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TOWARD A COURSE OF STUDY ON PRAYER FOR THE CONFIRMATION DEPARTMENT OF THE REFORM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

(sub-titled)

THE MIRACLE

BY

LAWRENCE N. MAHRER

This thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Hebrew Letters Degree and Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute of Religion,
Cincinnati, Ohio
1959

Referee, Professor Sylvan Schwartzman

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Lawrence Mahrer:

Toward a Course of Study on Prayer for the Confirmation Department of the Reform Religious School.

This thesis, entitled "Toward a Course of Study on Prayer for the Confirmation Department of the Reform Religious School", is divisible into two sections. The first is the introductory material. This includes the reasons why this thesis was considered to be necessary, the methods used in the research into the subject, and finally the results of this research. As a subdivision to this section there is an appendix containing copies of the questionnaires used and the statistical charts of the results. There is also a supplement embodying some secondary, though important, material which came out of the research but which does not fit into the Introduction. The second section of the thesis is a proposed new textbook for a course on prayer and the prayerbook for the Confirmation Department of the Reform Religious School.

By giving achievement and attitude tests to the students of eight religious schools across the country, it was possible to prove that the current text in this field, In the House of the Lord, by Dr. Solomon B. Freehof is not doing an adequate job of training Reform Jewish youth in this most im-

portant area. Neither achievement levels nor attitudes are sufficiently high. This indicates that a new text is necessary.

In the proposed new text, entitled "The Miracle", which makes up the second section of the thesis, the attempt was made to meet and solve some of the problems which were inherent in the current text. This proposed new text approaches the material from a topical-problem approach. The first half of the book is a topical history of worship forms and modes beginning with primitive man and ending with the modern Reform Jew. The second half of the book attempts to find answers to some basic questions about prayer by referring to material contained in the Union Prayerbook. Some of these questions are; Why do we pray?, What is prayer?, What happens when we pray?, To Whom do we pray?, Does God answer prayer? It was felt that these are the questions which teen-agers ask about worship and prayer, and that by approaching the material in this manner teen-agers can be interested and motivated to find answers for themselves. The material would, thereby, become meaningful and relevant to them. If this could be accomplished, the results of a study of the material would be much better than they currently are.

DEDICATION

This Thesis is lovingly dedicated to my wife, Janet, without whose encouragement its writing would have been so much more difficult, and to our families whose patience and support enabled us to bring this project to fruition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In any thesis which involves the writing of a book, there are three basic questions which must be answered: 1) why was the book felt to be necessary, 2) what were the methods employed in determining if this felt need was actual, 3) what were the results of this research which led to the eventual writing of the book? This introductory section will attempt to explain my feelings and procedures.

As we investigate the various curricula used and proposed for the use in Reform congregations, we find that one of the major goals underlying them all is to prepare the student for his eventual life as an American Reform Jew in the Twentieth Century. We certainly cannot disagree with this intention. However, some of the methods employed to translate this intention into a reality are indeed open to question. We find that in most of these curricula the major emphasis is placed on the mastery of courses such as Bible, history, customs and ceremonies, and Hebrew. All of these are important, but their value in the daily life of the Reform Jew can be questioned. It requires a stimulating text and teacher to bring out the relevence of medieval Jewish history for today's teen-ager. The same might be said for Bible and many of the other courses included in the typical religious school course of study.

If our present day Reform Jews engage in any religious activity, it is worship. Yet in the 1957-58 Curriculum for the Jewish Religious School prepared by the Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations no provision was made in any of the three curricula for a course on prayer or the prayerbook apart from the Hebrew study program. The textbook, In the House of the Lord by Dr. Solomon B. Freehof, which deals with the subject was mentioned as a possible alternate selection for the Confirmation Class. In the 1958-59 edition of the same curriculum this book is the suggested text for the special sessions of the Confirmation Class. It is the only text available for the teaching of this material. It is surprising to me that this most important area of study has not been dealt with by a great many more authors, and that it does not find a more prominent place in our 'official' curricula. This is one of the major reasons for undertaking the present thesis.

Very closely allied to this is the second reason for initiating this project. I firmly believe that this material can be made relevent to our teen-agers, and that they are quite interested in prayer, having many questions about worship, its value, what it does, how it works, etc. In preparation for the writing of his rabbinic thesis, Jack Spiro submitted questionnaires to over 1000 religious school students in the Cincinnati area. The questionnaire

consisted of a list of forty topics and questions about the Bible. The students were asked to check those about which they would be interested in studying. Three of these topics dealt with prayer, and all three were checked by more than fifty percent of the students. These topics were; Does prayer work?, Why do we pray?, Who is God?, and Does God speak to human beings?

The third reason for undertaking the present thesis is much more subjective, and is related with all modesty and humility. On two occasions I had the opportunity to teach using <u>In the House of the Lord</u> as the text. In both cases I found it to be highly unsatisfactory to me and to my students. They did not feel that its contents touched their lives, that it answered the questions which they asked about prayer and the prayerbook. At another time, and again over a period of two years, I supervised teachers whose classes were using this text. Again there was manifest dissatisfaction on the part of the students and the teachers.

Because I felt that a course on prayer and the prayerbook belongs in the curriculum of any Reform religious school, because I felt that the teen-age students of these schools were interested in this topic, and finally, because I believed that the present textbook covering this material was not completely adequate, I decided to write the pre-

sent thesis.

In the "Foreward" to In the House of the Lord the following is stated:

> .....We cannot hope to build up a worshipping congregation unless we make that aim part of our specific preparation in the religious schools. Such a course would lead directly into later adult experiences, for the prayer book is the one Jewish book that the child will see most and handle most when he is an adult. Surely we must prepare the child to understand the prayer book, the history back of it, the religious attitudes it implies, the structure and symmetry of the book.....The result sought for will be that the child, having taken the course, will understand the structure, the philosophy, and the history of the prayerbook. (pages IX-X)

Under "Specific Objectives" adopted by the Commission on Jewish Education, listed on page 4 of the Union Curriculum the following are stated as the objectives of the course of study in prayer"

> ....Understanding of the various blessings, prayers, and hymns and the basic concepts which they represent.

....Knowledge of the structure and history of the prayerbook.

....Positive attitudes toward prayer and worship.

....Habits of personal prayer and attendance at worship services.

In attempting to determine the need for a new textbook in this field, it was necessary to discover if the book presently being used met the goals and objectives outlined for it in the above quotations. As the first step a double postcard questionnaire was sent out to the entire membership of the Central Conference of American Rabbis asking if a course on the prayerbook was taught in their religious school, and if so, which book was used as a text. A copy of the postcard questionnaire is included in the appendix.

To those rabbis who had responded saying that they offered such a course in their school using In the House of the Lord an additional postcard was sent asking if I might send a questionnaire for their students to fill out. There were a number of affirmative responses, and the student questionnaires were mailed to the rabbis. They were to be used with those students who were completing their course on prayer, and also with those students in the preceeding grade who had not as yet taken the course. In this way

the results might be compared, and the actual value of the text determined. A copy of this questionnaire is also included in the appendix.

Section A of this questionnaire asked for some general background information about the student which would later be used in forming statistical correlations. Sections B, C, D, and E were a test dealing with information about the contents, structure, and history of the prayerbook. All of the questions in these sections refer to material covered in In the House of the Lord. In fact, Dr. Freehof's own list of Hebrew terms (pg. 152) was used for section B.

Section F was an attempt to discover the student's attitudes to prayer in general, and to forms of Jewish prayer in particular. The questions were made as general as possible, so that the student would be able to express his true feelings.

Sections G and H were attempts to get at the student's understanding of the basic concepts and religious attitudes implied in Jewish worship. The particular types of questions used tried to determine the depth of the understanding of these concepts and attitudes.

We have answered the first two of our questions about the

procedure employed here. We are now ready for the third; What were the results of this research?

The original post card questionnaire was mailed to the entire membership of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which numbers approximately 650. From this mailing 157 replies were received, and of this number only 72 offer a course of the type in which I was interested. In forty religious schools In the House of the Lord is the textbook used, while the other 32 use other materials. (Twenty-four use no actual text, only the Union Prayer Book.)

Of the forty responses which were received, 29 answered affirmatively when asked if their students might participate in a survey of student progress. A second postcard was sent to these congregations requesting the number of students in the class currently studying In the House of the Lord, and also the number of students in the next lowest grade. Only 17 replies were received from this mailing. The student questionnaires were immediately sent to these 17 congregations, and were received back, completed, from eight. I was rather distrubed by the diminishing number of responses at every step, but I was informed that this was to be expected.

The eight congregations which returned completed question-

naires are:

Beth Zion	Johnstown, Pa.
Shaaray Tefila	New York, N. Y.
Temple Emanuel	Mansfield, Ohio
Temple Israel	Omaha, Nebr.
Temple Shalom	Phoenix, Ariz.
Temple Israel of Westchester	Los Angeles, Calif.
Temple Emanuel	San Francisco, Calif.
Beneh Abraham	Portsmouth, Ohio

While the number is small, I feel that the sample is quite adequate statistically because it is completely random, it includes all sections of the country, and it covers congregations of all sizes from the smallest to the largest. The total number of students included is 264, but because some answers were of such a nature as to be useless, some answers evidenced a lack of understanding of the directions given, and in some cases the entire questionnaire was not completed, none of our statistics reflect the entire group.

As an interesting sidelight, which adds weight to my reasons for attempting this thesis, 38 congregations replied that they did not offer a course dealing with prayer and the prayerbook because, either they could not find an adequate textbook, or they had used Dr. Freehof's book and had

discontinued it and removed the course from their curriculum.

Sections B, C, D, and E of the questionnaire are a test of the information which the student has about prayer and the prayerbook. There are 25 questions included in these sections, and they will be treated as one unit. Section F is an attempt to discover the attitudes of the students toward worship, prayer, and the prayerbook. There are five questions in this section, (number 4 will be treated separately later), and each will be discussed individually. Sections G and H are a test of the students' basic understandings. There are 10 questions in these sections, with 14 possible answers, and the results are handled as a unit. Chart #1 in the appendix contains the basic results of the research in these three categories.

As we look at the first line across this chart, we notice that in the area of information the numbers are disturbing. Those students who were not taking the course in prayer only had 5.4 answers correct out of a possible 25. We would have suspected that their general religious school training would have enabled them to do better than this. Those students who did take the course, using In the House of the Lord as their text, managed to do some-

what better. They had 12.4 correct answers on the average, but even this is below 50%, and it is only a 28% improvement over those students who had not taken such a course. I do not believe that this improvement is satisfactory. Chart #2 in the appendix gives the further breakdown of these sections of the questionnaire.

Referring again to chart #1, let us look at the results of the attitude test. There is one general result which is immediately apparent. Looking only at the positive responses to our five questions, it is noticed that in all instances there is a higher percentage of positive attitude among those students who have not taken the course under consideration. We likewise notice that in response to three of these questions there is a greater percentage of negative replies among the students who have taken the course, while in a fourth question the resulting percentage is the same. With regard to those students whose response was classified as indifferent, in four cases out of the five there was a higher percentage in this group from those students who had taken a course on prayer and the prayerbook. From these results we can draw the general conclusion that with regard to students' attitudes toward worship and prayer, the use of <u>In the House of the Lord</u> has no positive effect, and in fact a negative correlation appears.

Turning our attention to the test of Understanding, we look at the results as indicated on the last line of the first chart. Those students who had taken the course could answer only 5.6 questions out of the 14 included which is approximately 40%. We certainly cannot be satisfied with this result. It is only approximately a 14% improvement over the 3.8 average which the students who did not take the course made. Chart number three gives a further breakdown of this material and includes everything from which the information in chart #1 was compiled.

All of these results point to one conclusion; In the House of the Lord is not achieving the results for which it was designed and which were outlined by its author and by the Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which published the book.

There is one objection which can be directed against these results; the Union curriculum is based on the assumption that the student will have studied a minimum amount of Hebrew, and that in this Hebrew preparation some attention will be paid to liturgical needs. Therefore, it is improper to test students on this book without some regard to their level of Hebrew knowledge.

In section A of the student questionnaire we attempted to discover the extent of the students' Hebrew knowledge. It was felt that if the student could claim to be able to read the Hebrew prayers contained in the Sabbath worship service his Hebrew training had progressed to the point where it might have some effect on his knowledge of prayer and the prayerbook. At this point it should have supplemented In the House of the Lord. There were 61 students who expressed the ability to read Hebrew to the level mentioned in the question. Of this number 26 had taken the course and 35 had not. Chart #4 in the appendix shows the composite results when these students were treated separately. Those who had taken the course had an average of 11.4 correct on the information test and 5.7 correct on the understandings test. Those who had not taken the course had an average of 5.2 correct on the information test and 3.4 on the test of understandings. If we compare these results to those included for the same categories of students on chart #1, we see that they are almost identical. Therefore, we can state that the study of Hebrew does not have a positive effect on students' knowledge about, or understanding of, the prayerbook over and above what may be obtained through studying the material in a text specifically designed for it. The combination of Hebrew and Dr. Freehof's text proposed by the Union Curriculum is no more effective than the English textbook alone. It was impossible to carry out

a correlation between the study of Hebrew and the students' attitudes toward prayer and worship as an insufficient number of these students completed that section of the questionnaire.

There were two additional correlations which were made which are of interest; the attitudes of those students who attend congregational worship services frequently, and the attitudes of those whose parents evidence a positive attitude toward religion.

In section A the students were asked to indicate their degree of attendance at congregational Sabbath services. It was decided that an attendance of at least once a month would be called 'frequent'. There were 46 students in this grouping. Chart #5 contains the necessary information about their attitudes. It will be noticed that there is a much higher percentage of positive responses and a lower percentage of negative responses than those mentioned for the total group in chart #1. This is true for almost all questions. It is possible to say, therefore, that there is a definite positive correlation between attendance at worship services and attitudes toward prayer, worship, and the prayerbook.

It might be difficult to determine the exact cause-

and-effect relationship in this area. Is attendance high because attitudes are high, or is the more positive attitude a product of a greater degree of attendance? Throughout this study we have been confronted by generally low attitudes toward worship. Here the opposite is true. There is one additional factor which might have had some influence in this respect. Many of these boys and girls are in the Confirmation class, and in at least a few cases their attendance at worship services is required. It, therefore, appears to me that attendance came first, and any improvement in attitudes grew out of this increase. If this is correct, it justifies the practice of many rabbis and might indicate a new program for the Confirmation Class of all congregations.

Next we attempted to determine the relationship between students' attitudes and the attitudes of the parents as expressed through their attendance at worship services and their home observances. Parents who attended services at least once a month and who observed at least seven of the home ceremonies listed in section A of the questionnaire were classified as having a positive attitude toward worship. The children of these families were compared to the total group and it was found that their attitudes were more positive. Chart #6 contains all of the statistics. It will be noticed that almost straight down

the line there is an increase in positive attitudes and a corresponding decrease in negative attitudes.

Again we are faced with the problem of determining the cause and effect relationship. Frequently we hear discussions of home observances and their value, and quite often these observances are suggested "for their own sake." While this approach has merit, we can be more pragmatic and practical when we realize that an observant home is one which fosters positive attitudes in the children. An effective increase in home observance might help us in our fight against the indifference and apathy in the lives of so many of our congregants.

This becomes even more apparent and important when we look at our next chart: the correlation between high attitudes and information and understandings. All students who expressed positive attitudes on three out of the five questions in section F were classified as having a generally positive attitude. Chart # 7 shows that these students had significantly higher scores on the tests of information and understanding.

It is well known that frequently the material taught in the religious school has no relationship to what the student sees and does in his own home, and that under these circumstances the material taught has little or no

relevance to the child. We can now see graphically and statistically that relevance, meaning, and personal experience with what is taught definitely effect the level of learning.

All of these charts indicate the need for a new textbook in this area for our religious schools. Number one shows that the use of the current textbook does not give the results for which the book was designed. Charts numbered 2 and 3 give further evidence of this fact. Even the study of Hebrew does not improve the situation as indicated by chart # 4. The last three charts 5, 6, 7, clearly indicate that progress in this area is possible, that there are some students whose attitudes are high and whose interest has been sufficiently awakened for above average success to be achieved.

There are two remaining parts to this thesis. The first is the Supplement; a compendium of information gathered when doing the research for this thesis which does not actually fit into this introductory section. The second is the book itself.

In writing the book, entitled The Miracle, I have attempted to keep the above objections to the present text in mind. The book can be sub-divided into two sections; the first

being a topical history of worship, and the second, attempts to answer a series of questions relating to worship and prayer.

It was felt that our present day teen-agers are concerned with prayer, that they do not understand it, that they have many questions about worship, and that by approaching the material through these questions it could be made relevant and meaningful to the students.

These questions have disturbed man throughout his history, particularly as he attempted to relate himself to that power which he felt controlled his life and his universe. All worship experiences and forms of the past are evidence of man's attempts to find answers to these basic questions. The same will be said of all such methods developed in the future.

Judaism found its answer in the synagogue, in the rabbinic law and lore which regulated its conduct, in the Siddur of Amram which for the first time gave written form to its service, in the Ghetto Shul of Europe, and in the magnificent modern temples of American Reform congregations. Basically these are all the same, and future developments will follow along the same time-worn and hallowed path.....

.....hence, THE MIRACLE

APPENDIX

XVIII

Dear Rabbi:

As a Senior Rabbinic student of the Cincinnati School of HUC-JIR, I am now engaged in the preparation of my Rabbinic Thesis. My general topic is the teaching of the Prayerbook in Reform Jewish Religious Schools, excluding Hebrew courses dealing with the prayers.

I would appreciate your kind cooperation in filling out the attached questionnaire and returning it to me promptly.

