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The Meditations of Our Hearts: Private Prayer and the Search for Personal Meaning

Jessica Kessler Marshall

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

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Advisor: Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman

Summary

The Meditations of Our Hearts: Private Prayer and the Search for Personal Meaning

Jessica Kessler Marshall

This thesis was motivated by a desire to find creative, new liturgy that might speak to the spiritual condition of Jews today, and help them connect to God and their community during worship. It surveys contemporary liberal prayer books across the denominational spectrum and focuses specifically on *Eloha'i N'tzor*. In order to determine whether *siddurim* meet the spiritual needs of contemporary Americans, the analysis relies on current sociological research utilizing interviews concerning all aspects of religious and spiritual life.

Chapter I investigates ancient and medieval sources on *Eloha'i N'tzor* including the Talmud, *Seder Rav Amram*, Siddur *Saadiah*, *Machzor Vitry*, and *Otzar Hatefilot*. Chapter II turns to contemporary *siddurim* beginning with the first American Reform prayer books. It continues with *The Union Prayer Book*, *Gates of Prayer*, and *Mishkan Tefillah*, as well as the Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom*, and the Reconstructionist *Kol Haneshamah*. Next, prayer books from Europe and Israel were also examined. In addition, a Reform alternative, *Paths of Faith* and Marcia Falk's *The Book of Blessings* were surveyed. The inquiry concludes with the Israeli publication *El Halev*. Each prayer book is analyzed for content, word choice, and the editor's rationale. Chapter III is a sociological analysis of the spiritual needs of contemporary Americans including the priority of individualism; how people make meaning; what they seek in their prayer experiences; and the contents of their prayers. A conclusion summarizes the findings from the analysis of contemporary prayer books and the sociological data on the personal and spiritual needs of contemporary Americans, in an effort to determine whether the prayer books meet these needs. It concludes with the broader implications of the data and what remains to be determined.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This thesis was originally motivated by a desire to find creative, new liturgy that might speak to the spiritual condition of Jews today, and help them connect to God and their community during worship. It was thus decided to survey contemporary liberal prayer books across the denominational spectrum in order to perform a thorough investigation of what is already in use. Because the material is so vast, this research focuses specifically on one personal prayer and its options--*Eloha'i N'tzor*, because its rubric offers the most freedom and creativity. *El Halev*, a recent Israeli compilation of prayers and blessings for the life cycle, as well as Israeli *siddurim* are also included in the investigation.

In order to determine whether *siddurim* meet the spiritual needs of contemporary Americans, the analysis relies on current sociological research. This research is borrowed from sociological literature and mainly consists of interviews of Jews and non-Jews of all ages. Questions revolve around all aspects of religious and spiritual life.

Chapter I of this thesis investigates ancient and medieval sources on *Eloha'i N'tzor* including the Mishnah, Talmud, *Seder Rav Amram*, Siddur *Saadiah*, Maimonides, Rashi, *Machzor Vitry*, Abudraham, and selections from *Otzar Hatefilot*, *Etz Yosef*, and *Iyun Tefilah*. These sources reveal which parts of *Eloha'i N'tzor* were included within a historical context.

Chapter II turns to contemporary *siddurim* beginning with the first American Reform prayer books: *Olat Tamid* and *Minhag America*; but including also the master compendium *Abodath Israel* prepared by Marcus Jastrow and Benjamin Szold in 1907. It continues with the American Reform Movement's *The Union Prayer Book, Gates of Prayer, Gates of Repentance* and *Mishkan Tefillah*; and, also from America, the Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom*, and the Reconstructionist *Kol Haneshamah*. Next, prayer books from Europe and Israel were examined: the British *Forms of Prayer* (Reform) and *Lev Hadash* (Liberal); the Progressive Israeli *Avodah Shebalev*, and its Conservative (Masorti) parallel, *Va'ani Tefilati*. Turning to non-denominational alternatives, a Reform alternative, *Paths of Faith* and Marcia Falk's feminist offering, *The Book of Blessings* were surveyed. As already indicated, the inquiry concludes with Ofer Shabbat-Beit Halachmi's Israeli publication *El Halev*. Each prayer book is analyzed for content, word choice, and the editor's rationale.

Chapter III is a sociological analysis of the spiritual needs of contemporary Americans. Areas investigated include: the priority of individualism; how people self-identify; how they make meaning; what they seek in their synagogue and prayer experiences; how they define God; and the contents of their prayers.

A conclusion, labeled "Implications" summarizes the findings from the analysis of contemporary prayer books and the sociological data on the personal and spiritual needs of contemporary Americans, in an effort to determine whether the prayer books meet these needs. It concludes with the broader implications of the data and what remains to be determined.

Chapter 1: Ancient and Medieval Sources on *Eloha'i N'tzor*

The rabbinic elite established a liturgical structure by roughly the first century B.C.E./first century C.E. This small privileged group of Rabbis often improvised prayers when leading worship for each other, but only according to a fixed order of topics which governed the way the service unfolded for all worshipers. However, during the first few centuries of the Common Era, oral improvisational performance was most prized amongst worshippers and prayer leaders.[1] Rabbi Eliezer, a mishnaic rabbi who lived after the destruction of the Temple and before Bar Kokhba's revolt, captures this sentiment with the declaration that one who makes his prayer fixed does not make a genuine supplication.[2] The Gemara asks, "What is the meaning of 'fixed?'" Various interpretations include: anyone whose prayer is a burden to him, anyone who does not recite his prayer in a supplicatory manner, and anyone who is not able to innovate something [i.e. a new request].[3] Thus, while the Talmud offers insight into the prayers of the Rabbis, the petitions it carries in their name are unlikely to be exactly what the Rabbis recited on each and every occasion. Instead, they are merely an example of rabbinic practice or a summary/outline of a prayer that would really have been longer and different in practice.[4] The fixed outline that everyone followed is termed *keva*; and the particular way an individual Rabbi fulfilled its demands on any given occasion is known as *kavanah*.

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[1] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*, vol. 1 (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), p. 7.
[2] M. Ber. 28b.
[3] M.Ber. 29b.
[4] Joseph Heinemann, *Hat'fillah Bit'kufat Hatana'im V'ha'amoraim* (Jerusalem, 5726/1966), 112.

One form of this liturgical improvisation, or *kavanah*, was the recitation of personal petitions. One such opportunity was the post-*Tefilah* petition. By the end of the tannaitic period and the beginning of the amoraic period, the recitation of post-*Tefilah* prayers was becoming more conventional. Both Talmuds cite over a dozen authored both by Tannaim and Amoraim. An examination of form and content offers insight into the Rabbis' ways of addressing God as well as ancient desires, insecurities, and ideals.

Most of the prayers began with יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, although other vocatives were used such as *Elohai*, and *Ribon ha'olamim*. All used the first person singular, allowing the petitioner to feel more immediately involved in the prayer, and no prayer referred to God in the third person. The opening language expressed humility before God. The petitions' conclusions were more varied—some reiterated God's goodness, and only Mar, son of Ravina, concluded with יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי. that Jews recite today.

Quite significant, is the use of a *n'chemta*. Furthermore, none of the Sages recited the final sentence beginning with *Oseh Shalom* that is the modern conclusion of *Tefllah*. Lastly, only Mar bar Ravina's blessing concluded with Psalm 19:15 as R. Yochanan recommended.[5] He used the Psalm verse to pray for successful prayer and request that one's petitions be accepted and answered. This desire to end with a scriptural *n'chemta* was not shared.

Thematically, these personal prayers were varied. Some contained overlapping thoughts while others were unique. R. Yochanan and Rava's prayers expressed a sense

[5] *Ber. 4b.*

of shame which may have been prompted by the destruction of the Temple.[6] In a similar vein, Sages such as Rabbi, R. Aleksandri, and Mar bar Ravina prayed that God save them from evil men, meeting evil, evil inclination, *Satan,* and evil women.

Several Sages also asked that their eyes be undimmed.[7] Love of Torah, keeping one's heart open to Torah, and engaging in Torah for its own sake constituted other petitions.[8] Another more positive theme voiced by Rabbis such as Elazar, Rav, and Rav Safa was that of peace, companionship, prosperity, and sustenance. The Sages also petitioned God with individualized, more personal, concerns. Pleas for humility, many disciples, a place in the future paradise, and appeals against jealousy, hatred, difficult law suits, scheming of one's enemies, and harsh judgments were among those included.

Some prayers were lengthy and contained many different concerns while others were more brief. R. Elazar, for example, recited:

> May it be your will, Adonai our God, that you cause to dwell within us love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship; lengthen also our reach to students and cause our end to prosper with a future and a hope, and set our portion in the Garden of Eden and establish us with a good companion and good inclination in your world. And may we rise up and find that the yearning of our hearts is to fear your name, and may what occurs in our souls come before you for the good.[9]

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[6] Edward Treister, *The Dialectic of Qeva' and Kavanah in the Development of the Liturgy* (unpublished Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1971), p. 114.
[7] Rav Chiya and Rabbi Alexandri.
[8] Rav, Mar, Rav Safa.
[9] Ber. 16b.

Rabbi Zeira, on the other hand, simply said, "May it be your will Adonai our God that we not sin and not be shamed or disgraced before our fathers."[10]

While the prayers were diverse, they shared several common elements. First, many desired an ideal quasi-Messianic era. Love, brotherhood, peace amongst humans and in the heavens, companionship, prosperous ends, and a portion in the Garden of Eden were all expressed desires. Second, Torah study and a love of Torah was a common theme. Third, an expression of humility and a sense of unworthiness were frequently employed. There were repeated statements that humans are shameful and evil and only God in his great compassion and mercy can bear to look at them. The notion that man is like dust, like a vessel filled with shame and humiliation, arose out of this belief. Last, four of these petitions concluded with the belief that the worshipper may come before God for good.[11]

This variation is reflective of liturgical status until the ninth century: *ad hoc* oral improvisation around a structural core.[12] All of this changed in 860 when Rav Amram, a Gaon in Sura, created a complete list of prayers and the rules concerning how they were to be performed. His prayer book, *Seder Rav Amram*, became the standard for Jewish prayer and ended the creativity that had characterized Jewish prayer for centuries.[13]

Amram's post-*Tefilah* petition was a blend of his own conception in addition to the Rabbis' prayers from the Talmud. His prayer was divided into three separate supplications: expressions of unity and then presentation of motives for God to act,[14] Rava's *Berakhot* 17a prayer, followed by Mar's *Berakhot* 17a prayer. Unlike the Rabbis,

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[10] Ber. 16b.
[11] Prayers of R. Elazar, R. Yochanan, Rav, and Mar.
[12] Hoffman, 7.
[13] Hoffman, 8.
[14] Treister, 122.

he did not begin his supplication with יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ . Instead, he opened with, "Our king, our God, unite your name in your world and unify your memory in your world."[15] He then went on to pray for the coming of the Messiah as Rabbi Elazar had done, followed by a series of exaltations of God intended to justify why the Messiah should come. Next, he inserted Rava's additional prayer from *Berakhot* 17a, "My God, before I was formed, I was unworthy of being formed, and now that I am formed, it is as if I have not been formed. I am dust in my life, surely I am dust in my death. Behold, I am before you like a vessel filled with shame and humiliation. May it be your will, Adonai my God, that I do not sin again...."[16] Amram may have chosen Rava's prayer because it was used also by R. Hamnuna Zuta as his confession on Yom Kippur.[17] The Rabbis had held that the private prayer following the *Tefilah* was equivalent to a confession; so using Rava's prayer, which had clearly been used that way as well, was an apt choice. Amram then incorporated most parts of Mar's petition asking God to "guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies. And to those who curse me, let my soul be silent. Open my heart to your Torah and let my soul pursue your commandments." However, he omitted some of the phrases from the Babylonian Talmud: "let my soul be onto all like dust," and "save me from evil men and from evil *Satan*, and from evil mishap and evil man and evil woman [similar to Rabbi's prayer in Ber.16b] and from evil hours and from evil decrees and thoughts come to the world. And all evil they establish upon me, speedily nullify them and spoil their thoughts." This exposition of evil was a combination of Mar and Rabbi's prayers. Subsequently, he mentioned the gates of wisdom and Torah, thus stressing the importance of Torah as did

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[15] Issachar Jacobson, N'tiv Binah, (Tel Aviv: "Sinai" Publishing, n.d.), p. 299.
[16] Jacobson, 299.
[17] This prayer is now recited after the *Al Cheit* confession on Yom Kippur.

the other Sages. Amram chose to conclude with Psalm 19:15 as did Mar: "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before you, God, my Rock and Redeemer." Amram's personal prayer juxtaposed both the exact language and the themes of the Rabbis' prayers with his own interpretations of what ought to be included such as the "do it for the sake of" section and the description of the various gates of wisdom and Torah.

