען
זאנע איינע דפואה געזען ען הרע

זוועקאנען אין דער בוכהאנדלונג

דערענאנטענע

קעניגסאסטע

באדאפערט

Sternberg et Comp.
Budapest Königsplatz 3

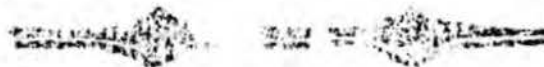
ישנת תרנ"ו ידבר לפק



מוזן וואלל קאהלען אב לעשען

וונד זאל דען קאהלען דייך זיין איינע
גרויסע פארשן פון וואלענע קליידער אונז
דיאמו אב לעשען אין פרייז וואלענע גליקעווע
קאהלען אונד לויקלע יין פאן ניין ביט אונד
אב וואלען דאס פניט וונד דיא ביי ענדעק
תק הערן וונד דייאמו טוינקען פון עוואב
געוואלען וואלען דייא קאהלען וואלד אפער
עקען פון ליאלייט צו וואלען דאס איינע
וואלען וואלד דיא איינע וואלען טוינקען
טייטשן ווייז דייא איינע וואלען טוינקען
זייער טייקען.

דייזע תחנה וויא פערשיידענע זאכן
תחנות זינד צו האבן בייא יומף שווער
פערשן אין וואלען קאהלען



14. איין אונטערפראגע געגען עין הרע

איין געזינע רפואה פאר עין הרע אחזקת רב הגאון דער
הנספח באת: אים יך דא היינט וואס זיין איינעם וועט דא
הער איין רעקטן פון דעם קראנקען עס זיין קליין קינד
זיין איין אלטער און זיין ער ווייב איין קאמאן פאר דעם קראנקען
אפן איין הויב ווער מיין טוך, אונד וואו עס נישט ווייט האלטען
פון זיין קאפף אונד וואו הערנאך דא הויב ווער דאקטור
דעם קראנקען אונטער דעם קאפף (געגען).
אויס דא הייל פאר גאטט דעם אלן אונטער דעם דא הייל
אלע קראנקען, דער וואו חבט דא פאר דיר אלע וועט אונד
אונד בענע בענע געט. דעם דיר וועט אנגעקאמאן עס זיין
פון איין בעזין אונד עס זיין פון איין שטאן ווער פון איין
פרייט עס זיין פון אונד ווער יונג וואו דיר נישט טאדען
דיר איין אונד לעבען נאך נישט אן דיר לונג ווער דער
הויה הנביא האט בשבע געט דעם אונד אונד אונד
טפדאך הויה הנביא לו מיהם: וואס געט דא היין? דא האט
ער מיין וואו געט דעם (פאר בר פאר) בת פאר אונד
וואו זיין גלידער אונד פאר אונד וואו טרינקען זיין בלוט
דא האט הויה הנביא לו מיהם: זא וואו אונד דא היין
רשות האט אונד טרינקען אלע וואס ער וועט דעם
אונד זא וואס דא נישט רשות האבען לוסעדיגען
מיהם, זיין איין, אונד נישט אן איינע פון זיין גלידער אונד
קינע וואו אונד פון דער גאנצער וועלט, האט מיהם איין
נער געגעבען איין בעז אונד, וואו עס מיהם נישט אונד
בייטאג נאך בייטאג נאכט זא אונד אונד קינדער פון יוסף
הלדיק האט אונד קיין בעז אונד קענען געבען זא וואו
עס דיר אונד נישט טאדען אונד עהע אונד זיין קען לע
(ען וואו דיר הויה היילען, אונד לו דער טונד וואס פאר
זיין געזונד דאס וואו מיהם אונד גאטט נאמען וואו פאר!

