INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES AND PRIZE ESSAYS

AUTHOR Jennifer Goldstein Lewis

TITLE The Megoneinot and Beyond: Female Voices in Communal Prayer

TYPE OF THESIS: Ph.D. [ ] D.H.L. [ ] Rabbinic [✓]

Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

1. May circulate [✓]) Not necessary
2. Is restricted [ ] for ___ years.) for Ph.D.) thesis

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses or prize essays for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ___ yes ✓ no

3/8/05
Date

Signature of Author

Library Record _ Microfilmed ___
Date

Signature of Library Staff Member

Jennifer Joy Goldstein Lewis
Thesis Abstract
March 2005

The *Mĕqonĕnot* and Beyond: Female Voices in Communal Prayer

In many communities of antiquity, women played a prominent role in the singing of laments at various funeral rites, and the ancient Israelite community was no exception. While our ancient texts do not mention women being allowed to participate in vocalization of music in the Temple, textual sources show that some Israelite women were not only permitted, but also required to honor the recently deceased with an emotional and melodic voice of mourning. To serve in this public capacity, women seem to have trained other women as *mĕqonĕnot*, professional [female] mourners, and they continued to do so through modern times in some communities, serving an important leadership role in communal public prayer.

Yet, during the rabbinic period, there was an intensification of gender boundaries and roles. The rabbis articulated limits regarding where and when Jewish men could hear female voices. These restrictions impacted the role of female voices in communal prayer. From the nineteenth century to present day, more lenient rulings acknowledged an expanded level of participation by Jewish women in communal prayer. In contemporary practice, women who specialize in pastoral care support those who grieve in the community – a function that shares some characteristics with the *mĕqonĕnot* of antiquity.

After a brief introduction in Chapter One, Chapters Two and Three discuss the customs and literature of lament and the connection between women and public mourning ritual in the ancient Near East including Israel. Chapter Four summarizes relevant rulings from subsequent periods, from Mishnaic times through modernity. Chapter Five begins with evidence of twentieth century *mĕqonĕnot* and ends with interviews of two female rabbis who specialize in the area of pastoral care. Chapter Five also includes an analysis of responses and a look at modern day Jewish communal support for mourners. Chapter Six provides a summary conclusion.

THE *MĚQONĚNOT* AND BEYOND: FEMALE VOICES IN COMMUNAL PRAYER

Jennifer Joy Goldstein Lewis

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

March 2005

Referee: Dr. Nili Fox
Second Reader: Dr. Mark Kligman

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF RABBI MARIANNE L. GEVIRTZ
May Her Memory be for a Blessing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - THE *MĔQOONĔNOT* AND BEYOND

In the Near Eastern communities of antiquity, women played a prominent role in the singing of laments at various funeral rites, and the ancient Israelite community was no exception. While Biblical texts do not mention women being allowed to participate in vocalization of music in the Temple, textual sources show that some Israelite women were not only permitted, but also required to honor the recently deceased with an emotional and melodic voice of mourning. To serve in this public capacity, women seem to have trained other women, serving an important leadership role in communal public prayer.

Yet, during the rabbinic period, there was an intensification of gender boundaries and roles. The rabbis articulated limits regarding where and when men could hear female voices. These restrictions led to differences of opinion and changing parameters in Jewish legal codes regarding the acceptability for men to hear women's voices, particularly during (but not limited to) times of prayer.

This report ties together mourning practices from several historical periods, while it explores how women have functioned both as professional mourners and as facilitators of mourning ritual. To begin, Chapter Two looks at the lament and mourning rituals of the ancient Near East, including the function of goddesses and women as mourners for the society. Next, Chapter Three explores the language and literature of lament in ancient Israel as well as the phenomenon of the *mĕqonĕnot*, a special group of women trained as

professional mourners in antiquity. Chapter Four presents evidence of the continuation of the employment of professional mourners through the Mishnaic period as well as an overview of rabbinic restrictions on women's voices through the nineteenth century C.E. Chapter Five portrays examples of modern *mĕqonĕnot* followed by interviews with two female rabbis who explain their work in the area of pastoral care, a modern-day specialty that serves a similar function to the ancient *mĕqonĕnot* in modern-day society. Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the material of the earlier chapters.

We know that ritual practice associated with mourning rites does not change very quickly; nor has the need for individuals within society to express anguish over loss disappeared in our modern world; nor is everyone – whether male or female – equally gifted in the area of comforting others in mourning. In ancient times, professional mourners knew how to raise a wailing sound as well as how to chant the rhythmic poetry of lament on behalf of the deceased and those who mourned them. Today, very few communities retain individuals skilled in lament song. However, rabbis and laity alike are just as needed today as they were in ancient times to be attentive to the needs of and show compassion for those who grieve.

CHAPTER TWO - THE LAMENT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

2.1. A Connection Between Women and the Mourning Profession.

Every significant genre found in the *Tanakh,* including the stories of creation and the flood, has antecedents or parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature. The literature of the ancient Near East included proverbs, parables, historical narratives, letters, law codes, love poems, and prophesies.[1] Therefore, this chapter's discussion of the literature of lament begins with a discussion of this literature in the ancient Near East and explores its connection to the women of the ancient Near East..

While literary comparisons are important, the pictorial art of the ancient Near East portrays gestures of mourning and, like the literature, indicates the existence of this phenomena in the pre-Biblical period. Verbal expressions of mourning derive from earlier gestures and sounds. Therefore, to enhance understanding of the lament of the ancient Near East, one section of this chapter focuses upon physical manifestations (i.e., gestures) and expressions of mourning.[2]

While considering the terms and gestures of mourning, this section also reviews aspects of the *Sitz im Leben* – the cultural setting in which each form of literary expression evolved and how these expressions were practiced in everyday life. Here, the recognition that the lament was chanted "by hired female mourners by the bier of the dead" is important, by helping us to understand its function in society.

Ritual practice associated with mourning rites does not change very quickly; it can

---

[1]Michael D.Coogan, ed. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 3.

[2]Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near* East, vols. I and II (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), p. 18.

be characterized as "conservative". That is, it changed very slowly over stretches of centuries.[3] Therefore, texts about mourning rites that have been written as far as 1500 years apart may describe common features.[4] The lament literature evolved in a variety of cultural contexts, yet the form transcended the years because of its conservative nature.

2.2. Important Terms and Forms.

One finds a range of expressions used to describe the phenomenon of communal lamentation in the Ancient Near East. These terms are based upon a survey of the Sumero-Akkadian literature that uses these terms to describe lament literature. Several of the important terms are described below. While gestures of mourning include, "weeping, beating the breast, pouring dust on the head and/or body, sitting on a stool or ground, and falling to the ground,"[5] two of these – weeping and beating the breast – are most closely related to lament and will be discussed later in this chapter.

City-laments and *Dumuzi*[6] dirges that are used to express sorrow and grief in the ancient Near East represent expressions of anguish over the loss both gods and humans. Their verbal content demonstrates that they functioned on behalf of communities. Other forms, such as the individual lament and the funeral dirge were used by individuals or groups to grieve over or honor a specific individual in the context of a funeral ritual. These latter categories were often similar to the communal lament, in terms of their themes and forms.[7]

---

[3]Anderson, Gary A., *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in IsraeliteReligion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 60.

[4]Pham, Xuan Huong Thi, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 16.

5 Gruber, *Aspects*, p. 401.

[6]*Dumuzi*, the Sumerian form of *Tammuz* was a god of vegetation, fertility, and the underworld (Sanders, p. 121.)

[7]Ferris, Jr., Paul Wayne, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 70.

While most Sumerian city-laments were written in the dialect of *emigir*, parts have been written in the *eme.sal* dialect, which has been identified as being used by women. *Balags* and *ershemmas* were written primarily in *eme.sal*. There is scholarly debate about whether *eme.sal* was strictly a women's language, and opinions about how to characterize it vary. Ferris attributed to I. Diakonoff the proposal that *eme.sal* was used for one of four purposes: (1) speech of women and goddesses in epics and proverbs, (2) speech of messengers of the goddesses, (3) speech of incantation singers, and (4) in some hymns and prayers.[8]

In general, there are two schools of thought regarding the *eme.sal* dialect. The first theory is that *eme.sal* is reserved for females. This theory is based upon its use in some *Inanna* and *Dumuzi* Sumerian texts. The second view is that because *eme.sal* was used by the *gala*-priesthood, which was comprised of males, it could not have been an exclusively female dialect. Those who subscribe to the second view believe that *eme.sal* is used as a literary device that indicates a role change undertaken by a single speaker.[9]

After the Sumerian period, public laments were performed by male singers called *gala*, rather than by women. However, these male singers attributed their songs to goddesses, such as *Inanna*[10]. And, they used the *eme.sal*, literally, the "thin tongue" dialect when singing these songs. The word *eme.sal* was once read *eme.mi* ("women's tongue"). It is thought to have been sung in a falsetto voice.[11] Because the *gala* used *eme.sal* in their performance, it is thought that they sought to imitate females who had

---

[8] Ferris, *Genre*, p. 25.
[9] Ferris, *Genre*, p. 29.

[10] The chief goddess of the city of Uruk, *Inanna* is goddess of "rainstorms...of the evening and morning star, and of the storehouse, in addition to her major role as goddess of sexuality and warfare..." (Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, *Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of the Pagan Myth* [New York: The Free Press, 1992], p. 222.)
[11] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 235.

previously served in this function as public lament singers.[12]

The *balag*, also a name for a musical instrument of the ancient Near East, came to be associated with the literature of lament, perhaps because dirges were accompanied by this instrument.[13] Ferris notes M. Cohen's description of the *balag* as a "lengthy, rambling work, sometimes having no basic story line." Some scholars characterize the *balag* as a different type of literature than the classic city-lament, while others designate *balag* as a functional term that includes the city-laments.[14]

Another term used for lament literature is *ér* and *ershemma.* This form is believed to be a well-structured, older genre than the *balag* and centers on a single theme. Ferris lists the *ér* categories of lament as follows:

irgidídakku, irgigiidakku: lament to accompany the flute.
irkatardudu: lament with doxology.
irkitusakku: lament of dwelling place.
irnamtaggadu: lament to obtain absolution for sins.
irsaharhubbakku: lament (to be recited while) covered with dust.
irsippittu: lament (Cf. Akk. *sipittu)*
irsizkurakku: lament with prayer (or sacrifices).
irsabadari: lament.
irsannisakku: prayer in the form of lamentation.[15]

The above list is significant because it shows that the literature of lament was highly

[12]Frymer-Kensky, *Women,* p. 44.

[13]Ferris, *Genre,* p. 19.

[14]Ferris, *Genre,* p. 46.

[15]Ferris, *Genre,* p. 18.

differentiated in those days.

The *balag* and *ér* literature, neo-Sumerian laments, have been identified from the Old Babylonian period. "Old Babylonia" refers to south Mesopotamia in the period about 2000-1595 B.C.E. when a number of important states dominated the region (i.e., Isin, Larsa, Eshnunna and, from 1894 B.C.E., Babylon.) Historians note that Babylon, ruled by a dynasty of Amorite kings, defeated the other states and expanded its control into north Mesopotamia. Until it was conquered by the Hittite king, Mursili I (*circa* 1595 B.C.E.), Babylon remained an important power. During the Old Babylonian period literary activity flourished. This activity included scribes who composed and recorded religious, poetic and other works in Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform, including the well-known stele of Hammurabi.

Other categories of lament literature include the city-lament and *Dumuzi* dirge. City-laments name a city or cities that have been destroyed as well as specific kings. The city-lament is structurally similar to the *balag* in terms of its multiple stanzas, while the *ershemma* has a different mechanical structure (separated by a scribal line on the tablets on which they were found). The structures of *balags* and *ershemmas* are represented below:[16]

***Balag* (Type I):**	***Balag* (Type II):**
I. Complaint	**I. Praise**
II. Appeal	**II. Accusatory Complaint**
	III. Appeal
	IV. Lament Proper

[16]Ferris, *Genre*, pp. 17-61.

Ershemma (Type I):	*Ershemma* (Type II):
I. Complaint	**I. Praise**
II. Lament	**II. Appeal**
III. Appeal	

Three notable Sumerian city-laments are "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur", "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur", and "Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur". The *Dumuzi* dirge is a mytho-cultic lament that may be written in the *balag* or *ershemma* form. In it, *Dumuzi* either dies and is resurrected each year or dies and stays dead; that is, there is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the permanency of *Dumuzi*'s death. However permanent his departure, the society's expression of response came in the form of a dirge.[17] Though it is composed for a god, the *Dumuzi* dirge is considered to be a funeral elegy. *Dumuzi* dirges sung by the goddess *Geshtinanna* over her brother *Dumuzi* as well as the goddess *Inanna*'s dirges for her spouse *Dumuzi* have been identified in the literary catalogues of ancient Sumer. Both names in the catalogue may represent the same goddess, though here too, scholars do not agree. A lament sung by *Inanna* over King *UrNammu*, who is identified with *Dumuzi*, has also been found.

Finally, one must recognize the individual lament form of the ancient Near East, a possible forerunner of the communal lament. The individual lament genre can be broken into at least two categories, including the *suilla* and the *ershanunga*. The *suilla* is a prayer of "the raising of the hand". Some contain penitential elements, while others do not. Most *suilla* prayers are written in Akkadian, though some are bilingual *eme.sal*/Akkadian. The *ershanunga* is a "lament for appeasing the heart." It is a private penitential prayer that is typically composed in the *eme.sal* dialect. It uses similar

[17]Ferris, *Genre*, p. 70.

language and expressions to that found in the *ershemma*.

2.3. *SITZ IM LEBEN.*

2.3.i. Ancient Mesopotamia.

In the Old Sumerian period (*circa* 2900-2400 B.C.E.), wives of the rulers administered the temples and temple estates of the cities' goddesses. Sumerian culture expected women to make cultural contributions, and women were involved in the production and management of household goods as well as the cultural arts.

The Sumerian pantheon had male and female gods and was complex; that is, gods were defined in natural, political, cultural, and familial terms. In addition to ordering the universe, gods also supervised the city-state/polis. Each city-state had its own pantheon (i.e., Utu was the god of Sippar, Nanna the god of Ur, etc.) Also, each family and each individual had its own god and goddess who affected its health, prosperity, etc. Personal gods were ranked according to each families'/individual's importance.

City gods rose, fell, and developed relationships according to historical events that occurred in Mesopotamia. The two distinct peoples of the region, Sumerian and Akkadians, who lived in the area of southern Iraq, mingled culturally.[18] For city gods, either male or female gods/goddesses could be the major deity. Frymer-Kensky asserts that for other realms, the sex of the god was crucial, because the two-gendered pantheon imitated the ancient belief in the duality of nature. She points out that other than in their control of cities, the sex of a god was intertwined with its perceived role in society, that is, feminine goddesses had "feminine" characteristics.

The functions of the deities conformed to social mores regarding the behavior of men and women in Mesopotamian society. Therefore, male gods were associated with

kingship and law giving, while female gods were associated with the wearing of cloth [rather than skins], eating of grain and the drinking of beer.[19] Female gods were involved primarily with those functions that transformed nature into culture. For example, the goddess Nisaba affected all the cultural arts and what made them possible (wisdom, writing, accounting, surveying...)

Goddesses were frequently associated with learned arts, including non-household activities considered womanly. The chief non-household feminine function performed was the singing of laments. As Frymer-Kensky notes, "...lamenting was the job of the goddess of the city [Sumer and Ur] not of the god..."[20] As they facilitated the public expression of grief – allowing emotional catharsis for both performers and listeners – the role of these lamenters was critical to the society. Lament was not merely venting emotion. Rather, it was purposeful; that is, the lamenters served as intercessors for the dead, an important function in that society.[21].

Other public roles of goddesses included dream interpretation, singing, healing, and learning. The goddess Nisaba was "the paradigmatic wise woman, the 'great knowledgeable, perceptive one' who knows everything"[22]. She was the divine patron of writing. Because goddesses are believed to mirror societal roles for women in Mesopotamian society, Frymer-Kensky deduces that women were involved in these occupations, saying that "...this was clearly the case with lamenting, which grows out of the undying love that mothers and sisters are portrayed as showing their sons and

---

[18] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 37.
[19] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 32.
[20] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 37.
[21] This function is similar to the one who reads the Kaddish prayer in Jewish liturgy today. According to Maurice Lamm, the utterance of the Kaddish prayer for ones parents, "...is considered true repentance for the deceased, and it redeems them from retribution. The Kaddish is not an explicit prayer for the redemption of parents, but its recital is an indication that good has come forth from them, and it is thus redemptive." (Lamm, Maurice, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* [New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1969], p. 160.)
22 Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 39.

brothers..."23 And, just as Nisaba was the divine patron of writing, the earliest known authored poems were written by a woman Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon.

Ancient Sumerian literature portrays goddesses lamenting for family members, but their role as mourner also extended beyond the family. That is, goddesses were also prime mourners over destroyed cities, such as the goddess *Ningal*'s lament over *Ur*. After the Sumerian period, later literature also included goddesses (typically, *Inanna*) lamenting.[24]

2.3.ii. Ancient Egypt.

In ancient Egypt, professions open to women included "priesthood, midwifery, mourning, dancing, and music"[25]. Priestesses imitated goddesses in funerary ceremonies. Some were also Musician Priestesses, who clapped and chanted rhythmically; tomb reliefs represent that at festivals they danced through the streets. Many ancient Egyptian women followed a career in mourning, and ancient Egyptians of the upper classes employed professional mourners to grieve openly at their homes during the seventy-day process when a dead person was mummified. Rituals of mourning included. "casting dust on the head, rending clothes, and scratching cheeks while wailing."[26] An Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1307 B.C.E.) tomb painting, Ramose at Thebes, shows a group of mourning women with a young girl in its midst. The group's gesture of mourning – upraised arms – is notable (See also Section 2.4 below). Dancing was also part of mourning ritual in ancient Egypt.[27], and there is evidence of both male and female dancers.[28]

Herodotus describes the bewailing and mourning traditions of ancient Egypt as

---

[23] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 41.
[24] Frymer-Kensky, p. 37-44.

[25] Watterson, Barbara, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (Great Britain: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1991),p. 38.
[26] Watterson, *Women*, p. 45.
[27] Watterson, *Women*, p. 46.