Thank you in advance for your helpfulness, and for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Larry Mahrer
Rabbinic Student

1. Do you teach a course dealing with our Prayerbook apart from the Hebrew curriculum?_____
2. In the teaching of such a course, what pupil text(s) are used? In what grade?
   a._____grade_____
   b._____grade_____
   c._____grade_____
3. What are your objectives, what do you hope to accomplish, in teaching these courses?_____
_____
_____
4. How much weekly time is spent on these courses? _____How often are worship services held for the Religious School?weekly___monthly___other____What Prayerbook is used?_____
5. Would you be willing to permit your students to participate in a study of student achievement?_____
Community_____Signature_____

Dear Student:

In filling out this questionnaire you will be participating in a ... study that is being conducted in many religious schools. Your help is very much appreciated.

This is <u>not</u> a test that will in any way count toward your grade. Therefore, you should feel free to answer exactly as you wish, giving your own ideas and feelings. Nor will anyone know what you have written here, as your name will not be asked.

Please read the directions carefully before answering each set of questions. Try to keep your answers brief, but be sure to say everything necessary for a complete answer.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Larry Mahrer
Rabbinic Student
HUC-JIR

A. First we need some general information, so please answer the following questions.

Name of congregation_____City_____
Religious school grade_____ age_____ sex_____

Are you taking a course dealing with the prayerbook?_____If so, what is the name of the textbook which you are using?_____ _____ Can you read, in Hebrew, most of the prayers contained in the Sabbath worship service?_____

How often do you personally attend Sabbath services? (check one) _____ every week_____ at least once a month_____ at least five times a year _____ less often.

How often do your parents attend Sabbath services? (check one) _____every week_____at least once a month_____at least five times a year_____less often.

Does your religious school hold worship services during the morning?_____How many times a month are these services held?_____

In the lists below please put a check mark before those ceremonies which are observed in your home, daily, weekly, or yearly.

<u>Daily</u>
___prayers before sleep?
___prayers upon arising
___blessings over food

<u>Weekly</u>
___Sabbath candle-lighting
___blessing over the Sabbath wine
___Havdolo
___blessings over food

<u>Yearly</u>
___Passover Seder
___Chanukah candle-lighting
___building a family Succah

B. In the left-hand column below are ten terms relating to the prayerbook. In the right-hand column are certain definitions or explanations. By putting the proper number in the blank space before it, match each item in the left-hand column with that item in the right-hand column which best defines or explains it.

____Minyon	1. Pointer used in reading the Torah
____Bor'chu	2. Weekly reading from the Prophets and the writings.
____Yod	3. Prayer honoring the memory of the dead.
____The T'filo	4. "Call to worship".
____K'dusho	5. Psalms recited on Holidays.
____Sedra	6. Minimum number for public worship.
____Kaddish	7. Hebrew calendar.
____Haftoro	8. Prayers recited over wine.
____Hallel	9. Prayers dealing with the unity of God.
____Kiddush	10. Prayers dealing with the holiness of God.
	11. Weekly reading from the Torah.
	12. A series of prayers of petition for special blessings.

C. Below are a series of questions each followed by four possible answers. Put a circle around the letter of the <u>one</u> which you feel <u>best</u> answers the question.

1. How many regular services are conducted in the traditional synagogue daily?

   A. 1 B. 0 C. 4 D. 3

2. What is the least number of people who must be present in order for congregational worship to be held?

   A. 13 B. 10 C. 7 D. 2

3. Where do most scholars feel that the first synagogues were located?

   A. Germany B. Palestine C. Assyria D. Babylonia

4. How long ago were our oldest prayers recited?

   A. 2500 years B. 2000 years C. 1000 years D. 500

5. Where does the Sh'ma originally come from?

   A. Talmud B. Orthodox prayerbook C. Bible D. The service in the Temple in Jerusalem

6. How many prayers are included in the basic Amido?

   A. 25 B. 11 C. 6 D. 18

7. Where did the practice of reading the Torah as part of worship first develop?

   A. The ancient Temple B. The ancient synagogue C. The European Orthodox synagogue D. The Tabernacle in the wilderness

8. Where did the use of music as part of the service originate?

A. The ancient Temple B. The ancient synagogue. C. European Reform temples D. European Orthodox synagogues

D. Below you will find two lists of four words each. One word does not fit with the other three. Place a circle around the letter in front of the word that does not fit.

A. T'filo	A. Torah reading
B. Hallel	B. Haftoro
C. Sh'mone Esre	C. Sermon
D. Amido	D. Adoration

E. Listed below are the opening words of five prayers. Using the numbers 1,2,3,4, and 5 in the blank spaces before each, arrange them in the order in which they appear in the prayerbook.

____"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts ..."
____"Praise ye the Lord to whom all praise is due ..."
____"Let us adore the ever-living God who spread out the heavens.."
____"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart ..."
____"Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who in Thy mercy makest light to shine over the earth ..."

F. Please complete the following statements briefly. Remember, you are asked here to give only your own ideas, feelings, and opinions. So, when you answer, you are stating exactly how you feel about things.

1. About Temple worship I feel _____

_____

_____

2. In comparison with Temple worship, I feel that private prayer is _____

_____

_____

3. To me, the prayers in the prayerbook are_____

_____

_____

4. The part of the service I like best is . . . . . because_____

_____

_____

5. About prayer in general I feel _____

_____

_____

6. About religious school worship I feel _____

_____

_____

G. Here are some statements about the prayerbook. What is your reaction to each? Give your answer by checking the proper space beneath each.

1. The majority of material in the prayerbook is Talmudic in origin.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

2. In general, the basic structure of the Orthodox and Reform prayerbooks is the same.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

3. There is a considerable difference between the structure of the Sabbath services and those of the Holidays.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

4. By and large the basic structure of Jewish prayerbooks is the same all over the world.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

5. The prayerbook speaks in the plural rather than in the singular, primarily because it is the congregation rather than the individual that is praying.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

6. Jewish worship is designed as much for education as for prayer.

   I agree___ I partly agree___ I disagree___ I have no opinion___

H. Listed below are the opening words of certain prayers. Beneath each are four possible meanings. <u>One or more</u> of these may apply to the particular prayer. Place a circle around the letter before <u>each</u> meaning which applies.

1. "Praise ye the Lord to whom all praise is due ..."
   A. We must worship the Lord in holiness.
   B. God is worthy of our honor.
   C. Prepare your heart, and make your mind ready to approach God properly.
   D. God is the source of all our blessings.

2. "Let us adore the ever-living God who spread out the heavens."
   A. God has established the brotherhood of all men.
   B. God created everything.
   C. We must strive to make our world a better place in which to live.
   D. God rules over the Jewish people.

3. "Praised be Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, God of Abraham..."
   A. The God whom we worship is the God of our ancestors.
   B. God created the heavens and the earth.
   C. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were creators of Judaism.
   D. God is our protector to whom we can turn when we need help.

4. "Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who in Thy mercy makest light to shine over the earth ..."
   A. God created the universe.
   B. All men were created in the image of God.
   C. God is a creator; therefore we must create.
   D. We must strive to make our world a better place for all mankind.

CHART #1

GENERAL RESULTS

		students taking course on prayer	students not taking course om prayer	total group
Information--average grade		12.4	5.4	7.3
Attitudes----(percentages)	#1 positive	33	42	34
	#1 indifferent	47	32	44
	#1 negative	20	26	22
	#2 positive	50	75	66
	#2 indifferent	37	19	26
	#2 negative	13	6	8
	#3 positive	30	37	32.5
	#3 indifferent	50	43	45.5
	#3 negative	20	20	22
	#5 positive	40	52	46.5
	#5 indifferent	50	39	42.5
	#5 negative	10	9	11
	#6 positive	22	24	23.5
	#6 indifferent	25	32	28.5
	#6 negative	53	44	48
Understanding--average grade		5.6	3.8	4.2

CHART # 2

TEST OF INFORMATION

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
students taking course					2	1	2	2	1	1	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	1	1	1	1
students not taking course	4	5	4	12	13	21	15	17	7	6	3	1	2	2								
total group	4	5	4	12	15	22	17	19	8	7	6	5	6	6	4	4	1	2	1	1	1	2

CHART # 3

TEST OF UNDERSTANDING

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
students taking course			1	4	9	6	6	8	5		1
students not taking course	13	5	16	16	17	13	11	3	4	3	
total group	13	5	17	20	26	19	17	11	9	3	1

CHART # 4

EFFECT OF HEBREW STUDY

	information	understanding
students taking course	11.4	5.7
students not taking course	5.2	3.4

CHART # 5

ATTITUDES AND TEMPLE ATTENDANCE

	% positive	% indifferent	% negative
question 1.	53	45	12
question 2.	64	28	8
question 3.	43	41	16
question 5.	47	45	8

CHART # 6

ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS' ATTITUDES ARE POSITIVE

	% positive	% indifferent	% negative
question 1.	44	42	14
question 2.	61	26	13
question 3.	40	40	20
question 5.	56	40	4

CHART # 7

HIGH ATTITUDES AND SCORES ON TESTS OF INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

	information	understanding
high attitude group	9.6	5.4
total group	7.3	4.2

SUPPLEMENT

On question number four the students were given the opportunity to fill in that part of the worship service which they liked best and to give their reasons for the choice. There were 96 students who responded to this section of the questionnaire. Their choices and the number of students making each follow:

Torah service..... 27
Sermon..... 24
Silent prayer..... 12
Adoration..... 9
Kaddish..... 6
Benediction..... 6
Music..... 6
Sanctification..... 3
"Amen" response..... 3

It is interesting that the top three choices contain 69% of the responses. It is also interesting that these three parts of the service are the only three which are not

There were two questions on the student questionnaire which have not been considered as yet. They are numbers 4 and 6 in section F; the students' choice of that part of the service which they liked best, and their reactions to worship services in religious school. There are lessons for rabbis contained in their answers to both questions.

On question number four the students were given the opportunity to fill in that part of the worship service which they liked best and to give their reasons for the choice. There were 96 students who responded to this section of the questionnaire. Their choices and the number of students making each, follow:

Torah service	27
Sermon	24
Silent prayer	12
Adoration	9
Kaddish	6
Benediction	6
Music	6
Sanctification	3
"Grant us peace.."	3

It is interesting that the top three choices contain 65% of the responses. It is also interesting that these three parts of the service are the only three which are not

formalized or written out in the prayerbook. These are the only sections of the service which are different every time.

When the students gave their reasons for their choices, this originality, this lack of constant repetition of the same material was one of the foremost reasons given. Throughout the attitude section of the test the students expressed the feeling that the words of the prayerbook held no real meaning for them. The vocabulary was difficult, the language strange, and the ideas expressed were not the ideas which the students felt they wanted to state. They felt that they could not really pray when tied down to a book which they did not understand. These three parts of the service gave them their only opportunity for worship, particularly during the silent prayer.

Along with this, the students stated a strong desire to learn about their religion, its history and its teaching. They also said that they like being told what Judaism demands of them. For these two reasons the Torah service and the Sermon become extremely important to them. But, they caution rabbis in their replies to direct their sermonic comments to teen-agers when they make up a large portion of the congregation. The students find it most difficult to sit through a sermon directed to adults. Likewise, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the Torah and Haftorah portions if they are not explained before

or during the reading.

These boys and girls expressed a readiness to participate in worship, to derive benefit from it, as long as their felt-needs are recognized and met. This is a legitimate demand, but one which most rabbis tend to ignore in their worship service preparation. These findings might also explain the tremendous success which the National Federation of Temple Youth achieves in its creative worship programs. We might follow their example insofar as possible in our congregational worship services.

With regard to the students' attitude toward worship services held in conjunction with religious school the results were most disturbing. Referring again to chart #1 we notice that in response to question number 6 on the attitude test only 23.5% of the students expressed a positive attitude with regard to religious school worship, while 48% expressed negative attitudes. However, when we investigate the reasons behind these attitudes, we can begin to understand them.

Some of the students said that they were bored with repeating weekly the exact same service which they have used for the nine or ten years in which they have been in religious school. A service which appealed to them when they were second or third graders certainly cannot be expected to have any at-

traction for them now that they are teenagers. Others of the students said that the services in their religious school were directed to the younger children and thereby had no real meaning for them. The language was too simple, the stories which were told were much too babyish, and the music too juvenile. Again we can appreciate the feelings of these boys and girls.

There are many solutions to this problem. The simplest would be to conduct a special service for the boys and girls in the upper grades. If this is impossible because of limitations of time or space, an effort should be made to direct the service directly at them on occasion. This might be accomplished by asking some of them to participate in the reading of the service or in the delivery of the sermonette. Whatever method is chosen, we must be careful not to permit the service to become mechanical through repetition.

The students had one other legitimate complaint about these religious school services: they are held in conjunction with assembly programs. This means that the worship aspect of the gathering is secondary in their minds. They are now old enough and mature enough to desire worship and prayer for its own sake, not combined with movies, singing, plays, dancing, or some other activity. This request on their part is reasonable. This combination-type program is often carried out in the assembly hall or social room of the temple. These

youngsters would like to worship in the sanctuary. This request should also be granted.

Frequently it is amazing what can be learned from teen-agers if they are given an opportunity to express themselves openly. They have opinions, needs, and desires which our religious schools and our congregations are not meeting. This is one of the most unfortunate aspects of our religious lives. The future of our entire movement lies in the hands of these children. It does not appear that we are doing enough to insure this future.

It would not be asking too much for rabbis to give some thought to the needs and desires of their teen-age congregants. The problems and difficulties which they raise can be readily solved.

THE MIRACLE

CHAPTER ONE

WHY?.....WHAT DOES PRAYER MEAN TO US?

Here we are, sitting in a classroom in religious school, with our textbook in front of us on the desk. Our teacher has explained that our course of study for the year will deal with the prayerbook; its history, its development, and its meaning.

One of the most legitimate questions which any person can ask when he or she is requested to do something, is "Why?" We can ask the same question of our teacher as we begin a new year in religious school. "Why are we being asked to study this book? Why is this course included in our curriculum?" These are good questions, and we should attempt to find a satisfactory answer before we proceed any further.

Historically, Jews have been referred to as the "People of the Book"; with the "Book" being the Bible. But, this is not completely true. It might be more truthful to call Jews the "People of the Books", for the Bible has not been the only book to which the Jews have had a reverent attachment. Throughout the ages the Bible, the Mishnah-Talmud of the Rabbis, and the prayerbook, have had an all pervasive influence on Jewish life and thought. This influence continues into our present day. So, in order to be well informed young Jews, it should be incumbent upon us to learn about the prayer-

book. This is the first partial answer to our question, "Why?"

Secondly, we might attempt to project ourselves about ten or fifteen years into the future. By this time we will all be adults, most of us will be married, and we will probably be parents. Still looking into this not-too-distant future, let us try to imagine what types of Jewish activities there will be in which we might take part. There are a great number of national Jewish organizations which we might join, such as Haddassah, B'nai B'rith, or the Zionish Organization of America. We will probably join a congregation and take part in the affairs of the Sisterhood and the Men's Club. These things are all very important, but they will not take up much of our time, and they are not specifically religious in their orientation. But there are other activities which are religious in their orientation which will take up a great deal of our time. We will participate in Sabbath and Holy Day worship with the other members of the congregation. We will want to observe the Jewish Holidays in our homes, and explain our practices to our children. How much easier it will be for us to do these things if we understand what we are doing! Many rabbis have said, "Many people come to the Temple on Friday night for services, but so few of them really understand what it is all about."_ Gaining understandings and in-

sights for the future is the second partial answer to our question.

The third part of the answer is much more important than the other two. As teenagers in the middle of the twentieth century, we pray. And even while we pray we have many questions about prayer in general, and about Jewish prayer in particular. Even though we should know about the prayerbook for historical reasons, and even though this knowledge will be very valuable to us in the future, our rabbi has elected to include this book and this course in our curriculum because he realizes that it is important to us right now.

Our chapter title contains two questions. The first one we have answered, but the second will be much more difficult. It will take the entire book for us to attempt to answer it, and then we might have to admit that some of the ramifications of the question will have to remain unanswered. In asking ourselves for the meaning behind a course of study dealing with prayer and the prayerbook, we can only do it in terms of the things in which we are interested or which cause us problems.

Let us attempt to isolate these areas through a series of questions which we will attempt to answer throughout the book.

Is prayer the only form of worship, or are there others?

What exactly is prayer?

Why do people pray?

What do they expect when they pray?

To whom do people pray? Do all people pray to God?

Does God actually hear the prayers which people address to Him?

And if God does hear prayer, does He answer prayer?

If God answers prayer, what answers does He give?

If we can answer these questions to our own satisfaction, then the meaning of the course will become clear to us.

These questions should not be completely new to us. The material which we have studied previously most probably suggested some of these questions to us, and others most likely came to our minds as we sat in the sanctuary and participated in a worship service. We might even have heard the rabbi discuss one or more of these questions in his sermons. Beacuse this is true, let us try a little experiment. Let each of us take a sheet of paper and write short answers to these eight questions. Then give them to the teacher to keep. At the end of

the course let us each do the same thing, and then the teacher will give our original answers back to us and we can compare them to see if any changes appear after our study. In writing our answers we need have no fears, for they will not be graded; they will not be marked right or wrong, and no one else will see them. They are exclusively for our own use. Let us try to be completely honest; put down exactly what we feel and believe as individuals, not what we think someone else might want us to say.

At this point it might be well for us to have some additional information about the rest of the book. The entire book might be divided into two sections. The first will deal with historical material which will be necessary in answering our questions. We will investigate worship methods and forms from their earliest beginnings down to the present day. As we go along we will attempt to point out how the particular method or form mentioned served the needs of the people who employed it. The second section will deal with our questions specifically. Frequently we will quote material directly from the Union Prayer Book whenever it applies to the question under consideration.

This study method or outline presupposes one idea about which we should be perfectly clear. The questions which we have asked ourselves on page 4 are not new. In fact,

they are as old as mankind!

The fact that religion, in some form or other, has been a part of man's life from the very beginning of time presupposes answers to some of our questions. As an example of this, let us investigate our own American Indians. When the Indian braves danced their Rain Dance they were worshiping; they were asking for rain. This indicates that they believed that somewhere there was a god or spirit who watched over them and who saw their ritual, who heard their chant, and who would, if he were properly persuaded, cause rain to fall.