#59

אתהנה פאר אמוטער צו זאגן נאכין ברית

גרויסקער בארעקוהערצער נאם! מיר האבען גיטאן ביין הייליגען
באפעל פיה: צוא זיין צו אקט כאג, ביטע איך ליכטער
נאם שייך ביין גלאד רחל אזוי וויא דוא האסט אים גילטיקט צוא
אקדט אדט הייליג זיין גיטה, אזוי ואל ער צייט היילען שטעל די
וואונד פון ביין קינד, ער ואל געוונד ווערן גיטוינד אונ גיב
אלעמען גיוונד, מען ואל קענען האן אימער ביין הייליגען שטעקע
מנה אשט אלקנה:

#61

תחנה פאר אמוטער וואס פירט אקונד אין הדר

בנרא העלמות! מיט נרויס הקמה האסטו בעשאגן דיא ניעלט
וויא מיר ווייסן, אונ דעם גער דרע ער ואל פאקען זיך דיג
דעם מענשין, פאר ארפואה האסטו בעשאפען די הייליגע תורה,
בארום האבין מיר אונד נאך אפגעגעבן צו לערנען תורה, בעם
איך דיר נאם, שטארק זיין הארין ער ואל פלייסיג לערנען, ער ואל
היטען זיינע מנזות אונ אונזערע עצות, פירד אים פדקדק בתורה
נסתענה, מיר ואלען דער לעבין זעהן, אז ער וועט זיין אגרויסער
בוזלג בתורה אונ איין שרליכער יוד אמן:

#60

אתהנה פאר אמוטער וואס פירט איהר קינד דעם
ערשטען מאל אין חדר.

רבנו של עולם! דו האסט גיטאפען אין דער הייליגער תורה דאס
שטערין ואלין לערנען תורה מיט זייערע קינדער, בארום
אזוי וויא מיר האבין קיין צייט גיט צוא לערנען מיט אונזער נאך,
האבין מיר געדונגען א מלמד פר אים, בארום בעם איך דוך נאם
געם אן אונזער געלד וויא מיר אליין וואקסען מיט אים געלערקט,
דער נכות פון דר תורה ואל אויף אונז מנין זיין אז מיר ואלין האבין
פון אים נחת אמן:

#62

א תחנה פאר א כלה קודם חתופה

שפארקער נאם! דריי וויקטיגע זאכן געם איך זיך היינט אויף
מיר, דורך מיין הענה, ווער איך א מוהנכת צו זיין
א פרוי, נאר צו מיין מאן, א ווייבדיגן צו אהיו, אונ מיט דער צייט
אמיטער צו קינדער, אונ איך פיל מיר אפילו שטונאק צוא דיא דריי
זאכן, ווי נדה, תלה, בדקת הגר, גור אפער איך ווייס, אז דאס
איז ביין הייליגער שטארק פאר אונזער טובה וועגן, דרום ויל איך
דאס שפארקען, שטארק אונ קרעכטיג מיר ליכער נאם, אז איך ואל
האבין כח ביין שטארק צו זיין, אונ צו דינען דיר גיטין גאנצן
הארצען, אמן ואמן:

[illegible]

המסלול החדש

#70 (cont.)

[illegible]

70 (end)

Footnotes

Chapter 1

¹Aramaic continued to be spoken into medieval times in some places; a few isolated groups still speak dialects of Aramaic to this day.

²Zinberg, 1975, p. 98. (See also Freehof, 1923, p. 382; Idelsohn, 1932, pp. 264-5; and Posner, 1970, p. 72.) For an exhaustive examination of arguments for and against prayer in Yiddish, see Weinreich, 1980, pp. 260-266. For Nahman of Bratslav's advocacy of Yiddish prayers, see Idelsohn, 1932, pp. 261-2.