[28] Robins, Gay, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 120.

follows, "...If a high-ranking man died in one of the houses, all the women of his family would blot their faces or heads with mud, leave the corpse in the house, wander in town lamenting the dead with their female relatives, uncovering their chests and rolling up their sleeves."[29] Nur El Din connects the origin of this tradition to the Osiris legend. Osiris, the Egyptian god of death, was mourned and lamented by his two sisters, the goddesses Isis and Nephtys.

In ancient Egypt, mourners were known by five distinct titles from the roots *Ḏrt, Tst, Rmyt, Wšbt,* and *Smntt.* The most commonly found title was derivative of *Ḏrt,* including the *Djeret Weret* ("Great Mourner", representing Isis) and the *Djeret Sheret* ("Lesser Mourner", representing Nephtys). Both were symbolized as vultures in ancient Egyptian tomb art, with the former pictured kneeling upon Osiris' head and embracing him at his side or hovering over his body, and the latter pictured kneeling at his feet and putting her hands upon his chest. Together, the two were referred to as *Djerty* in the pyramids texts. Female mourners of the Nineteenth Dynasty (1307-1196 B.C.E.) were called *Theset.* Their role was to perform a funeral dance at the entrance to a tomb during the burial. Men could also serve in this role. *Rmyt* referred to mourners of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1307 B.C.E.) and sometimes the Nineteenth. *Wšbt* was found in the Nineteenth Dynasty. It was used to describe the mourners in the tomb of Neferhotep who was a scribe of the temple of Amen. The last title, *Smntt*, was used in the pyramids texts, probably referring to divine mourners.[30]

Women of the Old Kingdom period of Egypt (2649-2150 B.C.E., the Third through Sixth Dynasties) were known to serve as mourners, funerary priests, and even by the title Overseer of Funerary Priests. By the Middle Kingdom (2040-1640 B.C.E.) and New Kingdom (1550-1070 B.C.E.) periods, women were no longer known as funerary priests but were known to dedicate funerary stelae and statues and to participate, with

---

[29] Nur El Din, Abdel Halim, *The Role of Women in Ancient Egyptian Society*, p. 80.
[30] Nur El Din, *The Role*, pp. 80-85.

men, in a last rite before the tomb called the "opening of the mouth ritual".[31] While New Kingdom depictions show male officiating priests, male and female mourners are shown accompanying funeral processions. Moreover, a stele from Deir el-Medina has been found that was dedicated by a woman and her daughter who both had titles, of Mourner, an indication that they may have been considered to be professional mourners.[32]

2.3.iii. Ancient Mourning Practices and Literary Composition.

Gaster writes that the "literary convention of composing lamentations over fallen cities in the form of dirges sung by some imaginary female citizen" developed out of the Near Eastern custom of employing professional wailing women to sing at funerals. He shows how similar some of the older Mesopotamian poems were to those of the Biblical period, comparing several Mesopotamian laments to the Biblical book Lamentations. Two of those he uses to illustrate this point are: (A) "Lamentation over the Destruction of the City of Ur"; and (B) "The Lament of the Daughter of Sin:[33]

Lam 1:10 The foreman has put forth his hand against all her precious things...	A [279] My treasure has verily been dissipated.
Lam 1:10 ...They have entered my holy place	B[i.6] He has entered my shrine.
Lam 2:1 The Lord in His anger beclouds the daughter of Zion	A [190] The day was deprived of the rising of the bright sun, the goodly light.
Lam 5:15 Our dance is turned into a dirge.	A [359-60] Thy song has been turned into weeping...music has been turned into Lamentation.

[31] The ancient Egyptians conducted this ritual which had as its aim bringing sensory life to the deceased. During this ritual a priest touched parts of a statue or relief with an implement and recited, "I perform the Opening of the Mouth upon your nose so that you may breathe in the Afterlife. I perform the Opening of the Mouth upon these your eyes so that you may see in the Afterlife,..." (Watterson, *Women*, pp. 2-3)

[32] Robins, *Women*, p. 164.

[33] Gaster, Theodor, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 818.

In Jer 22:18, the verse, "They shall not lament for him, 'Ah my brother!' or 'Ah my sister!'..." is also reminiscent of a standard form found in Mesopotamian and other Near Eastern texts. Gaster notes that a Mesopotamian text describing New Year (*Akitu*) rites mentions a wailing woman who cried, "Ah, brother! Ah brother!".[34]

2.4. Rituals, Gestures, and Etymology.

Some rituals and gestures common in ancient Near Eastern cultures may have affected lament literature. One mourning ritual – a dance unique to mourning -- has been hypothesized to have a connection with ancient Egyptian funeral rites (though it was observed in later Egyptian customs.) At least two anthropological studies of "modern" (early 20th century) Egyptians note a "peculiar limping or hopping step" that was a component of Egyptian funeral dance, and the theory developed from study of this phenomenon.

As recounted by Gaster, this theory is based upon a description of the following behavior: "...it is customary among the peasants of Upper Egypt for the female relatives and friends of a person deceased to meet together by his house and there to perform a lamentation and a strange form of dance...a slow movement, and in an irregular manner; generally pacing about and raising and depressing the body." Moreover, there is a connection between the Arabic/Syriac root word *r.q.d./r.q.s* , "to skip or hop" and this limping dance performed at funerals; while the Akkadian word *ruquddu,* which occurs in connection with mourning in the Tale of Aqhatu, means "[to dance in]a professional manner". It is believed, therefore, that the common scazonic (uneven, or 'limping') meter of Biblical lament may be related to this practice. [35] This topic is covered further in Chapter Three.

---

[34]Gaster, *Myth,* p. 604.

[35]Gaster, *Myth,* p. 456 (quoting from Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*).

Looking at the etymology of the root words describing lament, one gleans further information about this practice in Near Eastern societies. The Akkadian term *baku*, which can be compared to the Hebrew root (*bet*kaf*he*), means "weep, wail, or mourn," and *bikitu* means "mourning. Ugaritic roots *bky, dm*, and *tny* are synonymous with "weep", while *dmm, any,* and *yzg* indicate "moan", with *bky* indicating either "weep", "wail", or "mourn". The Akkadian word *sapādu*, which is analogous to the Hebrew root (*samek*pe*dalet*), means "to beat oneself" or "mourn. A causative form of this verb used in Ugaritic (and in Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic) refers to the role of people who officiate at funerals. In Ugaritic, two terms were used to refer to professional mourners – *bkyt* ("weeping women") and *msspdt* ("women who cause[others] to beat the breast").[36]

As Gruber notes, one may derive the meaning of these expressions from context. In the case of *baku*, one example he uses is the phrase, *summa enasu ibakka* ("if his eyes shed tears"). This phrase, with its connection to eyes, has the meaning "weeping"; texts whose subjects are animals tend to indicate "wailing", or "howling", and other usages (such as that of the prayer of Gilgamesh for Enkidu noted below) indicate mourning.

In the case of *sapadu*, Gruber notes three factors that connect it to a gesture rather than simply an expression of mourning. First, he quotes its usage from a late Babylonian text, "Ritual for the Repair of the Temple". Here, the quote *[ina maḫarbi]ti isappid u u'i iqabbima libittu su'atum"* ("he shall beat his breast, and he shall wail [before the tem]ple") is not commanded in connection with either death or another calamity. Next, Gruber notes that the verb does not have a direct object (i.e., an object of mourning). Finally, he compares the form to other Akkadian expression sequences that mean performance of a gesture while reciting (i.e., *qassu inassima iqabbi*) which uses two separate verbs – one to indicate a gesture and the other to indicate prayer – with the

[36]Gruber, *Aspects*, pp. 418-436.

gesture verb coming first.[37]

2.5. Selected Texts.

Funerals of the Near East, including those among the Egyptians and the Hittites, were known (and, in some areas, continue to be known) for the practice of employing professional wailing women to facilitate mourning. A literary example of this phenomenon is found in the Canaanite poem, The Tale of Aqhatu, which details *bkyt* ("weeping women") and *msspdt* ("female mourners"). The latter word is in the causative form, indicating that the women lead the dirge, causing others to wail.[38] Three ancient Near Eastern pieces of literature that illustrate the mourning rites of those days as well as the function of the lament include the Curse of Agade, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and The Tale of Aqhatu.

The Curse of Agade (circa 2200-2000 B.C.E.) describes the rise and fall of the empire of Agade:

> The chief lamentation singer who survived those years,
> For seven days and seven nights,
> Put in place seven *balag*-drums, as if they stood at heaven's base, and
> Played *ub*, *meze*, and *lilis*-drums for him (Enlil) among them (the *balags*).
> The old women did not restrain (the cry) 'Alas my city!'
> The old men did not restrain (the cry) 'Alas my people!'
> The lamentation singer did not restrain (the cry) 'Alas the Ekur!'
> The young women did not restrain from tearing their hair,
> The young men did not restrain their sharp knives.

---

[37]Gruber, *Aspects*, p. 452.

[38]Gaster, *Myth*, p. 871.

This lament describes mourning rituals such as women tearing out their hair and men gashing themselves with knives, but more notably, it tells of the professional lamenters. There was a chief lament singer who was accompanied by male and female lamenters. These lamenters were accompanied by *balag*-drums.[39]

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an Akkadian epic about the king of Uruk in southern Mesopotamia, now identified as Warka in central Iraq. It is thought to have been written sometime after 2150 B.C.E. In antiquity, Gilgamesh was considered to be a historical (not strictly mythical) character. If correct, the dates of his lifetime are thought to have been between 2800 and 2500 B.C.E.[40]

Gilgamesh was believed to be part god and part human. In the Epic, when his friend Enkidu dies, he makes multiple references to wailing women, including:

> *anāku ana Enkidu ibriya abakki*
> *kīma lallarīti [un]ambâ sarpiš*
> I cry for Enkidu my friend,
> Like a wailing woman [I m]oan bitterly[41]

Later in the text we read:

> The women of the palace ...lament for you now...I will cause all the people of Uruk to weep over you and raise the dirge of the dead...[42]

---

[39]Pham, *Mourning*, p. 16.

[40]Dalley, Stephanie, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989),p. 40.

[41]Gruber, *Aspects*, p. 423.

[42]Sandars, N. K., *The Epic of Gilgemesh* (London: Clays Ltd., 1972),p. 96.

In summary, we hear Gilgamesh comparing himself to a wailing woman as well as Gilgamesh calling for both women and men in the community to wail to help him mourn Enkidu.

In the Tale of Aqhatu, *Danilu* who has previously lamented and made sacrifices to the gods to obtain a son has his plea granted and is blessed with the son *Aqhatu*. However, his joy turns to grief when later in the tale his son *Aqhatu* dies. At that point, according to the tale's account:

> The wailing women entered [his house],
> The mourning women his palace...
> They [all] wept for valiant *Aqhatu*,
> shed tears for *Danilu* the man of *Rapa'u*

After seven years, *Danilu* sends these women away, saying, "Leave [my house], wailing women, my palace, mourning women..."[43] Again, the mourning women are shown to serve a function in society. Here, they help *Danilu* to grieve in a circumstance where he needed help grieving.

2.6. Concluding Remarks.

When one considers the literature of lament of the ancient Near East, the gestures, the expressions, and the *Sitz im Leben*, it is likely that they had some influence on the mourning practices of ancient Israel. Israel grew out of cultures of the ancient Near East, and this is clear from its words, Canaanite style of biblical poetry, its laws which bear similarities to the cuneiform legal tradition, and its wisdom literature which is reminiscent of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The mourning rites of the ancient Near East and those of ancient Israel show some common features. These commonalities may be attributed to

[43]Hallo, William, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical* World (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), p. 354.

one borrowing from the other, or it may simply result from cultural factors – conventions and expressions – that the two communities had in common.[44]

It is also clear that one of the roles women played in ancient Near Eastern societies, like the goddesses of ancient Mesopotamia, was professional mourner. These women appear in the literature of ancient Israel as those who help others to lament in the face of tragedy. A discussion of the various forms of lament literature of ancient Israel and the appearance of women therein will provide more information on this phenomenon.

[44]Ferris, *Genre*, p. 64.

CHAPTER THREE - BIBLICAL TEXTS

3.1. Women and Public Mourning Ritual in Ancient Israel.

The Biblical texts of lament, through their integral connection to music, served as a unique conduit of pastoral care for the community of ancient Israel. When, in Jer 9:17-18, professional mourners are called in, their purpose is "to help...[the] bereaved's tears to run down more freely."[1] The professional mourners' function served a spiritual value for both chanter and listener, providing assistance with the release of pain or muteness associated with grief, and freeing individuals and communities to heal from that grief. Some Biblical laments are directed towards YHWH, while others speak of His attributes. These laments illustrate a form of catharsis for the community or for specific mourners. Laments might be uttered upon the death of an individual or on the destruction of a city.

Through these texts of lament and the Biblical literary context surrounding them, we know that there were special groups of mourners who were regularly brought in to lead the mourning at communal rites. These individuals were sometimes called in by a family or clan in the event of an individual's death, and sometimes they were written to indicate that the professional mourners were summoned by the leaders of the community, i.e., in the event of the destruction of a city. Most scholars believe that the lament in ancient Israel was sung, not spoken, and these mourners are also referred to as singers (2 Chr 35:25).

[45]Pham, *Mourning*, p. 83 Here, the author is paraphrasing the passages from Jer 9:17-18.

As noted in Chapter Two, women played a prominent role in the singing of laments at various funeral rites in both Middle Eastern and African cultures. There is no record of women participating in music rituals in the Temple itself; this was the domain of the [male] Levites.[46] However, textual sources show that it was common to find Israelite women involved in public [musical] mourning rites outside of the Temple. Biblical texts such as 2 Chr 35:25 as well as texts from the Mishnaic period[47] mention the phenomena of professional women mourners, the latter quoting a verse that commands these women, *mĕqonĕnot,* to teach their daughters the skill of lamenting.

3.2 Mourning as a Profession in Ancient Israel.

3.2.i. Musical Elements.

Musicologist Peter Gradenwitz, a lecturer in music history at Tel Aviv University in the 1960s and 1970s, proposed that the ancient Israelites facilitated the exchange of musical culture across the ancient Near East and developed their own unique musical identity. Organized musical practice, including the development of tonal systems and musical instruments would not have been achievable without a community or cultural center (i.e., a temple or court) such as that which the ancient Israelites eventually established. He hypothesizes that because they were nomadic, the Hebrews picked up musical traditions (including instruments) from all over the Near East and incorporated them into a systematized art. In addition, he proposes that during the ancient Israelites'

[46] Idelsohn, Abraham, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), p. 16.
[47] *Moed Qatan Pereq 3: Mishnah 9*, referring to Jer 9:19.

time in Egypt, composing in specific modes became a well-defined system. Here, he defines mode as "the way in which certain beginning, middle, and concluding tones are joined and contrasted in the melody sung or played; within the modes chosen the singer or player has every individual freedom of variation and of emotional expression."[48] Thus, Gradenwitz believes that the Egyptian-influenced systemization of music influenced the organization of Hebrew musical theory. Yet, the performative element of much of the exalted speech of the *Tanakh* was dependent upon the rhythm of the words sung, and much of the non-Temple music was more exalted speech and less a refined art.[49]

The Jewish custom of differentiating musically between the reading of various sections of the *Tanakh* derived from ancient Israelite principles of associating sound with mood or context of a text. These principles, applied by the Masorites in the ninth century C.E., led to the tradition of a separate melodic system for cantillation of Lamentations among the Ashkenazic Jewish communities as well as among some Sephardic communities.

Unlike the Greek view that music was invented by Pythagoras, Jewish tradition attributes the invention of music to *Yuval,* who along with his half-brother *Tuval Qayin* and half sister *Naamah,* is listed as a descendent of *Qayin*/Cain in Gen 4:21-22). The

---

[48] Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel from the Biblical Era to Modern Times* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 46.
[49] Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel,* p. 48.

name *Qayin* means both "Smith" and "to sing" in more than one Semitic language; though in Hebrew *qinah* means "mourning song". Sarna suggests that the combination of a common father and the similarity of sound in the names of the siblings suggests "a closeness of relationship between the pastoral, musical, and metalworking arts, which in fact is well-founded."[50] Greek tradition's counterpart for *Yuval* is Apollo (for music) and for *Tuval Qayin* Hephaistos (the smith), together with their sister *Naamah* "a rudimentary Aphrodite."[51] One twelfth century commentary proposes a connection between the two brothers and the advent of music, suggesting that *Yuval* would listen to *Tuval Qayin*'s hammering of metal and because he "delighted in the sound of metals" he "devised out of their weights the proportions and consonances which originated in them."[52] Arab legend also names *Yuval* (who is called a son of *Qain*) as the first composer of a song, an elegy for Abel. A thirteenth century writer, Bar Hebraeus, "the Syriac patristic writer of Jewish parentage" wrote that it was the daughters of Cain who invented musical instruments, and Gradenwitz notes that *qaina*, is the name for the singing-girl of Arabic music and that women were always found in participating in popular music throughout the Near East.[53]

In later years, the Jewish people expanded and perfected this system of modes to serve their own cultural and spiritual needs. Some believe that the Greeks and others later adapted the system that the ancient Hebrews developed, incorporating their own

[50] Sarna, Nahum, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 37.
[51] Sadie, Stanley, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969), p 617.
[52] Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel*, p. 29.
[53] Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel*, p. 32.

cultural parameters. Within the various modes, individual singers were permitted a range of expression, and the modes were used to emphasize the purpose of the poetic speech. These modes conveyed resonance of mood or intended function, some of which derived from previously existing folk melodies.

Another opinion about *Yuval* and *Tuval Qayin* is that because they are both brothers to *Yaval*, the nomad, this perhaps is intended to teach that there is a fundamental relationship between nomads and the genesis of music. Westermann points out that the name Tuval is connected to the Akkadian *Tabal,* a region of Cilicia where bronze merchandise was traded, whereas *Qayin* ("forger", or "fabricator") "may be an allusion to *Tuval's* craft.[54] The etymological root *Qayin* *(qof*yod*nun)* is the same as that of *qiynah* , one of the words for "lament".

Singing was considered to be a form of speech in the biblical period.[55] Consistent with this stipulation, Sendrey has argued that the musical system of the ancient Hebrews was highly emotional, in contrast to the rigid, theoretical musical system of the ancient Greeks. Others have stated that Hebrew poetry has a free accentual rhythm that is more dynamic than mechanical.[56] In summary, some scholars stress the advanced systemized nature of the musical system of the Ancient Israelites, while others stress its emotionality

---

[54] Westermann, Claus, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 331-3.