Look how many of our questions are involved here! This tells us that prayer is not the only possible form of worship, for the Indians also expected their dancing to have some effect. These people did expect to have something happen when they worshiped; they expected their request to be fulfilled. This assumes that there is someone to hear and to answer when people worship. Thus, in one simple story about a worship experience we have found the American Indian's answer to four of our questions. But there is even more involved here. The only way in which we can truly understand the behavior of the Indian is to find the underlying motivation. What could possibly have caused the Indian to

act this way; to dance and to chant to the accompaniment of beating Tom-toms? This activity can only make sense if we realize that the Indians had asked themselves questions very similar to ours, and had found answers which led them into this type of worship. The Indian must have decided that his god heard prayer before he began his dance and chant for rain. He must have felt that his god would answer his request, or he would have been foolishly wasting his time and energy. He must also have felt that dancing was the most effective way of persuading his god that he should cause rainfall.

These, or similar considerations underly all religious activity. Without them, no form of worship makes sense, and with them all do.

But we seem to be somewhat ahead of ourselves. We have failed to consider the very beginnings, for actually the Indian was quite sophisticated in his worship. HOW DID THIS ALL BEGIN??

CHAPTER TWO

IT ALL BEGAN.....

.....a long time ago, on a day such as this.

It is dark in the woods, dark and still, with the black mystery which always comes before the dawn. Only the sounds and rustling of some of the early rising birds break the calm. Slowly our eyes become more accustomed to the dark, and we begin to notice a few details of the place. The trees are tall and straight; the underbrush is heavy--almost unpenetrable. There are no paths or roads of any sort; all in all it is a very forbiddding sight in the soft, new light of the slowly breaking dawn.

We sit with our backs against a tree and watch the morning drama of nature begin to unfold. Slowly more sounds are heard, as the animals begin to awaken and walk about after their night of rest. Their chattering seems eerie as it comes to us from the lush greeness of the surrounding woods. Presently a racoon wanders into our clearing, and goes to the small brook to wash and drink. A deer appears with its head held majestically high, and the little fawn following seems to have trouble standing on its spindly legs. The entire area seems alive now with movement and sound.

It is beautiful and peaceful. Harmony ~~seems~~ to be every-

where. But suddenly the sounds cease; the animals stop moving, something about their behavior tells us that they are disturbed. The deer nudges her fawn with her nose, and the two of them move slowly into the woods until they are lost from sight. The other animals seem less sure, yet they too disappear into the trees. We hadn't seen or heard anything, everything was still, peaceful. Suddenly we did hear a slight sound, then another, and another. They were very soft, irregular, and unidentifiable. They did, however, seem to be coming closer.

We moved out of the clearing into some underbrush, and sat down to wait and to see. Then the sounds stopped----- and the noise of the animals began again. Everything seemed normal for a few moments, in fact we were about to come out into the clearing again, when everything stopped. And the unknown sounds started.

Now it was possible for us to identify the sounds. We heard the crack of a twig breaking; the rustle of a bush as something brushed against it; and occassionally the clatter of a rock. By now, they seemed very close. Momentarily something, or rather someone, stepped into the clearing. It was a man; huge, dark, and quite hairy. He was standing upright, but his shoulders were bent far forward; his arms hung limply, yet his whole figure gave

an impression of extreme power and strength. In his hand he carried a large club made of a rock lashed to a heavy stick. He moved over to the side of the brook, looked down at the ground, and seemed satisfied with what he found. After he had had a drink and a few berries from a nearby bush, he slowly walked off into the woods following the path taken by the doe and her fawn.

Now it became clear. This man was a hunter, the club was his weapon, and he was stalking the deer. After a hurried discussion, we decided to follow him into the woods to watch. Hour after hour he walked along slowly, looking around accassionally, but mostly attempting to follow the tracks of the two deer. We followed and saw nothing; the tracks which he was following were invisible to our untrained eyes. At one point the trail led into a small grassy clearing, and the man stooped over to touch a spot where the grass was matted down. Quickly he stood up and moved off again, only now he was almost running. We too stopped to touch the ground, and we realized why the man had become excited. The spot where the fawn had evidently stopped to rest was still warm from his body heat. The two deer couldn't be too far ahead. Even we were excited.

The chase continued for only a short while longer. The

fawn was too young to spend the entire day on its feet, and the doe wouldn't go on without it. In the next clearing we saw the man come upon the doe standing by the side of her resting fawn. She looked at the man with her head held high, without the least sign of fear. Slowly the man raised his club until it was shoulder high, and cocked back in throwing position. Then the doe broke and ran, bounding across the clearing and through the underbrush with movements more graceful than any ballet. The man threw his club, accurate and hard, but it hit a low hanging branch and fell harmlessly to the ground. The deer had disappeared, and even the fawn had left the clearing untouched during all of the excitement.

Slowly, with discouragement written into every movement, the man picked up his club, turned, and headed back the way he had come. Again we held a hurried conference, and again we decided to follow.

As we walked we noticed that it had begun to get dark. Still we continued, for we wanted to learn more about this strange hunter; the man who had spent the entire day stalking a deer, but who was now returning home empty-handed. Finally, up ahead, through the deepening gloom, we saw a wavering light. It was toward this light that we were being led. In the clearing were five other adults and a

few young children; all were watching the hunter as he described with motions the events of his day. They watched him with rapt attention, as if he were performing a scene from some great play, and when he concluded there was an audible soft sigh from the group. Then everyone went about his own business, leaving the man standing alone. It was then that he began to do something very strange.

Pouring some water from an earthen pitcher onto the ground, the man began to make mud. He worked this with his hands until it was almost the consistancy of clay, and then began to mold it into a crude shape. Slowly we watched it take on the form of an animal, and then more specifically we could tell that it was a deer. When he had finished, he placed the model on the ground sticking its feet into the mud so that it would stand upright. Our hunter then picked up his club and began to move about as if he were stalking game. He moved slowly, quietly, looking at the ground for tracks and other signs. All the time he was moving toward the spot where the model deer was standing. When he got close enough he raised his club and brought it down sharply on the head of the mud model, completely destroying it. He sat down and looked for a long time at what he had done.

Then he began something else. Using a small stick he began to draw, in outline, the form of a deer in the dust. When it was completed he again began his play-acting as hunter. This time he brought his club down on the head of the figure which he had drawn, completely blotting it out. Again he sat down motionless, as if he was considering what he had done. He was this way when we left, and it is this way that we remember him.

And so, a long time ago-----that was how it all began.

The story which we have just read was obviously fiction, but the events might have happened. As religious school students, we are particularly interested in the last few paragraphs, those describing the man, his model, his picture, and his actions. For these portray ancient man's first attempts at worship. In stalking his model, finding it, and finally bringing his club down on its head he was acting out, or symbolizing, for his gods exactly what he needed or wanted. He was imploring his gods for help in finding and killing a deer.

The motivation behind much of our present day worship is the same. Frequently when we pray, we ask our God for His help in solving one of our problems. While

some of the motivation is similar, the difference in setting of worship between the primitive man and the modern American Jew is so great that they seem to be different things. How strange, how bewildered, the hunter would feel if he wandered into one of our large temples during services. He would be unable to explain the many things which we all take for granted, and without which we would feel uncomfortable. The choir, the organ, the rabbi, the Ark, the pulpit, even the congregation, in fact almost everything, would appear to him to be foreign to worship.

And for us the same would be true if we were again to watch him as he worshipped. The symbolic actions, their implied magic, would appear to be so undignified, possibly even crude, that we could hardly understand approaching a god in this manner.

Yet between these two widely differing methods of worship there are many areas of common ground. The basic questions which we have asked were also posed by primitive man. The answers which he found led him to worship as he did. He certainly believed that somewhere there was some 'power' who watched actions, who would be impressed by them, and who would respond. He also must have felt that this 'power' would answer his request in a suitable way; in our story by providing a deer for the man to kill for food. Again a great many of our questions have

answers----at least answers which were suitable for primitive man. But what about our answers?

We are not quite ready to begin that as yet. There is a line of development, a step by step chain which we must investigate first, so that our answers can be more meaningful to us. The next chapters will deal with this chain. We will follow it from its most primitive beginnings as it moves through the ages until Judaism appears on the scene. Then we will investigate the various worship forms employed by Judaism during its centuries of developement, ending with the modern Reform temple.

CHAPTER THREE

IF WE COULD IMAGINE.....

Let your imagination wander for a moment, and think of your Rabbi. Try to imagine what he would look like if he were to conduct the congregational worship service in a new way. What would be some of the things which he might do? He could ask the congregation to kneel; he might ask them to clasp their hands together in a prayerful manner; he might introduce some new hymns or some new prayers; but he would not ask the congregation to watch as he performed a few charades, or acted out his prayers.

Yet as we saw in our little story about the hunter, this is the way in which primitive man worshipped. Early man's life was one of facing countless problems in an almost endless stream. The farther back one goes in studying the life of man, the more difficult and hard becomes the life studied. The history of man is a history of achievement, a history of finding solutions to life's problems.

Have you ever been camping? Sure, but have you ever had a hand in the many preparations which were necessary? There were problems of shelter, food, cooking, heat, clothing, and many more which had to be solved before your camping trip could even get started. And every day that you were away from home brought more problems. What did you do when the racoon got into your food supply? What

did you do when an early morning rain soaked all of your wood and made fire building almost impossible? What did you do when your boat overturned and all of your fishing equipment was lost?

Any one of these things could have happened, and each could have ruined the most carefully planned camping trip. But consider how much more difficult such a problem would become if this were not just a camping trip, but the way you lived your life every single day. There is no farm house down the road from which you can call home: there is no camp counselor around to look after you, to help you solve these problems. This is the way you live, three-hundred and sixty-five days out of every year, through all types of weather, in the face of all of the problems which nature can throw your way. This is about as close as we can come to describing the conditions under which the primitive man lived. The world, and all of the forces of nature, seemed to be his constant opponent; an opponent which he himself was powerless to defeat. Ancient man found his only ally in his religion. He called upon his gods to help him solve his problems.

His religion, his worship did not consist of prayer as we know it; for it is doubtful that he could communicate verbally the way we do. But he could demonstrate, he

could act, he could indicate through his actions exactly what his problem was, and what he desired from his gods. When the food supply was getting low, he would indicate to his gods that he needed success on his next hunting expedition. He might dramatize a need for clothing. With elaborate actions he might act out his need for his gods to drive the evil spirit out of a sick relative. It has been suggested by more than one scholar that the cave drawings found in various places throughout Europe depict the hunts and the other activities of these ancient men. There are, however, a few scholars who feel that these familiar drawings do not show things which <u>have happened</u>, but rather indicate things which the artists wish <u>to happen</u> in the future. These scholars suggest that these drawings are a product of the communication between primitive man and his gods. Rather than act out their desires, these primitive artists would draw them out for their gods to see.

As these ancient men made progress, they solved some of their problems themselves. Progress in life also meant that life became more complicated, and with it, religion. Let us look at only one example. We have already described the hunt taken by a primitive man in search of food. It can easily be seen that his health, in fact his very life, depended upon his success as a hunter.

But slowly, man learned to domesticate animals, and to cultivate plants. In a general way these two advances solved his food problem. But notice how many other possible problems arose. Rain had to come immediately after planting so that the seed might sprout, but too much rain would wash the seed out of the soil or drown the young shoots. During the growing season the right combination of moisture and sun was needed. And during the harvest period rain would have been a major catastrophy as the grain would begin to rot on the stalk. As each of these periods in the farming season came and went, man relied on his gods to provide the correct combinations of rain and sun. Likewise, the domestication of animals was a great step forward. It helped solve the problems of food and clothing. But it also raised new problems for man. He was now concerned with the health of his animals; with feeding them, particularly during the colder months; and with protecting them from the weather and the hungry mouths of other, wilder animals. With these problems also, man turned to his gods.

As man progressed, he found it impossible to continue living alone or with small groups. It became necessary for him to band together with others into tribes. Often these tribes grew up through family connections, with the married children remaining with the parents and grandparents until a rather sizeable group of people was formed.

It was soon discovered that one of the men in the group was a better hunter than the others. It was therefore decided that if he would do the hunting for the total group, another would see to it that enough crops were set aside to meet the needs of his immediate family. One woman would look after the group's children, and the rest would take over her household duties; making clothing, cooking for the family, and so forth. This division of labor soon became the accepted manner of doing things for the entire tribe, and everyone was assigned to do those things for the group which he or she did best. But this left very little time for each man to look after his religious needs.

Life became busy and time-consuming. Each person was doing work for the group; doing more than was necessary to satisfy his own personal needs. This problem, too, was finally solved, as the others had been. One person from the tribe was given the duty of looking after the religious needs of the entire group. He was the ancient priest, the ancestor of our modern rabbi or minister. This change forced other, equally important changes to take place in the actual methods of worship; but they were still responses to the same basic questions.

As we remember, previous to this, all worship had been completely individual, each man worshipped for himself.

But now worship was a function of the tribe, and the individual was just one member of a congregation. The earliest forms of worship had been dramatic, symbolic, magical, because the art of verbal communication was not highly developed. When people began to live in tribes, it must have been necessary for them to talk one to another. With the art of communication came another change in the mode of worship. Prayer, man's attempt to communicate verbally with his god, became important. The older methods did not suddenly cease; they were still used, but this newer element was added. There is still one more change which took place at about this time in human development. Man suddenly came to realize that whatever success he had in combatting the forces of nature was given to him by his god. If he was successful on the hunt, it was because his god had willed it. If his crops were plentiful and he had a good harvest, it was again his god's doing. If everything which man accumulated had come from his god, would it not be only right for him to return the favor and offer some of it back? These early tribesmen seemed to think that it was, and the institution of religious sacrifice was born. There are almost as many different reasons given for the practice of sacrifice as there are scholars offering reasons. It is only fair to say that while there are many theories, no one knows the real reason at present.

Possibly, as we become more familiar with ancient writing we will find something which will give us a strong clue. For us, however, it will be enough just to investigate some of the theories.

Some hold that the idea behind the institution of sacrifice was bribery. According to this theory the ancients felt that if they would offer a young calf to their god, he would reward them by assuring the fertility of their herd for the coming year. If they would offer the results of this year's harvest, then their god would be bribed into giving them a good harvest for the next year. Others feel that the underlying motive is one of thanksgiving. The gods had been gracious, and man was indicating to them exactly how grateful he was. Still others feel that sacrifice grew out of an attitude of payment. Man felt that he had to pay for that which he had received from the gods.

Whatever the actual motives were behind the sacrificial rites, they were very complicated, as were the rites themselves. Usually the sacrifice took the form of a burnt offering, which meant that the material to be offered to the gods was either partly or wholly consumed by fire. Frequently, if an animal was to be sacrificed, the animal was roasted and then eaten by the priests or the tribe as a whole, thus symbolizing the act of eating

for their gods. On other occassions the entire animal was consumed by the flames, and the people assumed that it had been devoured by the god to whom it was offered. At other times the produce of the fields was to be offered to the gods. This was sometimes done by fire, but more frequently by exposure to the elements until decay had set in. Most frequently, however, it was given to the priests for their use, and thereby dedicated to god. Produce could be offered in its natural state, or in some prepared form. For example, among some peoples it was the custom to offer bread made from the wheat of the first harvest, while others offered the wheat itself. Along with the burnt sacrifices, most peoples also burned incense or some sweet smelling herb. This was done to counteract the somewhat offensive odor of burning flesh or grain.

The tendency toward sacrifice was so strong among ancient peoples that many even went so far as to sacrifice one of their children. This was done either because of payment, thanksgiving or bribery. The famous Biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac might have been included in the Bible as a reminder that Jews did not practice, or believe in child sacrifice, even though some of the neighboring peoples did.

The final change which took place at about this time dealt with the place of worship. As we saw in our story of the primitive hunter, he worshipped without visiting a special place. It was at the side of the family campfire. This was true of most primitives. But with the advent of tribal worship, of sacrifice, and all the rest, special places were set aside for worship. Occasionally a special building, or temple, was constructed. But most often the only structure was an altar of stones on the top of a hill or mountain. Frequently a grove of trees was chosen as the site, but usually it was an elevated position. Once a place had been used for worship by one group of people, it was considered sacred, or holy, by other groups, even if they worshipped other gods. Once it had been consecrated or set aside for worship, it was rarely used for any other purpose.

So far we have dealt with early religion in the most general terms. Where do the Jews fit into the picture? The answer is--all over. Judaism had as its foundation religious practice very similar to that which has been described. It will be our task in the next chapter to investigate early Judaism, the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the light of what we have learned about ancient religion.

CHAPTER FOUR

JUDAISM--------AN ANCIENT RELIGION?

When we think of Judaism, beliefs in One God, holiday celebrations, the Sabbath, the Rabbi, or such things usually come into mind. Rarely would we include sacrifice, priests, individual worship, or prayer on mountain tops, yet all of these elements of primitive religion had their place in early Judaism.

Sacrifice was so much a part of the worship of the Jews during the Biblical period that their religious thinkers, the writers of the early portions of the Bible, had the forerunners of mankind offering sacrifices. The following passage about Cain and Abel is from the fourth chapter of Genesis:

> And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the first-lings of his flock and of the fat thereof.

In the eighth chapter of Genesis, when the flood waters have receded, and Noah leaves the ark, the following is recorded:

> And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean

> fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled the sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart: 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake;'

On one occasion, Jacob was having trouble with his father-in-law, Laban. The difficulty was solved, and the Biblical passage in the thirty-first chapter of Genesis continues:

> And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread...

Jacob is involved in another such incident in the forty-sixth chapter of Genesis:

> And Israel (this is another name for Jacob) took his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto God of his father Isaac.