Much of Amram's post-*Tefilah* prayer was rejected by later liturgists. Israel Lévi's Genizah document showed that Rava's prayer was not included.[18] Instead, the post-*Tefilah* petition began with Mar's prayer. This Genizah document had the same omissions as Amram's version but not his additions. For example, only one expression of God's unity was given.[19]

This trend towards fewer post-*Tefilah* words continued fifty years later when another Gaon, Saadiah, compiled his prayer book. However, Saadiah's book rendered the instructions (though not the prayers) in Judeo-Arabic, whereas Amram had used Aramaic, the language of the Babylonian Talmud. Because (with the exception of Jews in Ommayad Spain) European Jews did not know Arabic, Saadiah's prayer book was virtually ignored.[20] Saadiah's post-*Tefilah* petition was similar to that of today's traditional prayer books. It began with, "My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies," like traditional *siddurim*, but then added, "and my legs from running to do evil." It then followed the contemporary petition closely asking that one's soul be quiet when being cursed, one's heart be open to Torah and commandments, and the plot of all who think evil upon the petitioner be negated. It concluded with Psalm

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[18] I. Lévi, "Fragments de Rituels de Prières," *Revue des Études Juives*, LIII (1907), 239.
[19] Treister, 120.
[20] Hoffman, 8.

19:15, inserting *Adonai Eloheinu*, but did not include *Oseh Shalom*. Saadiah's petition followed Mar to the exclusion of other Amoraim.

Maimonides did not present any post-*Tefilah* petitions at all. His *Tefilah* ends with Psalm 19:15.[21] Edward Treister offers the possibility that Maimonides recognized that these prayers were custom, but not law. He may have feared that composing even a suggested prayer would result in it becoming *keva* and *chovah*.[22] In effect, the absence of a set post-*Tefilah* prayer enabled worshippers to pray more personally.

There is also medieval and early modern literature which offers commentary on personal prayers. Rashi presented an outline of post-T*efilah* supplications very similar to Rav Amram's presentation.[23] He conformed to Amram's schema of three separate supplications. Rashi's first supplication was almost identical to Amram's except that he added *aveinu* when addressing God and presented the expressions of unity in a different order. The petitions were the same, although Rashi changed "make Your Messiah approach," to "make the end of the coming of Your Messiah approach." Amram presented eleven reasons for God to act, whereas Rashi only offered five and then ended his supplication. He retained Amram's second and third sections invoking Rava and Mar's prayers.

Machzor Vitry, compiled by Simhah ben Samuel of Vitry, contained rules concerning religious practice as well as responsa by Rashi and other authorities. *Machzor Vitry* retained much of Amram's wording, but changed the order of the supplications. It began with Mar's prayer,

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[21] Maimonides, *Hilchot Tefillah*, 2:9.
[22] Treister, 125.
[23] *Siddur Rashi*, para. 38, p.25

> My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies. And to those who curse me, let them be silent. Let my soul be unto all like dust. Open my heart to your Torah and let my soul pursue your commandments. All those who think evil upon me, speedily nullify them and spoil their thoughts. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before you Adonai, my Rock and Redeemer.

Machzor Vitry then inserted the following sentence: "He makes peace in his heaven, he makes peace upon us, and upon all Israel, and we say: Amen." Simhah ben Samuel of Vitry also adds directions to the phrase, "He makes peace in his heaven," citing that one needs to move backwards three steps, and after this, give peace [bow] to his left, and after this, to his right. For his left is against the right of the Holy One. And if he does not do this, it is as if he didn't pray."[24]

Machzor Vitry next explained that there are those who say before *Eloha'i N'tzor*: "Our God, our Father, our King, unify your name in your world, draw close the end of the coming of your Messiah. Redeem your people, make your congregation happy. Do it for the sake of your loving kindness. Do it for the sake of your righteousness. For the sake of saving your dear ones, save your right hand and answer us. My God, guard...etc." which is precisely what Rashi presented. *Machzor Vitry* was predominantly influenced by *Siddur Rav Amram* and helped to cement Amram and Rashi's personal supplication as standard.

David ben Josef ben David Abudraham lived in Seville, Spain during the fourteenth century and was known for his commentary on synagogue liturgy. Like Amram, Rashi, and *Machzor Vitry*, Abudraham began his post-*Tefilah* supplication with

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[24] Jacobson, 300.

"My God, guard my tongue from evil," and then notified the reader that this came from Psalms 34:14.[25] Abudraham explained, "Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies" implies that although good and bad are delivered into man's hands, he still asks for God to help him to do good.

Regarding "and let those who curse me be silent," Abudraham explained that the liturgist adds this to "guard my tongue from evil" both so that man not hasten to humiliate another person, but also so that man may endure another's curse. He referred to *Gittin* which cites: "They hear their abuse and do not reply."

Abudraham clarified that the petitioner adds "And let my soul be onto all like dust" after asking God to guard "my lips from speaking deceit" not only to petition to refrain from speaking deceit, but also to ask to be unto all like dust. Abudraham elucidated that man should be onto all like dust which is trampled. By lowering himself in this world, man will be at the top of the world to come.

Abudraham then provided proof texts for the concepts of following Torah and guarding one's tongue from speaking evil. He cited *Avodah Zara* 18b which also states, "Open my heart to your Torah" as well as Psalm 34:14, "Turn from evil and do good." He subsequently linked following Torah to avoiding evil citing Proverbs 4:2, "For I gave you good doctrine, do not forsake my Torah," asserting that one who studies and does not fulfill the mitzvot has done nothing. He then gives textual support for following the Torah's commandments and concludes that pursuing these commands will save one from those who think evil upon him and pursue him. Abudarham bolsters his argument using Psalm 119:86, "All your commandments are true; they persecute me wrongfully; help me. They had almost destroyed me on earth; but I have not forsaken your commands."

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[25] Abudraham, תפ.

He argued that if one has pursued the command helping to nullify the pursuit of hate, then one they can justify saying, "All those who think evil upon me, speedily nullify them and spoil their thoughts."

Lastly, Abudraham added that one ends with Psalm 19:15, "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you, God my Rock and my Redeemer." This was already written in the *Shmoneh Esreh* petition and taught in *Berakhot* at the end of *Hayah Korei* 17a.

Selections from *Otzar Hatefilot* offer further directions and insight into the reasoning behind post-*Tefilah* petitions. *Anaf Yosef* dictates that before *Eloha'i N'tzor*, one should say Psalm 121, *Shir L'ma'alot, Esa Ena'i.* By reciting the psalm, a person is thought to be loved in heaven and pleasing on earth. *Anaf Yosef* further admonishes one to be careful to say it each day for the sake of heaven and expect no benefit, in other words, say it for its own sake. It was written in another book that saying Psalm 121 with no expectations, will serve as a charm to be beloved and pleasing. One who recites it will not have any quarrels or jealousy with anybody or have wastedness from worshipping God or studying Torah.[26]

Etz Yosef expounded on "My God, guard my tongue from evil," explaining that even though good and evil are in the hands of humans, one asks God to help him to do good, as Abudraham states, not to embarrass the other.

Iyun Tefilah echoed previously noted parallels between talmudic and medieval post-*Tefilah* petitions citing that *Eloha'i N'tzor* is Mar's prayer that he would recite after his Prayer and that it adapts Psalm 34:14. It also noted that the section on good and evil is from Abudraham--explaining that even though good and evil are in the hands of man,

[26] *Otzar Hatefilot,* 365.

he asks for help from God--and cited Psalm 141:3, "Set a guard, O Eternal, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips," noting that even King David prayed for help to keep his lips from speaking guile.

Referring to "And to those who curse me, let my soul be silent," *Iyun Tefilah* explained that the petitioner not only prays that their tongue not respond to those who curse him, but also that one's soul be quiet advocating inner peace and a spirit of reconciliation when insulted.

Expounding on "And my soul be onto all like dust," *Iyun Tefilah* added a further interpretation: "God, teach me a way to hide my deeds from people that no one feels my being—only to feel me as one feels dust [i.e. not pay attention to me]. And in this manner, I will be far from the illusion of honor and the bad things this illusion would produce: pride, self-importance, closing one's heart from understanding the wisdom of Torah, and preventing one from pursuing mitzvot. Only then is one open to understanding the wisdom of the Torah and pursuing mitzvot. This focus on humility was further bolstered by biblical and Talmudic quotes such as: *Sotah* 21b, "Words of Torah cannot be established except with one who sees oneself as nothing; Job 28:12, "Wisdom is found with someone who makes themselves into a nothing; *Eruvim* 15b, "What do you do to not engage in *loshon hora*? If you are a *talmeed ha'cham*, engage yourself in Torah. If you are an *am haraf*, humble your mind. It is through these means you will help me keep yourself low in your estimation and open your heart to Torah." *Iyun Tefilah* then differentiates between the grammar used to convey pursuing commandments. *Machzor Vitry* and the *Gemara* read, "And my soul will pursue your commandments (במצותך)." The Sefaradi, Yeminite, and Haredi prayer books read,

"And my soul will pursue *after* your commandments (אחרי מצותך instead of במצותך). Amram used ולמצותך.

Another section of *Iyun Tefilah* referred to the section on God's unity saying that anyone who says these four things: "Do it for the sake of your name, do it for the sake of your right hand, do it for the sake of your holiness, do it for the sake of your Torah" merits the *Shechina*. It noted that *Sefer Manhig* only enumerated three of them and referenced Psalm 60:7 "that thy beloved may be delivered."

Iyun Tefilah then addressed suffering citing *Midrash Tanhuma* which said that God shares in human suffering but can also save humans and thus save himself. Rab Abahu added that God's salvation also saves Israel.

Following this was an interpretation between הגיון ליבי (meditations) and אמרי פי (utterings). One asked God that *Tefilah* petitions be acceptable whether said with or without *kavana*. *Berakhot* 34b was cited: "If one cannot keep his focus with all blessings, at least have intention for "*Avot*." Petitioners pray that they are able to have intention with all petitions in the same way they did with the first one (*Avot*).

Lastly, *Etz Yosef* clarified the last section of the supplication. "May it be your will" was recited because the "One Higher than All Heights" guards our mouths. These words sum up the acceptability of the High One. In addition, "Meditations of my heart" referred to what one was not able to express with their lips. God knows all and hears one's innermost thoughts.

No commentaries were offered on post-*Tefilah* petitions by *Otzar Hageonim* or *Agudat Habosem*.

Chapter II: Contemporary *Siddurim*

In order to obtain a fuller picture of the development of contemporary prayer books, a historical overview of past religious trends is helpful. Before the nineteenth century, religion was hierarchical, deferential, and stressed obedience to external authorities. This was true for Jews as well as non-Jews. However, beginning in the early 1800's, after Napoleon swept through Europe and developed the modern nation-state, this changed through the process we call modernity. Jews were freed from ghetto life and ceased to define themselves as another potentially disloyal nationality. Instead, they promoted themselves as a religious body; they had been denied the opportunity to develop freely like other nations, but their commitment to reason and modernity would flourish if given the chance. Jews began attending universities where they applied scientific reasoning as the basis of authority. Intellectual upheaval overturned the accepted belief that "mysticism" and revelation were the primary sources of knowledge. Religions placed a new emphasis on the individual and the voluntary association.