[55] Sadie, *Grove*, p. 616.

[56]Gillingham, S.E., *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 53.

or dynamic nature. There are valid arguments on both sides of this question, but in the absence of musical scores from the Ancient period, it is difficult to know for sure how the songs were composed and how they sounded. Though not a perfect fit, it is useful to apply Western models to analyze the distinctions of one form of Hebrew poetry – that is, musical poetry -- from another.

Bathja Bayer asserts that one can surmise forms of music "...from the forms of those parts of biblical poetry which are clearly meant to be sung."[57] These include the Psalms, which open with terms such as *mizmor* ("melody"), *shir* ("song") and *lamenatseakh* ("to the overseer/choirmaster"). David's lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17-27) and Chr 35:25 imply musical expressions of mourning because of their use of musical terms. However, though we know that some melodic and formal elements of music of the biblical period are old, it is not possible to confirm their specific form during the biblical period.[58]

Sendrey and others commonly quote nineteenth century scholar Budde's now controversial conclusion that laments and lament-like prophecies tend to follow the *qinah* meter, or "lamentation meter" in which each verse is divided into two unequal parts, in contrast to the typical parallel structure of other forms of biblical poetry. In *qinah* meter, the first parallel segment is longer than the second, and has fewer stresses (i.e., three or four stresses rather than two or three.) Later, German scholars, Sievers and Bickell

[57] Bayer, Bathja, "Music History: Biblical Period", in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Israel: Judaica Multimedia Ltd., 2004), p. 2.
[58] Bayer, "Music...",pp. 2-4.

further developed Budde's theories, discovering anapaestic and iambic meters, respectively, in Hebrew poetry. In the twentieth century, G. Holscher and S. Mowinkel further developed Bickell's view, concluding that only people who understood well the rhythms of Hebrew poetry could have composed verse. Gillingham also wrote that composing Hebrew poetry required professional liturgical expertise.[59]

Ferris summarizes further about the "scazonic" (limping, or off-beat) cadence of the dirges. He notes two variables that differ from Budde's theory. First, the *qinah*, 3:2, meter is not universal for lament (i.e., it sometimes varied to 4:3 or 4:2), but nevertheless, there is always an uneven balance. And second, he mentions an association of funeral practices of the Egyptians in the fifth century B.C.E. including a limping dance. Gaster has made a connection between the Hebrew root *samek*pe*dalet* (סָפַד) and *resh*qof*dalet* (רָקַד),noting their parallel placement in Eccl 3:4 and the similarity between *resh*qof*dalet* and the Arabic/Syriac root *r-q-d, r-q-s*, which denotes both "to skip, hop" and the "performance at a funeral of a special kind of limping dance". As further evidence, Gaster points to 1 Sam 15:32 where he postulates that *ma'adannot* (מַעֲדַנּוֹת) indicates "shaking or tottering" and is also used in connection with a dirge.[60]

Overall, there is no consensus among scholars as to the existence of a clearly developed Hebrew meter. Neither is there agreement that the poetry is fluid and flexible.

---

[59]Gillingham, *Poems*, p. 55.

[60]Gaster, *Myth*, 455-456.

The questions and arguments about this matter will no doubt continue since many issues of the original pronunciation or accents of the text remain unknown. Difficulties include: whether vowel-less letters are vocalized or silent (affecting where to stress a word); and where to stress compound word units.

3.2.ii. Mourning Language.

Before addressing Biblical texts that deal with the subject of lament, one should understand the distinction between the terms "lament", "dirge", and "elegy". According to the *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (Penguin)*, the term "lament" denotes, "An expression of deep regret or sorrow for the loss of a person or position. A non-narrative kind of poetry, it appears to grow up alongside heroic poetry and is widespread in many languages..."[61] Therefore, "lament" brings to mind both emotion and literature. In the context of this chapter, the term is used to refer to a form of poetry found in Biblical sources as well as to a descriptor of the act of mourning.

When referring to a sung text of lament, the term "dirge" is used, while "elegy" is a more general term used to refer to a form of poetry. In *Penguin*, the term "dirge" is explained as, "...a song of lament, usually of a lyrical mood. The name derives from the beginning of the antiphon of the Office of the Dead: *Dirige, Domine...* 'Direct, O Lord...' As a literary genre it comes from the Greek *epicedium,* which was a mourning song sung over the dead and a threnody... sung in memory of the dead. In Roman funeral

[61] Cuddon, J.A., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Clays Ltd., 1999), p. 448.

processions the *nenia*, a song of praise for the departed, was changed; and the professional wailing women (*praeficae*) were hired for the task on some occasions..."[62]

The term "elegy" is defined as follows in *Penguin:* "(Greek 'lament') In Classical literature an elegy was any poem composed of elegiac distiches ... also known as elegiacs, and the subjects were various: death, war, love and similar themes. The elegy was also used for epitaphs... and commemorative verses, and very often there was a mourning strain in them. However, it is only since the 16th c. that an elegy has come to mean a poem of mourning for an individual, or a lament..."[63]

2.1. Selected Texts.

Perhaps the best way to observe the varied qualities of the poetry of lament is to look at several examples of lamenting exemplified in the *Tanakh.* Many different words are used in the *Tanakh* to describe the process of mourning, persons who lament (for themselves or for the community), and those who express thoughts that we would describe as expressions of mourning or lamenting. According to the *Even-Shoshan* Concordance, there are several Hebrew verbs commonly associated with the root "to lament" , *qof*yod*nun* (ק י ר) in the *Tanakh.* These include: *alef*bet*lamed* (א ב ל), "mourn"; *bet*kaf*he* (ב כ ה), "weep or bewail"; *he*gimel*he* (ה ג ה), "moan, growl, utter, or speak in distress"; *yod*lamed*lamed* (י ל ל), "howl or make a

[62] Cuddon, *Penguin*, p. 227.
[63]Cuddon, *Penguin,* p 253.

howling, in distress"; *nun*he*he (נהה)*, "wail, or lament"; and *samek*pe*dalet (ספד)*, "wail or lament (associated with beating of the breast; i.e., Isa 32:12)".[64] With so many different words to describe what is commonly translated as "mourning" or "mourning song", the Hebrew poetry of lament is far more nuanced than most English translations can convey. Appendix A identifies places in the *Tanakh* where one will find instances of use for each of these terms.

The clearest way to illustrate the unique language of the lament and the nuances conveyed is by example. Below, we will explore six passages from the Prophets and two from the Writings: Jer 9:16-21; Zech 12:12-14; 2 Sam 1:17-27 and 3:33-34; Amos 8:3; Ezek 8:14 and 32:16; 2 Chr 35:25; and Lam 5:14-15. These laments contain the most commonly found Hebrew roots listed above, including forms of *qof*yod*nun (קינ)*: *nun*he*he(נהי)*, *bet*chaf*he (בכה)*, *yod*lamed*lamed(ילל)*, *samek*pe*dalet(ספד)*, and *alef*bet*lamed (אבל)*. In addition to the descriptors of lament, these texts use varied terminology to describe those persons whose profession it is to mourn for the community; that is, the *měqoněnot (מְקוֹנְנוֹת)*, "[professional]wailing women"; *hakhamot (חַכָמוֹת)*, "wise women"; *banot (בָנוֹת)*, "daughters"; *sharim (שָׁרִים)*/*sharot (שָׁרוֹת)*, "male singers/female singers"; and *mevakhot (מְבַכוֹת)*, "crying women". All but one of these terms represents females called to mourn for the community. I will highlight each of these key words and

[64]Even-Shoshan, Abraham, *A New Concordance to the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1982), p. 1893; and Brown, F, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), pp. 5, 113, 211, 410, 624, and 704.

explain points of interest in the sections below.[65]

Jeremiah 9:16 *Thus says YHWH, God of warfare: Consider diligently*[66] *and send for the* ***professional wailing women****, then they shall come [in], and for the* ***wise [skilled] women*** *and they shall come [in].*

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הִתְבּוֹנָנוּ וְקִרְאוּ

לַמְקוֹנְנוֹת וּתְבוֹאֶינָה וְאֶל־הַחֲכָמוֹת שִׁלְחוּ וְתָבוֹאנָה׃

In the Rabbinic Literature, *Radak*, Rabbi David Kimchi, known as a grammarian, noted the *patakh* (vowelling indicating a definite article) under the *lamed* prefixed to *mĕqonĕnot* (9:16), interpreting this to mean that these women were known to the community; that is, they were referred to as "the" *mĕqonĕnot*. A later (fourteenth century) scholar, Joseph Ibn Nachmiash, wrote that women were chosen for this profession since they were more emotional than men. According to *Radak*, the *hakhamot* were those women who were skillful in the area of eulogy and lament. Nineteenth century scholar, Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim explained that the *hakhamot* were women who knew how to "keep the living from dying in calamity".[67]

Holladay translates *mĕqonĕnot* as "dirge-women", noting that it is a unique

[65] Translations of *Tanach* presented in this chapter are my own.

[66] Omitted by the Septuagint and Syriac version (*Peshitta*); Holladay retains it (Holladay, William, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986],p. 309).

[67] Rosenberg, A.J., *Jeremiah, Volume One: A New English Translation* (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1985), p. 87-88.

denominative feminine participle, similar in meaning to the Irish "keener". He notes that it is the only reference in the *Tanakh* to professional mourning women. It is paralleled to the term *khochamot*, "wise women", to reinforce its association with professionally skilled individuals.[68] Sendrey echoes this belief when he writes that because *mĕqonĕnot* and *khochamot* are listed in a parallel poetic structure, this indicates that the profession [of mourning] was not a routine one. The use of two terms for these professionals implies that knowing and chanting the *qinah* was a skill.[69]

Jeremiah 9:17 *And they shall hasten and lift up for us* ***mourning song****, and tears will go down our eyes. Then, our eyelids will flow [with] water.*

וּתְמַהֵּרְנָה וְתִשֶּׂנָה עָלֵינוּ נֶהִי וְתֵרַדְנָה עֵינֵינוּ

דִּמְעָה וְעַפְעַפֵּינוּ יִזְלוּ־מָיִם׃

Jeremiah 9:18 *For a* ***voice of mourning song*** *is heard from Zion, "How we were devastated, we were very ashamed because we left the land [of Israel], for our settlements cast us out.*

כִּי קוֹל נְהִי נִשְׁמַע מִצִּיּוֹן אֵיךְ שֻׁדָּדְנוּ בֹשְׁנוּ

מְאֹד כִּי־עָזַבְנוּ אָרֶץ כִּי הִשְׁלִיכוּ מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֵינוּ׃ ס

The term used for the mourning cry is *qol nehi* (קוֹל נְהִי), or "a voice of wailing"(Jer

[68]Holladay, *Jeremiah,* p. 312.

[69]Sendrey, *Music,* p. 168.

9:18). This term for lament derives from the Hebrew root *nun hay hay (נ ה ה)* that generally refers to wailing or a mourning song. Abraham Joshua Heschel points out the fact that the mourning song is requested *aleynu*, "for us" (Jer 9:17). He thinks this implies that YHWH requests help with His mourning just as the prophet Jeremiah does. The phrase implies that the professional mourners represent the voice of YHWH's grief as well as human grief.[70]

Jeremiah 9:19 *Surely, women, hear the word of YHWH. Then let your ears take the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters* ***[the skill of] wailing*** *and a woman her fellow woman a* ***lament.***

כִּי־שָׁמַעְנָה נָשִׁים דְּבַר־יְהוָה וְתִקַּח אָזְנְכֶם

דְּבַר־פִּיו וְלַמֵּדְנָה בְנוֹתֵיכֶם נְהִי וְאִשָּׁה רְעוּתָהּ קִינָה׃

About this passage, *Radak* states that the women were instructed to teach the art of lament because they had more *rĕkhot-lev,* that is, they were more "tenderhearted" – they were more emotional-- than men.[71]

Jeremiah 9:20 *For death has ascended through our windows; [it] has come to our strongholds to cut off an abandoned child from the outside, youth from the plazas.*

---

[70]Heschel, Abraham, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), p. 143.

[71]Rosenberg, *Jeremiah,* p. 87.

כִּי־עָלָה מָוֶת בְּחַלוֹנֵינוּ בָּא בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֵינוּ

לְהַכְרִית עוֹלֵל מִחוּץ בַּחוּרִים מֵרְחֹבוֹת׃

Holladay capitalizes "Death", translating the Hebrew word *mavet* (מָוֶת) as a reference to the Canaanite god *Mavet*, the archenemy of Baal. He postulates that Jeremiah based his image of death on Canaanite tradition to suggest to the people that if they follow Baal, Baal's enemy will respond.[72]

Jeremiah 9:21 *Say thus, a declaration of YHWH, "And it fell -- the carcass of man -- like dung upon the face of the field, like a swath from behind the reaper; but, there is no gatherer."*

כא דַּבֵּר כֹּה נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְנָפְלָה נִבְלַת הָאָדָם

כְּדֹמֶן עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה וּכְעָמִיר מֵאַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצֵר וְאֵין מְאַסֵּף׃ ס

Holladay proposes that Jer 9:16-21 , a literary unit on its own, can be divided further into 9:16-18, a summons followed by a series of laments, and 9:19-21, another summons and another lament. However, Holladay notes different opinions among scholars as to which lines constitute the lament in the second section. He notes that the Jerusalem Bible assumes verses 20-21 are one lament (that the women teach each other), while another scholar he cites divides the same material into two laments, verse 20 and verse 21.[73]

---

[72]Holladay, *Jeremiah*, p. 314.

[73]Holladay, *Jeremiah*, p. 310-11.

scholar he cites divides the same material into two laments, verse 20 and verse 21.[73] Holladay agrees with the Jerusalem Bible, asserting that the lament begins with the word *ki* (כִּי) at the beginning of verse 20.

Holladay also notes two possible answers to the question: "who are these wailing women"? The first, traditional explanation is that they were called to mourn for Jerusalem on behalf of the community, as one would mourn for a person. Holladay explains that Jerome wrote in the fourth century C.E. about these professional women, quoting, "..This custom continues everywhere in Judea today; women scatter their hair and bare their breasts and then adjust their voices to rouse everyone in weeping."[74] The second answer to the question is that these women were individuals among the Israelites who had formerly lamented the dead Baal and, therefore, Jeremiah wishes to mock them. Holladay points to similar language used in 1 Kgs 18:27 when Elijah mocks the prophets of Baal.[75]

The next example, from the prophet Zechariah (Zech 12:12-14), is also related to mourning at the time of the destruction of the First Temple, although some commentators say that the mourning referred to is actually over the death of King Josiah.[76]

---

[73]Holladay, *Jeremiah,* p. 310-11.

[74]Holladay, *Jeremiah*, p. 312.
[75]Holladay, *Jeremiah,* p. 312-3.

[76] Plaut writes that Zechariah was active between 520 and 518 B.C.E., though some scholars consider Zech 9-14 to have been written after 323 B.C.E. (Plaut, xliv).

alone/separately, the clan/tribe of the House of Nathan alone, and their wives/women alone/separately.

וְסָפְדָה הָאָרֶץ מִשְׁפָּחוֹת מִשְׁפָּחוֹת לְבָד

מִשְׁפַּחַת בֵּית־דָּוִיד לְבָד וְנִשֵּׁיהֶם לְבָד מִשְׁפַּחַת בֵּית־נָתָן

לְבָד וְנִשֵּׁיהֶם לְבָד:

Zechariah 12:13 *The clan/tribe of the House of Levi alone and their wives/women alone/separately, and the clan/tribe of the Shimites alone and their wives/women alone/separately.*

מִשְׁפַּחַת בֵּית־לֵוִי לְבָד וְנִשֵּׁיהֶם לְבָד

מִשְׁפַּחַת הַשִּׁמְעִי לְבָד וְנִשֵּׁיהֶם לְבָד:

Zechariah 12:14 *All the remaining clans/tribes, the clan/tribe [was] a clan alone/separate, and their women [were] alone/separate.*

כֹּל הַמִּשְׁפָּחוֹת הַנִּשְׁאָרוֹת מִשְׁפָּחֹת מִשְׁפָּחֹת

לְבָד וְנִשֵּׁיהֶם לְבָד: ס

In this case, the Hebrew root *samek pe dalet* (ספד) is used. This root is a stronger word for lament that refers to a sung dirge. This root has been associated with a beating of the breast. By connecting the verb *safdah* with *ha'arets*, the verse portrays an image of a land, by virtue of its inhabitants, beating its breast or wailing; the poetry suggests a physical, visible and audible form of mourning. In addition, the verse states that each household must mourn separately, as if this form of mourning is characterized by that

which is conducted in the private sphere as well as publicly.

The next example of lament is from 2 Chr 35:25. This lament refers to Jeremiah's personal lament and that of the "singing men and singing women".

2 Chronicles 35:25 *And Jeremiah **lamented** about Yoshiahu, and all the **male singers** and the **female singers** spoke in their laments (dirges) about Yoshiahu [and this is done] until this day. And they set them for an ordinance upon Israel and they are written in The Lamentations.*

וַיְקוֹנֵן יִרְמְיָהוּ עַל־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ

כָּל־הַשָּׁרִים וְהַשָּׁרוֹת בְּקִינוֹתֵיהֶם עַל־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ עַד־הַיּוֹם

וַיִּתְּנוּם לְחֹק עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִנָּם כְּתוּבִים עַל־הַקִּינוֹת׃

Here, a connection is made between the public dirge, the *qinah* and singing. Jeremiah's *qinah* is mentioned in the same verse as the singing men and women, an indication that the *qinah* itself was a musical composition, an active public expression of mourning. The second part of the verse indicates that these dirges for *Yoshiahu* were written down and may have been recited annually. Some rabbinic commentators believe this refers to Lamentations.[77]

Finally, we observe this example from Lam 5:14-15, in which we find the

[77] Rosenberg, A.J., *The Five Megilloth: Volume Two: Lamentations Ecclesiastes* (New York: The Judaica Press, 2000), p. xviii.

following description:

Lamentations 5:14 *Elders ceased from [being at] the gate, young men from their music.*

זְקֵנִים מִשַּׁעַר שָׁבָתוּ בַּחוּרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם׃

Lamentations 5:15 *Our heart, it ceased from exultation. Our dancing it turned to* ***mourning.***

שָׁבַת מְשׂוֹשׂ לִבֵּנוּ נֶהְפַּךְ לְאֵבֶל מְחֹלֵנוּ׃

Here, we see a relationship between mourning and ceasing from *negiynah*, the producing of musical sounds.[78] The act of mourning, *e'vel* is contrasted with dancing (*hul)* as a time marked by the cessation of music. Other sources have noted that the *halil* (a type of wind instrument that came into wide use during the period of the Second Temple) was used in mourning ceremonies[79].