³The mishnah to Nedarim 35b includes the assertion: "Yet he may teach Scripture to his sons and daughters." The footnote to this mishnah in the Soncino English edition of the Talmud (1948) is most illuminating: "From this we see that it was usual to teach the Bible to girls, in spite of the Talmudic deduction that daughters need not be educated (Kid. 30a). The opposition of R. Eliezer to teaching Torah to one's daughter (Sot. 20a . . .) was probably directed against the teaching of the Oral Law, and the higher branches of study. . . . Ben 'Azzai regarded it as a positive duty to teach Torah to one's daughters. . . ." (p. 107) At least one woman author, a Frau Maruda of Gunsburg, subsequently used this argument to justify the publication of her book of musar (moral reproof) for women, Sefer Hamidot (Posner, 1970, p. 76).

⁴In Sephardic pronunciation, Yehi ratson -- "May it be Your will." This is the opening phrase of the prayer for the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple, for Birkat Hahodesh (blessing of the New Moon), and other prayers.

⁵Idelsohn, 1932, p. 264; Waxman, 1933, p. 641; Weinreich, 1980, p. 258; and Zinberg, 1975, p. 249. Freehof (1923) maintains that a tkhine was published in Venice in 1552 (see pp. 376-7), but I have been unable to verify his claim. A facsimile of the title page of Tkhine Zo can be found in Appendix 3, #1.

⁶At the same time that tkhine books were on the ascendency, the Hasidic masters were composing their own private, folksy devotions in Yiddish, which were disseminated amongst their disciples (Idelsohn, 1932, pp. 260-4). Indeed, much of the folk appeal of Hasidism was in its use of Yiddish in prayer and preaching.

⁷The three "women's commandments" are: 1) to remove a small piece of dough (halah) before baking each loaf of bread, and to burn the piece as a symbol of the biblical grain offering, 2) to abstain from all physical contact with adult males

during, and for seven days following, menstruation (nidah), and to purify oneself at the end of this period by immersion in the mikveh, or ritual bath, and 3) to light candles on the eves of Sabbath and holidays. As with other ritual commandments, the performance of these three mitzvot is to be accompanied by the recitation of the appropriate blessing.

⁸This is also true for those tkhines, of which there were a considerable number, which were written for synagogue use. While the men prayed from the siddur, the women read private tkhines corresponding to the various rubrics of the standard synagogue service.

⁹Underscoring indicates phrases or passages quoted in the original Hebrew in the text of a tkhine.

Chapter 2

¹High Holy Days (New Year and Day of Atonement). Facsimiles of the originals can be found in Appendix 3, following the numbering of the individual tkhines.

²This is the first of a series of Hebrew phrases, each followed by a Yiddish paraphrase. I have not rendered all of the Hebrew, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. These Hebrew phrases (with the exception of the biblical quotations) are almost certainly from one of the many versions of the Azharot, or poetic listings of the 613 commandments, which occur in the Musaf Amidah for Shavu'ot. Throughout my translations, underscoring of English indicates the use of Hebrew in the original.

³Exodus 20:8.

⁴Deuteronomy 5:12.

⁵Each Hebrew letter is assigned a numerical value, and hence words can be "added up." In this case, the Gematria (calculations based on the numerical value of words) is rounded up to 500. The traditional number of "limbs" or parts of the human body, is 248, hence bringing the number of limbs for two people to 496.

⁶"Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah," from the Ahavah Rabah prayer of the morning service.

⁷"How very famous are the daughters," apparently alludes to a similar phrase in the Bible or later Jewish literature, although I cannot identify the source. "A locked garden is my sister/bride" (Song of Songs 4:12).

⁸This phrase appears in both Hebrew and Yiddish in the original. The Hebrew terminology is entirely Talmudic. It is very similar to a number of statements in Tractate Nidah, although this exact phrase isn't found there. It either comes from a later halakhic code, or paraphrases a halakhic statement.

⁹Jewish tradition teaches that each person is born pure, free of sin.

¹⁰See Be'er Hetev on Yoreh De'ah 367:4.

¹¹Genesis 22.

¹²Congregational response to the Kaddish prayer.

¹³Rebekah was the one who devised the plan whereby her younger son, Jacob, would receive the blessing due his brother Esau (Genesis 27).