In terms of worship, modern decorum, vernacular prayer, and an emphasis on reason, ethics, evolution, and optimism permeated early Reform Judaism.[27] Moral teaching emphasized self control rather than deference.[28] Sermons emerged as regular staples of the service and were less concerned with doctrine and instead more focused on emotions and sentiments. Worship appealed to the sentimentality of the family and

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[27] Lawrence A. Hoffman, Gates of Understanding (Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1977) 140.

[28] Robert Bellah, *et. al*, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1996) 222.

became a place of love and acceptance-- especially as the industrial revolution and Victorian mores produced a harsher, more competitive society. These reformists also excised certain Jewish ideas from their liturgies that they considered opposed to enlightened dogma--such as the resurrection of the dead, future ingathering of Jews, concept of being a chosen people, restoration of the sacrificial cult, and restoration of Zion and return to Jerusalem.

Because of the ready availability of paper and relatively inexpensive publishing, prayer books continue to be created throughout these changes. One of the first prayer books published in the United States was Rabbi David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid,* published in 1858. Einhorn was referred to as one of the most radical Jewish leaders of his day. Rooted in German theology and scholarship, he taught a version of radical Reform Judaism that sought a Judaism "rooted in Sinai," purged of most ceremonies, focused on the moral law found in the Bible, and committed to the Jewish people's universalistic mission to the nations of the world.[29] *Olat Tamid* has little sympathy for folk religion. It opens from left to right, is in German, and links the Jewish idea of survival to the priesthood and the suffering servant Isaiah who give a prophetic description of Israel's messianic destiny.[30]

Olat Tamid: Book of Prayers for Israeliteish Congregations. Pgs. 32-33

Elohai N'tzor [only the title was written in Hebrew, the rest was in English]

(The congregation in a low voice)

O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from uttering deceit, and arm me with meekness against ill-will. Implant humility in my soul, and faith in my heart. Be my

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[29]Jonathan D. Sarna, American Judaism: A History, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004) 98.
[30] Idem, "The Language of Survival in American Reform Liturgy" (CCAR Journal 24:3, 1977) 94.

support when grief silences my voice, and my comfort when woe bends my spirit. Let thy truth illumine my path, and guide me; for thou art my God, and my aid; in thee I trust, day after day.

THE READER.

Receive with kindness the words of my lips, and the emotion of my heart, O my Maker and Redeemer; as thou preservest peace to reign in the heavenly spheres. So preserve it to us and to all who invoke thy holy name. Amen.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Amen. Halleluiah.

Analysis:

Olat Tamid stresses the drama of liturgical performance providing directions such as tone of voice, for both congregational and musical participation. The clear intent was to do away with the individualized worship that traditional *davening* presented. Worship by congregations using Einhorn's book was minutely controlled.

The original prayer book was in German, and it is difficult to determine how much of the English version corresponds to the German in style and affect. Neither one had much Hebrew, a lack reflecting the Classical Reform Movement's desire to pray in the vernacular. Many think of "classical" Reform as the form that emerges in America after the migration of Eastern European Jews in 1881. Einhorn's original volume precedes their arrival, but his sensitivities toward liturgy suit the moment exceptionally well, since he already stakes out a claim on the need for overwhelming use of the vernacular.

In addition, the use of Early Modern English second-person singular pronouns, standardized by the King James Bible, indicates an affinity for Protestant worship and biblical translation. However, there was no other English translation present at the time, so in a sense, this was the only model for English that the translator has.

In any event, there is no direct translation of the original *Eloha'i N'tsor*. The tenor of the translation is roughly the same, but it omits any mention of commandments or Torah as well as the "For the sake of" section ("for the sake of Your name, Your right arm," etc.). Einhorn agrees with the moral and ethical commandments, but seems to have preferred a more spiritualized and universal sentiment. God is portrayed as a wise and compassionate ruler who implants humility and faith in humans—all humans; a person of any faith could recite this prayer, it is not particularly Jewish. The concluding reference to Israel is also omitted, again a bow toward universalism. Instead, the worshipper asks for peace to "all who invoke thy holy name." Einhorn uses this inclusive interpretation to prove that Jews do not possess unique loyalty to Jewish peoplehood more than to America and the human race in general.

The final "Amen. Halleluiah" is reminiscent of the Protestant worship style early Reformers seek to imitate, although it is also quite Jewish in that it comes from Psalms. Einhorn is a master at combining his universalistic ideas, a modern but Protestant sense of prayer, and traditional Jewish ideas together. Not just the Halleluiah but also the beginning of the prayer ("keep my tongue from evil and my lips from uttering deceit") come directly from of Jewish texts, the latter being a true translation of *Eloha'i N'tsor*, so that no matter how far afield the translation, it is clear to the worshiper that the original is being followed to some extent.

God is seen as a transcendent majestic presence to be worshiped with reverence, fear, and trembling. The inclusion of a choir, and almost definitely an organ, also speaks to the model of the mid nineteenth century German Lutheran Church and the rebellion

against traditional Jewish liturgical expression.[31] The two go together: a conception of God as majestic, and worship music and instrumentation that demonstrate it.

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Isaac Mayer Wise, creator of *Minhag America,* was a leading Reform figure of his time. Originally from Bohemia, he moved to America in the mid 1850's. His goal was the unification of all Jews in America. He even went as far as to conciliate Orthodox Jews by affirming the binding nature of Talmudic authority.

Minhag America is particularistically and proudly Jewish, and its message of survival is a combination of folk religion and elite religion. However, in a commitment to universalism, Wise emends his liturgical message by stating that although Israel is superior to other nations, it is not favored politically, and petitions for divine beneficence cannot be applied to Jews alone. He also affirms that Jews can pray for the welfare of Jerusalem and hope for messianic age, but not for a personal messiah.[32]

Minhag America's examples of folk religion include an orientation from right to left, a large sampling of traditional liturgy, Hebrew texts prominently displayed, and directions for the congregation to stand at traditional times.[33] Its elite religious message is conveyed through the declaration that there be no individual *aliyot,* but that the "minister" wears a *tallit* only as "a memorial," and that people are told when to rise and when to sit.[34]

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[31] Stephen Fuchs, "The Legacy of Classical Reform," Sermon at Congregation Beth Israel, West Hartford, Connecticut, 10 Nov. 2006.
<http://www.cbict.org/docs/RFSermons/20061110LegacyClassicalReform.pdf>
[32] Idem, "The Language of Survival in American Reform Liturgy" (CCAR Journal 24:3, 1977) 91-92.
[33] Idem, "The Language of Survival in American Reform Liturgy" (CCAR Journal 24:3, 1977) 90.
[34] Idem, "The Language of Survival in American Reform Liturgy" (CCAR Journal 24:3, 1977) 91.

Minhag Amerika, Morning Services pgs. 53-4

אֱלֹהַי נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה
וְלִמְקַלְלַי נַפְשִׁי תִדּוֹם: פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי וְכֹל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי
רָעָה הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם: לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי: יִהְיוּ
לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ צוּרִי
וְגוֹאֲלִי: עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה
שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן:

My Lord, guard my tongue against evil speech, and my lips against uttering deceitful words. Grant me fortitude to be silent opposite those who slander me; let us be remembered and inscribed before Thee, to a life of goodness and peace.

Enlighten my heart with Thy lessons, that my soul may long after Thy commandments. Frustrate every evil device, and turn to goodness the hearts of those who devise them.

That Thy beloved ones may rejoice, save me with Thy power and respond Thou to me. May there be acceptable before Thee, the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, my rock and my savior. He who maketh peace in heavens high, grant also peace to us and all Israel. Amen.

Evening Services for Shabbat and Yom Tov pgs. 102-5

אֱלֹהַי נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה
וְלִמְקַלְלַי נַפְשִׁי תִדּוֹם: פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ

וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי וְכֹל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי
רָעָה הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם: לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי: יִהְיוּ
לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ צוּרִי
וְגוֹאֲלִי: עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה
שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן:

My Lord, guard my tongue against evil speech, and my lips against uttering deceitful words. Grant me fortitude to be silent opposite those who slander me.

Enlighten my heart with Thy lessons, that my soul may long after Thy commandments. Frustrate every evil device, and turn to goodness the hearts of those who devise them.

That Thy beloved ones may rejoice, save me with Thy power and respond Thou to me. May there be acceptable before Thee, the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, my rock and my savior. He who maketh peace in heavens high, grant also peace to us and all Israel. Amen.

Analysis:

This edition of *Minhag Amerika,* published in 1872, omits several Hebrew passages in *Eloha'i N'tzor* including:

וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה, and changes מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם וְקַלְקָל, to וחט לבבם לטובה. It had an incomplete "For the sake of section," and puts in its place:

לְמַעַן וחלצון יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי.

The sense of freedom with the Hebrew text demonstrates Wise's desire to omit negative statements about others, presumably in order to find commonalities with other faiths and make the text more inclusive. Excluding God's specific attributes in the "For the sake of" section, and inserting notions of God's saving power and beloved ones rejoicing also portrays Judaism more universally.

The translation is loose and idiomatic. Unlike *Olat Tamid, Minhag Amerika* references God's commandments but does so nostalgically rather than in an effort to dictate observance. Furthermore, in *Olat Tamid,* Israel is mentioned. Wise perhaps feels more comfortable mentioning Israel although he certainly downplays chosenness. However, the use of Early Modern English second-person singular pronouns, standardized by the King James Bible, indicates an affinity for Protestant worship and biblical translation.

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. Unlike the liturgies of Wise and Einhorn liturgies (which are Reform), *Abodath Israel* by Benjamin Szold and Marcus Jastrow, provides an early example of Conservative thinking. Szold became a rabbi at a congregation in Baltimore when it was just on the verge of becoming Reform. He allowed the congregation to innovate their ritual

practices, but not deviate from basic tenets of Judaism. He employed the educational potential of the weekly Sabbath sermon as well as introduced his own prayer book, *Abodath Israel*, to replace the previously used *Minhag Amerikah*. Szold publicly advocated Zionism, was an active Hebraist, and published scholarly commentaries on the Bible.

Jastrow was a rabbi in Philadelphia at a congregation largely composed of German immigrants. He strove to hold his synagogue within the confines of tradition but was not able to stem the tide to Reform. He introduced some reforms, such as the use of an organ and Szold's prayer book *Abodath Israel* which he helped to both revise and translate into English as *A Prayer Book for the Services of the Year* (1885). However, he opposed the movement for radical Reform as expressed by Wise and Einhorn. Instead, he emerged as one of the leaders of the historical school, which eventually developed into Conservative Judaism. Additionally, he served as editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society from 1895 to 1903 and published the *Dictionary of the Targumim*, and *the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*.[35]

Published in 1910, *Abodath Israel* includes the entire Hebrew text. The prayer book praises the qualities of forbearance and a meek disposition. Unlike Einhorn (who omits it altogether) and Wise (who uses the idea nostalgically) this prayer book uses the terms "fulfillment of commandments" traditionally, demonstrating its authors' preference for an obligation to at least certain mitzvot.

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[35] Gladys Rosen, "Szold, Benjamin," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, Vol. 19, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007). 409. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

Abodath Israel: A Prayer Book for the Services of the Year at the Synagogue

Shabbat Eve pg. 44
O my God! Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from uttering deceit. Grant me forbearance with those who deal ill with me, and a calm and meek disposition toward all my fellow-beings. Open my heart to receive thy sacred teachings, so that my conduct may evidence the fulfillment of thy commandments. Frustrate the plans and destroy the devices of all those who meditate evil against me, for the sake of thy Holy Name. May the words I have uttered and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before thee, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer; and mayest thou, who causest peace to reign on high, grant peace onto us and all Israel. Amen.

Analysis:

Abodath Israel's "For the sake of" section is quite abbreviated; it includes only "For the sake of thy Holy Name." The authors apparently prefer not providing anthropomorphic allusions to God's "right arm." The English version of this text is a combination of classical Reform ideology coupled with acceptance of Jewish particularism. The ways that *Abodath Israel* downplays chosenness, emphasizes universality, and shortens liturgy, are follow from its classical Reform position. Nevertheless, the prayer book's tolerance for mitzvot and mention of Israel indicates a more conservative approval of particularly Jewish concepts, especially given that early Reformers saw Oral Law as non-binding and renounced Zionism.