2 Samuel 1:17 *And David* ***chanted*** *this* ***elegy*** *over Shaul and over Jonathan, his son.*

וַיְקֹנֵן דָּוִד אֶת־הַקִּינָה הַזֹּאת עַל־שָׁאוּל

וְעַל־יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנוֹ׃

2 Samuel 1:18 *He said, to teach the sons of Judah [the story/song/lament*

[78] Idelson, A. *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1929), p. 9.
[79] Bayer, *Encyclopedia Judaica,* p. 2.

called]"Bow"; behold, it is written upon the Book of the Upright (Book of Yashar).

וַיֹּ֥אמֶר לִלַּמֵּ֖ד בְּנֵי־יְהוּדָ֑ה קֶ֚שֶׁת הִנֵּ֣ה כְתוּבָ֔ה

עַל־סֵ֖פֶר הַיָּשָׁ֑ר׃

2 Samuel 1:19 *The honor of Israel is profaned upon your high places/battlefields. How the strong ones fell!*

הַצְּבִ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל עַל־בָּמוֹתֶ֖יךָ חָלָ֑ל אֵ֚יךְ נָפְל֣וּ

גִבֹּרִֽים׃

2 Samuel 1:20 *Do not tell it in Gath. Do not bear tidings in the streets of Ashkelon[80], lest the daughters of the Philistines will be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.*

אַל־תַּגִּ֣ידוּ בְגַ֔ת אַל־תְּבַשְּׂר֖וּ בְּחוּצ֣וֹת אַשְׁקְל֑וֹן

פֶּן־תִּשְׂמַ֙חְנָה֙ בְּנ֣וֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים פֶּן־תַּעֲלֹ֖זְנָה בְּנ֥וֹת הָעֲרֵלִֽים׃

2 Samuel 1:21 *Mountain-ridge of Gilboa, let not dew [fall] or rain [be] upon you or fields of [sacred] offerings, for there the shield of heroes was cast away, the shield of Shaul [was] without anointing oil.*

הָרֵ֤י בַגִּלְבֹּ֙עַ֙ אַל־טַ֣ל וְאַל־מָטָ֔ר עֲלֵיכֶ֖ם וּשְׂדֵ֣י

תְרוּמֹ֑ת כִּ֣י שָׁ֤ם נִגְעַל֙ מָגֵ֣ן גִּבֹּרִ֔ים מָגֵ֥ן שָׁא֖וּל בְּלִ֥י מָשִׁ֖יחַ

בַּשָּֽׁמֶן׃

[80]Gath and Ashkelon were Philistine cities.

2 Samuel 1:22 *From blood of the fatally pierced, from fat warriors Jonathan's bow did not turn back, and Shaul's sword did not return empty.*

מִדַּם חֲלָלִים מֵחֵלֶב גִּבּוֹרִים %קֶשֶׁת יְהוֹ נָתָן

לֹא נָשׁוֹג אָחוֹר וְחֶרֶב שָׁאוּל לֹא תָשׁוּב רֵיקָם׃

2 Samuel 1:23 *Shaul and Jonathan, the beloved and delightful in their life, in their death they were not separated. They were swifter than eagles! They were stronger than lions!*

שָׁאוּל וִיהוֹנָתָן הַנֶּאֱהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם

וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרָדוּ מִנְּשָׁרִים קַלּוּ מֵאֲרָיוֹת גָּבֵרוּ׃

2 Samuel 1:24 ***Daughters of Israel weep*** *for Shaul; [he is] the one who clothed you in scarlet with ornaments, the one who put gold ornaments upon your clothes!*

בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־שָׁאוּל בְּכֶינָה הַמַּלְבִּשְׁכֶם

שָׁנִי עִם־עֲדָנִים הַמַּעֲלֶה עֲדִי זָהָב עַל לְבוּשְׁכֶן׃

2 Samuel 1:25 *How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the war! Jonathan slain upon your heights.*

אֵיךְ נָפְלוּ גִבֹּרִים בְּתוֹךְ הַמִּלְחָמָה יְהוֹ נָתָן

עַל־בָּמוֹתֶיךָ חָלָל׃

According to H. Jahnow, the word *eykh* (אֵיכָה), "how" or "alas" usually occurs at the

beginning of a funeral dirge (and other genres of lament, such as Lam 1:1), though not every dirge contains it.[81]

2 Samuel 1:26 *I am distressed on [account of] you, my brother Jonathan. You were very delightful to me. Your love to me was extraordinary, greater than the love of women.*

צַר־לִי עָלֶיךָ אָחִי יְהוֹנָתָן נָעַמְתָּ לִי מְאֹד

נִפְלְאַתְאַהֲבָתְךָ לִי מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים׃

2 Samuel 1:27 *How the mighty have fallen, and [so] the implements of war have perished!*

אֵיךְ נָפְלוּ גִבּוֹרִים וַיֹּאבְדוּ כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָה׃ פ

JGL **2 Samuel 3:33** *And the king* ***lamented*** *for Avner, and he said, "Will Avner die a fool's death?"*

וַיְקֹנֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְנֵר וַיֹּאמַר הַכְּמוֹת נָבָל

יָמוּת אַבְנֵר׃

2 Samuel 3:34 *Your hands are not bound and your legs were not bound in fetters. You fell as one falls before the unrighteous ones, and all of the people contined* ***to cry*** *over him.*

---

[81]Pham, *Mourning*, p.58.

יֶדֶךָ לְאֹ־אֲסָרוֹת וְרַגְלֶיךָ לְאֹ־לְנְחֻשְׁתַּיִם הִנָּשׂוּ

כִּנְפוֹל לִפְנֵי בְנֵי־עַוְלָה נָפַלְתָּ וַיִּסְפּוּ כָל־הָעָם לִבְכּוֹת עָלָיו׃

Carlson writes that the Deuteronomists revised and reinterpreted, according to their ideological bent, certain units of text. An underlying bias was that "the faithlessness of Israel to YHWH is the ultimate cause of her misfortunes."[82] Using a traditio-historical analytical method, Carlson notes that the dialogue form of 1 Sam 26:17-25 shows Deuteronomic influence. However, David's dirge over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17-27) appears to be pre-Deuteronomic. He claims that the "Book of Yashar" was well-known by the time the Deuteronomic editors were operating. When the text refers to teaching "The Bow", which Nielsen has pointed out is a symbol of Jonathan, it refers to a previously-written lament. Carlson also notes that the preface *vayomer* (וַיֹּאמֶר) in 2 Sam 1:18 preceded by *vayeqonen David et-haqinah hazot* (וַיְקֹנֵן דָּוִד אֶת־הַקִּינָה הַזֹּאת) in verse 17 introduces David's actual *qinah* here and also in verses from 2 Sam 3:33-34 in his lament over Avner, together marking a "Deuteronomic parenthesis".[83]

Amos 8:3 *And the singing women of the palace shall* ***howl*** *on that day, declares Lord YHWH , "Many corpses flung everywhere. Keep silence!"*

וְהֵילִילוּ שִׁירוֹת הֵיכָל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה רַב

הַפֶּגֶר בְּכָל־מָקוֹם הִשְׁלִיךְ הָס׃ פ

[82]Carlson, Rolf, *David, The Chosen King* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1964), p. 24.

[83]Carlson, *David,* p. 47-48.

This verse uses the root *yod*lamed*lamed* to express a very distressed form of lament sound. This form can be translated as "howl" or "make a howling, in distress".[84]

Ezekiel 8:14 *Then he brought me to the opening of the gate of the House of YHWH, which was towards the north; and behold – there the women [were] sitting,* ***weeping*** *over the [god] Tammuz/Dumuzi.*

וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי אֶל־פֶּתַח שַׁעַר בֵּית־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר

אֶל־הַצָּפוֹנָה וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם הַנָּשִׁים יֹשְׁבוֹת מְבַכּוֹת אֶת־הַתַּמּוּז׃ ס

Zimmerli notes that the first few verses of Ezek 8 show four areas of sin, in order of seriousness. These events deal with a vision of rituals in the Temple complex. Haevernick and Gaster note that these four acts correspond with a four act celebration for Adonis including, "...the setting up of thrones for the gods...a lament for Tammuz, and a prayer for the sun..."[85] Zimmerli, however, thinks these acts must be analyzed individually. Ezek 8:14 represents the "third occasion of sin", the women sitting on the ground, at the entrance of the Temple, weeping for Tammuz. The worship of Dumuzi[Tammuz], the earthly lover of Inanna, was evident throughout southern Babylon. He was a vegetation deity connected to the dying summer vegetation. Zimmerli postulates that these women practiced the custom of lamenting a dead god without considering it to be an impediment toYHWH worship (since YHWH was the

---

[84]*BDB*, p. 410.

[85]Zimmerli, Walter, *Ezekiel I* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 237.

"living god"). Another opinion, that of Abraham Joshua Heschel, is that many ancient religions had a myth about a suffering god that was impotent in the face of evil power. The women here represent the widespread popular observance of wailing for a suffering god, in this case, Dumuzi [Tammuz].[86]

Ezekiel 32:16 This [is a] **dirge**, therefore **they shall wail it**; the **daughters** of the nations, **they shall wail** it. Over Egypt and over all her noisy multitude they shall wail it. [This is] a declaration of Lord YHWH.

קִינָה הִיא וְקוֹנְנוּהָ בְּנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם תְּקוֹנְנֶהָ אוֹתָהּ

עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַל־כָּל־הֲמוֹנָהּ תְּקוֹנֶנָּה אוֹתָהּ נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה: פ

Again, this is an example of directions to women to mourn on behalf of others, indicating the prevalence of the custom of women taking on this role in ancient Near Eastern cultures.

3.4. Concluding remarks.

The poetry of Biblical laments evokes emotion even without the presence of music. In ancient Israel, this poetry was sometimes recited by professional mourners in a musical context. The effect of the words upon the listener must have been intended to evoke emotion and, perhaps, to comfort those individuals or communities who had experienced a loss. Then and now, there are fixed times when we as Jews are

[86]Heschel, *Prophets*, p. 409.

commanded to mourn and other times when we grieve spontaneously. Whether in a public or private context, the varied Biblical texts of lament provide examples that maybe followed to facilitate our grieving. Moreover, they illustrate a rich tradition that supports those who seek to support others in the grieving process.

CHAPTER FOUR – LATE ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

This chapter begins with the Mishnaic period and ends in the 21st century. It explores changes in the role of Jewish women who facilitate mourning rituals for others in their community. In the context of this discussion, this chapter will elaborate on religious, cultural, and legal activities affecting the phenomenon of the *meqonenot.*

4.1. Evidence of Female Mourners in the Mishnaic Period.

During the Mishnaic period[87], the practice of employing professional female mourners continued. This is evidenced in *m. Ketubbot* 4:4, which reads *afilu ani shebeyisrael lo yifkhot mishene khalilim umĕqonenet* ("Even a poor person of Israel shall not have less than two flutes and one professional female mourner"). One can infer from this mention in the Mishnah that this method of honoring the deceased was a common practice. *m. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:8-9 also mentions women leading dirges, and the *b. Mo'ed Qatan 27b* discusses the gestures of mourning, "*Amar Ulla hesped al lev dektiv, 'al shadayyim sofdim' tipuakh beyad qillus b'regel"*("Said Ulla [the technical meaning of] a hesped is [lamenting with striking] upon the bosom as it is written [Tremble ye...strip you...and gird sackcloth upon your loins], striking upon the breast (Isa 32:12)' [the technical meaning of] *tipuakh* is clapping ones hands [in grief] and that of q*illus* is [tapping] with the foot [in mourning]." While the primary function of this verse is to describe the gestures of mourning, the feminine form of bosom, *shadayyim* is used here in

reference to lamenting with striking, *sofdim*, of the breast.

Another Mishnaic reference to gestures of mourning and the women involved in public mourning practices is found in *m. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:8-9:

> (8) ...The women may sing dirges during the Feast but they may not clap their hands. R. Ishmael says: They that are near to the bier may clap their hands... (9) On the first days of the months[88] and at [the Feast of] the Dedication[89] and at Purim they may sing lamentations or clap their hands. What is lamentation? When all sing together. And a wailing? When one begins by herself and all respond after her; for it is written, "Teach your daughters a lament, and every one her neighbor wailing"...[90]

As one observes reading the passage above, the Mishnah seems to have no objection to the phenomenon of *mĕqonĕnot*. While the beginning date of the Mishnaic period is uncertain (it may have begun during the earlier half of the second century B.C.E., scholars agree that it and ran through the end of the second century C.E.), these Mishnaic period references point to the continued existence of the phenomenon of the *mĕqonĕnot* after the

---

[87] The Mishnah is a collection of Jewish religious law formulated until 200 C.E. (Strack, H.L. and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], p. 109.

[88] *Rosh Hodesh.*

[89] *Hanuka.*

[90] Danby, Herbert, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*

1st and even the 2nd Temple periods.

4.2. Changing Attitudes Towards the Female Singing Voice in Post-Mishnaic Rabbinic Literature.

We have now shown that the phenomenon of employing professional female mourners was commonplace in the ancient Near East, in ancient Israel, and continued in the Mishnaic period. The practice continues in a few Jewish communities today. What is the reason for the disappearance of this custom among much of world Jewry?

Some biblicists claim that post 333 B.C.E. (after the conquest of Judah by Alexander the Great), even the most loyal and pious Jews were influenced by Greek culture. Frymer-Kensky describes Greek philosophy as portraying females as "inherently and essentially different from men and fundamentally less valued..." That is, "...women [were]...untamed [, and]....males represented civilized humanity..." In making her point, she quotes Ecclesiastes ("clearly written during the Hellenistic period...") as a misogynistic example of Greek influence, quoting the lines, "...she is all traps, her hands are fetters and her heart is snares..."[91] Based upon her analysis of the Greek influence on Jewish thought, Frymer-Kensky theorizes that this change in gender ideology, "...that women might sweep men away with their attractiveness..."[92] are expressed in the Mishnah's laws of *yihud* ("union"), forbidding a man and a woman to be alone together.

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 211 (proof text quote from Jer 9:20).

[91] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 205.

The assumption is that the mere presence of women would tempt men into sexual immorality, and this led to women's separation from men and exclusion from public life.[93]

Post-Mishnaic rabbinic legal literature has reflected this change in gender ideology. For example, the Talmudic reference later interpreted to mean "a woman's voice is indecent" led to prohibitions against women singing in public.[94] One area of rabbinic law that may have influenced popular employment of women as professional mourners is summarized under the subject heading *Kol Ishah* ("the voice of a woman"). This phrase refers to the prohibition (upon Jewish men) against hearing the (speaking or singing) voice of (certain) women at (certain) times.

Rabbinic legislation on *Kol Ishah* derives from the broader category of laws related to *Tzniut* ("modest conduct"). The intention of these laws is to prevent forbidden extramarital acts. The rabbis are concerned with both the results of the act (A) and the act itself (B). They are concerned with (A), because one who allows him or herself to engage in these acts might be led to extramarital sexual impropriety, and with (B) because sexual acts and fantasies, in and of themselves, can be spiritually harmful.[95]

---

[92] Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, p. 207.
[93]Frymer-Kensky, *Women*, pp. 203-212.

[94]Shiloah, Amnon, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 178.

[95]Ellinson, Getsel, *The Modest Way: A Guide to the Rabbinic Sources* (Israel: The World Zionist Organization, 1992), p. 42-44.

Modern rabbinic responsas represent both strict and lenient positions on *Kol Ishah*. The following overview of *Kol Ishah* is taken from a piece by Saul J. Berman of Yeshiva University.[96] Berman hypothesizes that relative to later rabbinic opinions, the period of the *Rishonim*[97] was lenient on the issue of a man hearing woman's singing voice. The *Aharonim*[98] were more strict. Some modern-day rabbinic rulings have returned to the reasoning of the *Rishonim*, resulting in more flexible rulings.

During the Amoraic period (circa 200-500 C.E.), Amora Samuel made a statement that was quoted, in different contexts, in *b. Berakhot 24a* and *b. Qiddushin 70a*. The first discusses whether or not one may recite the *Shema* in the presence of a nude person, while the second recounts a discussion between R. Judah and R. Nachman in which the former seeks to discredit the latter. Both cases refer to Samuel's statement, "*...kol b'ishah ervah...*" ("a woman's voice is a sexual enticement").

Another Talmudic reference, *b Sotah 48a* offers another warning. It reads, "...R. Joseph said: when men sing and women join in, it is like a fire raging in flax," leading to a Gaonic period condemnation of the practice of women entertainers (singers *or* instrumentalists) at festive gatherings. This ruling did not mention Samuel's statement

---

[96]Berman, Saul J., "Kol Isha," in *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume* (New York: Ktav, 1980), pp. 45-66.

[97] The period of the *Rishonim*, or "Early [Rabbinic] Sages" extends from about the 11th century C.E. through the 15th century C.E.

[98] The period of the *Aharonim* or "Later [Rabbinic] Sages" extends from about the 15th century C.E. through contemporary times.

about a woman's voice being a sexual enticement; rather, it treated the *Sotah* as an entity unto itself. That is, it considered Samuel's statement (as presented in the *Berakhot* passage) to be a restriction on saying the *Shema* under circumstances where it is not possible to maintain the necessary concentration on ones prayer. The condemnation of women entertainers (based upon R. Joseph's statement) was not connected to Samuel's statement; rather, it stood on its own.