¹⁴Jeremiah 31:17.

¹⁵Rashi on Genesis 48:7.

¹⁶The expression "speedily in our days" occurs frequently in the liturgy, often (though not always) in connection with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, e.g.: in the weekday 'Amidah, in the Birkat Hamazon, in the blessing after the reading of the Haftarah, and in the refrain of the messianic hymn Adir Hu, sung at the Passover seder. In tkhines the expression is used particularly in relation to the request to send the messiah. "Thus may Your will be" is the congregational response to several prayers, such as the Birkat Kohanim (priestly benediction).

¹⁷Common rabbinic name of God.

¹⁸Allusion to the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37).

¹⁹A Mishnaic master. I have been unable to locate this aggadah.

²⁰"Blessed is the One Who spoke . . ." - beginning of the Morning Blessings.

²¹Shemoneh 'Esreh, or "Eighteen," meaning the Eighteen Benedictions, or the 'Amidah, the central prayer.

²²From the piyut (medieval poem) Vekhol Ma'aminim, in the 'Amidah for Musaf of Rosh Hashanah (said right after the Kedushah).

²³The Hebrew phrases all come from the Birkat Hahodesh, or Blessing of the New Moon, which begins: "May it be Your will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, that You renew

upon us this month for good and for blessing. Grant us long life, a life of peace, of good, of blessing, of sustenance, of bodily vigor, a life marked by the fear of heaven and the dread of sin, a life free from shame and reproach, a life of prosperity and honor, a life in which the love of Torah and the fear of heaven shall cleave to us, a life in which the desires of our heart shall be fulfilled for good."

²⁴This is not part of the Birkat Hahodesh. Source not identified.

²⁵Many things are attributed to King David in this literature which have no basis in Scripture. The phrase "Torah, marriage and good deeds" comes from the statement in the Berit Milah (circumcision) ceremony: "Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah, marriage and good deeds."

²⁶Genesis Rabbah 98. The Shema^c ("Hear, O Israel . . .") (Deut. 6:4) is the central affirmation of Jewish faith.

²⁷Source not identified.

²⁸Esther doesn't pray in the Book of Esther, but she does ordain a three-day fast (Esther 4:16).

²⁹Exodus 2:1-10.

³⁰Yashar Vayigash 109b-110a; Midrash Hagadol I 672; Hadar, Gen. 45:26.

³¹Exodus 15:20.

³²Judges 5

³³"The study of Torah surpasses them all [i.e. all acts of charity]" (Shabbat 127a).

³⁴Jeremiah 31:15.

³⁵"Be near, we entreat You, unto our cry . . ." (^cAmidah for fast days.) "Hear our voice!" (weekday ^cAmidah.)

³⁶I Kings 22:17; II Chronicles 18:16.

³⁷"Accept our prayer in mercy and favor" (weekday ^cAmidah).

³⁸Biblical name of God.

³⁹"You search all the chambers of the belly and try the intestines and the heart" (Vidui (confession) for Yom Kippur).

⁴⁰"Windows of the heavens" are mentioned in Genesis 8:2.

⁴¹"Happy is the man who trusts in You " (Psalm 84:13).

⁴²"He who will say 'enough!' to sufferings in the future, may He say 'enough' to my sufferings " (Genesis Rabbah 92).

Chapter 3

¹The exact source is not identified, but the phrase is very similar to the refrain of the Avinu Malkeinu: "Treat us with righteousness and mercy . . ."

²This idea undoubtedly comes from rabbinic literature, but I have been unable to locate the exact source.

³Genesis Rabbah 56.

⁴Source not identified.

⁵Psalm 119:169.

⁶This phrase probably comes from the supplicatory prayers. In the Tahanun (supplications recited on Mondays and Thursdays) is written; "Turn from Your fierce anger . . ."

⁷From Ulekha Adonay Hatsedakah, at the beginning of the Selihot service.