Eloha'i N'tzor is not included in the Shabbat morning service in either English or Hebrew indicating that Szold and Jastrow do not deem it an essential part of the *Amidah*. They may have justified the decision to omit it knowing that Maimonides also excluded it.

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In the 1880's the Jewish social structure changed as a flood of Eastern European immigrants arrived in America. These immigrants with their *shtetl* form of worship laden with Hasidic abandon, medieval symbolism, and a self image alien to what Germans develop, caused German Jews to react against them with the creation of *The Union Prayer Book* in 1895—a book emphasizing the ethical achievements of enlightened humanity, the denial of binding Jewish law, and stressing a cooperative ethical endeavor with one's neighbors.[36] Another influence was the Protestant social gospel of the 1890s which was in response to urban immigrant poverty. Up until that time, Protestant theology had stressed salvation through faith alone; now, in at least some more liberal circles, doctrine was altered to allow for salvation through good works.

The Union Prayer Book's structure reinforces these ideas. It is a book for Jews who are at home in the American milieu and accept its cultural and aesthetic values unhesitatingly. Consequently, it opens from left to right, has an English title and uses English predominantly, abbreviates services, and offers few theological choices from which to select. But alternatives are provided—perhaps to avoid boredom, because prayer was already loosing much of its vitality for Jews. This seems to have come with translations, since *davening* through Hebrew is a process of rote repetition, while worship in translation depends on attention to meaning. Furthermore, worshippers are given instructions for every action and paragraphs are labeled with directions. The congregation is told when to rise and sit, when to open the ark, etc. A mood of total decorum permeates the worship experience. Local custom is limited and a stylized, Protestant mode of worship is underscored thorough the use of terms such as "minister,"

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[36] Lawrence A. Hoffman, Gates of Understanding (Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1977) 141.

"hymns," "anthems," and "sermon."[37] The same may be true of the word "minister," although that particular term may just indicate a shortage of actual rabbis in America, and a consequent attempt to speak to everyone, not just ordained prayer leaders.

The Union Prayerbook, uses the descriptor "*Silent Devotion*" for *Eloha'i N'tzor.* Like *Olat Tamid,* it stresses the drama of liturgical performance specifically delineating a repetitive role for the choir.

The Union Prayerbook pg. 331

Silent Devotion

O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile. Be my support when grief silences my voice, and my comfort when woe bends my spirit. Plant humility in my soul, and strengthen my heart with perfect faith in Thee. Help me to be strong in trial and temptation and to be meek when others wrong me, that I may readily forgive them. Guide me by the light of Thy counsel, and let me ever find rest in Thee, who art my Rock and my Redeemer.

Choir

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Analysis:

Like its predecessors, *The Union Prayerbook* omits various portions including the "For the sake of" section as well as references to pursuing commandments. It represents the primary example of a prayer book that demonstrates what we consider Classical Reform principles, especially in its overwhelming emphasis on decorum. Furthermore, Israel is not mentioned in the petition because the particularism in thinking only about Jews is considered a counterproductive negation of Reform's emphasis on humankind's

[37] Lawrence A. Hoffman, Gates of Understanding (Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1977) 145.

universal bonds. In addition, commandments and mitzvot are not discussed because early Reformers believe that "excessive concentration on ritual observance would get in the way of the higher purposes of religion—the elevation of the human soul. Symbolism in their eyes represents primitivism."[38]

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Soon after the *Union Prayer Book* emerged, the identity and sociological makeup of America's Jewish community changed and the need for a new self-definition, and a new prayer book became apparent. There were several factors that lead to this shift in identity and ideology. First, German Jews became a minority as Eastern European Jews continued to immigrate to America. Subsequently, the gulf between Russian and German Jews disappeared, first through intermarriage, and second with the need to come together to fight Hitler and support Israel.[39]

The new community that emerged was one born and bred in America, but committed to membership within the Jewish People. These Jews were intelligent and informed, but not especially concerned with ethnic Jewish identity. They were open to exploring the fullness of the Jewish tradition, but gave no necessary priority to any specific aspect of it. They refused to compromise their intellectual honesty and ethical imperatives, and admitted that religion was a commitment to search and wonder, affirm and doubt. Lastly, these American Jews wanted to be free to draw from totality of Jew tradition and blend it with the best of modern culture.[40]

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[38] Michael Meyer, http://www.cbict.org/docs/RFSermons/20061110LegacyClassicalReform.pdf
[39] Lawrence A. Hoffman, Gates of Understanding (Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1977) 150.
[40] Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, 162.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, however, ethnicity was reestablished. The key events here, Jewishly speaking, were the Six Day War and its Yom Kippur sequel. But already, in the interim period between the *Union Prayer Book* and its successor *Gates of Prayer*, American Judaism was characterized by a vigorous civic culture and strong civic membership. Jewish peoplehood was seen as far-reaching. Music during services, for example, consisted of everything from American folk or folk rock music, Israeli melodies, compositions based on American jazz, Bernstein and the American theater, Modernist modes, and Hasidic *niggunim* set to modern percussion accompaniment.[41]

It was during this time that the "creative services" surfaced. This innovative service was initiated by youth groups, with contents centered on Vietnam, group sensitivity, and expressions of American authors and poets. The advent of the mimeograph machine and inexpensive paper enabled congregations to quickly write up services, pray from them, and then discard them the next day. Structurally, these services used a lot of English and transliterations. Choreographically, they relied on the folk guitar and American folk music.[42]

These "creative services" clearly revealed the need for a new model of prayer that the *Union Prayer Book* was not able to provide. The Reform movement published *Gates of Prayer* in the mid 1970's in an attempt to address this need. At the same time, the prayer book's symbolic content emphasized Jewish peoplehood against the backdrop of the struggling state of Israel, the tragic situation of Jews behind the Iron Curtain, and (still in recent memory) the Holocaust – especially given that American sensitivity to it

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[41] Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, 161-162.
[42] Lawrence A. Hoffman, Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987) 73-74.

had not emerged until the Eichmann trial of 1961. It expanded the American Reform Jewish sense of self to include group ethnicity--a family tie that makes all Jews responsible for one another. It confirms an individual's right to choose from within Jewish tradition, and implicitly defines diverse worship patterns as acceptable and desirable.[43]

Gates of Prayer's structure reflects a commitment to liberalism as well as one's shared Jewish and American identities. The book is bound in both directions, is written in both Hebrew and English and uses Roman and Hebrew numerals. It recognizes congregants' dual affinities and allows worshippers to decide which style is most comfortable for them, but it also demands that worshippers choose how they want to pray.

There is an abundance of services--a consequence of a committee whose members were committed to various mutually contradictory theologies, but unable to agree on any of them as the sole basis for prayer. Instead of defining prayer patterns using instructions, *Gates of Prayer* provides three kinds of print, each suggestive of a particular worship technique. The prayer book assumes an educated Jewry—it uses titles to enhance the prayer experience, and provides opportunities for reflection on the themes and structure of the prayers handed down through the centuries. This assumption of a searching, educated Jewish laity speaks precisely to the new Reform community.[44]

Gates of Prayer's wide range of choreographic possibilities further applies to the needs of Reform Jews in the mid 1970's. For example, passages blur social distinctions by omitting directional labels for performance by the congregation, choir, or leader.

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[43] Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, 154-155.
[44] Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, 159.

Moreover, the prayer book recaptures a mood of intimacy by encouraging an innovative use of space, thus breaking down social distance between congregants and officiants. By eliminating the hierarchical structure of its predecessor, it emphasizes mutual interpersonal relationships.[45]

Content-wise, *Gates of Prayer* also attempts to universalize problematic theology. Its predecessor, *Union Prayer Book*, eliminated whole blessings with which it took issue; but *Gates of Prayer* wanted to include as much as possible--a bow to reemphasizing tradition. *Gates of Prayer* therefore reinserts the ingathering of exiles, for example, but reinterprets it as a prayer for freedom. The blessing for Jerusalem asks for the peace of Jerusalem, and the Davidic monarchy is explained as deliverance for the entire world.

Gates of Prayer also represents the first Reform confrontation with feminist issues. It emends masculine language referring to people to include women but does not alter masculine references to God.[46]

Gates of Prayer, pg. 71

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה
לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ. לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי. יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי. עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit. Help me to be silent in the face of derision, humble in the presence of all. Open my heart to Your Torah, and I will

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[45] Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, 160.
[46] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) 146.

hasten to do Your Mitzvot. Save me with Your power; in time of trouble be my answer, that those who love You may rejoice.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer.

May he who causes peace to reign in the high heavens let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world.

Analysis:

Gates of Prayer prints the complete Hebrew text but does not translate all of the Hebrew, and what it does translate, it does idiomatically. . In later editions, a small superscript of a circle was added to indicate places where creative translations or new prayers were used. Unlike some previous *siddurim*, it mentions performing *mitzvot* but neglects to translate מְהֵרָה הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. most likely because the Hebrew is framed negatively. It also omits the "For the sake of" section.

A second tendency in *Gates of Prayer* is its references to the *Sho'ah*, the rise of the Jewish State, and (most recently) the Six Day War. The result is a return to particularism. Unlike its predecessor, *The Union Prayerbook*, it does mention Israel in its conclusion.

Gates of Repentance, pg. 38

O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit. Help me to be silent in the face of derision, humble in the presence of all. Open my heart to Your Torah, and I will hasten to do Your Mitzvot. Save me with Your power; in time of trouble be my answer, that those who love You may be delivered.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer.

May he who causes peace to reign in the high heavens let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world.

Pg.118

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer.

May he who causes peace to reign in the high heavens let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world.

Note: For Yom Kippur Evening, pg. 268, there is no *Eloha'i N'tzor*, only a meditation on repentance followed by *Y'hiyu L'Ratzon*.

For Yom Kippur Afternoon, pg. 322, there is no *Eloha'i N'tzor* at all.

Analysis:

See analysis for *Gates of Prayer*. Note that on Yom Kippur evening only an alternative meditation is offered centered on humbling oneself for repentance and defining genuine repentance. It is based on *Midrash Tehillim*, to Psalm 40:3. On Yom Kippur afternoon, there is no *Eloha'i N'tzor* printed.

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British Jewry has both Liberal and Reform movements. Reform stands closer to the American Conservative Movement, even though the British also have a *Masorti* (Conservative) Movement in its own right. However, there is not much difference between the Masorti and Reform *siddurim*. *Forms of Prayer*, includes transcriptions of the *Sefardic Minhag. Volume 1* published in 1931. 1977 is the 4th progression of this British Reform *siddur*. The progressive movements in the United Kingdom are generally more traditional than the Reform movement in the United States. For example, the British Reform movement does not accept patrilineal descent (although the Liberal movement does).

Forms of Prayer

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,

ואחרי מְצוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הקמים עָלַי לָרָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם.
יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי. עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

My God, keep my tongue from causing harm and my lips from telling lies. Let me be silent if people curse me, my soul still humble and at peace with all. Open my heart to Your teaching, and give me the will to practice it. May the pains and schemes of those who seek my harm come to nothing. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

May He who makes peace in the highest place bring this peace upon us and upon all Israel. Amen.

Analysis:

Forms of Prayer includes a benediction in Hebrew but makes some slight emendations. The editors add the word ואחרי before מְצוֹתֶיךָ which does not change the prayer's meaning, it is only is used only to add to the poetry. A second modification is the insertion of הקמים in place of הַחוֹשְׁבִים. This lexical substitution changes "evil thoughts" to "evil plots," making God's involvement in counteracting schemes more justifiable. It is somewhat surprising that the editors make this word substitution given that the translation omits God's role in preventing schemes from coming to fruition. A third revision is the omission of the "For the sake of section" in Hebrew. The editors also make other minor grammatical adjustments to the Hebrew.