The *Rishonim* focused further attention on the implications of Samuel's statement. While all accepted it as halachically binding, their positions differed . For German *Rishonim* (i.e., Rabbi Eliezer of Metz), *kol b'ishah ervah* implied only that "the *Shema* could not be recited while listening to a woman singing, since that would be distracting and would prevent proper concentration. The North African and Spanish *Rishonim* (i.e., *Rambam*) and the *Tosafists* ruled that Samuel's law did not restrict recitation of the *Shema*; rather, it "contributed to a ban on such verbal communication as might lead to an illicit sexual relationship." The *Rishonim* of Provence (i.e., *Rabad* of Posquieres) found both concerns valid and adopted bans combining the limitations of both positions.[99]

Also under the *Rishonim*, the concept of *regilut*, or "accustomedness" was introduced to the discussion. That is, if one is accustomed to hearing a voice on a regular basis (i.e., the voice of ones wife), it is not considered to be a distraction. *Rashi* stressed that the main thrust of Samuel's statement was to control "...the quality of the social

relationship which might result" if men and women engage in dialogue with those who are prohibited to them. Thus, according to *Rashi*, its primary purpose was stemming improper social relationships rather than being intended to prohibit a man from hearing a woman's singing voice.

The *Aharonim* differed from the *Rishonim* in their interpretation of the statements of Samuel and Joseph. They came to the conclusion that Samuel's ruling was not imposed merely to prevent distraction from attentive recital of the *Shema* or to reduce the likelihood of illicit sexual behavior between men and women. Rather, *kol b'ishah ervah* implied that a woman's **singing voice** was considered to be a form of nudity, limiting its permittedness to wife-husband interactions.

The transition from the view of the *Rishonim* to that of the *Aharonim* began with R. Jacob ben Asher's paraphrase of *Rambam*'s code, "*v'asur lishmoa kol ervah oh lirot sa'areh*" ("it is prohibited to hear the voice of an *ervah* [prohibited female] or to see her hair [*Tur, E.H.*, Chapter 2]"[100]). He omitted the use of the definite article "*he*" from *ervah*, using it to refer to the *ervah* herself (not to her voice). R. Joseph Karo in the *Shulhan Arukh, O.C.* 73:3 also omitted the "*he*" and agreed with *Rambam*'s position. However, he acknowledges the German *Rishonim*'s concerns by adding that one should avoid *(yesh lizaher)* "hearing a woman's singing voice during the recitation of the *Shema*".

---

[99]Berman, "Kol Isha", p. 62.

[100] Berman, "Kol Isha", p. 56.

R. Moshe Isserles assumed that Karo agreed with the German *Rishonim*, and he added their qualification to *Shulhan Arukh* 75:3 , "a voice to which one is accustomed is not considered to be *ervah*."[101]

After the phrase *"kol ervah"* (without the definite article) was introduced, different interpretations of this phrase arose. R. Joshua Falk's commentary on the *Tur* said it could be interpreted two ways: (a) as the voice of an *ervah*, or (b) a sexually-stimulating voice. Though R. Falk preferred the first interpretation, later *Aharonim* accepted the second interpretation. R. Abraham Abele Gumbiner in *Magen Avraham* (commentary to the *Shulhan Aruch, Orech Hayyim* 75:6) states that "the singing voice of a married woman is always forbidden to be heard, but her speaking voice is permitted." This statement, while promoting leniency regarding hearing a woman's speaking voice, established stringency with regard to a woman's singing voice.

Because the *Aharonim*'s ban was so strict in the face of Biblical references to women singing before men (i.e., the prophetess Deborah), explanations for exceptions arose. For example, because Deborah's singing arose through divine inspiration, it was not considered to be *kol ishah*. Or, since Deborah sang together with Barak, it was not considered to be *kol ishah*.

Several modern day rabbinic scholars have attempted to reduce the rigidity of the

[101]Berman, "Kol Isha", p. 58.

rulings of the *Aharonim*. As found in the Berman piece, R. Yehiel Weinberg of Germany, ruled permissively on the question of whether male and female students could sing Shabbat songs together. He used three principles to allow the practice: first, the principle of "two voices are not heard"[102] simultaneously; second, he said that the singing of Shabbat songs should not be banned because "that arouses religious feelings, not thoughts of sin"; and third, he added that the ban should be overridden because he considered it to be a stringency rather than an absolute prohibition, stating:

> ...since there is no absolute prohibition, but rather a righteous custom and practice of modesty, it is possible... to permit the practice in France. For the situation of Jewry has arrived at a point of crisis, and if we do not grasp educational methodologies, which are tested and crowned with success..., the Torah will, God forbid, be forgotten among Jews.

Weinberg adds:

> In countries like Germany and France, women would feel disgraced and see it as a deprivation of their rights if we prohibited them from joining in the rejoicing over the Sabbath by singing *zemirot*...

According to Berman, R. Weinberg's position indicates that he feels the *Aharonim*'s standard is "supra legal" and will not "result in greater religiosity". Therefore, it should be suspended in the case at hand. Other modern-day rabbinic authorities have also questioned the *Aharonim*'s comparison of a woman's singing voice to nudity and have concurred with the permissive ruling of R. Weinberg.[103]

---

[102]From *b. Megillah 21a*. Other rabbinic opinions dispute the application of this principle to this type of a case (see Ellinson, *The Modest Way*, p. 101)

[103]Berman, "Kol Isha", pp. 64-5.

Another lenient opinion, that of Rav Chaim Chizkiya Medini (1832-1904), is found in *Sdei Hamed, Ma'arechet* 100, 42, which concludes:

> ...as long as a woman is not singing passionate love songs, and as long as the man does not intend to derive pleasure from her voice, there is no prohibition. On those conditions, a man may hear her sing praises to God for a miracle, lull a child to sleep, or wail at a funeral.

One can see that this opinion provides the rationale for professional female lamenters being permitted at funerals, in contrast to what one might have concluded from the Magen Avraham. That is, the Magen Avraham considered the ban (on hearing female singing voices) a prohibition, whereas Weinberg considered it stringent in some cases.

4.3 Concluding Remarks.

Though *mĕqonĕnot* appear to have been a practiced custom in Mishnaic times, subsequent rabbinic rulings on issues pertaining to *kol ishah* raised questions about the acceptability for Jewish men to hear singing voices of Jewish women other than their wives. The differences of opinion among modern-day rabbinic scholars may help explain why the custom of retaining *mĕqonĕnot* has continued in some Jewish communities but not in others. The interviews presented in the following chapter reveal some continuation of *mĕqonĕnot* customs as well as other roles for professional Jewish women in modern communities that serve mourners.

CHAPTER FIVE - MODERN DAY *MĚQOONĚNOT* AND OTHER FEMALE VOICES

5.1. Introduction.

Although only a fraction of Jewish communities around the world today continue the custom of professional female mourners, female Jewish professionals continue to play a part in supporting grieving families. This chapter documents evidence of a continued connection between women and mourning rituals in two ways. First, it presents information about twentieth century *měqonĕnot;*.second, it documents interviews with two female Jewish professionals who are skilled in working with grieving families. This chapter demonstrates that just as the *měqonĕnot* served an important function in ancient Israel, so too women who practice and teach skills that comfort grieving families play an important, though clearly different, role in our modern Jewish communities.

5.2. Modern *Měqonĕnot.*

The custom of employing professional female mourners has continued among some modern-day Jewish communities. A video of this practice in the Jewish community of Darbent, Dagistan in 1991 is available at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Givat Ram (item #Y05307).[104] Other publications also document its continuation into modern times, for example, a publication about the Jews of Libya which describes twentieth-century mourning practices of that community prior to its emigration to Israel:

> ...at the death of a person, the women sound wails of grief, scratch their faces, and strike their chests, and a female professional mourner [*mĕqonenet*] raises a monotonous lament, then the women repeat the refrain, after[wards] the entire house [repeats it]. At the death of a young man, they have a custom to take out the table that the deceased ate upon in his life, and the women strike it with sticks; they had a custom to fetch a female professional mourner during the afternoon before each memorial service of the first year [after his death]. The Rabbis recommended the abolishment of these customs, because it imitates the customs of Gentiles, and indeed with the years, they [these customs] have been going and disappearing...[105]

While the above passage states that because Libyan rabbis objected to the practices, they became less and less common among the Libyan Jewish community, the book includes a photo of *mĕqonĕnot* at the gate of the cemetery of Tripoli. Though perhaps less popular than in earlier years, the photographic and documentary evidence leads one to conclude that the custom continued in spite of the rabbinic recommendation that it be abolished, at least in the period prior to immigration to Israel.[106] Though the Libyan Jewish community's customs are reminiscent of the Mishnaic dictum requiring the hiring of a *mĕqonenet*, the Libyan rabbi's ruling shows that the custom, though not explicitly forbidden, was discouraged and certainly not considered to be a requirement.

In addition to the Jews of Libya, Iraqi Jews also continued a form of the custom of *mĕqonĕnot* into the modern era. A study conducted in 2002 by Rebecca Shargel

---

[104] Shargel, Rebecca, "The Lamenters of Jeremiah 9 and Beyond" (Senior Educators Program Final Project; Tutor: Menachem Hirshman, 2002), p. 13.
[105] Hajig-Liluf, Yaacov, *The History of the Jews of Libya* (Israel: Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2000), p. 342.
[106] Hajig-Liluf, *History*, pp. 341-343.

documents the case of Adela, a seventy-one-year-old Iraqi Israeli woman who had immigrated to Haifa in 1951 at age eighteen. Adela was interviewed in Israel during the 2001-2 academic year in connection with Shargel's Senior Educator Program[107] project on the teaching and learning component of women lamenting.[108] Shargel asked Adela to describe her experiences hearing *qinot* in her hometown of Ana, outside of Baghdad. The author notes that Yitzhak Avishur has published a book that discusses the laments from Ana, Iraq, attesting to its practice in that community.[109] Shargel presents the substance of her personal interview with Adela as follows:

> ...As a girl she said the practice of women lamenting the dead was widespread, especially since many women died in childbirth and [because of] the difficulties in living in a town which was removed from the hospitals and modern medicine. She describes that in Iraq there was a constant tradition of women reciting poetry for the dead. An expert *měqonenet* know[s] the different laments for each kind of people and she would recite poetry according to the age and gender and circumstance of the departed. The *měqonenet* would sing specific laments for men, women, young, old, religious, and secular. Adela described the night that her father died and her mother recited a dirge... Adela reported that it was only the older women who participated in reciting the laments... young people did not participate actively... but watched from the side... the women stood in a circle and beat their chests, with an expert leading the group. There were some dirges where the women sang along and other dirges where the expert sang a solo... Adela herself recited several laments that she remembered hearing as a young person in Iraq and also in Israel in the first two decades of her *aliyah* [this would have been 1951-1971].[110]

Shargel concludes that the skill of professional lamenting is passed down from generation to generation and is shared between peers, similar to method described in the Biblical text,

---

[107] Ms. Shargel completed this project while a graduate student at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). She is now working towards completion of a Ph.D. in Education at JTS.

[108] Shargel, "The Lamenters", pp. 13-14.

[109] See also: Avishur, Yitzhak, Women's Folk Songs in Judeo-Arabic from Jews in Iraq (Or Yehuda: Teherikover Publisher Ltd, 1986 [in Hebrew]).

Jer 9:19.[111]

5.2. Other Modern Voices - Interviews with Female Rabbis Who Specialize in Pastoral Care.

This section focuses on the experience of two women who are both ordained Rabbis[112] and members of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains.[113] Because of the small number of interviewees, the responses do not have statistical significance; however, they do provide anecdotal information relating to the subject of professional mourners and modern Jewish rituals for comforting the mourner. After presenting the questions and responses gleaned through these interviews, I present an analysis of the responses.

The subjects of the interviews, Rabbi Ruth Alpers (RA) and Rabbi Elena Stein (ES), have worked in a variety of settings. Rabbi Alpers has over eleven years of experience in the field. She is a Board Certified Chaplain and has served as a Rabbi and Chaplain at pulpits ranging in size from fewer than 40 to 1500 families, including serving as an Associate Rabbi at a congregation in Boston that averaged seventy-five funerals per

---

[110]Shargel, "The Lamenters, p. 14.

[111]See also Chapter Three above.

[112]Through the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (Reform Movement).

[113] The National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC) is "an international, trans-denominational Jewish organization which certifies professional Jewish chaplains and which promotes the development of Jewish chaplaincy and the professional growth and competency of Jewish chaplains" (from Jewish Spiritual Care: The Professional Journal of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains; Vol. 6., No. 2, Winter 2004; p. 32.)

year. Rabbi Alpers is an Instructor at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, teaching courses in Professional Development, Human Relations, and Clinical Pastoral Education and serving as Chaplain to students, faculty, staff, and their families. Rabbi Stein served as the Director of Hillel at Ohio University for five years and as Rabbi for Southeast Ohio, prior to her current position as a Chaplain at The Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati. Her Hillel experience included serving a student roster of 300 (with an estimated 500 students at OU) as well as forty affiliated families. She has served at Jewish Hospital for two years and has additional experience leading funeral services in the greater Cincinnati area.

Below, I present the substance of the interviews. My analysis of the results are presented in the following section (5.4):

PART ONE: PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH MOURNERS AND MOURNING.

1. WHEN YOU HAVE DEVELOPED LITURGIES OR RITUALS (FOR BOTH THE TIMES LEADING UP TO, FUNERAL EVENTS, UNVEILINGS, ETC.) HAVE YOU WORKED SOLO OR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS?

RA: I rely heavily on our tradition – on what's already been written – I don't believe in reinventing the wheel. So, I wouldn't say I've ever worked as part of a group on this kind of project other than working with the clergy with whom I shared responsibilities for the congregation. So, in congregational life, that would have been the Senior Rabbi, the other part-time Associate Rabbi, and the Cantor.

ES: Solo, in terms of professionals. I would say that I consider myself in partnership with the family that I'm working with, and hopefully in partnership with God too -- but that would be always... I haven't done too much to develop formal creative grief rituals. The most I've done with that is I do utilize spontaneous prayer quite

a bit...even for a very Reform traditional funeral, I'll still do the benediction as spontaneous prayer... Beyond that, I would say that I've held to a fairly... traditional "Rabbi's Manual" kind of model... Occasionally... somebody expresses something about their family – a very strong particular Jewish value, and a reading comes to mind...I'll substitute it in... I think what it is is that there are just some times (when I'm meeting with a family or know a patient or someone who's died) that a particular theme will emerge for me based on the story they tell me about their family ... hopefully and usually (because that's what I'm attuned to) some kind of Jewish theme. So if one of those emerges for me and I know of readings that would be suitable, I do substitute them. When I say, "theme", I mean if it seems like the person they are describing sounds like a "woman of valor", an *e'shet khayil*, so I might look for something like that. If they tell me that somebody was completely secular, ... then I might find some readings that seem to speak to that. I can think of one funeral in particular – it was somebody who had been an attorney who really, really did work on a lot of justice issues and they were not particularly religious – they were not even affiliated [with a synagogue] – they were getting a rabbi just for this. But there were some readings about justice and the importance of justice and Judaism that seemed really important to include for someone whose, her life story and her family story, were that that was what was important to her, that was what she valued.

2. DID YOU NOTICE ANY DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF THE APPROACH OF YOUR MALE AND FEMALE COLLEAGUES DURING THAT TIME?

RA: I worked with a very unique Senior Rabbi who was very empathetic and very intuitive, which isn't necessarily the societal norm for men in high positions of authority. ...We did have unique approaches when it came to visiting with people. I was much more, I would say, "pastoral" in my approach, and he was much more "go in, get it done, and (once it was done) go".

ES: Well, I just don't have a huge basis of comparison and the only things I can think of seem so specific to who the female rabbi was. It was somebody who... Rabbi Marianne Gevirtz... she was a rabbi who I feel had a real strength and dedication to creating sacred moments for people through formal rituals and through life cycle events and she really brought a lot of that to her work. And, that even came through when one of her congregants would die and I would be covering for her and I would do that and vice versa... we were definitely collaborative in terms of talking about, "...What is it that the family is going to need? What ritual? What themes might support this? How can we, working together, facilitate the fact that it is (in my case) my congregant, but I can't come back from Israel to do the funeral?" So, how can we make it work so that they both accept her as their rabbi but also know that I am there with them for other things, and so for her when she was out of the country and I'm covering for her how to do that too. So in that

sense collaborative...trying to figure out how the relationship with either of us would be that would be most supportive to the family in the short run and in the long run... With men [male rabbis and male ministers with whom I have worked]... I think... we were more focused on ... what is the ritual and who's gonna do which piece and who's gonna do which reading...

2. PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE PASTORAL IN YOUR APPROACH.

RA: ...I have specific training for that [this approach] as a Board Certified Chaplain and my long association with Clinical Pastoral Education. ...Just as an example [of a "pastoral" approach], before visiting someone...[at] a hospital visitation, I would take off my coat before I went into the room, and I would sit down when I went into the room. And, he [,my Senior Rabbi,]would keep his coat on and stand up. So, it's just a difference in approach. We were of different generations in the way that we were trained, but people responded very, very well to him as much because he was a Senior Rabbi as who he was as an individual, as a man.

ES: Well, when I hear the word "pastoral" I do think of, you know, a pastor with a flock of sheep... shepherding... What I mean by that is... at times of death and dying I found that Jewish families for the most part don't always really know what to do and also they're in... there's so much going on for them... part of taking care of them is being able to tell them what they need to do. So, in that sense I think that I do lead and guide people in terms of letting them know what's traditional in Judaism letting them know step-by-step what they can expect, what's going to happen next... sort of walking them through and trying to leave the door open for two things: (1) ...that if they do in those moments want to talk about the person who's dying and do life review that that's there, that if they want to talk about how they're feeling that that's there, but even more important, (2) helping them realize that the process doesn't end at the end of the funeral, so if they have a lot of process stuff that they need to do in terms of grief and bereavement that that is something that we're going to be working on long-term, and that's not necessarily something that I try to solve or have them solve in those moments that they're in the hospital. At the time of the funeral, I find that there are a lot of times when, even if it was expected, there is a certain level...of shock and ... people almost, regress a little bit, in terms of needing to just ...be told what to do even if it's small things like [to be told], "Here, sit down." Or a lot of times just not knowing what to expect, I mean, I'm always very careful both in the hospital and at the funeral home to tell people, "what's going to happen [is] you're gonna sit in a room, people are gonna come in to greet you. There's *keriah*[114]...," because a lot of people never experienced a funeral before, at least ... [on] the side of the mourner,

[114]The ritual of tearing a garment upon hearing of the death of a close relative.

and they don't necessarily know that, and I find that brings a certain comfort, just having somebody tell them, "Here's what's gonna happen," and then they see that it happens and kind of walking them through that...