These four passages have been selected from many because they are easily understood, they contain all of the elements of primitive worship which we have been discussing, and because the characters involved are people with whom we should already be familiar.

In each of the incidents the person offering the sacrifice

does it himself, not one of them takes his animal or grain to a priest who then performs the sacrificial act. The religion described in these four selections is completely individualistic.

The passage dealing with Cain and Abel states clearly that two different materials were used as the sacrifice. Cain, who was a farmer, brought some of his produce, and Abel, who was a herdsman, brought some of his animals. The quotation also states that it was the "firstlings", the first-born animals which were brought to be sacrificed.

The third element is contained in the third quotation, the first one dealing with Jacob. There we are told that Jacob offers his sacrifice on a mountain top. In another familiar story a mountain is important. When Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son, Isaac, the commandment specifies a particular mountain.

Finally, from these four selections we can learn something about the motivation behind the practice of sacrifice. Cain and Abel's sacrifice seems to have something to do with agriculture; either to insure a good crop or herd the next year, or to express thanksgiving with their present harvest. Noah's sacrifice, coming when it does, almost certainly seems to be one of thanksgiving. The

sacrifice of Jacob-Israel is in preparation for his journey into Egypt, and possibly is his method of asking God's protection on his travels.

It is interesting to note the reaction to sacrifice on the part of God, at least as detailed by the Biblical writers in the Noah story. This particular sacrifice was acceptable to God and had some effect on Him, for after He smelled its "sweet savour" He said that He would never again cause a flood or in any other way destroy all human life. If these ancient writers could include such ideas in their stories, then we can assume that this was the very reaction which they expected sacrifice to have; and that they too asked the "whys" and the "hows" of worship.

From all of the above, we can see that while Judaism has lived down through the ages, and while it continues to flourish in the Twentieth Century, at its beginning it was really very little different from the other primitive religions of the same time. It was individualistic, it consisted mainly of sacrifice, the sacrifice was intended to influence God favorably for man, and no special place was set aside for worship, but the spot chosen was usually elevated such as a mountain top.

But after the events which took place at Mount Sinai

the religious picture of the Jews changes. With the issuance of the Ten Commandments, Judaism became highly organized. There were now priests and lesser religious functionaries who performed the worship duties for the entire group. The sacrifices were now listed in great detail; there was a Tabernacle in which the tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept and around which all worship centered; the Levites played instruments and music was associated with worship; specific holidays, and the Sabbath, were included in the worship calendar. It was at this point that Judaism began to differentiate itself from the other religions. Each developed in its own direction.

While sacrifice, as a method of worship, is not mentioned in the Ten Commandments, it continued to be the major form of worship for Judaism during the period of the wandering in the wilderness, and after the Hebrews had conquered Canaan. In Canaan the sacrificial system continued to center around the Tabernacle until The Temple of Soloman was completed. It is interesting to note that the Temple was completely designed to serve only as a center for sacrifice, and it too was built on the top of a hill in Jerusalem. Sacrifice was so important that even today the Orthodox prayerbook contains pleas for the restoration of sacrifice as the mode of worship, and on the holidays the list of special sacrifices which were offered in celebration of the holiday is read.

Entire chapters of the Biblical books of Exodus, Levitucus, and Deuteronomy contain the laws and the descriptions of the sacrificial system as it was carried out in the Temple in Jerusalem. Sacrifices were offered twice daily, in the morning and the late afternoon, every day of the week. On the Sabbath, New Moons, Festivals, and High Holidays additional sacrifices were offered after the morning service. From this practice has come the traditional Jewish custom of holding daily worship services, with special or additional services for the above mentioned special occasions. We will deal with this in more detail in a later chapter.

There were many classes of religious functionaries in the Jerusalem Temple, with the High Priest as the man in charge. Beneath him were the regular priests, then the Levites, and then other men who acted as helpers, workers, and assistants. The Levites were a special group, descendents of the tribe of Levi, whose specific function it was to assist the priests, to provide the music which accompanied the sacrifice, and to perform other tasks directly associated with the service. In the Orthodox service of today the first man called to the reading of the Torah is a descendant of a Priestly family, and the second is a member of a Levitical family.

The sacrificial service was always witnessed by a large

multitude of people who stood in one of the many Temple courtyards. Rarely, if ever, did these people actually participate in the service. They were spectators at worship. However, when a man brought an animal to be sacrificed, if the law stated that he and his family were to eat a portion of the animal, some of its meat would be returned to him. There was one point in the service when the assembled people did respond. The actual name of God, spelled יהוה in Hebrew and YaHVeH in English, was pronounced by the High Priest only on Yom Kippur. When the congregation heard this name pronounced, they responded with the sentence which we use immediately after the Sh'ma; "Praised by His name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever." The Newly Revised edition of the Union Prayer Book, Vol.II, contains an excellent description of the Yom Kippur service in the Jerusalem Temple (beginning on page 266) which should be read by all in connection with the present discussion.

In the year 586 BCE the Jerusalem Temple built by Solomon was destroyed by the invading Babylonians, and a large portion of the Jewish population was carried off to Babylonia in exile. This event caused another major change in Jewish worship practice. The people had become accustomed to worship through sacrifice, and this only at the Temple. Now the Temple had been destroyed, it was impossible to build another in Jerusalem, and without the

Temple the sacrificial mode of worship could not continue. The people had a desire to worship, in fact in their reduced status of exiles, they had a need to worship, but they did not know how. The prophet Jeremiah had not been exiled by the Babylonians, and he continued to live in Jerusalem. Jeremiah wrote a letter to those people who were in exile in Babylonia, attempting to bolster their spirits and telling them that they could still worship God even though they were in a foreign country and even though they could not sacrifice. Another prophet, Ezekiel, had gone into exile in Babylonia earlier, and it was he who appears to have given the people the greatest assistance. When the people had problems, when they desired to hear the word of God, they went to see the prophet. These sessions probably became frequent, and important, and probably led to the development of the next stage in Jewish worship--the synagogue.

The synagogue was a small, local community center of worship as opposed to the Temple which had been large and national. There were no sacrifices associated with the synagogues, rather worship took the form of prayer and learning. The learning and the prayer are outgrowths of the people's desire to hear the word of God read and discussed. It seems as if originally the synagogues were community centers of education, meeting, and socializing,

and only later took on the added aspect of centers for worship.

The synagogue was not a special building necessarily; it might have been a room in a prophet's or learned man's house; it might have been the market place, or a courtyard convenient for all. The synagogue became very important in a very short time, for we read in the book of Nehemiah, chapter 8, that shortly after the Jews returned to Judea from the Babylonian exile in 516 that Ezrah the scribe gathered all of the people together in an open space before the gate of Jerusalem and read to them out of the "Book of the Law of Moses." Not only did he read a portion of the law, but we are told that he and some of his assistants explained what had been read so that all might understand, even the women and children. Some special prayers and blessings were recited on that occasion also. If we analyse this chapter of Nehemiah carefully, we would find in it all of the elements which we associate with Jewish worship today: prayer, reading of scripture, and the explanation of the scripture or sermon. Even in this brief, almost outline form, we can see how far the synagogue had developed in this short span of time.

Even though Ezra and Nehemiah were so closely associated with the new synagogue, they were both instrumental in

getting the Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. With the new Temple completed and in operation, with the reinstitution of the sacrificial system of worship, we could expect the newer, and therefore less traditional synagogue to become less important and possibly disappear altogether. But this did not happen. In fact the opposite was true. For many people the synagogue became more important, even supplanting Temple worship completely. But for most people, both systems continued side by side until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE by the Romans.

The sacrificial worship in the new Temple began exactly where it had left off with very little change. In the five hundred and fifty years during which it was in existence very little of importance was changed. Its methods and procedures were hallowed by time and fixed by Biblical law. This was not at all true of the synagogue. It was in a constant state of change and development. In every town the synagogue was conducted as the people of that locality wanted it. There was no central authority which could control the synagogue; there were no law books which could be referred to in case of any dispute. Each synagogue was a law unto itself within the pattern mentioned above: prayer, reading of scripture, explanation of the reading. The synagogue still had its other functions of education, charity, and the like, but even these were handled differently from place to place. Just as each of

us might find different answers to the original questions which we asked, so too the individuals who determined policy for these small, new synagogues.

This could easily have led to anarchy and religious chaos. But, slowly, another change was taking place within Judaism which would bring order out of the chaos, and which would lay the foundations for all future Judaism. We are concerned with this change as it affected the various worship forms of the Jews. This shall be the topic of our next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RABBIS TO THE RESCUE

The Temple was regulated by ancient custom and by Biblical law. Its practice was constant, and there was very little significant change. But the synagogue was a new institution. Laws governing its operation had not yet been developed, and it had not been in existance long enough for strong custom to have grown up. This practically meant that every congregation could go its own way, and some widely differing customs did develop. Judaism had always been a highly formal and highly organized religion. Now the operation of the synagogues seemed about to destroy all this. For if people could act in different ways, why could they not believe different things? This was the problem which confronted Judaism during the days of the Second Temple.

There was an additional aspect to the problem which was also very important. Most of the religious laws which governed the religious practice of the Jews were quite old. Most dealt with sacrifice as the only valid method of worship, and most were written by the priestly group, who were after all, the ones most concerned with correct religious practice. These laws said nothing about the synagogue, and many in the priestly group looked upon the synagogue with horror, believing as they did that it was not a proper form of worship.

Finally there was this side of the problem. Most of the laws governing the daily lives of the Jews were also old and out-of-date. They had been written for another day and age. They had been written for life in a society which was rural, agricultural, and possibly even nomadic. Now that a great percentage of the Jews were living in cities, engaging in commerce and the trades, these laws were extremely difficult to follow, and some did not apply at all. The obvious solution would be to change the old laws, or to write new ones. But how could this be done? The laws of the Jews were in the Bible, and the Jews believed that the Bible was the product of God. Surely man could not change its contents! But certainly something must be done, and done soon, before Judaism died a slow death---strangled by its own inaction. The answer lay in the process of interpretation and reinterpretation.

If we look at this solution in the light of a modern problem, it might be somewhat easier to understand. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads as follows:

> All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities

> of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.....

This amendment, adopted in July, 1868, was one of three attempting to settle the rights and status of the newly freed slaves in the South. This amendment made these slaves citizens of the United States and of the state in which they lived. Furthermore, it forbad the various states to enact laws which would penalize these people in any way purely because their skin was of a different color. Yet, we know that the problem of the negro in the South was not solved so easily. In fact, it is still with us, almost one-hundred years later.

One of the ideas held by the original framers of this constitutional amendment was that the negroes should have equal opportunities of education;; that they should not be deprived of life or liberty through unequal opportunities to progress through education. It will be noticed that this law does not say anything specific about education. But the law was made to apply to education through the legal interpretation of the United States Supreme Court. Their first important decision concerning the

education of the negro in the South called for the establishment of "separate but equal" facilities for negroes. This was the system operating in the South until the recent Supreme Court order declaring this two-school system unconstitutional. This decision was based in part on the "due Process" provision of the Fourteenth Amendment. But then, it was on this same provision of this same amendment that the original concept of "separate but equal" had been based.

Here we have seen the process of interpretation and reinterpretation in action. The original law, which made no specific mention of education, was interpreted in such a way as to include it. On the basis of this interpretation a specific educational system was established. Years later, however, the same court reinterpreted the same law and found that the system established previously by the court was unconstitutional, and then set up a new system more in keeping with its new interpretation.

Now let's see how the same process was applied to synagogue worship in Judaism so many years ago. In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy is a very familiar passage;

> And thou shalt love the Lord they God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all

thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

As we read this passage we often wonder what is meant by the phrase, "these words", which are commanded to the people. In Deuteronomy the verse immediately preceeding this paragraph contains some very important words, and possibly they are the ones talked about. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One."

Now, read the paragraph again; does it say anything about worship, about the synagogue? The answer to both parts of the question is, "No." Yet, it has been interpreted to refer to worship in the synagogue. It is taken as a basic command to recite the sentence which we call the Sh'ma. This was further expanded to include its recitation during three different time periods; the early morning, the daylight hours, and in the evening. These times come from interpreting the phrases,"liest down" (in the evening), "risest up" (in the morning), and "sittest" and "walkest"

(during the day). As far as we have gone in the interpretive process a Jew was required to recite the Sh'ma three times a day, but the place of the recitation was not specific.

We have already discussed the sacrificial worship service in the Temple, which was held twice daily; in the morning and in the afternoon. The synagogue worship services corresponded, in time, to these two daily sacrificial services. Thus, when a man attended the synagogue, he fulfilled two of the three daily recitations of this prayer. But he was on his own, so to speak, to recite the third in the evening. Rabbi Gamaliel II, (the second), ordained, at the end of the first century, that the synagogue should have a third daily service. This was to be in the evening, based on the interpreted command to recite the Sh'ma in the evening.

Again we have treated a very complex and involved subject in a very brief fashion, but it should be sufficient to indicate how this interpretive process was employed by the rabbis, in order to bring religious law to bear upon the synagogue.

It might be well for us to spend a moment discussing the group of men, called rabbis, who managed to make all of

these necessary changes. The rabbis, or as they have been frequently called, the Pharisees, were the religiously educated among those who were synagogue oriented, as opposed to the priestly group who were Temple oriented, and who were otherwise called Sadducees. The rabbis were the leaders of that group which felt that the laws of Judaism had to be changed, or reinterpreted, in order to make them apply to the changed life circumstances of the Jews. These rabbis set up large schools, called academies, in which they discussed the law, interpreted the law, and passed their teachings on from generation to generation. You might recall the famous story about Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai who was in Jerusalem when it was being besieged by the Romans. Just before the city fell the rabbi was carried out of the city by his students, alive, but in a coffin; for this was the only way that people were permitted to leave; to be buried. He then went to see the Roman general and asked to have one wish granted. The general, who had heard of the famous rabbi, granted the request of the rabbi to start a little school in Jabneh. This little school permitted the tradition of the rabbis to continue, even after Jerusalem had been captured and the Temple had been destroyed for the second time.

The traditions of the rabbis were called the Oral Law, and were not to be written down. The Written Law was the Bible.

However, as time went on, and as the material included in the rabbinic tradition grew vast (for it all was remembered) there came a point when it was virtually impossible for it to be handled in unwritten form. Rabbi Judah the Nasi, or chief among the rabbis, decided that it was necessary to collect, arrange, edit, and finally write down this rabbibic material. When he had finished, about the year 200, he had a monumental work of Jewish law all based on the Biblical law, but all intended to "modernize" Judaism for his day. It was called the Mishnah, which means Teaching. After this work had been completed, it became the object of study in the rabbinic academies.

The process of study, interpretation, and reinterpretation did not stop for another two or three hundred years. During this period the sayings and decisions of the rabbis included in the Mishnah were the topic of discussion in the academies. Some of the material in the Mishnah was not clear in meaning, some was so general as to be hard to apply to a specific case, some became out-of-date as the Biblical laws had before them. This left a great area of creativity for the rabbis. Again, the new material was not written down until it became unmanageable because of its bulk. The amount of detailed material which these rabbis had trained themselves to remember was phenomenal! Eventually, however, in about the year 500, it was all committed to writing. This new written material

was called the Gemorah. The Gemorah, together with the Mishnah to which it pertains, is called the Talmud.

It seems as if we have come a long way from our original discussion of the mode of worship in the ancient synagogue, but the side trip was necessary. For it is in the Talmud that we finally reach the decisions which became the laws governing all phases of synagogue worship. We have already discovered how the time of the services was set. In this same manner the prayers were decided upon, and in a few cases the specific content of the prayers was also given.

Occasionally a rabbi would quote an original prayer used by one of his teachers, when those in the school were trying to decide which was the appropriate prayer for a specific place in the liturgy. On other occasions a rabbi would ask one of his students to compose a prayer for a specific purpose, or he might compose one himself. There are other examples where the tradition knows of only one prayer being used, so that there is no argument. Finally, there are places where two or three prayers were used and the final decision would be based on the reputation of the rabbi in whose name the use of a prayer was quoted, on the logical content of the prayer in relation to those immediately surrounding it in the liturgy, or by the democratic procedure of a majority vote.

Most rabbinic decisions were reached in this manner.

While it is true that we find all of this material in the Mishnah and Gemorah, or Talmud, it is important that we realize and remember one more thing. Some of the prayers were originally written or said by the rabbis, but the great majority have their basis in the Bible itself. We have already seen an example of this on page 39 in our discussion of the Sh'ma. Whole Psalms were placed in appropriate places in the liturgy; prayers were written by using verses of the Bible; even original prayers had quotations from the Bible included within them.

All of the work of the Rabbis with regard to worship was intended to supply answers to questions similar to the ones which we asked ourself at the beginning. These answers were satisfactory for their day---they may even be valid today. But more of that later.

So far, in the first five chapters of this textbook about the prayerbook, we have not even used the word "prayer-book" until now. This was not an oversight---for there was no prayerbook.

The history of worship goes back for many tens of thousands of years; Moses probably lived about 3000 years ago; but

the oldest Jewish prayerbook of which there is any record is only 1100 years old. This means that it was written at least 350-400 years after the completion of the Talmud, by which time all of the decisions had been reached. What happened to cause the delay? What is the relationship between this ancient prayerbook and the modern Orthodox prayerbook? How do they relate to the Union Prayer Book which most of us use? The answers to these questions will be our topic for the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRAYERBOOK

When the synagogue was new, there was no need for a prayerbook, for there was little ritual connected with worship. It was mostly a matter of reading of scripture, and then listening while the reading was explained. If a man had a special petition to direct to God, his own words were sufficient. Slowly, more and more actual prayers were added, but still there were not that many that they could not be easily memorized. After the Temple was destroyed a whole new series of prayers dealing with the Temple, the priesthood, Jerusalem, and the nation were included, but still it was possible to operate without a prayerbook. The people attended synagogue often, and found it easy to memorize the oft-repeated prayers.