⁸"Remove from me reproach and contempt " (Psalm 119:22).

⁹The sound of the shofar is normally associated with repentance, not with accusing.

¹⁰According to Maimonides, the sound of the shofar stirs us to repent. (The implication is that our sins will then be forgiven, for repentance leads to forgiveness.) (Hilkhos Teshuvah, chapter 3, in Mishneh Torah.)

¹¹Source not identified.

¹²Repeatedly in the siddur.

¹³Source not identified.

¹⁴Isaiah 1:18.

¹⁵Although the Torah records no instance of Sarah praying, rabbinic tradition simply assumed that all the patriarchs and matriarchs prayed, as was fitting for the pious progenitors of a holy people. Tradition also held that Sarah conceived on Rosh Hashanah.

¹⁶The maftir, or prophetic reading, for Rosh Hashanah, includes the story of Hannah in I Samuel 1.

¹⁷The fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12), and Leviticus 19:32: "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man . . ."

¹⁸Based on II Samuel 14:2.

¹⁹In Ahavah Rabah (in the morning service) and other prayers.

²⁰I have been unable to locate any reference to Satan being confused through the sound of the shofar. The closest analogue is in a prayer composed by the great mystic, Isaac Luria, to be recited before blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, which refers to destroying the Satan with the blast of the shofar.

²¹Psalms 51:19.

²²"Shout, cry, alarm."

²³Genesis 24.

²⁴In the "Book of Life."

²⁵Genesis 37:28.

²⁶Ginzberg includes this midrash in his Legends of the Jews, 1947, Vol. II, pp. 20-21, but fails to identify the original source.

²⁷See the Sim Shalom prayer, Birkat Hahodesh and Birkat Hamazon for similar phraseology.

²⁸"May his soul be bound up in the bond of life" (El Malei Rahamim).

²⁹Of the Temple, i.e., the Holy of Holies. Here Seril is referring to the celestial Temple.

³⁰"Satisfy us with Your goodness . . ." (Kedushat Hayom, Sabbath Amidah).

³¹According to the Bible, there are four rivers flowing out of a common source in the Garden of Eden (which subsequently came to mean Paradise) (Gen. 1:10).

Chapter 4

¹Literally "Head of the (Rabbinical) Court," but in practice it meant the chief or sole rabbi of a town.

²The biblical expression for finding acceptance or approval is to "find grace in the eyes of ____."

³Common liturgical invocation, used in the Birkat Hahodesh and other prayers.

⁴This is a common rabbinical and liturgical name of God. The phrase appears in Hebrew and Yiddish paraphrase in this tkhine. I have translated only the Yiddish.

⁵Avot 5:1.

⁶Isaiah 49:3. (Both Hebrew and Yiddish given in the original.)

⁷Psalms 105:15 and I Chronicles 16:22. (Both Hebrew and Yiddish given in the original.) In the story of Sarah (Sarai) and Pharaoh, God plagued Pharaoh and his house when Sarai was taken as his wife (Gen. 12:17). The commentators understood the purpose of the plagues to be the hampering or prevention of intercourse (see Rashi on this verse).

⁸Genesis Rabbah 82.

⁹According to Rashi (comment to Gen. 29:25), Jacob had given Rachel certain signs by which she could identify herself to him on their wedding night. But when Rachel learned that her father Laban intended to substitute her sister Leah for her, she told Leah what the signs were, so that Jacob would, in the dark, think she really was Rachel, and not, therefore, embarrass her by rejecting her. By the time Jacob discovered his wife's true identity, the next morning, the marriage had already been consummated and it was too late. (Based on Megilah 13).

¹⁰See Rashi on Gen. 29:17.

¹¹Segulati. The phrase 'am segulah (a treasured people) is a biblical euphemism for Israel (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6 and 14:2; Ps. 135:4).

¹²"Purify our hearts to serve You in truth," from the Shema' Uvirkhotehah (Shema' and its blessings) of the morning service.