In the English translation, Torah is translated as "teaching." One's obligation to *mitzvot* is translated as "the will to practice it," an ambiguous statement given that "it" replaces "*mitzvot*" and many worshippers would consider practicing God's teaching easier than obeying God's commandments. As previously noted, there is no specific mention of God actively hindering evil schemes. Lastly, *Forms of Prayer* uses a masculine pronoun for God and mentions Israel in its translation.

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Progressive Judaism in Israel has a much shorter history than that of Reform Judaism in America or Great Britain. The first attempt to establish a non-Orthodox form of Judaism in Israel was made by Rabbi Max Elk, an immigrant from Germany. In 1935 he founded a liberal congregation in Haifa, where he also established the progressive Leo Baeck School in 1939. Elk's synagogue, as well as several other new non-Orthodox synagogues became Orthodox a few years later. Reform leader Alfred Gottschalk contends that economic hardships and political pressures exerted by the Orthodox stood in the way of these early congregation's success.[21] It also seems that there was simply little market for liberal religion in Palestine at that time. Immigration from Germany ceased and the generally anti-Zion attitude of early Reform Judaism inhibited even liberal German Jews, from attending Reform services. Furthermore, the majority of the Jews in Palestine at that time considered the Progressive service to be immigrant-oriented and alien to their own tradition. Sermons were rendered in German, and did not easily resonate with the native population; nor were they tolerated by immigrants from other countries. The nature of the religious needs of the Jewish population in Palestine leads to a break in formal liberal Jewish activities that lasted until well after statehood.[47]

The turning point for the creation of the Progressive movement came in 1965, when a public conference was held for those interested in a religious alternative to Orthodoxy.[23] Following the conference, six independent Progressive congregations that were in existence at that time strengthened their contacts with one another. The movement incorporated under Israeli law in 1971.

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[47] David Polish, Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in Reform Judaism (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976); Ze'ev Harari, "Chapters in the History of the Movement for Progressive Judaism in Israel" (Hebrew), incomplete thesis, 1980, Hebrew Union College Library, Jerusalem.

The name Progressive Judaism, rather than Reform Judaism, indicated an ideological orientation toward religion as developing in accordance with contemporary thought. It symbolized a shared identity with the American Reform movement while also indicating some distance from that movement, as well as from classical Reform Judaism, because of the negative connotations that those associations had for Zionism and the Israeli population.[48]

The rabbinical arm of the movement is represented by MARAM, the Council of Progressive Rabbis. MARAM published a Progressive *siddur*, *Avodah Shebalev* in 1982, which came under criticism by the younger generation in the Israeli Progressive movement soon after its publication. Some claimed that a printed version of the prayer service arrests its further development.[49] This criticism exemplified the problem of creating a fixed text within a movement dedicated to ongoing accommodation to contemporary life. Some congregations distributed prayer sheets with additional or alternative prayers at weekly services. (A significant change in the revised 1991 printing of the prayer book and the *machzor* was gender-neutral God-language and egalitarian wording in Hebrew to include the matriarchs with the patriarchs).

Congregation Harel in Jerusalem published *A Companion to Haavodah Shebalev* in 1992, a supplement that included an English translation of some prayers.
Other publications issued under the supervision of Council of Progressive Rabbis in Israel include three readers regarding Jewish prayer, *halakhah* and *mitzvot*.[50,51]

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[48] Ephraim Tabory, "Reform Judaism in Israel: Progress and Prospects," online posting, American Jewish Committee <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=840313&ct=1051515>.
[37] Tabory.
[50] Tabory.

Avodah Shebalev pg. 47

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה
לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ. לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי. יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי. עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Analysis:

Avodah Shebalev is written only in Hebrew, of course, and includes the entire Hebrew petition. The decision to retain of all of the Hebrew may reflect a desire to allow worshippers to individually choose what to recite and what to omit given the criticism that the *siddur* faced after its publication.

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Around this same time, Conservative Judaism also faced challenges. The end of the postwar "baby boom" and the decay of urban and inner suburban neighborhoods hurt synagogue membership, and the number of Conservative congregations consequently dropped. Assimilation, including intermarriage, became more prevalent, and the social

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[51] Yehoram Mazor, Holidays in the Thought of Progressive Judaism in Israel (Hebrew) (The Institute for Jewish Education, Democracy and Zionism, The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, 1988); idem, Mitzvah and Halakhah in the Thought of Progressive Judaism in Israel (Hebrew) (The Institute for Jewish Education, Democracy and Zionism, The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, 1988); idem, Thoughts of Prayers in the Thought of Progressive Judaism in Israel (Hebrew) (The Institute for Jewish Education, Democracy and Zionism, The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, 1991).; Moshe Zemer, A Sane Approach of Halakhah (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1993). See also David Ellenson and Michael White, "Moshe Zemer's Halakhah Shefuyah: An Israeli Vision of Reform and Halakhah," CCAR Journal 43:2 (Spring/Summer 1996): 31-41.

upheavals of the 1960s exacerbated the decline of the movement's appeal to young adults. Followers of Kaplan's Reconstructionist Judaism left the movement and opened their own rabbinical school in 1968.[52] An additional spur toward leaving was Jewish geographical relocation to the South and West where family ties that had held people in their traditional synagogues disappeared. Actual drops in membership were not apparent until 2000, due to the fact that Orthodoxy bled its nominally Orthodox members into the Conservative movement, thus masking the slow but steady departure of Conservative Jews.

But even in the 1950s and '60s, the movement experienced a wide disparity between a high level of ritual observance on the part of its rabbinic leadership and a lower degree observed by the majority of its laity. Denominational leaders debate their response to the new conditions, traditionalists urging a reemphasis of commitment to halakhah, and liberals calling for outreach to the disaffected by means of bolder departures from tradition.[53]

The main subject of their debate was the role of women within the Conservative synagogue, an issue raised by the growth of feminism as an American social concern. In 1972, a small group of feminists called "Ezrat Nashim" came to the Rabbinical Assembly convention, demanding a greater role for women in the synagogue. In 1974, the conservative Committee for Jewish Law and Standards voted in a near-tie to count women in the *minyan*. From 1977 to 1983, the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary faculty debated the ordination of women. After an initial defeat in

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[52] "The Four Faces of Judaism," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd Edition, 2006.
[53] "The Four Faces of Judaism."

1979, women were admitted in 1983 even though several leading Talmud professors defected.

The Rabbinical Assembly's 1986 reaffirmation of matrilineal descent and the retention of traditional strictures against homosexuality in 1992 served as counterweights to the liberalization represented by egalitarianism. They asserted Conservative Jewish practice and a denominational identity, over and against Reform and Reconstructionist, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy, on the other.[54] The Conservative movement published *Siddur Sim Shalom* ten years after *Gates of Prayer* in 1985.

Siddur Sim Shalom, pg. 121

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה
לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ. לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי. יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי. עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

My God, keep my tongue from evil, my lips from lies. Help me ignore those who slander me. Let me be humble before all. Open my heart to Your Torah, so that I may pursue Your Mitzvot. Frustrate the designs of those who plot evil against me. Make nothing of their schemes. Do so because of Your compassion, Your holiness, and Your Torah. Answer my prayer for the deliverance of Your people. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer. He who brings peace to His universe will bring peace to us and to all the people Israel. Amen.

An alternative, pg. 123

May it be your will, Lord my God and God of my ancestors, that Your compassion overwhelm Your demand for strict justice; turn to us with Your lovingkindness. Have compassion for me and for my entire family; shield us from all cruelty. Put false ways far from me, turn me away from visions that lead me to futility. Lead me on a proper path, open my eyes to the wonders which come from Your Torah. May I not be

[54] "The Four Faces of Judaism."

dependant upon the gifts of others; forsake me not as I grow older. Bless me with a wisdom that will be reflected in all that I do. May kindness, compassion, and love be my lot, from You and from all who know me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Analysis:

Siddur Sim Shalom is printed in Hebrew and English and has no transliteration. Its format encourages a high level of Hebraic knowledge for the average congregant. The Hebrew is printed in its entirely but uses a more literal translation including, for example, the "For the sake of" section. Its God-language is emphatically masculine. The editors felt that no Conservative Jews should be using the English to pray. They therefore did not hesitate to translate all the Hebrew literally-- masculine references and all.

However, *Sim Shalom* provides an alternative prayer from Rabbi Nachman of Bretzlav based on Mar bar Ravina's Talmudic prayer. This second option casts God as a deity whose compassion overwhelms strict justice. Traits of compassion and lovingkindness are repeated throughout as is God's protective leadership that does not wane with time. This is a softer, gentler God. In addition, the alternative prayer avoids overtly masculine God-language.

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Reconstructionist Judaism originated as a radical left branch of Conservative Judaism in the 1930's and 1940's. It was forced out of the movement in 1946 when Conservative Judaism defined itself explicitly against Kaplan's theology.

Reconstructionists emphasize positive views towards modernism, and consider religious custom to be subservient to personal autonomy. However, they also emphasize

the call of community on the individual, thus favoring relatively traditional services. A further issue pushing worship toward tradition is Kaplan's identification of ritual as sancta that reinforces group solidarity.

The *chavurah* movement developed consisting of small fellowship circles based on an assumption of Jewish literacy. Members were set free to imagine alternatives encouraged by the general zeitgeist of the era and the forceful intervention of young people against the Vietnam War. These *chavurot* were alternatives to synagogues in that they eschewed professional leadership, were fiercely independent, and failed to support a national organization. Eventually, they merged with the Reconstructionists, who had also been loosing members and were facing a fiscal crisis.

The two movements had little in common, other than the importance of Jewish literacy. Kaplan had been independently rationalistic while the *chavurot* were often influenced by *kabbalah* and the evolving mystical consciousness of the 1960s and '70's. These *chavurot* had countercultural ideals, counter-aesthetic values, and disdained Judaism's established movements and organizations. Nonetheless, they shared the idea of Judaism re-imagined "as a revolutionary force...[working] toward liberation, greater freedom for the individual and the society."[31]

Reconstructionsim was thus transformed away from Kaplan's strict rationalism and moved toward greater mystical aesthetics. It also saw a renewal of spirituality that sought to compliment social justice, rationally oriented teachings that appealled to the mind, and spiritual and emotive experiences that appealled to the heart and soul. It additionally incorporated music, dance, mystical teachings, and prayers for healing.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, founded in 1968, prided itself on questioning all inherited values and concepts while still emphasizing ritual and spirituality. *Kol Haneshamah*, the Reconstructionist *siddur was* published in 1989.

Kol Haneshamah, pg. 115

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע
וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה

יהי רצון שאסור מרע
והטוב בעיניך אעשה
יהי חלקי עם מבקשי שלום ורודפיו

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ,
יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו,
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעַל כָּל יושבי תבל
וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Dear God, protect my tongue from evil,
and my lips from telling lies.
May I turn away from evil
and do what is good in your sight.
Let me be counted among those who seek peace.
May the words of prayer
and my heart's meditation be seen favorably,
YAH / BELOVED ONE my rock and redeemer.
May the one who creates harmony above
make peace
for us and for all Israel,
and for all who dwell on earth.
And say: Amen.

Alternative Amidah: Shiviti Meditation, pg. 182 (The following is a synopsis of the meditation. See *siddur* for complete instructions.)

The *Shiviti* provides a visual focus for the efforts to sense the divine presence. It can yield a sense of harmony and balance, a sense of our place in the order of things, fresh perspective, clarity, and energy.

a) Let the fullness of this *Shiviti* flow over you. . . . Slowly begin to focus on one of the psalm verses on the *Shiviti* page. Visualize the *yud hey vav hey*. . . . Slowly chant to yourself the words of your verse. Allow yourself to feel the presence of God

b) Let the fullness of this *Shiviti* flow over you. Begin to focus on the *yud hey vav hey*. Visualize the יהוה. . . . See it vertically. Reach for the holiness it embodies. Focus on the *yud*. Visualize your head as a *yud*. . . . Focus on the *hey*. Visualize your shoulders as a *hey*. [etc.]. Feel the godliness rise and fall within you. Focus on your sense of unity with the divine.

c) Let the fullness of this *Shiviti* flow over you. Begin to focus on the יהוה. . . . As you focus on the *yud*, empty your breath slowly for a count of four. . . . As you focus on the *hay*, breathe in slowly for a count of four . . . . [etc.] Feel godliness flowing in and out of you. Feel the links to all other breathing vessels of God.