Frequently, even though the rabbis had decided which prayers were to be recited at which point in the service, the actual content of the prayer was left open. The first line and the concluding line were formally established, but the material in the middle varied from congregation to congregation. It was even common for this middle section to be varied within the same congregation depending on the leader of worship or on the special occasion being celebrated. On page 12 of the Union Prayer Book, Newly Revised, Volumne I, there is an example of a prayer beginning and ending with a blessing.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the world, by whose law the shadows of evening fall and the gates of morn are opened..... .....Praised be Thou, O Lord, for the day and its work and for the night and its rest.

Originally, only these two lines were formalized; later the whole prayer became standardized.

As the material included in the worship service became greater, as the service grew longer, it became more and more difficult for all of the people to know the total content of the worship service. There were now special prayer-leaders whose responsibility it was to know by heart the entire service, all of the ritual connected with it, and who were required to be able to lead the entire congregation in prayer. At this point in the development of worship it was not uncommon to see men sitting at prayer not saying anything; or to see them responding with those few portions of the service which they happened to have learned somewhere. Again the question can be asked, "Why weren't the prayers written down?" And again, the answer is the same. They were part of the Oral Law, which was not to be committed to writing, but as in the case of the Mishnah and the Talmud, the time was coming when this would be found necessary.

After the completion of the Talmud until the end of the

ninth century, or from about 500 to about 1000, was the period of the G'onim. This was the title given to the leaders of the great rabbinic academies which still flourished in Babylonia, who by virtue of their great learning had gained a reputation which enable them to be the actual spiritual leaders of all Jewry from southern Arabia to northern France. To these G'onim many questions of ritual observance were addressed, and through their answers (responsa) they directed the religious life of all the scattered individual communities. To the Gaon Amram about the year 850, a question was directed with regard to the prayers, and he responded by giving a fairly complete outline of the prayerbook. This responsa of Amram constitutes the first written prayerbook. Apparently the old objection to writing down such oral teachings must have vanished in the face of the necessity of keeping the outlying congregations informed of the specific content of the prayers.

This prayerbook was of tremendous influence in developing all of the prayer rituals of the Jews in Europe, and there is hardly a subsequent authority in Spain, France, or Germany who does not quote copiously from it. Actually the prayerbook of Amram was more than just a book of prayer. It was more of an encyclopedia of prayer, as it contained, beside the prayers themselves, benedictions for all types of occasions, notes about the origin of prayers, and the

Talmudic decisions relating to prayer and worship. Another Gaon, named Saadia, also wrote a prayerbook. His was written almost one hundred years later, and from our standpoint was somewhat more complete. Where Amram had given the opening and closing sentences of a prayer, leaving the middle section to the congregation, Saadia would generally include the entire prayer. His book, however, did not contain all of the notes and other extra material which is found in Amram's.

We have mentioned two prayerbooks thus far, but it must be remembered that there were only two. These books were not printed, every copy had to be made by hand, and had to be letter perfect because they contained the word of God. The process of copying was very slow and very expensive, and while no exact number can be given for the number of copies made, it must have been very small.

While these two books were the basis for <u>all</u> future Jewish prayerbooks, they were not the final word. A great deal of further development has taken place. One aspect of this development had begun even before the advent of these two books. This was the writing of religious poetry and its inclusion in the worship service. During the early stages of its history this religious poetry was strictly local or regional in character and use. The poems of an Italian would not be used in a Spanish synagogue, for example.

The use of this poetry in worship caused divergences over which the rabbis had little control at this time in history. These poems were used mainly to embellish or lengthen the service. Frequently, their theme came from the Bible, or from an event in Jewish history. They expressed the difficulties and troubles of the Jewish past, as well as the hopes and prayers for its future. The writing of this type of poetry continued well into the sixteenth century, but little of the newer material became part of traditional worship because of the next great change which took place. A man named Guttenberg invented a printing press with moveable type.

In April of 1486 the first printed Jewish prayerbook appeared in Italy. This was shortly followed by many more. The advent of printing made the prayerbook a much more common item, and most synagogues soon had enough copies to supply those worshippers who did not bring their own. Local differences in the specific content of the worship service now began to disappear, as most congregations found it much too expensive to have books printed for their exclusive use. Prominent rabbis would decide what was to be the correct wording of the prayers, which of the many religious poems to include, and other problems generally associated with the publishing of a new book. It finally ended with two major divisions; Ashkenazi and

Sephardi. These two rituals were quite different in detail, but very much the same in general outline. These differences have come down to us in the present day, with the Sephardic ritual holding sway in the Spanish-Portugese areas of the world, and with the Ashkenazic being the ritual of northern and eastern Europe. Major differences are in the following areas; the melody of the chants, the poems used, the pronunciation of some words, the ritual ceremonies connected with the worship.

We have now reached a plateau in our discussion of the development of Jewish worship. The synagogue is flourishing, the prayers have been standardized, prayerbooks are available to all who can afford them, and very little else has to be accomplished before we move into the modern era. The prayerbook which we have been discussing on the last few pages is almost identical with the modern Orthodox prayerbook, and the last major change in Jewish worship came with the advent of Reform Judaism at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. One of the major causes of the original break between the early reformers and the Orthodox was the method of worship.

Orthodox worship contained, and still does contain, many prayers whose ideas were repugnant to these German

Jews. These people felt that they were citizens of Germany, not that they were in exile from Palestine. Therefore many of the prayers calling for the restoration of the Jewish state in the Holy Land, the restoration of a descendant of David as King, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the restoration of the sacrificial worship system made little sense to them. They wanted to delete these prayers from the service. They also felt that the service was much too long, and desired to shorten it by eliminating some of the passages which were repeated. In traditional worship there are very long prayers, or groups of prayers, which first are read by the congregation and then chanted by the Cantor. These early reformers also wanted to pray in German. They knew that many people did not understand Hebrew, yet they used this language when they prayed, if they prayed; for lack of attendance was a very serious problem in those days. The reformers felt that if their suggestions were carried out, and if these changes were made, then a much greater number of Jews would participate in worship and understand exactly what they were doing.

As we can well imagine, these suggested changes in Jewish worship caused quite a battle. The Orthodox believed that the material in the prayers, and the prayers themselves, were a part of the Oral tradition of the rabbis, and as such had their ultimate origin in God. If they were God-

directed or God-inspired products, then certainly man could not change them. The Orthodox also felt that these early reformers were attempting to move Jews in the direction of Christianity with the hope that many Jews would ultimately convert. This was, of course, false, but to the Orthodox of the period it seemed obvious. This charge does not seem to be so far fetched when we notice that some of the external changes in worship which the reformers advocated tended to make the synagogue similar in conduct to a church.

In the synagogue male and female worshippers were separated with a curtain or with the women sitting in a balcony. The reformers wanted them to sit together, because they saw no real reason why a husband and wife should be separated during worship. The only music in synagogue worship came from the cantor and a small, all male choir. The reformers wanted to install a musical instrument and a choir of mixed voices. The service in the synagogue was quite noisy, and generally lacking in decorum. The reformers wanted to have it much more highly organized so as to eliminate all talking and moving about. All of these things, the mixed seating, the mixed choir, the organ, the quiet service, were marks of the local German Protestant churches, and were therefore violently opposed by the Orthodox leaders. All were just as violently proposed by the reformers who were particularly interested in making worship

more beautiful, more interesting, and more understandable to the masses, for they felt that many were dissatisfied with current Jewish worship to the point of not participating in it.

The two factions could not be reconciled, and eventually, after a great deal of trouble and argument, the Reform Jewish movement was officially established with its own worship ritual. This ritual, even though it is quite different from the Orthodox in detail, is the same as the Orthodox in general content and structure. Both follow the general decisions of the rabbis as included in the Talmud; both follow the general outline of the service as detailed by Amram in his prayerbook; generally both use the same prayers, with only a minimum of change in the wording; both celebrate the same holidays, in similar, though differing manners; and both are thoroughly Jewish, developing as they did from the same sources, and through the same tradition.

In order to make some of this more clear, we will read a few short prayers which are found in the Orthodox prayerbooks, but which were omitted from the Reform. These are quoted from the Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, published by The Rabbinical Assembly of America and The United Synagogue of America in 1946. This is a Conservative prayerbook, but it is close enough to the Ortho-

dox to serve as our example.

> Our God and God of our fathers, may our remembrance and the remembrance of our forefathers come before Thee. Remember the Messiah of the house of David, Thy servant, and Jerusalem, Thy holy city, and all Thy people, the house of Israel. (page 30-31)

This passage is omitted from the Reform prayerbooks because it mentions the personal messiah for whom the Orthodox are still waiting, and who they expect to arrive on earth as God's messenger, solving all of man's problems. Reform Jews do not expect a personal messiah to solve man's problems. Rather they look forward to a messianic age, when man through his own efforts will solve his own problems.

> O Lord our God, be gracious unto Thy people Israel and accept their prayer. Restore the worship to Thy sanctuary and receive in love and favor the supplication of Israel.....O may our eyes witness Thy return to Zion. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who restorest Thy divine presence unto Zion. (page 32)

The reason for the omission of this passage lies in the phrase, "Restore the worship to Thy sanctuary," and in the phrase, "Thy return to Zion." The first of these is a plea for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem as the center of Jewish worship. This implies that the Temple is the only true form of worship, and that the synagogue is a temporary thing which will disappear when the Temple is rebuilt. This further implies that all Jews will eventually live in the Holy Land, and will be able to worship at the restored Temple. Reform Jews feel that they are citizens of the country in which they live, and feel no longing to return to Palestine. They believe that they may worship as effectively in their own country, using the method currently employed. The second statement implies that God has somehow removed Himself from the Jews and Jerusalem and that in the future He will return to both. Reform Jews likewise deny this. They believe that God is just as accessible to man in one place on this earth as He is in any other. Another quote from the prayerbooks makes the above ideas even clearer.

> May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, to grant our portion in Thy Torah, and may the Temple be rebuilt in our day. There we will serve Thee with awe as in the days of old. (page 33)

The next quotation is taken from the Additional Service for the Sabbath which follows immediately after the regular morning service.

> May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, to lead us joyfully back to our land, and to establish us within its borders where our forefathers prepared the daily offerings and the additional Sabbath offerings, as is written in Thy Torah, through Moses, Thine inspired servant. (page 141)

This is followed immediately by the following reading:

> And on the Sabbath day two he-lambs of the first year without blemish, and two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a meal-offering, mingled with oil, and the drink-offering thereof. This is the burnt-offering of every Sabbath, besides the continual burnt-offering, and the drink-offering thereof. (Numbers 28:9-10)

Neither of these two passages are included in the Sabbath worship of Reform Jews. The first is omitted because it again refers to the reestablishment of the Temple in Jerusalem with its sacrificial mode of worship, and because it calls for the return of all believing Jews to the Holy Land. As has been stated before, Reform Jews do not

believe that any of this is necessary for the proper and meaningful worship of our God. The second passage is omitted because it is the Biblical passage detailing the law concerning the additional sacrifices which were offered on the Sabbath, and which were mentioned in the prayer just quoted.

These four passages are just a few of many which could have been used. They were quoted in an effort to make clear the areas of disagreement between the Orthodox and Reform Jews in the matter of the content of the prayers. Reform Jews cannot accept the ideas expressed or implied in these and other prayers, so they have left them out of their prayerbooks.

But what have they left in? Of what exactly does the prayerbook consist? Does it have any form, or structure, or outline? The answer to the first of these questions is "lots", to the second is "plenty", and to the third is "yes". We shall go into it in more detail in our next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEY ARE ALL THE SAME

All Jewish worship services are the same. This might sound somewhat astounding, for we already know that there are differences between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. We will learn that there are differences between the services of the Sabbath, the Festivals, the High Holidays, and those for every day. Yet, underlying all of the differences there is so much similarity, that it is possible to say, "All Jewish worship services are the same."

Every Jewish service has the same outline; they are all constructed of the same components. In this chapter we will investigate this outline, or basic structure, and attempt to notice a few of the differences between the various services. Whenever prayers are quoted they will be taken from the Union Prayer Book, Newly Revised, for this is the one with which we are most familiar. The numbers in the parentheses will refer to the page and volume number of this prayerbook. For instance, (118-II) will mean page 118 of volume Two. We will investigate the Evening Service for the Sabbath and use it for our example and model.

The first thing which we notice about this service is that there are five of them; one for every Friday in the month. This was done so that no worshipper would feel bored by

hearing the same words repeated week after week. This is an innovation of Reform Judaism and does not appear in any of the other prayerbooks. These services are all in Volume One, beginning on pages 8, 26, 37, 48, and 61. This service begins with an introductory section, as do all other services. This material is contained on pages 8 through the top of page 12.

> It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High; to declare Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness in the night seasons,... For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will rejoice in the work of Thy hands. How great are Thy works, O Lord!" (8-I)

Already we can see the mood which is being set. The prayer attempts to set the worshipper's mind at ease, to turn his thoughts from the cares of his daily life to the greatness of God, to attune him to prayer. We notice further, that this prayer is in the singular. Generally, all prayers are in the plural, for it is the congregation which is praying. Even prayers which are quotations from the Bible are recast into the plural for congregational worship. But originally, this introductory section of the service was individual, not congregational. It was the individual's private task to get himself ready for worship. This mood continues with the following sen-

tence, taken from the very next prayer.

> .....We turn from our daily toil, from its difficulties, from its clamor and its weariness, to meditate on the serene calm of Thy presence which pervades all creation and hallows our life with the blessing of Sabbath peace. (9-I)

Throughout this introductory portion of every service there are pleas for the congregation to get ready for worship. There are statements about the glory and greatness of God, all designed to help the worshippers develop a prayerful attitude. The section ends with the "Call to Worship," (Bor'chu), the actual beginning of congregational prayer.

> Praise ye the Lord, to whom all praise is due. Praised be the Lord to whom all praise is due forever and ever. (12-I)

The first line, read by the rabbi or reader, is a command to the congregation to begin praying. It tells them to praise the Lord. When the congregation responds to this command by reciting the second line, it begins congregational prayer by actually praising the Lord. At this point we might ask the question, "If God is as great as we say He is, why is it that all during the service we praise Him? Does He need our praise for his ego-satisfac-

tion? Is He like a spoiled child that has to be constantly reminded of his worth?" These are all excellent questions, and they shall be discussed later in a separate chapter dealing with types of prayer.

The next, or second, section of the liturgy is the Sh'ma and its blessings. There are always two blessings before the Sh'ma itself, and either one or two after it. The first paragraph before the Sh'ma deals with God and nature.

> Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the world, by whose law the shadows of evening fall and the gates of morn are opened....(12-I)

The second paragraph before the Sh'ma always refers to God's love for Israel---the people, not the nation.

> Infinite as is Thy power, even so is Thy love. Thou didst manifest it through Israel, Thy people.....Praised be Thou, O Lord, who hast revealed Thy love through Israel. (12-I)

These prayers always contain the same ideas, even though the specific content may vary from service to service, and from occasion to occasion. For instance, compare the complete text of the two prayers just quoted with the complete text of the corresponding prayers in the Rosh Hashanah evening service. These are found on page 10 of volume two of the prayerbook. It will be noticed that the

basic prayers are exactly the same, except that two sentences are added to each for the New Year.

When we speak of the Sh'ma, we mean a great deal more than the one sentence to which this term is generally applied. In the Orthodox prayerbook, the Sh'ma consists of three long paragraphs from the Bible. Our prayerbook only retains the first of these plus the last sentence of the third. The remainder has been omitted: the second paragraph because it speaks of agriculture, and the third because it contains the commandment out of which grew the habit of wearing a Tallis during worship. The Sh'ma, as it now exists in our prayerbook, consists of the following; the familiar sentence,

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

followed by the quote from the Temple service,

> Praised be His name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.

This is followed by the already quoted paragraph,

> Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.....

This is the first of the Biblical passages grouped together to make up the Sh'ma. The last line of the third of these paragraphs is included as the last line of the above section;

That ye may remember and do all My commandments and be holy unto your God. (14-I)

The general intent of all of this material is a statement of Judaism's basic belief about God: He is One. It also contains statements of man's obligations to this God: to love Him, to learn of His ways, and to perform His commandments.

The material immediately following this on pages 14 and 16 are the blessings after the Sh'ma. All of these prayers make up the second section of the service: the Sh'ma and its blessings. The third section of the service has three names; Amidah, Sh'mone Esre, and T'filah. Amidah means "standing", and it is used as the title of this section of the service because originally this entire portion of the worship was recited by the members of the congregation while they stood. In Orthodox and Conservative worship this custom is still followed. Sh'mone Esre is Hebrew for "eighteen", and it is applied to this group of prayers because originally in its basic form this section contained eighteen benedictions. In the traditional daily services this is still the case, while on the Sabbath the number is smaller. T'filah means "prayer", and its use as a name for this section of the service indicates how important this group of prayers was considered to be. It was so important and so central, that it could just be called, "Prayer."

In our prayerbook this material is found on pages 18 through 24.

It is in this section of the service that most of the changes made by Reform were located. This material is basically petitionary prayer, which means that it includes many requests made of God. Those requests dealing with the restoration of a Hebrew nation, the restoration of a descendent of David as king, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the reinstitution of the sacrificial mode of worship, and the advent of the Messiah were all eliminated from this section as we have already learned. Prayers for the safety of individual travelers, and for the recovery of individuals who are ill have also been removed as being unnecessary.

Let us conduct an experiment! Open your prayerbooks and read the material on pages 18 through 24. This is the T'filah of the Sabbath evening service. Then read the prayers found on pages 320 through the middle of page 326. This is the same section of the daily morning service. Compare the two sets of prayers. We will notice that except for the"Sanctification" on page 321, the two groups of prayers are very similar in content and major ideas. If we were to perform the same survey using a traditional prayerbook we would notice a great difference between the two groups of prayers. All of the petitions which we

have mentioned would be included in the daily service only; they would not be found in the service for the Sabbath. This difference is a guiding principle in the construction of a Jewish worship service---there is no petition on the Sabbath! In its place we find prayers of aspiration. The prayer on page 20 is an excellent example of aspiration. We will have an opportunity to discuss these types of prayer in a later chapter.