¹³The request that God do something "for Your name's sake" is found throughout the siddur, as for example, in Rav's prayer, which follows the 'Amidah.

¹⁴"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . ." (Deut. 6:5).

¹⁵The Bible and siddur are replete with references to God hearing or accepting prayers.

¹⁶Psalm 69:14.

¹⁷Tahanun (supplicatory prayers for Mondays and Thursdays).

¹⁸Psalm 103:13.

¹⁹The rabbis of the Talmud put this prayer in the mouth of Hannah: "Now Hannah, she spoke in her heart." R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: She spoke concerning her heart. She said before Him: Sovereign of the Universe, among all the things that You have created in a woman, You have not created one without a purpose, eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands to do work, legs to walk with, breasts to give suck. These breasts that You have put on my heart, are they not to give suck? Give me a son, so that I may suckle with them! (Berakhot 31b).

²⁰"I will lift up my eyes unto the mountains: From whence shall my help come?" (Ps. 121:1). "Lift up your eyes to the heavens . . ." (Is. 51:6).

²¹Psalm 51:19. (Tradition credits King David with composing the Psalms.)

²²From the prayer beginning "Ribon Ha'olam," recited when the ark is opened on the three festivals.

²³Similar phrases can be found in Exodus 34:16, Psalm 86:15, the Hashkivenu prayer of the evening service, and in other prayers, as well.

²⁴The last sentence of Rav's prayer after the 'Amidah.

²⁵"R. Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of Sabbath eve and exclaimed: Come and let us go forth to welcome the queen Sabbath. R. Jannai donned his robes on Sabbath eve and exclaimed: Come, O bride, Come, O bride!" (Shabbat 119).

²⁶See the Birkat Hamazon. This is an allusion to the messianic age, for the Sabbath was considered to be a foretaste of the days of the messiah. The resurrection of the dead will occur at the beginning of the messianic age, according to a dominant tradition.

Chapter 5

¹"We have turned aside from Your commandments" (Vidui (confession) for Yom Kippur).

²"For on that day he will atone for them to purify you from all your sins - before the Lord you will be pure." (Lev. 16:30).

³"For the sin that we have sinned before You with malice or accidentally" (Vidui for Yom Kippur).

⁴This idea is expressed repeatedly in the Bible and sidur. For example, this phrase is recited frequently by Jews who pray regularly: "Praised are You, O Lord, who desires repentance" (Weekday 'Amidah).

⁵" . . . who brings low the haughty and raises up the lowly . . . who helps the poor . . ." (Ge'ulah prayer).

⁶Possibly this refers to Psalm 8:3: "That You may still the enemy and the avenger." See also II Samuel 24:14, in which David says "let me not fall into the hand of man."

⁷Psalm 71:9.

⁸The most righteous sit at God's right side in the world to come.

⁹See I Samuel 1:12-17.

¹⁰This most likely refers to a midrash, but I have been unable to locate it.

¹¹In the Talmud (Eruvin 18b), the dove sent out from Noah's ark returns with an olive leaf in its beak and exclaims: "Master of the world! Let my food be bitter as an olive-leaf but given by Your hand; and let it not be as sweet as honey but dependent on a mortal."

¹²Source not identified.

¹³A typical biblical expression is "How long, O Lord?"

¹⁴"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

¹⁵"Wherefore should the nations say: Where is now their God?" (Ps. 79:10 and 115:2).

¹⁶From the 'Amidah for Rosh Hashanah.

¹⁷These two most common names for God are joined in the beloved Avinu Malkeinu prayer, recited throughout the year, but most strongly associated with the liturgy for the High Holy Days.

¹⁸The sin of the golden calf (see Ex. 32).

¹⁹Exodus 4:22. (This verse is quoted in both Hebrew and Yiddish in the original.)

²⁰"Our Father our King! Close the mouths of our adversaries and accusers!" (Avinu Malkeinu).