Analysis:

Emboldened by mystical writings that rearrange text graphically, *Kol Haneshamah* takes liberties in how it reprints the Hebrew text. It begins with the opening line of *Elohai N'tzor* and then inserts an original composition based on the petitions general theme of turning from evil:

יהי רצון שאסור מרע

והטוב בעיניך אעשה

יהי חלקי עם מבקשי שלום ורודפיו

This is a creative interpretation given that the notion of being counted among those who seek peace is not something *Eloha'i N'tzor* specifically states.

The Hebrew then jumps to יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן. *Kol Haneshamah's* translation of this line alters the traditional "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and my Redeemer," to "May the words of prayer / and my

heart's meditation be seen favorably, / YAH / BELOVED ONE my rock and redeemer." Thus, K*ol Haneshamah* changes the focus from an individual's words to the words of prayer themselves.

Another significant development is the use of YAH / BELOVED ONE in place of Lord or Adonai. This is the first instance a *siddur* uses gender neutral God-language. The choice to designate God as "BELOVED ONE," as opposed to a title such as "Revered One," emphasizes God's soft and compassionate side, but other epithets for God appear elsewhere in the volume – which regularly provides such options for worshipers who prefer emphasizing one or another aspect of God's qualities. . This is part of the entire plan of the book, which distances itself from more set liturgical formulae brought about by the merger of Reconstructionism with the *Havurah* movement.

The insertion of וְעַל כָּל יושבי תבל into the final line of the petition reveals the editors' desire to include other peoples in the Jewish prayer for peace—an allusion to Kaplan's original Reconstructionist ideal. This practice has been adopted at many Reform services as well.

K*ol Haneshamah* also provides notes and commentaries at the bottom of the page for worshippers for whom the translation is unsatisfactory or who need further explanation. It invites people to compose their own meditation and cites the Talmud which lists other personal meditations that could follow the A*midah*. Additionally, under the heading "Kavanah," it defines sin as failing to live up to the best that is in us and signifying that our souls are not attuned to the divine—that we have betrayed God. Traditional Judaism defines sin as a violation of divine commandments while this

interpretation deftly touches on that idea, it couches it within the concept that humans are created in the divine image, and thus sinning is not living up to the divine within each person.

K*ol Haneshamah* provides an extensive alternative reading section. Many of these alternatives center around breathing and visualization exercises based on a prayer's theme. The *Shiviti* meditation is described as providing a visual focus to assist worshippers sense the divine presence. The *siddur* affirms that that such mental imagery can yield a sense of harmony and balance, a sense of one's place in the order of things, fresh perspective, clarity, and energy. Worshippers are guided to feel the godliness rise and fall within them, focus on their sense of unity with the divine, as well as their links to all other breathing vessels of God.

This alternative *Shiviti* meditation touches on *Eloha'i N'tzor's* content. Unity with the divine is interpreted as obeying God's commandments as well as establishing peace amongst humans. God's hearing and answering prayer is also experienced as unity. This meditation focuses on a perceived desire for a sensory experience, a feeling of connection with other human begins, a need for relaxation, and a need to find God within oneself.

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Progressive synagogues in the United Kingdom that were influenced by the German and North American Reform movements refer to themselves as Liberal. Liberal Judaism there (unlike its counterpart, Reform – see above) considers itself the sister movement of the North American Reform movement. Since 1964, despite historical and theological differences, both the Liberal and Reform movements in Great Britain have

co-sponsored Leo Baeck College in London, a progressive seminary. In recent years, also similar to North American Reform Judaism, there has also been a move towards more traditional elements in Liberal services. This includes more Hebrew, an increase in the use of *tallitot* and *kippot*, and more observance of minor festivals.[55] However, Liberal Judaism is still distinctly more progressive than British Reform. Liberal British Jews more readily recognize patrilineal descent and support homosexual partnerships in synagogues using the traditional symbolism associated with Jewish weddings.[56] *Lev Hadash*, the British Liberal *siddur*, was published in 1995.

Siddur Lev Chadash, pg. 145

Note: Before Elohai N'tzor, the following is printed as a silent prayer both in Hebrew and English:

Let me feel Your loving kindness in the morning, for in You I trust. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, God of my salvation and my constant hope. Send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy mountain, to Your dwelling place. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a willing spirit within me.

Following this is the same Hebrew as all other *siddurim* and the following translation:

O my God, guard my tongue from speaking evil and my lips from telling lies. Even when others curse me, may my soul be silent, and humble as the dust to all. Open my heart to Your Teaching and make me eager to do your will. Dissuade those who seek to harm me, and let not their plans prevail.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable to You, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer.

May the Most High, Source of perfect peace, grant peace to us, to all Israel, and to all the world (וְעַל כָּל בְּנֵי אָדָם).

(The service may continue with the "Prayers and Readings on Various Themes")

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[55] <http://wapedia.mobi/en/Liberal_Judaism>.
[56] < http://wapedia.mobi/en/Liberal_Judaism>.

Some of these themes, based on *parshiyot,* include: Doubt, Prayer, Synagogue, Human, Nature, Dreams, Loyalty, and Suffering.

Analysis:

Lev Hadash employs *Eloha'i N'tzor* differently in its various services. In the weekday morning service, only the conclusion of the benediction, "May the words," etc. is printed with a literal translation. However, in the Sabbath morning service, before *Elohai N'tzor,* a silent prayer is printed in both English and Hebrew. *Lev Hadash* is the first prayer book to insert a meditation before *Elohai N'tzor.* The fact that it is also written in Hebrew adds a degree of credibility in that many worshippers associate Hebrew prayer with an established and accepted tradition. Furthermore, some might argue that using a Hebrew prayer encourages Hebrew literacy amongst worshippers (Although there is little evidence that it does, and, in fact, some evidence that it does not).

This silent prayer emphasizes God as teacher, source of truth, and salvation. It appeals to the need for a comforting, all-knowing, and pure divine figure. The meditation ends with a plea for a clean heart and willing spirit, an apt introduction to *Eloha'i N'tzor* given that worshippers ask for humility and openness to performing God's commandments.

Eloha'i N'tzor is printed both in Hebrew and English following the silent meditation. The Hebrew text is in its traditional form but like most liberal prayer books surveyed, it is missing the "For the sake of section." It also gives worshippers the choice between concluding with יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן or עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם instead of reciting both of them. *Lev Hadash* adds וְעַל כָּל בְּנֵי אָדָם to those included in the final prayer for peace. Like *Kol Haneshamah,* the inclusion of all people, not solely Jews, in the prayer for peace

reveals the editors' desire to be as inclusive as possible—an obvious choice for the most progressive British movement. The English translation is a close, literal translation.

At the end of *Eloha'i N'tzor*, worshippers are given the option to continue with "Prayers and Readings on Various Themes." These themes include: doubt, prayer, synagogue, human nature, dreams, loyalty, and suffering. The editors clearly recognize a need for the option of further personal prayers, which cover both liturgical topics and as well as basic human concerns.

***

Va'ani Tefilati is the Israeli *Masorti* prayer book published in 1997. The *Masorti* movement is also known as the Conservative movement in Israel. The movement was founded in 1979 and aimed to foster traditional Judaism in Israel while embracing modernity.

Va'ani Tefilati

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם.
(missing עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן passages)

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי.
עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Analysis:

This version of *Elohai N'tzor* omits the "For the sake of" passage but retains everything else. It is nor surprise to see that the Masorti movement preserves almost all of the traditional Hebrew text.

***

Chaim Stern, author of *Paths of Faith*, was the most prolific liturgist of twentieth-century Reform Judaism. He also edited or authored *Gates of Prayer, Gates of Repentance, Gates of Forgiveness, Gates of Joy, Passover Haggadah, Day by Day, On the Doorposts of Your House, Pirke Avot: A New Commentary*, translations of all prophetic texts used in the synagogue and printed in *The Haftorah Commentary.*

Paths of Faith is a gender-sensitive prayer book published in 2003 with the most comprehensive transliteration of any prayer book in the Reform movement--although, it is not an official reform publication, as much as it is Stern's private attempt to appeal to liberal Jews of all backgrounds. Alongside each of the classical prayers is an explanation of its content & significance, establishing the prayer's place in the liturgical structure. It contains thematic cross-references connecting readers to other passages in the book, offering an interactive, highly personal approach to prayer. It includes a special section of readings for Troubled Times; Prayers for Healing; a Betrothal Prayer; newly-translated Psalms, and blessings & rituals for individuals and communities, at home and in the synagogue. In addition, each service begins with a *Kavannah* ("prayer before prayer") in the margin. These additions are taken from traditional texts, and worshipers are encouraged to link prayer and meditation with the ethical behavior that ought to flow from the act of worship.

Stern writes, "I consider Paths of Faith my masterwork, the prayer book I always wanted to create. It is the summation of a lifetime devoted to creating liturgy. It developed out of the wisdom that comes with advanced years, and the complicated circumstances of our world. I hope the prayer book's poetry and spirituality illuminates our worship in a time of uncertainty."[57]

Paths of Faith, pg. 59

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה
לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ. לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי.

My God, keep my tongue from evil, my lips from deceptive speech. In the face of malice give me a quiet spirit; let me be humble wherever I go. Open my heart to Your teaching; make me eager to fulfill Your Mitzvot. Then will Your name be exalted, Your might manifest, Your holiness visible, and Your Torah magnified. Inspire me to love You, and be the answer to my prayer.

(Following this are reflections for each day of the week)

These are a few excerpts:

> Sunday: ...help me to hear the still, small voice that speaks within me...persuad[ing] me to see the divinity in everyone I meet.
>
> Monday: ...help me to sense Your presence and to find the courage to affirm You, even when shadows darken my days.
>
> Wednesday: ...no two people have the same abilities. You...must work to serve God according to your own talents.... You cannot accomplish anything by imitating another person's way of service.
>
> Friday: guard me from despising others for their weakness, and, whatever may be my own faults and weaknesses, let me not come to despise myself. Instead, encourage me to search diligently for the good in others....

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[57] Chaim Stern, Paths of Faith: The New Jewish Prayer Book for Synagogue and Home : For Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals & Other Occasions, (S.P.I. Books: New York, 2002).

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ,
יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו,
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

May the source of peace on high send peace to us, to all Israel, and to all the world, and let us say: Amen.

Analysis:

The Hebrew section of *Eloha'i N'tzor* in *Paths of Faith,* is complete up until the "For the sake of" section. The *siddur* explicitly mentions observing *mitzvot*, using the phrase, "make me eager to fulfill Your Mitzvot." This return to ritual observance is common in Reform and Reconstructionist circles at the turn of the twenty-first century. Following the "For the sake of" section is a series of "Reflections" for each day of the week. The reflections are not written in Hebrew but are original creations that draw on classic sources. On Sunday, for example, one prays to hear the "still, small voice" that speaks within, persuading worshippers to see the divinity in everyone they meet. This is directly from1 Kings 19:12 and also acknowledges the Jewish concept of humanity being created *b'tzlem Elohim*.

On Monday one prays to sense God's presence and find the courage to affirm God, even when feeling despondent. Both this reflection and Sunday's reflection address the perceived need to connect with the divine throughout daily life.

On Wednesday, one acknowledges that no two people have the same abilities. One must work to serve God according to one's own talents—one cannot accomplish

anything by imitating another's behavior. While this idea is not explicitly raised in the traditional *Eloha'i N'tzor* text, asking God that one's words of prayer and heart's meditations be acceptable is akin to affirming the goodness resulting from each person serving God according to their own strengths. This theme speaks to the contemporary societal focus on the individual.