Included in the T'filah is a sub-section which we have already mentioned, but which we should look at somewhat more closely. It is found only in the morning services and is called the "Sanctification." We might also want to learn the Hebrew name of this passage--- "K'dishah", which means holiness or sanctification.

We might find it somewhat difficult to decide on one name for the fourth section of the service. Generally, it is referred to as the Torah Service, but much more than just this should be included in it. Certainly it begins with the Torah reading, but it also includes the reading of the Haftorah, and the rabbi's sermon should be included also. If all of this material can be discussed at once, if it all made up one section of the service, then we might be able to refer to that section of the service as the Educational Section.

As the synagogue developed as a Beth Ha-T'filah, a House of Worship, so too it grew and developed as a Beth Hamidrash, a House of Study. This aspect of synagogual development is reflected and emulated in our present day religious school, almost all of which are connected in some way with a congregation. It is also reflected in the tradition of reading the Torah and a selection from the prophets during worship.

It was an ancient custom in Palestine to have the Torah read on Monday and on Thursday mornings in the town square. While this might seem strange to us, we must remember that these days were the market days and a great number of people from the outlying districts came into the towns for that reason. The fact that the Torah was read at all indicates the tremendous importance placed on education. In our worship practices today the Torah is divided into fifty sections, one of which is read every week. In this manner the entire scroll is covered within one year. On the holiday of Simchas Torah, at the end of Succoth, it is the custom to read the last few words of Deuteronomy and follow this with the first few words of Genesis, thus indicating that the study of Torah never ends, but rather immediately renews itself.

In chapter three we had occasion to refer to the eighth chapter of the Biblical book of Nehemiah. At that time

we were interested in what it might tell us about the growth of synagogual worship. Let us look at it again with a different purpose in mind. The incident described in that chapter deals with Ezra, the scribe, reading from the book of the "Law of Moses" before a large gathering of people. There are a few verses and phrases in the chapter which give us a hint as to the purpose of the reading. All of the people were gathered together, "... both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding..." (v. 2) Standing with Ezra on a platform before the throng were a group of men about whom the following is said: "And they read in the book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (v.8) The final verse in this story tells us that the people went away from the place filled with a great happiness, "...because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." (v.12)

It is obvious from this account that Ezra and his aids read to the people in order to educate them. In it we might also find the earliest beginnings of the practice of including a sermon in the worship service. Since, as we know the earliest sermons were explanations of the portion of the Torah read at the particular service, the giving of the sense and the causing of the people to understand the reading might be thought to be a forerunner of the sermon.

Some mention must also be made of the reading from the prophetic writings, or Haftorah. Even though it sounds as if it might, this word has nothing to do with the Torah----it refers to the material read from the prophets, and means "completion", for this reading completed the Biblical reading for any particular service. Usually, the Haftorah material is chosen to go with a particular section of the Torah reading because of some association with it. This association might mean that the ideas in the two passages are similar, or it might just mean that similar words are used in the two passages.

The material included in this section is found in our prayerbook on pages 94-97. In the Sabbath morning service this section is entirely different, so that it might be a good idea to look at it also. This is found on pages 144 through the top of page 150.

Just as the service begins with an Introductory section, so it ends with a Concluding section. This concluding material is the fifth section of the service. It is found on pages 71-77 of our prayerbook. It consists of two subdivisions: the Adoration, and the Kaddish or mourner's prayer.

For a great many people the Adoration is the high point of the service. The extremely hopeful ideas expressed in it

are Reform Judaism's prayerful goals for all of mankind. We have already stated the Reform prayerbook does not contain the references to a personal messiah found in the Orthodox Siddur. In place of these, we find this prayer asking for the speedy dawn of the Messianic Age.

> May the time not be distant, O God, when Thy name shall be worshipped in all the earth, when unbelief shall disappear and error be no more. (71-I)

The prayer continues by painting an ideal picture of a perfect society when all men will worship one God, when goodness shall do away with all forms of evil, when all men are united in human brotherhood, and when God's kingdom shall finally be established on earth. While it is not expressly stated in this prayer, it is the generally held belief that man must do most of the creation of this society for himself; it is not something which God will impose upon man.

There are five prayers which serve as introductions to the Kaddish. There are many important ideas expressed in these paragraphs; and many more important ideas which are denied by implication. One of the most central parts of any religion are its concepts of what happens after death. Some religions affirm a physical existence or immortality after death. Other religions add to this

beliefs about a heaven or hell as the place of this continued life. Still others believe in resurrection, which means that the person will come back to life at another time as another person, or that in some future time all of the 'good' people will come back to life here on earth as they originally were. All of these ideas are denied in Reform Judaism. In our prayerbook they are not denied in detail, but rather by the substitution of something else in their place.

Reform Judaism believes in a partial immortality; an immortality of the soul. This soul or spirit is Divine, or God-given. It is the spark of life, the indescribable something which keeps the body alive, that aspect of the person which makes him an individual totally different from every other person. At death this soul returns to God who implanted it within the individual body originally, and it continues its existence with God. There is another manifestation of this immortality. Every person who ever lived is remembered by someone else; every person influenced or affected other people. This memory and influence live on after death and in this way immortality is assured.

Let us attempt to make this last idea more specific. Your great Grandfather raised your grandmother. As he did so, his personality had a great influence on the type of

person she became. To a large extent she was the person she was, because he was the person he was. When your grandmother raised your father, he was greatly shaped by her, who remember, had been shaped by someone else. Now your father is helping to raise you, and in many ways his personality creates yours. So actually this chain can be carried back as far as your family tree goes; with each parent affecting his children and through them his grandchildren, his great grandchildren and so on down the line to the end of time.

The Kaddish is not written in Hebrew, as are the rest of the prayers in the worship service, but in Aramaic which was the spoken language of the Jews in Palestine at about the time of the beginning of the Common Era. The English on page 76 is not an accurate translation of the Kaddish, for the prayer never mentions death or mourning. It consists almost entirely of praise of God. Originally, it was the custom of scholarly Jews to recite this prayer at the conclusion of study sessions in the academies. Later, someone suggested that since this prayer usually marked the end of study, it should also be used to mark the final end of a scholar's study---his death. Still later, others objected to this lack of democracy in Judaism and the prayer was recited whenever someone died, scholar or not. Now it is recited at the time of death

and at the yearly anniversary of death.

This then, is the basic outline which runs through all Jewish worship services which makes it possible for us to state that they are all the same. As a summary let us attempt to put this structure in outline form.

A. Introductory Prayers

I. Call to Worship (Bor'chu)

B. Sh'ma and its Blessings

I. Blessings before the Sh'ma

II. Sh'ma itself

III. Blessing (s) after it.

C. T'filah (or Amidah or Sh'mone Esre)

I. Sanctification (K'dushah)

D. Educational Section

I. Reading of the Torah

II. Reading of the Haftorah

III. Sermon

E. Concluding Section

I. Adoration

II. Kaddish

In this outline there are nine Hebrew words. All are explained within this chapter. We should all know exactly what these words mean and to what prayerbook material they refer. In the chapter there are some additional Hebrew words which we likewise should know. They are:

Tallis, Beth Ha-T'filah, Beth Hamidrash, Siddur.

We have now completed the first section of the book and the course. In it we have surveyed the history and the development of worship forms and modes, paying particular attention to changes and growth within Judaism. Insofar as was possible we showed how the particular method of worship under discussion answered the questions about worship which we felt could be found as underlying motivations or assumptions which the worshipper held. It will be our task in the remainder of the book to attempt to find answers to these questions for ourselves. In so doing we shall attempt to discover any answers which might be found within the Union Prayer Book itself; but we will not be bound by these answers, for we realize that such answers must be original and individual, suitable and meaningful for our own lives.

Let us now proceed to our first question; is prayer the only form of worship, or are there others?

CHAPTER EIGHT

DANCING, SINGING, SILENCE AND PRAYER

From the historical angle we already know the answer about the various forms of worship. We have already learned that in the development of worship, prayer is a rather late innovation.

Our story about the primitive hunter indicated that he worshipped by acting out his needs for his gods. Tribal worship was usually sacrificial in nature; and the worship of the American Indians contained magical elements as well as dancing, prayer, and chanting. And prayer itself can have many forms. It can be recited, by an individual or a congregation; it can be sung, by an individual or by a congregation; or it can be offered in silence, again either on an individual or congregational basis.

All of these various forms have had their place in Judaism at one time or another, and many are still used. The Bible does not contain any record of worship in the manner of our primitive hunter; that is, there is no mention of anyone acting out his desires for God to see. But there are many references to the magic which this type of worship implies.

The sixteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus contains a description of the ritual on the Day of Atonement with

Aaron officiating as High Priest.

> And he shall take the two goats, and set them before the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for Azazel.....But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the Lord, to make atonement over him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.....And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all of the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land which is cut off; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. (Lev. 16:7,8,10,21,22)

This is certainly to be considered magic. The High Priest is to get two goats; one to be offered as a sacrifice, the other to be kept alive. The live goat serves to carry the sins of the people into the wilderness, to a place where other people shall not find it, to a place

where it shall be left unattended to die, and with it the sins of the people.

There is another ritual performed by some of the Orthodox to this very day which contains some similar elements. During the High Holiday period these people go to the side of a flowing body of water, and there empty their pockets of small crumbs and whatever dirt might have accumulated. These crumbs and dirt specks are then cast into the water to float away and carry the peoples' sins away with them. This ceremony is called Tashlich, meaning Casting. This ritual might actually be acting out the peoples' wishes for God to see. From the sources it is not certain whether the crumbs carry the sins, or whether they merely indicate to God that the people would like their sins to be carried away as the crumbs are floated away by the water.

During the Eighteenth Century there was an offshoot of Orthodox Judaism which flourished in Eastern Europe called Hasidism. These Hasidic Jews were extremely pious and observant, but they made certain changes in the method of worship, so that their religious experiences became more meaningful to them. It was common for them to worship through song and dance. Their songs had no words; just melody and syllables. We still sing one of their songs regularly in our religious schools: "Bim Bom". Their

dances were very emotional, and generally quite beautiful to watch. A small group of these Jews is still practicing their form of worship on the east side of New York City.

In the Orthodox synagogue the T'filah is always read by the congregation in complete silence. Then it is repeated aloud by the Chazan or Cantor. The Reform worship service also makes provision for silent prayer, even providing the worshipper an opportunity to pray in his own words.

This short survey has served to remind us that even though we might consider some forms of worship to be peculiar, all have had a place in Judaism at one time or another, and many are still in use.

We might be able to better understand these divergent methods of worship if we can answer one additional question. What are people trying to do when they worship? This is a new question, somewhat different from the two which we asked on page 4 :: "What exactly is prayer?" and, "Why do people pray?" When we get around to answering these two questions we will find that our results are dependent on what we are about to do.

What are people trying to do when they worship? It seems as if all people, everywhere, realize that there is a

Power somewhere, greater than they, which has some interest in, or control over, what happens here on earth. All worship, whatever its form and method, appears to be an attempt at communication with this Power.

Communication is a two-way process: whoever enters into real communication serves as both a transmitter and a receiver. If we were to attempt to talk to a friend, and the friend refused to answer, we would soon become frustrated and quit. In order for communication to be possible there must be a response. But how can we be sure that we will be aware of the response when it comes? Television is a form of communication, but the receiver, or TV set, does not work automatically. It must be turned on, allowed to warm up, and finally turned to the correct channel and tuned properly.

The same is true in purely human communication. People must be attuned and ready if they expect to hear. How frequently we call so someone and get no reply! It might be that Mother is busy with the laundry and cannot hear us over the sound of the washer or dryer; Dad might be cutting the grass and our words are drowned out by the noise of the mower motor; sister might be so engrossed in a book that our words fail to register in her mind. All of these things are possible, and many more. The same is

true in a worship experience.

People need little preparation before they initiate communication, before they act as transmitters. But they do seem to require preparation before they can function as receivers. A great deal of worship attempts to do just this.

Worship seems to be an almost completely emotional phenomenon, and a great deal of its time is spent in preparing the emotions of the worshipper for true worship. The pageantry of the Catholic Church is a good modern example of this. The dancing and singing of the Hasidic Jews is admittedly highly emotional in content. Imagine how the emotions of the onlookers were aroused as a priest in his colorful garments killed and prepared an animal for sacrifice! Death and burning have always been highly charged emotionally.

The Union Prayerbook also attempts to attune the worshipper to the possibility of true communication with God. The following phrases which indicate this effort are all quotes from the prayerbook. It would be well worth our while to read the prayers from which these are taken in their entirety.

...we lift our hearts to Thee... (10-I)

...meditate on the serene calm of Thy presence (10-I)

...to behold Thy guiding power...(10-I)

...awaken within us the consciousness of Thy presence...(27-I)

...we open our hearts to the...influences of the day hallowed for Thy worship. (49-I)

...we regain the feeling of our kinship with Thee.(108-I)

...we lift up our hearts to Thee...(8-II)

...may we listen reverently to its solemn admonition. (8-II)

There are many more examples of this type of material in the two volumes of the prayerbook, but these should be sufficient. These examples, and all of the explanatory material which we read before them, have given us a good understanding of the problem. But is there anything which we can do to improve our ability to act as 'receivers'?

This is something which we should definitely discuss in class with our teacher. There are a number of possible alternatives, but they are only suggestions, for as we have already said, this is an individual problem which the person must solve for himself. We might find that the first step would be to attempt to attend the congregational worship services more often, for all we might need is more practice. On the other hand we might want to make some

suggestions about changes in the congregational services to the rabbi. If we could explain why we were interested, he would certainly listen. Possibly we might desire more music in the service; music which is familiar to all so that we might join in the singing with the choir. If the Temple has a youth group of some sort, we might suggest that we join with it in writing some creative prayers or even complete services. The rabbi might even permit us to use one with the entire congregation some Friday night.

Realizing that there are many possible ways to worship, and that worship is an attempt at communication with God, we are ready for our next two questions. What exactly is prayer? Why do people pray? We are now narrowing the entire field of worship down to prayer, for we realize that this is the most common form of worship for Jews. We will investigate the phenomenon of prayer from the standpoint of its motivations, its content, and its use as a method of communication.

CHAPTER NINE

PETITION, THANKSGIVING, AND MORE.....

What is prayer, and why do people pray? For our understanding, these are probably the two most important considerations. The answers to all of the other questions are based on these.

We are already aware of the fact that all worship, of whatever form, is an attempt at communication with God. Prayer is a form of worship, so it too is attempted communication. But there is more to it than this. As man has become more civilized, more highly integrated, more socially oriented and influenced he has changed his ways of doing things. We have all seen cartoons of the cave man, with his club in his hand, dragging his new 'bride' off to her new home by the hair. Fortunately, times have changed, and this type of behavior is no longer acceptable.

So too, in religion. Times have changed, and religious ritual has changed along with it. We noted the beginning of this change when we discussed the power struggles between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, between synagogue and Temple, in Chapter Five. The proponents of the synagogue won out, and it became the accepted place of worship. Along with this, prayer became the standard mode or method. We are now so accustomed to prayer that any serious attempt to change our method of worship would meet

with grave difficulties. It would have to withstand mocking, derision, arguments from tradition, and many more challenges. Yet, if it was the appropriate time, if social conditions were correct, some change would be made no matter how strong the opposition. All people have the need to worship at one time or another, and they will choose the method which best satisfies this need. If a change in the current form has to be made, they will force such a change.

In the United States, in the second half of the Twentieth Century, we customarily communicate verbally. It is only natural that this use of words should be reflected in our worship. But, in our day to day, personal communication, we use many different types of talking, many different tones of voice. There are times when we plead; times when we merely ask; times when we order; times when we discipline; and other times when we raise our voice in anger. The variety of communication which we use at a particular moment depends entirely on two factors. First, it depends on with whom we are talking, and secondly, on what we are trying to accomplish. These varieties of communication are also reflected in our prayers, and again the determining factors are the person addressed and the desired end.

We have already stated that, in Judaism, all prayer is

addressed to God. Yes, but what kind of a God is he, what do His worshippers consider Him to be, what kind of a relationship are they attempting to establish with Him? If we look at the titles given to God in prayer, we might discover an answer to our question. All of the following are commonly applied to God: Lord, Ruler, King, Almighty, Creator, Father, Redeemer, Helper, Savior, Protector, Shield.

All of these titles seem to be divisible into three groups. The first four all seem to indicate a monarch, a ruler of some sort; the next two refer to a parent; andthe last five describe God as being Someone who cares for, or looks after people. This is, then, the type of God with whom we are attempting to establish a relationship when we pray. It is possible to further limit this to two types of relationship, and still include all of the varieties implied in these titles. Ruler-subject and Parent-child relationships seem to cover everything.

It should not be necessary to describe the actions and attitudes of one who relates as subject to a ruler, or of one who relates as child to a parent. These things are familiar. To a large extent the material included in our prayers is determined by the usual, customary actions of one who is involved in one of these two relationships. The choice of words, the attitudes ex-

pressed, and the external tone of the prayers are limited by the considerations of these relationships. But even within the confines of the relationship there are differing types of prayer. We have already mentioned some of them in passing; now we will discuss them more fully. When we have done this, we will have completely answered our questions dealing with the definition of prayer, and we will have hinted strongly at the answer to our question of why people pray.

There are five basic types of prayers; petition, aspiration, praise, thanksgiving, and confession. In any service all five will be found to some extent, but certain services have a preponderance of one over the other. For example, there is very little of the petition type in the Sabbath services, but there is corresponding increase in aspiration and praise. Generally speaking, the services for the three festivals, Succoth, Pesach, and Shavouth, contain a great deal of thanksgiving; while the services for the High Holidays contain a large measure of confession and petition.