²¹"Before they will call, I will answer." (Is. 65:24. See also Ps. 86:7, 102:3, 138:3.)

Chapter 6

¹I have been unable to locate any cure for the evil eye in the Gemara² (Talmud), although there is mention of protection against the evil eye (Berakhot 55b).

²"Said the Rabbis to him: Is not the Master afraid of the evil eye? - He replied: I come from the seed of Joseph, over whom the evil eye has no power, as it is written, 'Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine above the eye.' (Gen. 49:22) . . . 'And let them multiply like fishes in the midst of the earth.' (Gen. 48:16) Just as the fishes in the sea are covered by water and the evil eye has no power over them, so the evil eye has no power over the seed of Joseph." (Berakhot 20a, Baba Metzia 84a and Baba Batra 118.)

Chapter 7

¹The classical formula for blessings is "Praised are You, oh Lord our God, King of the universe . . ."

²"Let Your ear now be attentive, and Your eyes open, that You may hearken unto the prayer of Your servant, which I pray before You at this time, day and night . . ." (Nehemiah 1:4).

³". . . that I may be able to support my household with pleasure and not with pain . . ." (Tefilah 'al Haparnasah (Prayer for Sustenance)).

⁴Another version of this tkhine reads "until 120." The age of Moses at his death, "until 120" became a standard euphemism for long life.

⁵Birkat Hamazon.

Chapter 8

¹According to rabbinic tradition, on account of Miriam's merit a well accompanied the children of Israel on their wanderings in the wilderness, providing a constant source of fresh water. This legend and many elaborations on it are found in the Midrash and Talmud. The sources are too numerous to be listed here.

²Genesis 2:7.

³"Withdraw Your hand from me; and let not Your terror make me afraid." (Job 13:21).

⁴"And all who think evil of me, speedily make their counsel of no effect and spoil their thoughts " (Rav's prayer).

⁵"May the Lord guard your going out and your coming in." (Ps. 121:8). "Guard our going out and our coming in unto life and peace." (Hashkivenu prayer).

⁶According to tradition, the messiah will be a descendant of King David.

⁷The Bible relates the story of the prophet Elisha and the widow's oil (II Kings 4:1-7), although neither the woman nor her deceased husband are named. I have found no mention of "the wife of Obadiah" in rabbinic literature.

⁸Tanhuma² (Buber) I, 163 and 178-179; Tanhuma² Vayishlah 3, Mishpatim (end); Agadat Bereshit 53:109.

⁹In a discussion of the three women's mitzvot, the Talmud points out that women are "tried" through childbirth - if they were careful in their observance of the mitzvot, they are spared. If not, they suffer and may even die. The rabbis then asked: "And when are men examined? - Said Resh Lakish: When they pass over a bridge . . ." (Shabbat 32a) The implication is that one's faults are remembered more at times of danger, and so one is more likely to be punished at such times.

¹⁰" . . . and unify our hearts to love and to fear Your name." (from the Ahavah Rabah prayer in the Shema² and its Blessings).

¹¹"Our Father, our King! Open the gates of heaven unto our prayer!" (Avinu Malkeinu). "Open for me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter and give thanks unto the Lord." (Psalm 118:19).

¹²Psalm 145:18. (This Psalm appears frequently in the liturgy.)

¹³A common biblical and liturgical invocation.

¹⁴Eve's sin - eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and offering it to her husband - was punished by pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16).

¹⁵Deborah, a judge and military leader in the Book of Judges, orchestrated a decisive victory against the Canaanites, with the help of Yael, who slew the Canaanite general, Sisera, single-handedly. Huldah was a prophetess in II Kings and II Chronicles, who confirmed the divine authenticity of the law book discovered in the Temple during the reign of King Josiah.

¹⁶Agadat Tefilat Shemoneh 'Esreh 54-55.

¹⁷"And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children . . ." (Deut. 6:6-7).