4. ARE THERE ANY THINGS THAT STAND OUT IN YOUR MEMORY IN TERMS OF RITUAL, PROCESS THAT (IN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH CONGREGANTS) YOU FOUND TO BE PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE?

RA: I find that when you have the opportunity, the use of *Viyduy*[115] is very, very powerful as well as some sort of ritual around healing into death that might accompany that with the family – not just with the individual whose death is imminent, but with the family as soon as possible... it is a way of gathering the family together, it is a way of framing an experience... around the bed... it's an invitation for family to say what they need to say, each to the other, and it frames it in a uniquely Jewish ritual setting... it [the *Viyduy*] has been traditional for a long long time, because we are taught you should repent the day before you die, and none of us knows the day of our death, and so the idea is you repent each day and the deathbed confessional is that last opportunity to do that. And it also can be done on someone's behalf if they are in coma or unconscious, so the effect can still be the same for the family.

ES: A question that I like to use a lot is, "Tell me about _____". The 'fill in the blank' is frequently tell me about the person who died... It allows people to tell me and to talk about their loved one and that is part of the bereavement and the grief... sharing memories... That, in and of itself can be very healing.

PART TWO: PARALLELS TO THE *MĔQONĔNOT* AND OTHER PUBLIC ROLES FOR WOMEN IN MODERN-DAY JEWISH COMMUNITIES.

5. THE *MĔQONĔNOT* WERE HIRED PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS – WOMEN AND MEN WHO WERE BROUGHT IN BY SOMEONE EITHER WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY TO MOURN – WAIL AND CHANT LAMENTS -- DURING THE TIME AFTER DEATH WHEN THE PERSON WAS BEING ESCORTED TO HIS OR HER FINAL RESTING PLACE; SOMETIMES THEY WOULD BE CALLED IN EARLIER, JUST AFTER THE PERSON DIED. DO YOU KNOW OF ANY PARALLELS TO THAT PHENOMENON THAT EXIST NOW WITHIN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY?

RA: I'm not familiar with any situations in which people were hired to come in as mourners. The community that I saw created around families who were in mourning was entirely spontaneous. When someone died who was a member of a

[115]Confessional prayer.

family but was known throughout [the] community, obviously the community came out for the funeral, the burial, the *shivah*[116]. Another thing that happened was we would sometimes have parents of members of our congregation die out of state, and then that individual would come back to their home community and not have a way of receiving the support of their friends. And so oft times we would offer them an opportunity to have a memorial gathering at their home or ... at the synagogue, where they would have an opportunity to receive their friends from their home community and have an opportunity to share with them about their loved one who recently died, and have a *minyan*[117] of sorts. It wouldn't necessarily be a *shivah minyan*, but it would be a *minyan* service in a house of mourning... Many times they chose to have it at their home, mimicking the *shivah* ritual, although it was dislocated in terms of time and space from where the actual burial had occurred.

ES: I will say that I think that that is an area of gap or real weakness or limitation in the Jewish community right now that we need to address... grief, I've found for most people in our society right now, is a very individual, individualized experience. And it's not just because America is such an individualistic society. A piece of that is ... that the funerals that I've done ... [have] family members ...coming in from different parts of the country. They come in for the funeral... and then they leave. And while they're supportive of each other ([for example] if you're going back to California, it's hopefully your friends in California who will support you) ...really, they [the out-of-town friends] were not a part of that community process – the funeral and everything else. And when you are the one that's local, well yeah, your kids come into town or your relatives come into town and they're there for you, but in the end, they go back to where they live. And it is kind of similar for the congregations. There is still this custom of people bringing food the initial weeks [to the house of mourning], but still it's very task-oriented – 'Here's the food, now we're gone'. I mean, sometimes people just drop them off not necessarily providing that comfort. And one thing I do remember – the suicide in the [Jewish] fraternity [whose funeral I officiated while a Hillel Rabbi] ... in that particular case, the community was there... all those guys were there together not just the week of the funeral, but a year later... the year this person would have graduated... that was a very important and valuable thing... having that community. And I'm not so sure that we do really have that. *Shiva* is getting shorter and shorter for people and less commonly observed. The distance that people have to [are expected to] travel to be physically together is getting smaller and smaller,

[116]According to Jewish tradition, this is the seven day mourning period immediately following burial.

[117]A group of ten individuals – traditionally men, though in Progressive Jewish communities, women are counted in the *minyan* – required by Jewish tradition to recite specific prayers, including the Mourner's *Qaddish*, a prayer for the deceased.

what people [mourners] feel that they need other people to do for them is getting less and less... you know, I'm thinking that maybe in olden times, you know, the *taharah*[118] and all of that. Well, your [distant] family and friends had to come and do it. Now the funeral home takes care of it – who knows who's doing it? ... If you live in a small community, people you know are doing that for you – the same with sitting together and reciting psalms... I remember there was a faculty member from HUC who died... and in that case there was a community, you know, students performing this ritual... But I would say for the average... Jewish community member who dies, if they want *taharah*... [or] those psalms recited... which most people don't think about, know about... it's probably going to be [done or recited by] a stranger.

6. IS THERE A SPECIFIC TYPE OF MUSIC THAT YOU THINK IS PREFERABLE TO ANOTHER (I.E., FOR MOURNING RITUALS/SERVICES)?

RA: Familiar melodies like *Oseh Shalom, Shalom Rav,* ... one of the many settings of *Mi Sheberakh,* 23rd Psalm, 121st Psalm – liturgical settings for those in a funeral setting in funeral liturgy – things like that.

ES: Well, I'm biased toward wanting things that are Jewish... (When people do come to me and say [but] their favorite song was some Cat Stevens song and it must be in the funeral, I initially do encourage them, "... You know [you can] bring your guitar to the *shivah* house... please don't do it during the funeral." But, sometimes I've been prevailed upon...) But... I don't know that I've had specific things that I've used. Somehow, you know, I do stick to traditional melodies for the cantillation and all that... but, I realize that very frequently I use *Eli, Eli, shelo yigamer l'olam* ("Oh Lord my God, I pray that these things never end...") That, I do find that to be very useful and meaningful to a lot of people... some of it is practical... the melody is very conducive [and] it's in Hebrew and English, so people in the community aren't lost as to what's going on... But also... for me it speaks to a certain sense of eternity, a certain idea of eternity, which is... ritually ... healing... helping people to hold the tension between the loss that's taken place – you've lost something that's never going to come back, and you have to grieve that – and holding that intention with the fact that something of this person will never leave you .. Just like the 'sand and the sea' and the 'rush of the waters' – whether...memories that you have of them, whether it's the legacy that they leave in their kids or their art work or their publishing or whatever, or whether people do have a more traditional idea that this person is living on in eternity, I feel like that song speaks to some of those themes.

---

[118] Literally, "purification," this is ritual cleaning of the deceased and preparation of the body for burial, typically by members of a community *Khevre Qaddisha* (literally, "holy society", a Jewish burial society).

7. JEWISH LEGAL (RABBINIC) LITERATURE SPEAKS OF WOMEN HAVING MORE OF A ROLE IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE AND MEN MORE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE– LAWS OF *TZNIUT* [MODESTY] AND LAWS OF [ADMONITIONS AGAINST] *KOL ISHAH* (HEARING A "WOMAN'S VOICE" WHILE PRAYING, ETC.) AND OTHER THINGS...DO YOU THINK THAT ANY OF THESE ELEMENTS OF JEWISH TRADITION HAVE ANY BEARING IN TERMS OF HOW YOU ENGAGE OTHERS AS A RABBI IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MOURNING, OR DO YOU FIND THAT IT IS NOT PARTICULARLY RELEVANT? IN OTHER WORDS, WORKING AS A WOMAN IN A PUBLIC ROLE, DO YOU FIND THAT THE SOURCES OF OUR TRADITION THAT EMPHASIZE WOMEN'S STRENGTHS IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE (VERSUS THE PUBLIC) CONTRADICT OR SERVE AS A BARRIER OR HINDRANCE TO YOUR WORK?

RA: Working as a Reform Rabbi, no I don't. As a Reform Rabbi, while it's important for me to have knowledge of the traditions and the *halakhot*[119] surrounding *Tzniut* and *Kol Ishah*, they are not concerns that guide me in terms of how I function as a rabbi. I would be more inclined to frame them in terms of what are the standard societal roles for women in the way that women interact as opposed to how men interact. And the general ways for gender roles is that women are much more relational – we talk more about things — and men are much more fixers and doers in terms of 'get it done' and not so much (generally, very generally, I'm making a sweeping generalization) not so much process-oriented.

ES: ...I was born after Sally Priesand [the first female to be ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion] so I've always experienced women in the public sphere in Judaism... As a small child, Sally Priesand was the Assistant Rabbi at Wise [Synagogue] and then the first female Congregational President... when I was very small, so personally in my lifetime I haven't experienced that so much, though I would kind of agree with the thesis, historically. And the only place where I see it ever coming up is, it's not a *Kol Ishah* issue, but even for people who are not very religious, there are times in terms of music that they will say that they want a male voice... they'll tell me, 'it needs to be a male voice doing *Kol Nidre*, it needs to be a male voice doing *El Male Rahamim*,' that type of thing, so that's the one place I've encountered that...

PART THREE: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF MODERN-DAY JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SERVING THE NEEDS OF MOURNERS.

8. IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT – GIVEN YOUR EXPERIENCE AND WHAT YOU'VE SEEN IN YOUR WORK WHERE ARE WE DOING A

[119]Jewish laws deriving from both written and oral (Rabbinic) tradition.

GOOD JOB IN SUPPORTING MOURNERS (PARTICULARLY WITHIN REFORM JEWISH COMMUNITY OR PROGRESSIVE JEWISH WORLD)?

RA: [The Senior Rabbi of the Boston congregation where I served as an Associate]'s goal was that there be a community, a Caring Community, that was established within the congregation so that some of the burden was lifted from the clergy and also so that the congregation would take ownership for what happened within the congregational body itself... more congregations are [also] concerned with creating Caring Communities. Some congregations have now gone to the model of the Parish Nurse. [That is], some congregations actually have nurses that work with them in the congregation to help facilitate programs and care for the members of their congregation in ways in which the clergy are not qualified... it's another way of adding to the 'caring' aspect of what the congregation has to offer... it's a growing movement and it has been, I would say, for the last ten years ... The URJ Office of Family Concerns that Rabbi Richard Address runs is uniquely concerned with these kind of issues in congregations.

ES: I think we do do a very good job of providing secular support (meaning support groups for the bereaved, social workers, psychologists, counselors, etc.) and also the same with Rabbis being fairly trained to do empathetic listening and that type of thing.

9. CAN WE DO BETTER? THAT IS, WHAT ARE OUR SUCCESSES [IN MODERN SOCIETY] AND WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU SEE? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE/WHAT WOULD BE YOUR IDEAL PICTURE OF A COMMUNITY/HOW A COMMUNITY SUPPORTS ITS MOURNERS WITHIN THE PROGRESSIVE JEWISH WORLD IN THE FUTURE?

RA: I think the most important thing is to not cut off contact once *shivah* is over or *sheloshim*[120] is over, but to recognize that the mourning process continues and there is a very natural sort of ending to the most intense mourning that might take place with an unveiling.[121] But that every time *Yizkor*[122] comes around 3-4 times a year, you know, that is an opportunity for wounds to be opened a little bit again. And, one of the things that I did as a congregational Rabbi was create a *Yizkor* service that was separate and apart from the congregational festival service that

[120]The initial thirty-day mourning period following burial; it marks the end of the traditional mourning period for close relatives other than father and mother (which terminates after one year).

[121]The service of commemoration, formally dedicating a marker at the gravesite of the deceased. According to Jewish custom, this takes place within one year of the death of the individual.

[122]The memorial service of remembrance recited on *Yom Kippur* and on the final days of *Pesakh, Shavuot,* and *Sukkot.*

included *Yizkor* but allowed for people to attend the full congregational service should they choose to, because they were mourners who were looking for something different...I designed this along the same lines as our Healing Service. There were opportunities for people to share experiences, if they wanted to, there was silence, there were empty chairs, there was Kleenex... It was a small intimate space. It was in a room that we use that has a small ark. It was used for Board meetings and Torah study and things like that, so seating was very flexible, but it was an intimate setting. And there was music too... 23rd Psalm, 121st Psalm, um, I can't remember offhand not having led it for six years, but... I learned the setting from our Cantor... I was the one leading [the music]...[123] There was also a full traditional *Yizkor*, so there was quiet time as well... It was an opportunity for people to have time to remember. Societally, we don't give people time to remember. [The] general rule in society is that people have three days. And then you should be over it, [be]cause I'm over it, and I need you to be over it, and I need you to be doing what you have always done and so therefore I need you to be where I need you to be. That's generally the message that people get – Jewish or not. So, in our busy lives, we tend to, once *shivah* is over – once our immediate responsibility as clergy is over, we can tend to get caught up in other things. And one of the reasons, one of the most compelling reasons for having a Caring Community in the congregation is so that nobody falls through the cracks. So someone calls to arrange to meet the mourner in services to sit with them throughout the first year when they are reciting *Qaddish*[124]... They were members of the congregation – they were members of the Caring Community of the congregation, and they were not professionals – they were all volunteers... They would provide challah or a meal of consolation [would visit the person] if that was desirable. The idea was not to have any expectations but to simply be open to it... These people do it out of their sense of community and congregation and giving back, taking ownership of their congregation.

ES: I think that we do fall short on the spiritual end, that we do/are always putting people off to the secular places to get help and to secular resources. What might help augment that... one of the things I'm very interested in... is spiritual direction... Basically, it's somebody who works with people where you're talking with this person about your relationship with God, and there isn't a form in the Jewish community, when you've lost somebody, to really, really talk and explore with someone, 'Where is God for you in this loss? How has this changed your relationship with God?'... And it has been my experience working with Jews in hospitals that Jews do have spirituality and they do have thoughts and feelings

[123]See Appendix B for a copy of a revised version of Rabbi Alpers' *Yizkor* service.

[124]The Mourner's *Qaddish* is the Jewish prayer recited for a deceased parent for eleven months or one year from the individual's burial date.

about God and sometimes people in the Jewish community seem to think that they are not open to talking about that... There are so many different kinds of communities. In a congregational setting, I think that if there can be chavurahs[125] within a large congregation, it really does help as long as the chavurahs are trained to know that one of their roles as a chavurah is to be with someone through the grief and bereavement and help to educate them about that, along with all the other stuff. I think a good model would be to try to begin to educate lay people about how to do some of these things and also, finally, to somehow create that there can be people – whether it's the Rabbi or what[who]ever – who somehow are able to find time or opportunities or a certain regularity with speaking with the bereaved about how this impacts their relationship with God.

5.4 Analysis of Interviews.

Given the historical connection of women to the mourning profession, how and/or does this history inform current practice in the modern-day Jewish world? At the end of the preceding section, this report documented the results of interviews with two female rabbis who specialize in the area of pastoral care. These interviews were conducted onsite at the rabbis' workplaces during the month of January 2005 – for Rabbi Alpers, at her office at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati campus, and for Rabbi Stein at the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati, Office of Pastoral Care. Tapes were made of the interviews, which were transcribed and edited for this report.

The interviews focused on three areas: (I) Personal involvement with mourners and mourning; (II) Parallels to the *mĕqonĕnot* in modern Jewish communities, including public roles for women in modern-day Jewish communities; and (III) Strengths and weaknesses of modern-day Jewish communities in serving the needs of mourners.

[125] A "chavurah" is a circle of friends, committee or association of individuals, from the Hebrew root *khet*bet*resh*, meaning "to connect".

Questions number one through four, six and seven address Area I, questions five and seven address Area II, and questions eight and nine address Area III.

First (Area I), the rabbis were asked about their professional experiences working with mourners, including liturgies and rituals used and perceived differences in the work of male and female colleagues in the field. Because both women are also members of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains, I also asked about their concept of the Pastoral approach to comforting the mourner. Both women stated that they relied heavily on Jewish tradition in terms of ritual approach, though Rabbi Stein specifically mentioned spontaneous prayer and the incorporation of themes related to the life of the deceased in her work with mourners and their families. That is, she attempts to incorporate themes that either the decedent or the mourning family has shared about the life of the decedent in the readings for his or her funeral. The reliance of both on traditional Jewish liturgy attests to what has been stated earlier in this report about the conservative nature of mourning ritual. Rabbi Stein's incorporation of themes is reminiscent of David's lament in 2 Sam 1:19-27, discussed in Chapter Three, which describes Shaul and Jonathan as beloved and strong.

Question six revealed that both women preferred traditional, or familiar melodies. Rabbi Stein mentioned her preference for the song "*Eli, Eli*" because, "...the melody is very conducive [and] it's in Hebrew and English, so people in the community aren't lost as

to what's going on..." The creative *Yizkor* service that Rabbi Alpers designed for a large congregation that she served, included in Appendices at the end of this study, also utilized this song.

Both women were hesitant to generalize the differences in the approach of male and female colleagues. However, both also described themselves as more "pastoral" in their approach to working with mourners than at least one of the men with whom they had worked. Rabbi Alpers framed this distinction in terms of, "...standard societal roles fore women in the way that women interact as opposed to how men interact," stating that women in general tend to be, "...much more relational..." and process-oriented in their approach. She said that the male Senior Rabbi with whom she had worked was both empathetic and intuitive, "...which isn't necessarily the societal norm for men in high positions of authority..." Echoing the standard societal roles theme, Rabbi Stein described the work of a female colleague as "...collaborative... trying to figure out how the relationship...would be most supportive to the family in the short run and in the long run..." versus male colleagues who had been more focused on "...what is the ritual and who's gonna do which piece".

The "pastoral approach" was described differently by each of the interviewed rabbis, but their responses had in common that both used descriptions of physical gestures to elaborate on their concept of this behavior. Rabbi Alpers gave an example that,

"...before visiting someone [at] a hospital visitation, I would take off my coat before I went into a room, and I would sit down when I went into the room..." Rabbi Stein said that for her, "pastoral" meant shepherding the mourner, "...letting them know step-by-step what they can expect, what's going to happen next..." to facilitate their knowing, "...that if they want to talk about the person...[and]about how they're feeling..." they can do that and, "...if they have a lot of process stuff that they need to do in terms of grief and bereavement, that is something that we're going to be working on [together] long-term..." Rabbi Stein added that while at the hospital or the funeral home, she will tell mourners, "...even...small things like, 'Here, sit down,' to facilitate their care..."