On Friday, worshipers pray that God guard them from despising others for their weakness; and also prevent them from despising themselves for personal faults and weaknesses. Instead, one asks for encouragement to search for the good in others. This reflection is a progressive interpretation of:

אֱלֹהַי נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַ

נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה.

The original prayer asks God to guard one from *speaking* unkindly about others, whereas the reflection in *Paths of Faith* petitions God to guard against *thinking* unkindly about others. The reflection then further applies *Eloha'i N'tzor's* theme of guarding one's tongue from evil and asks to see the good in others. This prayer demonstrates an interpretation of rabbinic writings with a liturgical creation based on its implications.

The final line of the prayer retains the original Hebrew, but the translation adds that peace be sent to "all the world" instead of just to us and Israel. Like *Kol Haneshamah* and *Lev Hadash*, it is a deliberate embrace of human diversity.

***

The final version of *Mishkan Tefillah* was unavailable at the time of this writing. Therefore, comments are based on the penultimate trial edition. The project as a whole arose out of a 1994 survey in which Reform worshippers articulated a desire for

transliteration, meaningful God language, expanded God language, relevant and compelling English prayer, faithful translation, and a response to the feminist critique.[58] They wanted to participate actively and seek a renewal of spirit through ritual, music, and intellectual engagement with Torah.[59]

Mishkan T'filah, uses an integrated theology. It is polyvocal—inviting full participation without conflicting with the *keva* text. Over the course of praying, many voices are heard and ultimately come together as one. It is the community that matters most. Elyse D. Frishman, editor of *Mishkan Tefillah* states, "We join together in prayer because together we are stronger and more apt to commit to the values of our heritage.... Our diversity is God. . . It is the blending of different voices that most accurately reflects God."[60] Survey respondents asked that their *siddur* include perceptions of God as transcendent, mysterious, evolving, a naturalist, and a partner.

Mishkan Tefillah

(weekday evening)

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה: וְלִמְקַלְלַי
נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ,
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מְהֵרָה
הָפֵר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקֵל מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה
לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ. לְמַעַן
יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנִי.

My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile. To those who challenge me, let my soul be quiet; let humility shine before me. Open my heart to Your teaching, and I may pursue Your counsel. For those who think evil towards me, may their thoughts disappear.
For the sake of Your Name, for the sake of Your power,
For the sake of Your holiness, for the sake of Your Torah,

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[58] Elyse D. Frishman, *Entering Mishkan T'filah,* (CCAR Journal, Fall, 2004).
[59] Elyse D. Frishman, "Entering *Mishkan T'filan*" (CCAR Journal, Fall, 2004) 57-58.
[60] Elyse D. Frishman, "Entering *Mishkan T'filan,*" 62-3.

Help me banish evil.
Save your beloved, and answer me.

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי
וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You,
Eternal, my Rock and my Redeemer.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא
יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

May the One who makes peace in the high heavens create peace for us and all Israel.
Amen.

(ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION)

I still don't know whom,
I still don't know why I ask.
A prayer lies bound within me
And implores a god
And implores a name.
I pray
In the field
In the noise of the street
Together with the wind, when it runs before my lips.
A prayer lies bound in me
And implores a god
And implores a name.

Notes: The bottom of page also includes quotes by R. Eleazar and R. Zera.

pg. 187 Weekday morning contains same Hebrew and translation and the following ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS:

CREATE a pure heart within me;
let my soul wake up in your light.
Open me to Your presence;
flood me with Your holy spirit.
Then I will stand and sing out
the power of Your forgiveness.
I will leach Your love to the lonely;
the lost will find their way home.
Adonai, open up my lips
And my mouth will declare Your praise.

IN THIS MOMENT of silent communion,
A still, small voice beckons me;
to pursue my life's work with full attention
though no eye is upon me;
to be gentle in the face of ingratitude,
even when slander distorts my nobler impulses;
to meet the end of the day with the certainty
that I've used my gifts well and with dignity.
O let me become ever braver,
facing life's trials with distinction.
May I live on in deeds that bless others,
And offer the heritage of a good name.

YOU ARE whatever your thoughts are.
Make certain your thoughts are where you want to be.

Analysis:

In its weekday evening and morning services, the complete Hebrew text for *Eloha'i N'tzor* is printed. In the translation, מִצְוֹתֶיךָ is rendered as "your counsel" instead of "your commandment" or "your *mitzvah.*" Given the Reform movement's current embrace of ritual, it is interesting that מִצְוֹתֶיךָ is not translated directly. The rest of the translation is quite literal. Unlike some of the other *siddurim*, the editors do not add a phrase asking for peace for all of humanity in the final sentence of the prayer.

For each literally translated Hebrew *keva* text, *Mishkan Tefillah* includes a facing page with alternative prayers, on the same general theme as the *keva* text opposite it, but reflecting varied theologies. The weekday evening service includes a poem about prayer laying buried within someone "imploring a god and imploring a name."[61] This alterative prayer addresses issues which arise when defining God as well as struggling to articulate

[61] From Ruth Brin, "No One Ever Told Me."

one's inner feelings. The bottom of the page also includes quotes by R. Eleazar and R. Zera whose post-*Tefilah* prayers are cited in the Talmud.

The weekday morning *kavanah* texts include an interpretive translation of Psalm 51:12-17. The translation frames the psalm in a more positive light and emphasizes the splendor of God's holy spirit as opposed to human bloodguiltiness. It begins with asking for a pure heart--lightly touching on *Eloha'i N'tzor's* theme of right speech. Rather, alternative texts answer the need for private meditation on a variety of topics. For example, the power of forgiveness is highlighted in the *kavanah* text even though forgiveness is not addressed in *Eloha'i N'tzor* itself. This alternative text ends with "Adonai, open up my lips / And my mouth will declare Your praise," which is in Psalm 51 and is tied to the end of *Eloha'i N'tzor* when one asks that one's words be acceptable to God.

A second original prayer also focuses on some of *Eloha'i N'tzor's* themes but addresses then with creative license. For instance, one part of the poem includes being gentle in the face of ingratitude which directly relates to being silent in the face of challengers. But another part of the poem includes a reference to the "still, small voice" mentioned in 1 Kings 19, living on in deeds that bless others, and offering the heritage of a good name--none of which is contained in *Eloha'i N'tzor*. This prayer related to many contemporary concerns including pursuing life's work with full attention and facing life's trials with distinction. While it does not directly incorporate *Eloha'i N'tzor's* specific references, it still captures the essence of the prayer.

A third quote is from Rav Nachman of Bratzlav about ensuring that one's thoughts are where one wants them to be. Rav Nachman was an Ukranian Chasidic

master who lived during the late 18th century. These three alternative prayers—an interpretation of Psalm 51, a poem with biblical quotations, and the quotation from Rav Nachman all offer worshippers a way to move beyond the *keva* text to connect with *Elohai N'tzor's* larger implications.

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Marcia Falk has gained recognition as the first-generation Jewish feminist theologian specializing in poetry, translation and prayer. Her creation of Hebrew blessings gives voice to her theology of immanence—God as an immanent force or power that is neither apart from nor above the world.[62] In re-examining names for God, she favors God as a process rather than a Being and attempts to move beyond all anthropomorphic imagery. By embracing a multiplicity of Divine images, she affirms the unity of all creation and celebrates diversity.[63]

In attempting to reflect the Divine equally in men and women, she imagines God as "Source of Life," "Flow of Life," and "Breath of All Living Things." She replaces the formulaic *Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam* with *"N'varech,"* eliminating images of God as male and as the One who hierarchically dominates creation. In so doing, Falk asserts a more active human role in the creation and redemption of the world.[64] Her blessings are a kind of *midrash* on the historical tradition. However, Falk never intends to substitute only the specific names for God that she uses, as this would create further exclusivity and distortion. Instead, she seeks a process of ongoing naming

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[62] Borowitz, Eugene B, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought.* 2nd Edition. Behrman House: West Orange, New Jersey, 1995. 329.
[63] Borowitz, 330.
[64] Borowitz, 331.

that points to the diversity of human experience. No prayer convention ought to become completely routine, Falk maintains.[65]

In the preface to *The Book of Blessings* published in 1996, Falk asserts the power of the Hebrew language as the language of her people. She refers to blessings as the heart, soul, and bones of Hebrew prayer. Blessings intensify life by increasing an awareness of the present even while awakening one's connection to the past.[66]

Many of her blessings contain no specific reference to the divine. Instead, they call to mind the unified body-spirit-self, the alignment of heart and minds during ritual acts, wishes for the fulfillment of self and community, commitment to redeem the world through acts of *tikkun*, and contemplation of the redemptive state. While the divine is not explicitly mentioned, Falk stresses that the divine is potentially everywhere. If everything is capable of being made holy, then one ought not to localize divinity in a single word or phrase. Divinity can be found wherever one's hearts and minds, blood and souls are stirred.[67]

The Book of Blessings discusses each blessing's counterpart in the traditional liturgy. By providing historical background and theological analysis, Falk offers her theology alongside traditional and contemporary Jewish thought.

The Book of Blessings is intended to provide a resource for the forging of inclusive and embracing communities. It is for those dissatisfied or frustrated with traditional prayers but who nonetheless appreciate them and want to build upon them.

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[65] Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* (San Fransisco: Harper San Fransisco, 1996) xvii.
[66] Falk, xvi.
[67] Falk, xix.

The aim is to be part of an ongoing conversation that will keep Judaism alive and responsive to spiritual needs and moral concerns.[68]

Book of Blessings

Pg. 244, The Gift of Gratitude

Silence: personal meditation

Pg. 170, Sh'ma: Communal Declaration of Faith

Hear, O Israel—
The divine abounds everywhere
and dwells in everything;
the many are One.

Loving life
and its mysterious source
with all our heart
and all our spirit,
all our senses and strength,
we take upon ourselves
and into ourselves
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
We will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day—
as we dwell in our homes
and as we go on our journeys,
from the time we rise
until we fall asleep

And may our actions
be faithful to our words
that our children's children may live to know:
Truth and kindness
have embraced,
peace and justice have kissed
and are one.

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[68] Falk, xx.

Pg. 258, Blessing of Peace

Eternal wellspring of peace—
may we be drenched with the longing for peace
that we may give ourselves over
as the earth to the rain, to the dew,
until peace overflows our lives
as living waters overflow the seas.

As we bless the source of life
so we are blessed.

Analysis:

While Falk loosely follows the benedictions of the *Amidah*, she does not provide a poetic interpretation of *Eloha 'i N'tzor*. The closest she comes is under the "Gift of Gratitude" rubric and is only three words: "Silence: personal meditation." This sparsity encourages worshippers to struggle with determining which words might be most personally appropriate and meaningful and not to rely on another's words. Falk's preface also expresses her conviction that prayer be flexible and varied.

Her *Sh'ma* emphasizes a theology of God's expression in multiple forms. Her words, "the many are One," affirm the non-hierarchical unity of all creation and celebrate diversity. The divine is also referred to as a "mysterious source"—Falk never even uses the word "God" believing that most people associate it with a dominating male and instead offers other descriptors for the divine.

Falk's treatment of commandedness is also noteworthy. Instead of employing the customary commandments in the *V'Ahavta*h such as affixing *m'zzuzot* or wearing *t'fillin*, she writes of the *promises* of "truth and kindness, peace and justice." Falk moves from commands to promise. Interestingly, her interpretation alludes to Classical Reform

theology which espouses prophetic Judaism rather than the fulfillment of particular *mitzvot*.

Her Blessing for Peace addresses God as "Eternal wellspring of peace." This natural, non-hierarchical title is one to which all people can relate. Her blessing uses imagery of submission, but instead of one person submitting to another, she describes the way the earth, rain, and dew are given over to one another until peace overflows. The divine as a source of peace is grounded in natural phenomena.