When someone is asked to define prayer on the spur of the moment, the answer usually goes something like this; "Prayer is when you ask God for something." This is the most common concept of prayer; it is petition. Just as children find it impossible to meet all of their own needs

themselves, and just as citizens find it impossible to satisfy all of the needs of society by themselves, man finds it impossible to solve many of his problems without outside help. When children have difficulties, they ask their parents; when citizens are faced with a problem, they approach the government; and when man is faced with a dilemna which he cannot solve, he prays to his God.

There are many types of petitionary prayer, in that there are many things for which man asks God's help. Some of these prayers are valid, others are not. Let us imagine a little scene. John is walking home from school one afternoon, and just as he is about to reach his corner a fire truck passes him and turns into his street. He knows that something is burning, and he quietly says, "Dear God, don't let it be my house!" This is a petitionary prayer, but it is not a proper one. John has asked for something which cannot be granted; now that a house is burning, even God can't change which one it is. Likewise John has asked for something which might bring harm to others. If it was his house which was burning, John's selfish request would have another's house burn in its place.

Let us place John in another situation and see what his prayer might be. Someone whom he loves very dearly is quite ill, and John prays: "Dear God, take good care of

my dad. He is real sick. Help his doctors and nurses to cure him. Try to see to it that they do the right things for him. Thank you, God." This prayer is certainly much better, for the things which it asks are within the power of God to grant. But this does not mean that they will be granted.

John's birthday is coming soon, and so he prays, "Dear God, please have Mom and Dad buy me that dog that I want for my birthday. If you do this, then I promise to be good and do what my parents want all year." Here again, is an improper prayer. We can't bribe or blackmail God by attaching conditions or strings to our prayers.

> Let wickedness and hatred cease, and reign Thou over us in justice and love.....Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us and we shall be saved.....(322-I)

> Grant us peace, Thy most precious gift, O Thou eternal source of peace, and enable Israel to be its messenger unto the peoples of the earth. Bless our country that..... Strengthen the bonds of friendship..... Plant virtue in every soul.....(140-I)

> Grant me the strength of will to live as Thou

> wouldst have me live. Incline Thine ear unto me; be gracious unto me. Lead me and guide me for my times are in Thy hand. (27-II)

These three excerpts from the prayerbook are good examples of legitimate prayers of petition. We might sum up by saying that petitionary prayers ask God to do something for us or for others which will be of benefit to the recipient and which will not cause harm or discomfort to others and which could logically be granted in the normal order of things.

Prayers of aspiration are very similar in that they are also requests directed to God. However, the things asked for are generally more spiritual, emotional, or intellectual in character.

> Help us, O God, to banish from our hearts all vainglory, pride of worldly possessions, and self-sufficient leaning upon our own reason. Fill us with the spirit of meekness and the grace of modesty that we may grow in wisdom and in reverence.....O heavenly Father, put into our hearts the love and awe of Thee, that we may consecrate our lives to Thy service and glorify Thy name in the eyes of all men. (101-2-I)

This prayer is loaded with requests of God, but notice their character. They are not for material things, or even for health or strength. Rather, the worshipper asks for changes in his basic personality in order that he might better serve God and his fellow man. This is an excellent example of aspirational prayer, and it clearly points out the difference between this type and petition.

The most frequent type of prayer in our prayerbooks is praise. It might also be the most difficult to explain. The key to the understanding of this type of material seems to lie in this sentence. "Praise ye the Lord, to whom all praise is due." It appears as if the compilers of our prayerbook felt that it was a duty incumbent upon man to praise God. But why?

This material was not included in the prayerbook because the rabbis felt that God needed praise. He does not have any need to be 'built up' or flattered by man. Likewise this type of prayer was not written with bribery in mind: "Listen, God, to all of the nice and pleasant things I have said about you. Won't you now grant my one little request?" And not, "Did you hear all of the praise which I heaped on you, God? Aren't I a pretty nice fellow?

Praise is due God, but not for any benefit which will accrue to God. Rather, man derives the benefit of his own

words. Prayers of praise are part of the process by which man becomes attuned to prayer in general. By saying these things repeatedly during a worship service, man influences his own attitudes and feelings. He becomes emotionally involved, and therefore, better able to pray and worship. If we look carefully, we will notice that almost every prayer, in our prayerbook, of whatever general type, begins with a sentence of praise. Many also conclude with such a sentence.

Try to count the number of times during a day when it is necessary to say 'thank you'. It comes out to be amazingly high! If it is proper and necessary to express thanks so often during a normal day, is it not also necessary and proper to extend thanksgiving to God during a worship service? We all will agree that it is. The miracles of life, of the universe, of nature, and the loving blessings of home, family, and friends are all handed to us. We do not work for them, we do not create them, they are given to us to enjoy and cherish. We must render thanks for them.

> We gratefully acknowledge, O Lord our God, that Thou art our Creator and Preserver, the Rock of our life and the Shield of our help. We render thanks unto Thee for our lives which are in Thy hand, for our souls which are ever in Thy keeping, for Thy wonderous providence and for Thy continuous goodness, which Thou bestowest upon us day by day. Truly, Thy mercies never fail and

> Thy lovingkindness never ceases. Therefore do we forever put our trust in Thee. (138-I)

Frequently, in order to make things right within ourselves, or in order to restore and improve our relationship with our parents, we find it necessary to admit that we were wrong. Our wrongness might have involved something which we thought, something which we said, or something which we did. On occasion no one else might know that we had been incorrect, but still we feel the need to express our regrets.

In the relationship between man and God the same thing occurs. Man is compelled to admit that all is not as it should be, that his behavior has not been as good as it might have been, that his thoughts were not as pure as he would have liked them to be. The type of prayer recited at such a time is called confessional.

> .....As we thus survey our life, we are filled with shame that we have fallen short of the purpose for which Thou didst send us hither, and have failed to use aright the manifold gifts which Thou didst bestow upon us. Humbly we confess that our intentions and our deeds accuse us before the tribunal of

> our conscience and convict us in Thy sight, O righteous Judge of the world. (137-I)

This example of a prayer of confession was taken from the Sabbath Morning service. We should also look at the prayers on pages 212-221 of Volume II of our prayerbook. All genuine prayers of confession must end with the worshipper's resolve that in the future he will be better. In this connection we should note the remainder of the prayer quoted above, and the last sentence on page 221.

> Before the hour has passed, let us in deep humility and contrition make confession to God, and with sincere vows resolve so to mend our ways that we shall not be moved from his path. (221-II)

This completes our analysis of the five different types of prayer, and through four of them gives us a hint as to why people pray.

Because of the very nature of human life, man is faced with manifold problems and difficulties, the very magnitude of which, make it impossible for him to solve them alone. He must turn to some aid outside of himself. As children, we often turn to our parents. As citizens we often turn to our government. As men, we must also turn to God.

When we are confronted by periods of stress and strain, such as sickness or death, we turn to God with prayers of petition. We also can recite this type of prayer when we feel that there is something lacking in our lives, or in the lives of others. Our uses of aspirational prayer are very similar. Our awareness of the glories and gifts of the world around us, often leads us to recite prayers of thanksgiving; and our awareness of our own shortcomings, of whatever nature, prompts us to confession.

These are the reasons for prayer. But there is one other which we will find somewhat harder to express and understand. People have found through experience that they feel better when they pray. After a hard week of work the soft lights, the music of the choir and the organ, the all inclusive calm of the entire service seem to have a beneficial effect upon people. These are the things which cannot be measured, which people even find hard to express. Still, they exist, and they are one of the causes of worship.

As individuals we will have to think out our own motivations, we will have to learn our own desires, so that we can better understand our own prayer needs. Once we have done this, we can begin a realistic examination of our next question. Unfortunately, we will discover that most

people have not gone to the trouble. They are looking for the wrong things, things which they can never get through prayer. And they end up being frustrated, angry, and convinced that prayer has no value.

After some serious classroom discussion of the problems raised in this chapter, we will be ready to move toward an answer to; What do people expect to happen when they pray?

CHAPTER TEN

DO WE WANT MIRACLES?

Whenever people engage in an activity, they expect their actions to have a result. The same is true of praying; when people pray, they expect something to happen. This is normal and natural, but a problem arises when these expectations are not realistic, and therefore, not realizable.

People, generally, have two major categories of expectation about their prayers. Simply stated, people desire to have their prayers heard and answered. These hopes, in their simplest forms, are valid; and we will discuss them as such in later chapters. What we are interested in here, are the non-valid, the not realizable, expectations which people hold.

The first of these involves the character of God. One of the cardinal principles of Judaism deals with the non-anthropomorphic nature of God. This long word comes from the Greek Anthropos, meaning man, and Morphe, meaning form. It therefore means 'human in form', and is used in religion for a conception of God with human attributes. Judaism denies such a concept of God, but admittedly has a great deal of difficulty doing so.

Because we are human, and because all of our efforts at

communication are limited to action and reaction with other humans, we find it extremely difficult not to refer to God using human terms. The words which we used in an earlier chapter to describe God are all terms which we could easily have applied to a human parent or sovereign. The use of such terms is a limitation of our humanity, but they should not force us into an anthropormorphic belief about God. Yet, many people do hold such beliefs, and run into difficulty in terms of their expectation about prayer.

When these people speak or think about God's hearing of prayer, they do so in human terms completely. And just as they expect the person to whom they are talking to hear them, so too, they expect God to hear. They have never thought out the problems of communication, of establishing relationships, which we have already discussed. And just as they expect the person to whom they are talking to answer, so too, they expect God to respond immediately. They do not realize that, perhaps, they are not ready or capable of receiving a reply. In contradistinction to this type of thinking, we can say that while God might hear prayer, He does not do so with ears; and while God might respond to prayers, He does not do so with a voice!

The second of these non-valid expectations which are held by some people, of which we should be aware before we go any further in our study, involves the content or quality

of God's response to their prayers. A story is told (by Rabbi Jack Spiro in his Rabbinic Thesis for the Cincinnati School of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion) about one of the prayer experiences of the late Pope Pius XII.

A rather large group of Canadians was traveling in Europe and made Italy a stop on their tour. While there, they visited Vatican City, and managed to have an audience with the Pope. After the usual introductions and conversation, the Pope began to bid them farewell. He blessed each of them, and prayed for their safe journey home. A very few days later the plane on which they were traveling crashed; all were killed.

The entire world was saddened by this tragedy, and, of course, the Pope was severely shocked. But this incident did not shake his confidence in the power of prayer. The exact cause of the crash has never been determined, but we can be sure that it was caused either by the weather, mechanical or electrical failure, or a lack of fuel. In this instance, in order for the Pope's prayer for the safety of the travelers to have been answered, God would have had to intervene in the natural order of events.

Many people expect just such intervention into nature by

God. To put it more simply, people tend to expect miracles. We all will agree that this is somewhat unreasonable. The expectation of miracles is given support by the literal understanding of some of the events described in the Bible, and other religious literature. When the Biblical account of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt under Moses tells of the division of the Red Sea, we cannot assume that it is relating an historical fact. The story was written down many, many, many years after the event which it attempts to describe, and we therefore can expect it to contain some inaccuracies. We must also remember that the story was written down by a relatively primitive, unscientific people who could not explain natural events, or even social events. These ancient people knew that their ancestors had fled from Egypt, that Egypt was one of the major world powers at that time, and they could find no reasonable explanation for the Jews' success. Therefore, they explained the event in the only way they could under the circumstances: God had intervened and caused a miracle. It would be possible to analyze almost all of the miracles mentioned in the Bible in this fashion.

Along this same line, and very closely related to it, is the third erroneous expectation which people hold. God is supposed to answer in the affirmative every petitionary prayer which people make, no matter what it takes for God to do it.

A young mother came to her rabbi with this story, and asked his help in solving the problem contained in it. This woman had a seven year old daughter who attended the rabbi's religious school in the second grade. There she had had stories read to her about God. In one of these stories the statement was made that God was so great, so different from people, so superior, that He was almost "Magic". The story also said that we could not expect God to perform magic for us, but this little girl did not remember. This child was left-handed, and because of this was having a great deal of difficulty learning how to write properly. Her teacher insisted that she write at home every night for practice. This the girl did, but her papers were always extremely messy. As she wrote, in the typical left-handed backhanded manner, her left arm was dragged across the paper smudging, and smearing all of the words written there. When the girl would finish a page she would look at it with a great deal of dissatisfaction and frustration, for she realized how badly it looked. She would then cover her eyes with

her hands and say the following: "God, our teacher told us that You are magic. While I have my eyes covered You come and clean up my paper. I won't peek." When she opened her eyes her paper was, of course, exactly as it had been before.

The child's mother knew that her daughter's expectations were improper, and her request to the rabbi was for help in straightening the child out. This the rabbi did by meeting with the class for three weeks and talking with the children about God and prayer. It was fortunate that this mother became aware of the problem while her child was yet young, for we see many adults making the same sort of demand upon God.

In our prayerbook, there are a few sentences in the various services which tend to combat these attitudes.

> Thou who hearest prayer, we beseech Thee to endow us with a contented disposition. When we pray for new blessings, may we come to Thee in the spirit of humility and submission, remembering that we cannot know whether what we ask is really for our good. Thou alone knowest and orderest all things well, whether Thou grantest our petitions or deniest them. (20-I)

> O Lord, though we are prone to seek favors

for ourselves alone, yet when we come into Thy presence, we feel lifted above petty thoughts of self. (45-I)

Both of these passages contain an important idea, at which we have only hinted so far. This is the reaction of the individual to the denial of his prayer.

Frequently, people whose prayer has been denied become angry with God. They are frustrated in their desires, and attack that which they feel caused their discomfort. This is a natural human reaction to frustration, but it is the frustration itself which should interest us. This human reaction presupposes that things might have been different; certainly the expectation before the prayer made this supposition.

Something goes wrong in the life of the individual, or something is lacking in his life, so he turns to God and asks that He rectify the situation. But is this proper? Did God actually cause the problem? Should He be asked to undo someone else's work? Should the individual be angry when his petitionary prayer is seemingly denied?

Our prayerbook bids us to approach God humbly and ready to submit to His wishes; this rules out any possibility of man's becoming angry. Likewise, we pray for a contented disposition", which would serve the same purpose.

We are also admonished to lift ourselves above petty thought of ourselves. If we can do these things, then we will not fall into the trap of the three incorrect, or improper, expectations about prayer discussed in this chapter.

However, we asked ourselves some questions at the bottom of page 102. We have made no attempt to answer them here, for they introduce another topic. We would ordinarily expect 'yes' answers to most of these questions. But what if some prayers were not actually directed toward God? Would this fact change things? Let's see!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TO WHOM DO PEOPLE PRAY?

In our first few chapters, in an indirect way, we discussed part of the answer to this question. Our primitive hunter did not have one God to whom he prayed, but a series of gods or powers, each one with a different function. There were gods of the hunt, gods of rain, gods of crop and herd fertility, gods of health, and also some evil spirits who caused bad luck and sickness. For these ancient peoples, no matter what form of worship they employed, the appropriate god was called upon at the correct time. Even nations as civilized and sophisticated as the ancient Greeks and Romans, had this multiplicity of gods as part of their religion.

With the entrance of Judaism into the world religious picture, the concept of One God was introduced. But even this underwent a period of growth and development. At first, the Jews recognized the existence of the other gods worshipped by other peoples. The Jewish God was, however, supreme, strongest, and most powerful. Slowly the idea emerged that there was only one real God, that other gods were not gods at all, and that the people who worshipped them erred. Now that other religions include the concept of one God among their beliefs, there is a tendency to say that even though we worship in different ways, even though our God concepts differ somewhat, it is still the same one God whom we worship.

The evidence from history indicates that all peoples, primitive or highly civilized, have always addressed their worship to what they considered to be the God or gods who ruled their lives and their world. This is certainly true of sacrifice, which only can be meaningful as it is directed to a god. The same can be said of that form of worship which consists of acting out one's desires. We have already said that dancing and singing as a part of worship have a great effect on the worshipper himself; the introductory parts of our worship service are also designed to influence the worshipper, to heighten his emotions, to prepare him for the act of divine communication. Even though all of our Jewish prayers are addressed to God, might we not ask to whom people actually pray? Are all prayers really intended for God?

Nowhere in our Prayerbook do we find prayers beginning, "O Man", or"O Human", or "O Myself". But let us look into the content of some of these prayers more closely, to see if they are not actually intended for man's ears, heart, and mind.

.....May each new Sabbath find us going from strength to strength, so that by Thy grace we may be helped to even worthier work. Make us conscious of our obligation to Thee and of the

opportunities for service which Thou hast put within our reach. Help us to use our powers for the benefit of our fellowmen, so that the hearts of Thy children may be gladdened by the work of our hands. (38-I)

In this hour of worship, I draw aside from toil and care, and lift my heart unto Thee for light and strength, for faith and courage. In the stress and turmoil of daily striving, I yield only too often to selfish ease and mean ambitions. I become so entangled in the things of earth that I lose the sense of life's simplicity and nobility. Fortify my spirit, enlighten my reason, and elevate my aims and desires, that I may devote all my powers of body and mind to Thy service....O that my ideals would pervade all my thoughts and labors, that I might never lose sight of Thy supreme realities! (58-9-I)

Both of these prayers are aspirational in character, while the second contains elements of confession. They are both addressed to God in their complete form as found in the prayerbook, but they aspire to things which man can only do for himself. We have already said that confession can have no meaning unless it is accompanied by sincere

resolve to rectify the wrong. This resolve is not contained specifically in the second passage above, but it certainly is implied. This rectifying must be done by man, and the requests in the prayer are, therefore, directed to himself, to his hidden resources of strength. God does not fortify, enlighten, or elevate man; neither does He help him to become conscious of his obligations and opportunities or help him use his powers.

If we were to read more of the aspirational prayers of our prayerbook, we would find that they all are about the same in this respect. It seems as if the intent is to get man to help himself in these matters by making him aware of the problem. If we did not feel that we had fallen short of some goal, if we did not realize that we were not achieving as much as we are capable, then we could never attempt a solution. The repetition of this type of prayer makes man aware, and by so doing starts him on the road to the solution.