In terms of ritual process, Rabbi Alpers reported that she finds the use of the *Viyduy* (at the deathbed of a dying person) to be very powerful, because, "...it is a way of gathering the family together...of framing an experience... an invitation for family to say what they need to say, each to the other... in a uniquely Jewish ritual setting..." Rabbi Stein finds that (after the death) asking the fill-in-the-blank question, "Tell me about _____" is effective, because, "...it allows people to tell me and to talk about their loved one, and that is part of the bereavement and the grief... sharing memories..."

The next series of questions (Area II), began with a description of the *mĕqonĕnot*, seeking the interviewees' opinions on parallels to this phenomenon in modern-day Jewish communities. Rabbi Alpers said she was not familiar with individuals being hired to serve

as mourners, saying that the community of mourners she had experienced, "...was entirely spontaneous..." Rabbi Stein found, "...an area of gap or real weakness or limitation...," because for most people in modern-day society, "...grief...is a very individualized experience...," and, "...family members [come] in from other parts of the country... for the funeral...and then they leave." In contrast to the Jewish communities of antiquity, where family members and friends tended to live in close proximity to one another, family members and friends are at a physical disadvantage. Even the custom observed by some Jewish communities of bringing food to the home of the mourner during the *shivah* is problematic because, "...it's still very task-oriented, 'Here's the food, now we're gone'. Sometimes people just drop [it] off not necessarily providing... comfort [i.e., by remaining with the mourner for a visit, providing a friendly ear, etc.]."

Question seven asked whether these female rabbis felt that Jewish tradition that emphasizes women's strengths in the private versus the public sphere, laws of *Tzniut* ("modest behavior") or *Kol Ishah* have impacted their work. Both indicated that this was not a significant factor, though their responses indicated some concern about the issues underlying the legal rulings. Rabbi Alpers felt that while it was important to be knowledgeable about these laws, she preferred to frame her functional parameters according to "standard societal roles for women," saying that, "women are much more relational – we talk more about things – and men are much more fixers and doers in terms of 'get it done!'..." Rabbi Stein, who mentioned that she had been born after women were

already being ordained as rabbis, said that the only area that issues have affected her related to women's public role is that of liturgical music. She did not connect this impact to *Kol Ishah* however, stating, "...it's not a *Kol Ishah* issue, but even for people who are not very religious, there are times in terms of music that they will say that they want a male voice... they'll tell me, 'it needs to be a male voice doing *Kol Nidre*, it needs to be a male voice doing *El Male Rahamim*,' that type of thing..." From Rabbi Stein's comments, we observe that while she did not view *Kol Ishah* as impacting here work directly, Jewish communities with which she has worked have stated a preference for a male singing voice over a female singing voice for solemn liturgical occasions.

During the last segment of the interviews, Area III focused on the rabbis' perceptions of strengths and challenges in Progressive Jewish communities in terms of how we support our mourners. As Rabbi Alpers revealed in her responses, some Reform congregations have addressed this issue through developing Caring Communities. Here, clergy and congregational leaders, to better serve mourners and others, train members of the congregational community.

Rabbi Alpers mentioned the work of the Union of Reform Judaism and Rabbi Richard Address in her responses. The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) published a revised edition of its guide, Becoming a *Kehillat Chesed*, that provides an eight-step approach to developing community programs that (among other outreach programs)

"...provide support and comfort in the days that surround death." In his introduction to the guide, Rabbi Richard Address notes, "...The creation of a congregational culture that places the sacred aspect of personal relationships at its core stands as a distinct and powerful anecdote to the culture of isolation, privacy, and disconnection that marks much of secular culture..."[126] The concept of *Kehillat Chesed*, in which the *mitsvot* of caring for those who are ill, comforting the mourner, providing food for the hungry, etc. are moral imperatives, is clear. It provides direction for clergy and lay leadership to help other congregants better understand how to fulfill these *mitzvot*. Just as the *mĕqonĕnot* composed and led dirges to facilitate the mourning of others, Rabbis, Cantors, and lay leaders can model these *mitzvot* so that others can learn through their example to support congregants who grieve.

Like Rabbi Alpers, Rabbi Stein also acknowledged a strength of Progressive Jewish communities. She felt that we are doing a good job providing secular support and felt that, "...Rabbis [are]...fairly trained to do empathetic listening and that type of thing..." Yet, both women pointed to areas where we can improve our work on behalf of mourners. Both spoke to the need to address mourners' needs beyond the funeral itself. Rabbi Alpers stated that, "...the most important thing is to not cut off contact once *shivah* is over or *sheloshim* is over, but to recognize that the mourning process continues and there is a very natural sort of ending to the most intense mourning that might take place with an unveiling..." Similarly, Rabbi Stein suggested that we might train chavurahs to

[126]Rosen, Harriett, *Becoming a Kehillat Chesed* (New York: URJ Press, 2004), p. x.

"...be with someone through the grief and bereavement [period]..." Rabbi Stein also felt that our modern-day Jewish communities would benefit from support in the area of spiritual direction, which she described as, "...somebody who works with people... talking...about your relationship with God... when you've lost somebody, to really, really talk and explore with someone, 'Where is God for you in this loss?'..." For a congregational setting, Rabbi Stein described training chavurahs in a similar capacity to that described by Rabbi Alpers about her former congregation's Caring Community program.

The interviews with Rabbis Alpers and Stein exemplified contemporary practices, creative liturgy, and new roles for female prayer leaders in supporting mourners. From their personal involvement with dying individuals and mourning families to their analysis of parallels to the *měqonĕnot* in modern-day society (or lack thereof), to their assessment of strengths and growing edges for Jewish communities today, it is clear that their skills are strong. Like the *měqonĕnot* of antiquity, these women facilitate mourning ritual and train others in the area of mourning practices.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

In today's Jewish world, women and men serve as rabbis, cantors, congregants, family members, friends, and community members. In all of these roles, we can benefit from understanding the communal role of the professional mourners of antiquity. Just as in ancient times, our relationships with one another are sacred. Supporting one another at times of grief is a *mitsvah* each of us can embrace in some fashion. Both men and women of today may learn from the mourning practices of antiquity. However, there is a special historical connection for women in the mourning profession.

In Chapter Two, we learned that in the ancient Near East, the most significant non-household role for women was that of professional mourner. Women led dirges and caused others to wail at funerary events, serving an important societal function. Other mourning rituals from antiquity such as beating oneself, howling, or dancing a limping mourning dance were also noted.

In Chapter Three, we saw that the mourning rituals and literary history of other peoples of the ancient Near East must have influenced the ancient Israelites. Although its literature is distinct in certain ways, we saw thematic and structural parallels to the mourning literature of the ancient Near East. Professional mourners (men and women) employed a unique form of poetry and nuanced words and expressions that conveyed

arguably more emotion than other literary forms of that day. Biblical texts of lament continue to be used even today to facilitate our grieving.

Chapter Four showed that during the Mishnaic period, the practice of employing female mourners continued in Jewish mourning rituals. This is true even though some traditional authorities find that hearing the voice of a woman wailing at a funeral is *halachically* permissible for men, and does not fall under the umbrella of prohibitions on *Kol Ishah.*[127]

In Chapter Five, we revealed that some Jewish communities (in Libya, Iraq, and elsewhere) continued *mĕqonĕnot* customs into the 20th century We also learned about how modern Jewish female professionals have assumed more liturgical and rabbinical roles, through the interviews with Rabbis Alpers and Stein. Thus, our customs continue to change and adapt to new societal norms and communal structures.

So what have we learned? Lament literature and ritual was well-developed in the ancient Near East. Similarly, in ancient Israel, the genre of lament continued to serve multiple purposes. Laments could be addressed to God (YHWH), uttered upon the death of an individual, or wailed to commemorate the destruction of a city.

Within the phenomena of lament ritual were a special class of mourners who led

the mourning at communal rites. These professionals included both women and men, though mostly women. While the use of professional mourners of both genders was documented through the Mishnaic period, the prevalence of this custom diminished between those days and modern-day. It is likely that religious, cultural, and legal activity within the Jewish community over the intervening years had some impact on this change.

[127]Ellinson, p. 107.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Danby, Herbert, ed., *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Epstein, I., ed., *The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Moed*, vol. 4. London: The Soncino Press, 1938.

Jewish Publication Society, *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

Midrash Eicha Rabbah, Petichta 24

Mishnah Ketubot 4:4

Mishnah Mo'ed Qatan 3:8-9

Mishnah Seder Nizikin 6:1

Talmud Bavli, Berakhot 24a

Talmud Bavli, Megillah 21a

Talmud Bavli, Mo'ed Qatan 27b

Talmud Bavli, Qiddushin 70a

Talmud Bavli, Sotah 48a

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Anderson, Gary A., *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: the Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.

Auerbach, Susan, "From Singing to Lamenting: Women's Musical Role in a Greek Village," in

Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective. Edited by Ellen Koskoff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Bach, Alice, *Women in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Brown, Francis, S.R.Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Fifth Printing. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., March 2000.

Carlson, Rolf August, *David, the Chosen King: a Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel*. Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1964.

Cohen, D.A., *The Twelve Prophets: Hebrew Text and English Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: The Soncino Press, Ltd, 1994.

Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol.12. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971.

Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Freedman, H., *Jeremiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. London: The Soncino Press, Sixth Impression, 1970.

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, *Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of the Pagan Myth* New York: The Free Press, 1992.

Gaster, Theodor H., *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Gradenwitz, Peter, *The Music of Israel: From the Biblical Era to Modern Times*. Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996.

Gruber, Mayer I., *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*: 2 vols. Rome:

Biblical Institute Press, 1980.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit, translated by Batya Stein, *Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature.* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000.

Holladay, William Lee, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971.

Holladay,William Lee, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Idelsohn, A.Z., *Jewish Music in its Historical Development.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1929.

Khazzoom, Loolwa, "Jewish Multiculturalism: Enhancing Our Awareness, Embracing Our Diversity," *Tikkun: Vol. 12, No. 4* , July/August 1997.

Kodell, Jerome , *Lamentations, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Obadiah, Joel, Second Zechariah, Baruch.* Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982.

Mandolfo, Carleen, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament.* New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.

Pham, Xuan Huong Thi, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible.* England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Pritchard, James B., *The Ancient Near East in Pictures: Relating to the Old Testament.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954.

Rosenberg, A.J., *Jeremiah, Vol. One: A New English Translation* New York: The Judaica Press,

Inc., 1985.

Sadie, Stanley, Ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 2001.

Sendrey, Alfred, *Music in Ancient Israel*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1969.

Shargel, Rebecca, "The Lamenters of Jeremiah 9 and Beyond: An Oral Tradition as a Model for Teaching and Learning." Senior Educators Program Final Project; Tutor: Menachem Hirshman; May 12, 2002.

Shiloah, Amnon, *Jewish Musical Traditions*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.

Slotki, I.W., *Chronicles: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. London: The Soncino Press, 1971.

Strack, H.L. and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Watterson, Barbara, *Women in Ancient Egypt*. Great Britain: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1991.

Westermann, Claus, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, Translated by John J. Scullion S.J. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984.

Zimmerli, Walter, *Ezekiel 1*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

APPENDIX A - The *Měqoněnot* and Beyond (J. G. Lewis - 3/8/05)

(א ב ל)

alef*bet*lamed

AMOS 8:8;9:5
HOS 10:5
JER 4:28;12:11
JOB 14:22
JOEL 1:9

(א נ ה)

alef*nun*he

EX 32:31
DAN 9:4
GEN 50:17
ISA 38:3
JONAH 1:14; 4:2
NEH 1:5; 1:11
PS 116:4,16;118:25
2 KGS 20:3

(ב כ ה)

bet*kaf*he

DEUT 1:45; 21:13; 34:8
EZRA 3:12
GEN 23:2; 29:11; 33:4
GEN 37:35; 45:14,15
GEN 46:29; 50:1,3
HOS 12:5
ISA 33:7;38:3
JER 8:23; 22:10;31:15
JER 48:32
JOB 27:15;30:25
JUDG 4:16; 20:23; 21:2
LAM 3:51
LEV 10:6
NUM 20:29
PS 69:11; 78:64
2 CHR 34:27
2KGS 13:14; 20:3
ZECH 7:3

(י ל ל)

yod*lamed*lamed

AMOS 8:3
DEUT 32:10
EZEK 21:17; 30:2
HOS 7:14
ISA 13:6;14:31;15:2
ISA 16:7;23:1-6,14
ISA 52:5;65:14
JER 4:8;25:34;47:2
JER 48:20-31;49:3
JOEL 1:13;15:11
MIC 1:8
ZECH 11:2
ZEPH 1:11

(נ ה ה)/(נ ה י)

nun*he*he/nun*he*yod

AMOS 5:16
EZEK 32:18
JER 9:9,17-19;31:15
MIC 2:4
PS 102:8

(ק י נ)

qof*yod*nun

AMOS 5:1;8:10
EZEK 2:10;19:1,14
EZEK 26:17;27:2,32
EZEK 28:12;32:2,16
JER 7:29;9:16
JUDG 9:9,19
2 CHR 35:25
2 SAM 1:17;3:33;21:16

(ס פ ד)

samek*pe*dalet

ECCL 3:4
EZEK 24:16
GEN 23:2
ISA 15:3;32:12;52:12
JER 4:8;16:4-6
JER 22:18;25:23
JER 34:5;49:3
JOEL 1:13
MICAH 1:8
1 KGS 13:29-30; 14:13-18
2 KGS 13:29-30
2 KGS 14:13-18
1 SAM 25:1;28:3
2 SAM 1:12;3:31;11:26
ZECH 7:5;12:10,12

APPENDIX B

Jennifer Goldstein Lewis
, 2005
"The Meqonenot and Beyond: Female Voices in Communal Prayer"

Yizkor
"May God remember..."

We thank You, O God of life and love,
For the precious gift of memory
Which endows Your children, fashioned in Your image,
With the Godlike sovereign power
To give immortality through love.
Blessed are You, O God,
Who enables Your children to remember.

Rabbi Morris Adler

Temple Israel, Boston, Massachusetts

Yizkor, meaning "remember," is recited four times during the Jewish year: Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah, Pesach and Shavuot. At these times, special prayers are added to the liturgy which are dedicated to the memory of family members and loved ones who have died. We begin to observe *Yizkor* on the first of these four major holidays to occur after death.

This liturgy was created to provide an expanded *Yizkor* service for all the mourners among us. We have sensed a deep need for a more intimate and open *Yizkor*, where individuals and families can have an opportunity to express feelings and share thoughts and memories of loved ones. We hope that this service will help to provide some comfort as together, each of us moves through our own process of mourning.

Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman

Cantor Roy B. Einhorn

Rabbi Elaine S. Zecher

Rabbi Ruth Alpers

GIVE ME THE VISION

Shall I cry out in anger, O God,
Because Thy gifts are mine but for a while?
Shall I be ungrateful for the moments of laughter,
The seasons of joy, the days of gladness and festivity,
When tears cloud my eyes and darken the world
And my heart is heavy within me?
Shall I blot from mind the love
I have known and in which I have rejoiced
When a fate beyond my understanding takes from me
Friends and kin whom I have cherished, and leaves me
Bereft of shining presences that have lit my way
Through years of companionship and affection?

Give me the vision, O God, to see and feel
That imbedded deep in each of Thy gifts
Is a core of eternity, undiminished and bright,
An eternity that survives the dread hours
of affliction and misery.
Those I have loved, though now beyond my view,
Have given form and quality to my being.
They have led me into the wide universe
I continue to inhabit, and their presence
Is more vital to me than their absence.

What Thou givest, O God,
Thou takest not away.
And bounties once granted
Shed their radiance evermore.

Rabbi Morris Adler

יהוה מָה־אָדָם וַתֵּדָעֵהוּ
בֶּן־אֱנוֹשׁ וַתְּחַשְּׁבֵהוּ
אָדָם לַהֶבֶל דָּמָה
יָמָיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר
בַּבֹּקֶר יָצִיץ וְחָלָף
לָעֶרֶב יְמוֹלַל וְיָבֵשׁ
תָּשֵׁב אֱנוֹשׁ עַד־דַּכָּא
וַתֹּאמֶר: שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי־אָדָם:

ALMIGHTY ONE, what are human beings
that you take note of them,
the children of humanity
that you should think of them?
A human being is like a momentary breeze,
a person's days are but a passing shadow.
At dawn, life blossoms and renews itself,
at dusk, it withers and dries up.
You return a person unto dust.
You say: Return, O children of humanity!

There is a time for everything, for all things under the sun:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to laugh and a time to cry,

a time to dance and a time to mourn,
a time to seek and a time to lose,

a time to forget and a time to remember.

This day in sacred convocation we remember those who gave us life.

We remember those who enriched our lives with love and beauty, kindness and compassion, thoughtfulness and understanding.

We renew our bonds to those who have gone the way of all the earth.

As we reflect upon those whose memory moves us this day, we seek consolation, and the strength and insight born of faith.

May we live unselfishly, in truth and love and peace, so that we will be remembered as a blessing, as we this day lovingly remember those whose lives endure as a blessing.

E·sa ei·nai ei he·ha·rim,
mei·a·yin ya·vo ez·ri.
Ez·ri mei·im A·do·nai,
o·seh sha·ma·yim va·a·rets.

אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הֶהָרִים,
מֵאַיִן יָבוֹא עֶזְרִי.
עֶזְרִי מֵעִם יְיָ,
עוֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

I lift up my eyes, unto the mountains,
From whence does my help come?
My help will come from Adonai,
Maker of heaven and earth.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יהוה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר: בִּנְאוֹת דֶּשֶׁא יַרְבִּיצֵנִי
עַל־מֵי מְנֻחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי: נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוֹבֵב
יַנְחֵנִי בְמַעְגְּלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֵךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמָוֶת לֹא־אִירָא רָע
כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ הֵמָּה יְנַחֲמֻנִי:
תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי שֻׁלְחָן נֶגֶד צֹרְרָי
דִּשַּׁנְתָּ בַשֶּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסִי רְוָיָה:
אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּי
וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יהוה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים:

Adonai is my shepherd, I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures,
Leads me beside still waters and restores my soul.
You lead me in right paths for Your name's sake.
Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;
With rod and staff You comfort me.
You have set a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Adonai forever.