Chapter 9

¹An'im Zemirot ("Sweet Hymns") is the title of a hymn recited in the Sabbath morning service.

²Avot 4:1, commenting on Psalm 128:2: "Happy are you, and it is good for you . . ."

³Tradition holds that God is merciful in judging His people Israel when He remembers the worthiness of their ancestor Isaac, who was willing to be sacrificed for God's sake.

⁴Genesis 28:20.

⁵All of these phrases are from the congregational silent prayer recited, in the Ashkenazic rite, at the same time that the Cohen blesses the congregation in the Nesi'at Kapayim (lifting up of the palms) ceremony.

⁶"Accepting the Yoke of the Kingship of God" is the term by which the rabbis referred to the Shema² and the biblical passages read immediately following it, especially the phrase "Praised is the name of the glory of His kingship forever and ever."

⁷The words "merciful in judgement" are not part of the rest of this Hebrew verse, which comes from the hymn Adon 'Olam ("Master of the World"). The verse appears in both Hebrew and Yiddish in the original.

⁸ Hineni prayer before the Musaf service on Rosh Hashanah. (This quote appears in both Hebrew and Yiddish.)

⁹ It is written in the Talmud, not the Torah (although "Torah" broadly construed is understood to include the Oral Law, as well): "One doesn't rely on a miracle" (Pesachim 64).

¹⁰ Avot 3:21.

¹¹ See Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot De'ot 4:1.

¹² Opening words of the Modeh Ani prayer, the first prayer an orthodox Jew recites upon awakening in the morning.

¹³ "The death of the righteous atones" (Mo'ed Katan 28a). "Death and the Day of Atonement procure atonement, together with penitence" (Yoma 85b).

¹⁴ "Blessed is His name" - an Aramaic prayer recited during the Torah service.

¹⁵ Tradition ascribes the Zohar to the second century Mishnaic master Simeon ben Yoḥay, but it was, in fact, composed around the thirteenth century.

¹⁶ Zohar, Vayakhel 206a (or 269a).

¹⁷ Nowhere can such a statement be found in the Torah or in subsequent sacred literature. Jewish tradition consistently insists that repentance and restitution, not mere confession, is required for atonement, or "release" from judgement.

¹⁸ "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 3:11).

¹⁹ The hiding of the face is a common biblical euphemism for God's anger or failure to respond positively to human need.

²⁰ "You, O Lord, are He who answers in time of trouble" ('Amidah for fast days).

²¹ "Incline Your ear, O my God, and hear . . ." (Dan. 9:18).

Chapter 10

¹The loose and unprecise use of quotations from and allusions to the classic Jewish sources throughout tkhine literature indicates that, in most cases, the authors acquired their knowledge of Hebrew literature either orally, as a sort of sacred folklore, or in Yiddish translation.

²The acronym ש"צ ("may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing"), an expression of respect for the deceased, appears after the name of each of these women's husbands. The fact that no comparable expression is used in conjunction with the author's names indicates that they were still alive at the time their books were printed.

³From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries a number of volumes of "private devotions" for Jewish women appeared in English. But these were almost all tertiary sources, being translations from German books which were, in turn, based on the original Yiddish sources. Some of the English and German works were, to be sure, original, but even the German translations completely changed the flavor of the original Yiddish works. By the time these books were translated into English, the passionate, humble, folksy style of the true tkhines was no longer in evidence - in fact, it would be unfair to even label these English collections "tkhines." Amongst the most popular of these works were: Ascher's Book of Life (London, 1861); Bresslau's Devotions for the Daughters of Israel (London, 1861); Cohen's Prayers for Family Use (London, 1884); Mayer's Hours of Devotion (New York, 190? - translated from Fanny Neuda's Stunden der Andacht); Montagu's Prayers for Jewish Working Girls (London, 1895); Baroness L.D. Rothschild's Prayers and Meditations (London, 1869); and Alice Lucas' The Jewish Year (London, 1898).

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