Individually this would be a very hard road for us to travel, but knowing that we have the company of others tends to lighten the load. For this reason, the majority of our prayers are written in the plural, and are recited in the midst of the entire congregation. Sitting alone in his room, man would probably brood when faced with his own lack of perfection. But when we are surrounded by our friends,

all of whom have the same problem, we draw strength from each other.

There is an additional aspect to this discussion which we have not yet mentioned. We have stated previously, that God does not intervene into the world at man's bidding. He does not cause miracles in response to our petitionary prayers. Why, then, should we expect him to intervene in response to our prayers of this type? This expectation is likewise not valid.

On page 104 we mentioned that Judaism contributed the One God idea to the world's religions. It is now appropriate to mention that Judaism also gave the world another very important religious concept.

The prophet Isaiah gave voice to this idea when he said, speaking for God,

> Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways; as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask of Me righteous ordinances, they delight to draw near unto God.....behold, in the day of your fast ye pursue your business, and exact all of your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high. Is such

> the fast I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul?.....Is not this the fast I have chosen? To loose the fetters of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? (Isaiah 58: 2-6, selected)

This passage asks the people if their method of seeking God is proper, if it is the type of worship which God desires. It then, answers the question in the negative by stating that there is a plus factor, something which must be added to worship in order to make the worship acceptable to God. The last verse quoted begins the outline of this additional factor. We have included enough to make it possible for us to see that what is required is a certain type of moral, ethical human behavior. If we read further, we find that the type of behavior desired is almost exactly the same as the goals mentioned in our aspirational prayer.

Here, in the Bible, God demands that we achieve a certain level of human conduct before we approach Him in worship. In our aspirational prayers we turn around and seemingly ask God to help us reach this very same conduct level. This is an additional reason for our conclusion that many of the prayers in our service are meant for man, even though they are addressed to God.

> When we sing Thy praise, may our souls rise with our songs to Thee, and when we render Thee our homage, may we remember that only by obedience to Thy commandments, by faithfulness to our duties, by the goodness of our deeds, can we make our worship acceptable to Thee. (20-I)

This is the prayerbook's way of expressing the very same idea. This passage is also aspirational, but in it the realization is expressed that the first steps belong to man. He must make the initial effort. Let us reread the prayers quoted on pages 105 and 106, so that this difference becomes clear to us.

This is called the 'covenant concept' which means an idea of the relationship of man and God based on mutual contract. When we enter into a legal contract, we always state that we will do something in return for the other party's doing something. The religious covenant is based on the same principle. In this case, the Jews vowed to perform certain commandments, to live a certain type of life; and God promised in return to be their God, their Savior, their King.

This covenant relationship of Israel and God is detailed

in Exodus, Chapter 19, where the events immediately prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments are related. According to the Bible, God speaks to Moses and says,

> 'Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if you will hearken unto my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.' And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said: 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.'

All of the elements of the covenant are expressed here. God initiates the contract and explains the responsibilities which will fall upon the people. He, then, describes the resulting relationship. Finally the people state their acceptance of the specified terms.

We seem to have created a contradiction. On the one hand we have said that God does not intervene in the natural

order of things. Now, we have explained the covenant relationship of man and God, which insists that God will function in the world. We are faced with two alternatives: either we accept one of the above ideas and disregard the other, or we attempt to harmonize the difficulty by resolving the contradiction.

The key word in the proper understanding of this conflict is the word 'intervene'. God does function in the world, in human lives, but He does not intervene. There are certain phenomenon of nature, of life, which we could not explain adequately if it were not for God. The balance of forces in nature which permit life to exist, which permit life to continually renew itself, is only understandable if we assume that it is ordered and controlled by God. Throughout the ages men have felt experiences of God within their own lives. The Hebrew prophets all had God-experiences of one sort or another. All felt that they had been commissioned to be prophets by God. Even in more recent times, people have had the feeling of the Presence of the Divine. Such an experience occurred during the summer of 1954.

A group of young men were spending the summer together in the mountains of north eastern Pennsylvania. It was their custom to hold Sabbath evening services out-of-doors exactly at the time of sunset. As they sat on the hillside on the western side of a valley, the sun was setting directly over the hill behind them. They were facing toward

the east, toward the opposite hill. As the sun settled beneath the crest of the hill, its dying rays illumined the other hill with golden, fiery hues. The trees, the rocks, the fields, all looked as if they had been mysteriously sprayed with gold paint. The group was nearing the end of the service, and rose to recite the Adoration. "Let us adore the ever-living God, and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth, whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world. He is our God; there is none else." Suddenly these words came to life for one of the members of the group. Suddenly, possibly because of the outstanding beauty of the particular situation, these sentences had meaning. The rest of the group sat down at the conclusion of the prayer, but this one young man remained standing, almost transfixed. He cannot describe exactly what happened to him on that day, he cannot put into words the inner feelings which he had for that one short moment, but he is certain that he had an experience of God.

It seems as if we might say in conclusion that God will function in human lives, if certain prior conditions are met. First, man must make the effort necessary to open the channels of communication. Second, man must meet the demands set upon him by the covenant with God, and third,

man must not expect the impossible through his prayers.

We must also say that in all of these areas we can only state opinion based on our beliefs. There are no final answers to the questions which we have raised, and will continue to raise. However, man must attempt an answer which at least satisfies him personally. With our limited human knowledge, our limited human capabilities, we cannot presume to fully understand the workings of the Divine.

Our lack of understanding and knowledge will be most evident as we discuss our next topics. Does God hear and answer prayer? What answers does He give?

CHAPTER TWELVE

ARE PRAYERS HEARD AND ANSWERED?

Again there is no scientific evidence which we can consult in our attempt to answer these questions. Those answers which have been devised and accepted through the ages were the products of the faith and conviction of their authors. The same will hold true for whatever answers we manage to come up with.

While it is true that a great number of the prayers in our services are intended for man, in that they point out his shortcomings and urge his improvement, another large group of prayers is intended for God. Those prayers which we have said are meant for man all contain aspirations which man can achieve by himself. Man's intellect and reason, coupled with his previous progress in the realms of science and the social sciences, make prayers answerable. The strength of his will is enormous, he has just barely tapped his own potential, and he has visions of a better future. These goals toward which he is striving assure us that, insofar as is possible, he will make a great effort to surmount his problems.

Even with this assurance, there are a number of prayers which do not refer to areas in which man can help himself. When he prays for help in these areas, how can he be sure that his prayers are heard? The obvious answer is that he cannot!

Almost all of our petitionary prayers are directed expressly to God. On page 87 our mythical friend, John, offered a prayer when someone whom he loved became ill. At this time in his life John was powerless; there was nothing which he could do to help himself except pray. His prayer was meant for God.

> We pray for all people who are at this hour in tribulation, in sickness, in want, in danger of body or soul. We name in our hearts those who are near to us and in whose afflictions we are afflicted. Let them see Thy help and grant them a blessed release from their trials. (49-I)
>
> .....Forgive our sins, pardon our failings, and remove from us suffering and sorrow. May the erring and the wayward be led to know Thy lovingkindness, and to serve Thee in newness of heart; and may those who love virtue and do the right, ever be glad of Thy favor. Bless our land with plenty and our nation with peace; may righteousness dwell in our midst and virtue reign among us. (349-I)

These two prayers from the prayerbook are examples of petitionary prayers directed to God. Most of the things asked for are things which man cannot obtain completely for himself. Even so, we have no firm guarantee that our prayers are heard.

Whatever opinions we hold on this matter, we derive them from three sources. The evidence contained in our religious tradition, the experiences of others, and our own religious faith and conviction all combine to tell us that God hears prayer.

We have all read or heard Biblical stories in which it is told that so-and-so talked with God. While we can't believe that these people actually spoke with God in the human sense, it is possible that these Biblical accounts refer to the communication of prayer. King David was very remorseful after he had sinned by taking Bathsheba as his wife and having her husband killed. As punishment his son died. David then prayed asking God that the monarchy continue and that one of his sons becomes king after he died. According to the Biblical narrative this prayer is answered, and God tells David that his son, Solomon, shall be king after him. Throughout the exodus story, whenever Moses and the children of Israel have a problem, Moses prayed asking for a solution. In every case the prayer is answered by God who gives Moses instructions for solving the difficulty. There are so many examples of prayer being answered in the Bible that it would be virtually impossible to list them all. Our religious tradition, from the earliest time, carried with it the belief that God does respond to prayer.

On page 112 we read the story of a modern prayer experience which indicates also that God responds to prayer. This example could be repeated over and over from the pages of recent literature. There is an entire religious sect which is completely based on this belief, while others are partially so. The Christian Science sect will not permit its adherents to use the services of a trained medical man when they are ill. Instead, they call on a 'practicioner' who is trained in the proper prayers. They firmly believe that all illness can be cured by prayer. A few other Christian denominations demand similar beliefs from their followers. Thus, the modern experiences of others tends to confirm our belief that God answers prayer.

The third source of our opinions on this question is our own religious faith and conviction. This is something which is impossible to get from a book. We have attempted to raise some of the problem, to provide some of the answers which might make it easier for us to establish a firm religious faith, but the primary task must be done by each of us individually.

This faith will have to include many things, if it is to be complete. It must take into consideration a God-concept, a belief about prayer, a statement about the value of life, and a working system of morals and ethics. Our religious

school teachers, our parents, and our rabbis can be of help to us as we try to work these things out. We might find it very valuable to discuss this at some length in our classroom, possibly with the rabbi there to help out.

Most of us will come to the conclusion that God answers prayer. The overwhelming weight of the evidence points to the fact that He does. We will then be faced with an additional question. What answers does God give to prayer? What responses can we expect?

Again, we have already considered some of the possible answers. We have dismissed as improper and invalid those expectations which infer that God will perform miracles, or that God will interrupt the natural order of events to answer a prayer. We have also mentioned the effect which prayers of praise have on the worshippers. This can be considered an answer to prayer. This psychological change within the individual worshipper has some additional manifestations which we should discuss.

It is a horrible feeling to know that someone we love is in danger, either through war or sickness, or some other cause, and not be able to do anything about it. We always want to help, to ease pain, to comfort someone in distress, but in many situations we are powerless.

Even though we might call the foremost doctor in town, even though we might take it upon ourselves to defray all of the costs, it does not seem to be enough. We would feel so much more at ease if only we could take an active part in the curing of the illness. This is where prayer helps. The person who prays sincerely at such a time feels a great deal of relief. The frustration caused by inactivity, the feelings of powerlessness and anxiety all are lessened once the heartfelt prayer has been recited. This is certainly a type of answer to prayer; it is a response.

This feeling of inner peace and satisfaction which prayer brought in the situation described above, can be the result of prayer on many occasions. A prayer of thanksgiving offered after we have successfully completed a difficult task, a prayer of thanksgiving after a safe journey or the recovery from serious illness, a prayer of praise or admiration upon the sight of a natural beauty can bring this same inner feeling. This, too, must be classified as a response to prayer.

Frequently, we are faced with a problem which at the moment seems insurmountable. We have thought of many different solutions, only to realize that each creates another problem or is impractical in some way. We have even asked our friends for help, but their solutions are

also useless. Suddenly, almost out of the clear blue sky, we know the correct answer. Possibly this inspiration is the answer to an unvoiced prayer. Inspiration, the seemingly super-human force which compels people to do things, has long been operating in the world. A man writes a piece of great literature, and never again creates anything worthy of publication; caught in the grips of heightened emotion a rabbi writes a prayer more beautiful than anything he has ever written before; in a religious experience a man gains a message which he feels he must share with the entire world; the amateur poet pens a literary classic; all of these are examples of the working of the force called inspiration. And all may be the response to prayer.

Thus far we have discussed four types of responses to prayer, and there are four more which are worthy of our consideration. In a sermon prepared for delivery during the High Holiday period a prominent rabbi attempted to explain these four types of responses to prayer to his congregation; Yes, No, Work, Wait.

This rabbi chose to limit his discussion to prayers of petition, because it is easier to discover the answers to this type of prayer. The first two answers can be quickly explained. If the thing requested in the prayer

occurs, then we can say that the answer to the prayer has been, "yes." If we were to pray for the recovery of a friend from sickness, and the friend recovers, then the prayer has been answered to our satisfaction.

If we were to offer a prayer asking for success in finding a job, and after a hard day of looking we still did not have a job, we might say that our prayer had been answered, "No." It would be very difficult to determine the difference between an answer of "No", and no answer at all. But actually, this difference is unimportant; what is important is the fact that our Prayer was not answered in the affirmative.

According to this rabbi, it is rarely this simple. Frequently what man takes to be a response of "Yes" has not been an answer at all. Man satisfied his needs himself, and only attributed his success to God. It is also very easy to misunderstand answers which on the surface appear to be negative. In actuality these answers may be a delayed "Yes". The rabbi chose to label this "Work" and "Wait."

Almost from the beginning of his human existance, man has desired to fly. Ancient legends tell us of the father and son who made wings for themselves of feathers and wax, and who actually flew with them until they went too high,

too near the sun whose heat melted the wax destroying the wings and causing the death of both. The answer to man's prayers for flight was not "No", rather it was "Work". It was God saying to man, "This is something which you can have, but it will not be given, you will have to work for it." We have all heard of the many unsuccessful attempts made before the Wright brothers finally managed to make a powered flight in a heavier-than-air craft. There has been a great deal of additional work between their faltering success and the modern jet airliner. God's response to the prayer had told man what to do, man did it, and then, in the long run, man's prayer was answered "Yes."

For hundreds of years Orthodox Jews have prayed every day, three times a day, for the reestablishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. At first glance it would appear that the answer to this prayer had been "No" down through the years. The rabbi who formulated these categories of answers felt that the answer had actually been "Wait."

If this prayer had been answered in the affirmative during the Eleventh Century, when the Crusades were making life in Europe miserable for all Jews, and if these persecuted people had gone to Palestine in some form of mass migration, then the world would have witnessed results which were catastrophic in nature. Science had not progressed to a point which would have enabled them to live

in the land. Agricultural techniques were not well enough developed for them to have fed themselves. There was insufficient commerce to have supported them. It was not the right time for such a prayer to have been answered "Yes."

However, in the late 1930's the picture had changed. Science and agriculture had combined to make the desert bloom again, there was commerce and industry in the area and a need for even more, industrial techniques made it possbile for housing and transportation to be developed rapidly. Now the time was right; and now the answer to this continuous prayer was changed from "Wait" to "Yes."

We have investigated eight varities of response to prayer. Before we conclude, we must emphasize once again that these responses can be understood and appreciated only by the individual who has offered a sincere prayer within the context of a relationship of communication with God. Prayer is a two-way communication system; our transmitter and receiver must both be operating properly if success is to be assured.

In discussing our expectations with regard to prayer and the answers to prayer, we said that we did not believe that God would perform magic acts or miracles for our benefit in response to our prayers. There is, however,

one miracle which is continually going on, which is the work of man. This shall be the topic of our final chapter.

CONCLUSION

THE MIRACLE

We do not believe that God will perform miracles at our bidding, but as Jews we participate in one constantly. It is the miracle which we have discussed in this course; the miracle of prayer.

Our Jewish tradition is a very long one. By our calendar, it is over 5700 years long, and continually growing! In this book we have traced one phase of it from its very beginnings down to the present day. Throughout this history we noticed that there were certain underlying questions which seemed to motivate whatever type of worship the Jews chose to employ at a given moment. We realized that as people change, as their social and economic situation changes, as new things happen to them in their history, their worship also changes to reflect these things.

With this in mind we have asked ourselves some of the fundamental questions concerning worship. We have investigated these questions in the light of our experiences using the Union Prayerbook as our source and example. It was our hope that through this process some of us might find our answers to these questions, so that our prayer experiences might become more meaningful to us.

If we can sincerely say that we know why we pray, if we can declare to whom we are praying, if we feel that we know what happens when we pray, and if we believe that we know what we can expect in the way of answers to our prayers, then the miracle has occurred again!

Twice in our discussion we referred to an event described in the eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah; Ezra's reading of the "Book of the law of Moses" to the people. We concluded that this description contained all of the elements found in the synagogue worship service. If our knowledge of the history of that period is at all accurate, we can date the above event in about 340 BCE, which means that it happened over 2300 years ago. Yet, this is still our form of worship. Every time that we go to Temple on the Sabbath or a holiday we are participating in another miracle. No other people has a history of worship which has remained as constant as ours for as long as ours. It has been unchanged for so long for only one reason; it meets the felt religious needs of the people. In a relatively minor way it did not completely satisfy all of the people, so a little over 150 years ago Reform Judaism began as an attempt to correct these small faults. But even so, the general character, the basic structure of the service remained untouched.

This is our third miracle; the constant, unchanging content of the prayerbook. In about the year 850 Rabbi Amram Ga'on wrote a responsa which contained the outline of the service. This outline was based almost completely on material found in the Talmud. It might be possible to say that our service goes back to the year 500. Even if this can't be proven, we do know that it is over 1100 years old.

It is interesting, and pleasing, to note that the ancient rabbis who compiled our prayers and formed them into a worship service did their job so well. Our world is certainly completely different from theirs. They could not have imagined the vast strides made by science. The speed of modern transportation, our methods of mass communication, the luxury of our daily lives, our citadels of industry and commerce, all of which we take for granted, would have been completely beyond their understanding. Yet, instinctively they knew the necessary ingredients of the relationship between man and God. We have changed some of their words to make them conform to modern usage, we have eliminated some of their prayers as being meaningless to us today, but their core of ideas and concepts we have not been able to touch.

If we were to venture a prediction of things to come, if we were to gaze into the crystal ball, we could

with a great deal of certainty say this.....

.....one thousand years from now the lives of the Jews will be very different from ours, but their worship will have remained unchanged in its basic elements. This is THE MIRACLE!

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