Our generations are bound to each other as children now remember their parents. Love is strong as death as husbands and wives now remember their mates, as parents remember their children, as companions remember their beloved. Memory conquers death's dominion as we now remember our brothers and sisters, grandparents, and our other relatives, friends and loved ones.

The death of those we now remember left gaping holes in our lives, but we are grateful for the gift of their lives. And we are strengthened by the blessings which they left us, by precious memories which comfort and sustain us as we recall them this day.

Moments of Sharing

Eili, Eili	אֵלִי, אֵלִי,
	El·li, El·li,
I pray that these things never end:	שֶׁלֹּא יִגָּמֵר לְעוֹלָם
	she·lo yi·ga·meir le·ol·am
The sand and the sea,	הַחוֹל וְהַיָּם,
	ha·chol ve·ha·yam,
The rush of the waters,	רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,
	rish·rush shel ha·ma·yim,
The crash of the heavens,	בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,
	be·rak ha·sha·ma·yim,
The prayer of the heart.	תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.
	te·fi·lat ha·a·dam.
The sand and the sea,	הַחוֹל וְהַיָּם,
	ha·chol ve·ha·yam,
The rush of the waters,	רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,
	rish·rush shel ha·ma·yim,
The crash of the heavens,	בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,
	be·rak ha·sha·ma·yim,
The prayer of the heart.	תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.
	te·fi·lat ha·a·dam.

A personal meditation...
Eternal God, Source of mercy, *give me the gift of remembering*. May my memories of the dead be tender and true, undiminished by time, not falsified by sentimentality. Let me recall them, and love them, as they were. *Give me the gift of tears*. Let me express my sense of loss, my sorrow, my pain, as well as my gratitude and my love. *Give me the gift of prayer*. May I confront You with an open heart, with trusting faith, unembarrassed and unashamed. *Give me the gift of hope*. May I always believe in the beauty of life, the power of goodness, the right to joy.

We rise to read silently the appropriate passages among those which follow, taking the opportunity to add personal meditations if desired.

In memory of a father:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אָבִי מוֹרִי שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר
(נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה
בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כָּבוֹד, שְׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ,
נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my father who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. May I prove myself worthy of the gift of life and the many other gifts with which he blessed me. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with his memory and with our entire family. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a mother:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אִמִּי מוֹרָתִי שֶׁהָלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר
(נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתָהּ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשָׁהּ צְרוּרָה
בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתָהּ כָּבוֹד, שְׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ,
נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my mother who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is her soul bound up in the bond of life. May I prove myself worthy of the gift of life and the many other gifts with which she blessed me. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with her memory and with our entire family. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a husband:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת בַּעֲלִי שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֶרֶת צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כָּבוֹד, שְׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my husband who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. Love is strong as death; deep bonds of love are indissoluble. The memory of our companionship and love leads me out of loneliness into all that we shared which still endures. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a wife:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אִשְׁתִּי שֶׁהָלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֶר צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתָהּ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשָׁהּ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתָהּ כָּבוֹד, שְׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my wife who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds and through prayer and memory is her soul bound up in the bond of life. "Many women have done superbly, but you surpass them all." Love is strong as death; deep bonds of love are indissoluble. The memory of our companionship and love leads me out of loneliness into all that we share which still endures. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a son:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת בְּנִי הָאָהוּב מַחְמַד עֵינַי שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֶר (נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כָּבוֹד, שְׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my beloved son who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. I am grateful for the sweetness of his life and for what he did accomplish. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a daughter:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת בִּתִּי הָאֲהוּבָה מַחְמַד עֵינַי שֶׁהָלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר (נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתָהּ. אָנָּא תְּהִי נַפְשָׁהּ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתָהּ כָּבוֹד, שָׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my beloved daughter who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is her soul bound up in the bond of life. I am grateful for the sweetness of her life and for what she did accomplish. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of other relatives and friends:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמוֹת קְרוֹבַי וְרֵעַי שֶׁהָלְכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר (נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. אָנָּא תִּהְיֶינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתָם כָּבוֹד, שָׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of _____ and of all relatives and friends who have gone to their eternal home. In loving testimony to their lives I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to them. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, are their souls bound up in the bond of life. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with their memory. May they rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of martyrs:

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמוֹת כָּל־אַחֵינוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁמָּסְרוּ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם עַל קִדּוּשׁ הַשֵּׁם. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר (נוֹדֶרֶת) צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. אָנָּא יִשָּׁמַע בְּחַיֵּינוּ הֵד גְּבוּרָתָם וּמְסִירוּתָם וְיֵרָאֶה בְּמַעֲשֵׂינוּ טָהֳרָה לִבָּם וְתִהְיֶינָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם צְרוּרוֹת בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים וּתְהִי מְנוּחָתָם כָּבוֹד, שָׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

May God remember the souls of our brethren, martyrs of our people, who gave their lives for the sanctification of His name. In their memory do I pledge charity. May their bravery, dedication, and purity be reflected in our lives. May their souls be bound up in the bond of life. And may they rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of congregants:

We lovingly recall the members of our congregation who no longer dwell upon this earth. They have a special place in our hearts. We pray this day that all who have sustained the loss of loved ones be granted comfort and strength.

Exalted, compassionate God, comfort the bereaved families of this congregation. Help all of us to perpetuate the worthy values in the lives of those no longer with us, whom we remember this day. May their memory endure as a blessing. And let us say: Amen.

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

The night I lost you
someone pointed me toward
the Five Stages of Grief.
Go that way, they said,
it's easy, like learning to climb
stairs after amputation.
And so I climbed.
Denial was first.
I sat down at breakfast,
carefully setting the table
for two. I passed you the toast --
you sat there. I passed
you the paper -- you hid
behind it.
Anger seemed more familiar.
I burned the toast, snatched
the paper, and read the headlines myself.
But they mentioned your departure
and so I moved on to
Bargaining. What could I exchange
for you? The silence
after storms? My typing fingers?
Before I could decide, Depression
came puffing up, a poor relation,
its suitcase tied together
with string. In the suitcase
were bandages for the eyes
and bottles of sleep. I slid
all the way down the stairs
feeling nothing.
And all the time Hope
flashed on and off
in defective neon.
Hope was a signpost pointing
straight in the air.
Hope was my uncle's middle name,
he died of it.
After a year I am still climbing,
though my feet slip
on your stone face.
The treeline
has long since disappeared;
green is a color
I have forgotten.
But now I see what I am climbing
toward: Acceptance
written in capital letters,
a special headline:
Acceptance.
Its name is in lights.
I struggle on,
waving and shouting.
Below, my whole life spreads its surf,
all the landscape I've ever known
or dreamed of. Below
a fish jumps; the pulse
in your neck.
Acceptance. I finally
reach it.
But something is wrong.
Grief is a circular staircase.
I have lost you.

Linda Pastan

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.
In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

We rise for El Male Rachamim...

אֵל מָלֵא רַחֲמִים, שׁוֹכֵן בַּמְּרוֹמִים, הַמְצֵא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה
תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה בְּמַעֲלוֹת קְדוֹשִׁים וּטְהוֹרִים כְּזֹהַר הָרָקִיעַ
מַזְהִירִים אֶת־נִשְׁמוֹת כָּל־אֵלֶּה שֶׁהִזְכַּרְנוּ הַיּוֹם לִבְרָכָה
שֶׁהָלְכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם, בְּגַן עֵדֶן תְּהִי מְנוּחָתָם. אָנָּא בַּעַל הָרַחֲמִים,
הַסְתִּירֵם בְּסֵתֶר כְּנָפֶיךָ לְעוֹלָמִים וּצְרֹר בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת־
נִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. יהוה הוּא נַחֲלָתָם, וְיָנוּחוּ בְשָׁלוֹם עַל
מִשְׁכְּבוֹתֵיהֶם. וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace among the holy and the pure, in Your sheltering Presence, to the souls of all our beloved who have gone to their eternal home. May their memory endure as inspiration for deeds of charity and goodness in our lives. May their souls thus be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

שָׁלוֹם רָב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ תָּשִׂים לְעוֹלָם, כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אָדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם.
וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בִּשְׁלוֹמֶךָ.

Shalom rav al yisra'el am'cha tasim l'olam. Ki ata hu melech adon l'chol hashalom v'tov b'enecha l'varech et am'cha yisra'el b'chol et uv'chol sha'a bish'lomecha.

Give abundant peace to Israel, Your people, forever. For You are the Sovereign God of all peace. And You find it good to bless Your people Israel with Your peace at every season and every hour.

לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	*Each Of Us Has a Name*
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים	given by God
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ	and given by our parents
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאַפָּן חִיּוּכוֹ	given by our stature and our smile
וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרִיג	and given by what we wear
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ הֶהָרִים	given by the mountains
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ חֻמָּיו	and given by our walls
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ הַמַּזָּלוֹת	given by the stars
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ שְׁכֵנָיו	and given by our neighbors
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ חַטָּאָיו	given by our sins
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ כְּמִיהָתוֹ	and given by our longing
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ שׂוֹנְאָיו	given by our enemies
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ אַהֲבָתוֹ	and given by our love
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ חַגָּיו	given by our celebrations
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ מְלַאכְתּוֹ	and given by our work
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ תְּקוּפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה	given by the seasons
וְנָתַן לוֹ עִוָּרוֹנוֹ	and given by our blindness
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הַיָּם	given by the sea
וְנָתַן לוֹ	and given by
מוֹתוֹ:	our death.

Zelda (translated by Marcia Falk)

A SACRED PILGRIMAGE

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
But life is a journey.
A going - a growing
From stage to stage.

From childhood to maturity
And youth to age.
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
And then perhaps, to wisdom.

From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness -
And, often back again.
From health to sickness
And back we pray, to health again.

From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding -
From fear to faith.

From defeat to defeat to defeat -
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage
by stage, a sacred pilgrimage.

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
But life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage -
Made stage by stage -
To life everlasting.

Rabbi Alvin Fine

Life and death,
a twisted vine sharing a single root.

A water bright green
stretching to top a twisted yellow
only to wither itself
as another green unfolds overhead.

One leaf atop another
yet under the next;
a vibrant tapestry of arcs and falls
all in the act of becoming.

Death is the passing of life.
And life
is the stringing together of so many little passings.

Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro

It is a fearful thing
to love
what death can touch.

A fearful thing
to love,
hope, dream: to be -

to be,
and oh! to lose.

A thing for fools, this,
and
a holy thing,
a holy thing
to love.

For
your life has lived in me,
your laugh once lifted me,
your word was gift to me.

To remember this brings a painful joy.

'Tis a human thing, love,
a holy thing,
to love what death has touched.

Chaim Stern

SLEEP IN THE QUIET NURSERY OF NATURE

I often feel that death is not the enemy of life, but its friend, for it is the knowledge that our years are limited which makes them so precious. It is the truth that time is but lent to us which makes us, at our best, look upon our years as a trust handed into our temporary keeping. We are like children privileged to spend a day in a great park, a park filled with many gardens and playgrounds and azure-tinted lakes with white boats sailing upon the tranquil waves. True, the day allotted to each one of us is not the same in length, in light, in beauty. Some children of earth are privileged to spend a long and sunlit day in the garden of the earth. For others the day is shorter, cloudier, and dusk descends more quickly as in a winter's tale. But whether our life is a long summery day or a shorter wintry afternoon, we know that inevitably there are storms and squalls which overcast even the bluest heaven and there are sunlit rays which pierce the darkest autumn sky. The day that we are privileged to spend in the great park of life is not the same for all human beings, but there is enough beauty and joy and gaiety in the hours if we will but treasure them. Then for each one of us the moment comes when the great nurse, death, takes us, the child, by the hand and quietly says, "It is time to go home. Night is coming. It is your bedtime, child of earth. Come; you're tired. Lie down at last in the quiet nursery of nature and sleep. Sleep well. The day is gone. Stars shine in the canopy of eternity."

Joshua Loth Liebman

MOURNER'S KADDISH

Exalted and Sacred
is Your great Name
in the world created
by Your will,
and Your sovereignty
will prevail in our own day,
in our own lives,
and in the life of all Israel,
speedily and soon,
and say: Amein.

Your great Name
will be blessed in the world
for ever and ever,
through all eternity.

Blessed, praised,
honored, extolled, glorified,
adored, exalted above all else
is Your Holy Name, blessed be You
beyond all blessings, songs,
praises, and consolations
that may be uttered in this world,
and say: Amein

May You bring great
peace from the heavens
And life for us and for all
Israel, and say: Amein.

Source of Life
who makes peace on high,
make peace descend
on us and on all Israel,
and say: Amein

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי־בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ,

Yit·ga·dal ve·yit·ka·dash she·mei ra·ba be·al·ma di·ve·ra chi·re·u·tei,

וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל־בֵּית

ve·yam·lich mal·chu·tei be·cha·yei·chon u·ve·yo·mei·chon u·ve·cha·yei de·chol beit

יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis·ra·eil, ba·a·ga·la u·vi·ze·man ka·riv, ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.

Ye·hei she·mei ra·ba me·va·rach le·a·lam u·le·al·mei al·ma·ya.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא, וְיִתְהַדַּר

Yit·ba·rach ve·yish·ta·bach, ve·yit·pa·ar ve·yit·ro·mam ve·yit·na·sei, ve·yit·ha·dar

וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקוּדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעֵלָּא מִן־כָּל־

ve·yit·a·leh ve·yit·ha·lal she·mei de·ku·de·sha, be·rich hu, le·ei·la min kol

בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא,

bi·re·cha·ta ve·shi·ra·ta, tush·be·cha·ta ve·ne·che·ma·ta, da·a·mi·ran be·al·ma,

וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן־שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל,

Ye·hei she·la·ma ra·ba min she·ma·ya ve·cha·yim a·lei·nu ve·al kol Yis·ra·eil,

וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־

O·seh sha·lom bi·me·ro·mav, hu ya·a·seh sha·lom a·lei·nu ve·al kol

יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis·ra·eil, ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

May the One who causes peace to reign in the heavens above, let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world, and let us say: Amen.

SOURCES

Brener, Anne, *Mourning & Mitzvah*, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993.

Harlow, Rabbi Jules, Editor, *The Bond of Life*, New York, The Rabbinical Assembly, 1983.

Harlow, Rabbi Jules, Editor, *A Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1985.

Riemer, Jack, Editor, *Wrestling with the Angel*, New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1995.

SLEEP IN THE QUIET NURSERY OF NATURE

I often feel that death is not the enemy of life, but its friend, for it is the knowledge that our years are limited which makes them so precious. It is the truth that time is but lent to us which makes us, at our best, look upon our years as a trust handed into our temporary keeping. We are like children privileged to spend a day in a great park, a park filled with many gardens and playgrounds and azure-tinted lakes with white boats sailing upon the tranquil waves. True, the day allotted to each one of us is not the same in length, in light, in beauty. Some children of earth are privileged to spend a long and sunlit day in the garden of the earth. For others the day is shorter, cloudier, and dusk descends more quickly as in a winter's tale. But whether our life is a long summery day or a shorter wintry afternoon, we know that inevitably there are storms and squalls which overcast even the bluest heaven and there are sunlit rays which pierce the darkest autumn sky. The day that we are privileged to spend in the great park of life is not the same for all human beings, but there is enough beauty and joy and gaiety in the hours if we will but treasure them. Then for each one of us the moment comes when the great nurse, death, takes us, the child, by the hand and quietly says, "It is time to go home. Night is coming. It is your bedtime, child of earth. Come; you're tired. Lie down at last in the quiet nursery of nature and sleep. Sleep well. The day is gone. Stars shine in the canopy of eternity."

Joshua Loth Liebman

MOURNER'S KADDISH

Exalted and Sacred
is Your great Name
in the world created
by Your will,
and Your sovereignty
will prevail in our own day,
in our own lives,
and in the life of all Israel,
speedily and soon,
and say: Amein.

Your great Name
will be blessed in the world
for ever and ever,
through all eternity.

Blessed, praised,
honored, extolled, glorified,
adored, exalted above all else
is Your Holy Name, blessed be You
beyond all blessings, songs,
praises, and consolations
that may be uttered in this world,
and say: Amein

May You bring great
peace from the heavens
And life for us and for all
Israel, and say: Amein.

Source of Life
who makes peace on high,
make peace descend
on us and on all Israel,
and say: Amein

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי־בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ,

Yit·ga·dal ve·yit·ka·dash she·mei ra·ba be·al·ma di·ve·ra chi·re·u·tei,

וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל־בֵּית

ve·yam·lich mal·chu·tei be·cha·yei·chon u·ve·yo·mei·chon u·ve·cha·yei de·chol beit

יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis·ra·eil, ba·a·ga·la u·vi·ze·man ka·riv, ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.

Ye·hei she·mei ra·ba me·va·rach le·a·lam u·le·al·mei al·ma·ya.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא, וְיִתְהַדַּר

Yit·ba·rach ve·yish·ta·bach, ve·yit·pa·ar ve·yit·ro·mam ve·yit·na·sei, ve·yit·ha·dar

וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקוּדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעֵלָּא מִן כָּל־

ve·yit·a·leh ve·yit·ha·lal she·mei de·ku·de·sha, be·rich hu, le·ei·la min kol

בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא,

bi·re·cha·ta ve·shi·ra·ta, tush·be·cha·ta ve·ne·che·ma·ta, da·a·mi·ran be·al·ma,

וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל,

Ye·hei she·la·ma ra·ba min she·ma·ya ve·cha·yim a·lei·nu ve·al kol Yis·ra·eil,

וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־

O·seh sha·lom bi·me·ro·mav, hu ya·a·seh sha·lom a·lei·nu ve·al kol

יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis·ra·eil, ve·i·me·ru: a·mein.

May the One who causes peace to reign in the heavens above, let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world, and let us say: Amen.

SOURCES

Brener, Anne, *Mourning & Mitzvah*, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993.

Harlow, Rabbi Jules, Editor, *The Bond of Life*, New York, The Rabbinical Assembly, 1983.

Harlow, Rabbi Jules, Editor, *A Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1985.

Riemer, Jack, Editor, *Wrestling with the Angel*, New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1995.