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El Halev, a compilation of prayers and blessings for the contemporary lifecycle, is edited by Ofer Sabath-Beit Halachmi, an Israeli Progressive rabbi. An interview with Sabath-Beit Halachmi offers insight into the rationale behind the compilation as well as to which prayers and blessings people have been most responsive. Sabath-Beit Halachmi, explains that his intention was to find moments in the contemporary life cycle that did not have a sufficient response in prayer books. People now have a way to infuse spirituality into events such as falling in love, finishing a degree, or getting engaged.

In compiling the book, Beit-Halachmi wanted a mixture of prayers and blessings with visible connections to Jewish sources as well as Modern Hebrew. He believes this combination speaks to Israelis.

The author stresses in his preface that all inclusions are suggestions. It is only worthwhile if it is continually refreshed by readers--a work in progress. He cites the Gemara saying that a person should not pray banal or cliché prayers. Personal prayers should be heartfelt and appropriate to one's spiritual state. Prayer should reflect the fact that the physical and spiritual life of a person is dynamic. Beit-Halachmi adds that the

best thing people can do with this book is to edit it and use it in a personally meaningful way.

When asked whether his Israeli audience had different or similar needs from Americans, Beit-Halachmi responded that Israelis' needs are similar. He added that the way he combines ancient Hebrew sources with contemporary Hebrew writing is something Americans and Israelis feel is authentic. The encouragement to write one's own prayers and blessings for life cycle events is universal. However, in America, there is a longer tradition of creative prayers and services—especially within the Reform movement which has been doing this for over 200 years in English.

He said that of all his innovations, people are most responsive to the prayers about ritual immersion, going on a long journey (especially Progressive bicyclists), the state of Israel, and giving birth. Beit-Halachmi continues to collect new prayers and some of the latest include: prayers for IRAC's (Israeli Religious Action Center) days of recognition for victims of persecution (similar to the days of recognition that the United Nations recognizes), a prayer for the redemption of captive soldiers, and a *Mi Sheberach* for B'nai Mitzvah students.

When asked to compare the individualism so prevalent in American life to Israel, Beit-Halachmi responded that he seeks to help people on their spiritual journeys, but also desires to bring the wisdom of the generations to communal living. These two parallel voices—personal, individual needs *and* the community's journey are equally important. His goal is for individuals to find moments in their lives that respond to these blessings, but to sanctify these moments within a community, within Jewish tradition.[69]

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[69] Ofer Shabbat-Beit Halachmi, personal interview, 2 October 2007.

El Halev (Translated by Jessica Kessler Marshall)

Great Thanks and Pardons, pg. 2

This collection gives new life to words that have been worn away through the generations.

We need personal creations that give expression to our spirit using old and new liturgical texts in a way that is paved anew on every trip (when we say these prayers, we are able to look at our lives anew and give new meaning to the prayers).

This collection is merely an example of the many creations that already exist and those that are needed to renew Judaism in our time. These liturgical creations express our faith, outlook on the world, and encompass different events in people's lives.

While we have done our best, it's clear that mistakes have been made. Please pardon these mistakes.

We have completed a beginning. It is up to the people reading it to renew it each time.

Preface, pg. 5

This notebook is set before you: words of spirit and holiness. We finished a work of creation! How do we bless? Who do we bless? What do we bless? What words do we use?

For example, I learned a new and joyous thing, or I arrived at a sea and was excited by its essence, or I was met with love, or sadness...

Many times we find ourselves searching for words that give spiritual meaning to the stages in our lives. Or oppositely, and maybe more often, we "forget" our spirit and sink into a materialistic world.

Giving up on spirit for the material world is one of the human occurrences recognized in every age. In the past and also in the present, daily challenges, daily events, needs of the hour and needs for one's livelihood are voices heard constantly and strong voices in our lives. The prophets cried out against this danger and were strongly obligated to the traditional rites and norms in the family and community and worked against this danger. What remains in our modern world? In our time when the commitment to tradition is lacking, we do not live by this measuring stick, and the social structures of the family or

community do not give us answers. A heavy responsibility is thus placed on us and on our close friends.

Since the soul is not subservient to the body, and finds crooked paths to express and satisfy its needs, the responsibility is incumbent upon us to not only engage in the spiritual search, but rather to overcome the profane and be reminded of the desire and need of the spirit and raise ourselves up with words and deeds.

In the active framework that accompanies the rabbis of the Student Youth Forum for the Jewish Progressive Movement, a need was felt to initiate the project before you. Together with us, willingly involved in the activities, was also the Israeli Rabbinical Program of Hebrew Union College with its rabbinical students and graduates. We did the act of creating new prayers and blessing to use in our lives—here and now.

"El Halev" is a collection of original blessings and prayers placed before you for all times and readings. "Reading for the Spirit:" enter in peace and show the light that exists inside our lives. The time of new creation and freshness in order to give words and renew the covenant with the spirit in our lives.

This collection was created out of the Jewish progressive search. A search inside ancient texts of our culture, inside the Bible, prayer books, and the Talmud; inside the new Hebrew spiritual world, and inside the spirit of our period. We searched deep inside our books and created anew—whether giving words to situations in our lives that did not exist, or giving new life to words and ideas that have worn away over the course of generations.

We need a personal creation that gives humans' expression to their spirits, to the situation of the spirit and its attitude that is beyond. We can accomplish this using old and new liturgical texts to renew a well worn path.

"El Halev" collects new creations and tries to be merely an example of the great number of existing creations and it also serves as an example of the need to renew Judaism in our time. The liturgical creation expresses our faith, our outlook on our world and its surroundings to the different events in human's lives.

<u>To the Heart of the Young and the Young at Heart</u>, pg, 7

The Youth Forum and Students of the Jewish Progressive Movement is composed of students in their twenties and thirties interested in deepening their commitment to progressive Judaism. For some of these students, this is their first meeting with Judaism in general, and specifically progressive Judaism. This compilation is intended to be a pleasant first meeting with the prayerbook and an expansion of the existent prayerbook. It strives to combine tradition with renewal for the young Israeli identity. It introduces new texts because there are not current ones that respond to our time but still includes existing texts.

Sometimes set prayer can lead to enslavement. Therefore, *avodah* should include searching and make demands on the individual praying.

This collection also recognizes the importance of a spiritual connection to one's soul. Prayer is a privilege, a grace, when the soul strives to express itself whether in difficult times or in a spiritually elevated state.

The Gemara states that a person should not pray banal/cliché prayers. Personal prayers should be appropriate to one's spiritual state and something heartfelt. One must find a balance between regular and occasional prayer.

The physical and spiritual life of a person is dynamic and prayer should reflect this.

How to use El Halev, pg. 9

These prayers can be adapted or edited to fit one's particular situation.

One can pick and choose amongst the following blessing formulae:

מלך העולם	אלהינו	ברוך אתה יהוה
חי העולמים	השכינה	ברוכה את יה
רוח העולם	עין החיים	ברך את
מקור הברכות	המקום	מי יתן

Introduction, pg. 10

Rote prayer is not real prayer. Prayers should not roll off the tongue automatically.

The *techina* was a particular type of liturgy said as part of the lifecycle and on particular occasions such as for an easy pregnancy, successful children, and a successful husband. Women could express their wishes and goals freely. They added to the set prayers in the *siddur*. The *techina* was attractive because it did not have to be said in public or in a synagogue.

Just because one makes something new, they do not disparage the old.

Liturgy was the cause for the Reform revolution. Views about God were based on Judaism and common humanity.

This collection both returns to the *siddur and* desires to create it anew by modifying and developing it. Some examples of the new prayers in this collection include: prayers for couples, new members who join the community, and situations of loss. This collection adds parallel pages from *Avodah Shebalev* and rephrases older prayers.

El Halev is not the last word. It is only worthwhile if it is continually refreshed by readers.

Prayer in a Time of Loss (note: can be a blood relation, someone close to you, or just a feeling that something has been torn from you/is missing)

For the friend to say:
Permanent separation is difficult. Someone who only yesterday was with us. Someone who we loved and respected. Someone who took part in our lives just as we took part in their life which has been cut off.

Death places before us its great mystery. Sometimes through the death of someone who is dear to us, sometimes through our own death towards which we are always moving. towards.

At the moment of separation, we stand on the threshold that is between life and not-life, between what is and what is not. We consider what is beyond the threshold and do not know that which we see.

This is the moment that we must gather up our courage and return to life, and return to creativity when we are missing so much the one who has crossed over and is no more.

Let us remember in these moments that mourning is but the other side of the love we experienced. Know that by seeing beyond the pain, is hidden the deeper meaning of this pain.

Let us know that we must always form from this pain the bricks from which we will build the structures of our life, our love, and our creativity.

And in a time such as this when everything becomes so confused in front of our eyes, let us cling with love and fear to the one who said "let this world be"-- this world we live in, the world of love and pain, and in which we are commanded to find light and hope.

For the mourner to say:
Blessed are you God (Adonai, Eternal, etc.), king of the universe who is good and does good.
or
God gives, God takes, let the name of God be blessed.

Read Amir Gilboa's poem and Psalm 1:3-5.

Encounter with Pain/Illness

Begins with Psalm 44:22-27 and Psalm 27:1.

By Jeanne Wiseberg composed/suggested from *Talking to God* by Naomi Levi.

My God,
in my pains and absence of salvation I lost my footsteps.
Help me my God to accept what I cannot understand,
Remind me that though it is not in my power to change my fate,
I do have the power to choose the way to accept what has happened on my way.
If only I would not fear.
Please take the bitter feelings from me,
would that my path lead me to love, to wisdom, compassion, and to You: Amen.

Finding Love

Kavanah [The intention]:
To pray for a love that is good and does good.
To open oneself to another soul and another person.
To pray to do good to the beloved woman or man.
To be worthy of abundance.
To pray to find blessing in the love.
To find holiness in the love.

[the prayer itself follows]
By Gili Tzidkiah

In love
I touch holiness
In the true inner place
I arrive without barriers.

A moment of quiet
and if I can focus
a moment of glory.

In love
I meet myself with you
I enter into myself and depart from myself to the other.

It becomes known to me
and if I work on it, I touch
you.

The love is always with me
Entering into me and departing
from me.

Drop by drop
and when I'm flowing
a spring.

Blessed are you God, source of life, who made human beings through holy love.

Reconciliation
By Elza Lasker Schiller

A big star will fall into my bosom.
Come, the night has awakened.

Let us pray in languages
inscripted in the lute's string

Come, let us reconcile tonight.

Confession—prayer for repairing the tablets
By Ofer Sabath-Beit Halachmi

God, the God of testimony
who knows the heart and creates the world.
Look from Mount Horeb
and forgive.

And send in your kindness
repair and bandage
to the openings that have split in me
from the vanity of idol worship.

Forgive the broken pieces that I have left on my way.
Shattered parts of the soul, or shattered parts of the body.
Because all things are unintentional
and from human weakness.

Forgive
And send in your hidden kindness
Repair of reception and light
to these broken tablets
and send the strength to stand

before You
God.

Analysis:

The preface and introduction introduction of *El Halev* emphasize several themes: the need to renew Judaism in our time, the desire to include existing texts but give new meaning to them, and the desire that prayer be personal and expressive of one's current feelings. Shabbat-Beit Halachmi echoes Falk's motifs, namely, embracing a myriad of divine images, creating new names for God, and affirming the dynamism of a person's physical and spiritual life.

The "Prayer in a Time of Loss" is unique in that it applies not only at the moment of death, but also when one feels that something has been torn from them or is missing. It touches upon the universal theological theme of death's mystery and the personal existential theme of one's own demise. It presents God as creator of the world with a broader vision of the life cycle than humans. The prayer commands readers to find light and hope and to see beyond their pain. Recognizing the larger picture beyond the pain allows one to realize the deeper meaning of their anguish.

The prayer concludes with both ancient and modern texts: two psalms and a poem by Amir Gilboa. The choice to included Gilboa, a prominent Israeli poet, indicates an appeal to Zionist and perhaps secular readers. Gilboa was a Ukrainian who migrated to Palestine in 1937, fought in World War II, and also fought for Israel's independence. One of the most original and experimental Hebrew poets, Gilboa's work combines the traditional with the current, and the personal with the national. He also rejects the traditional use of biblical figures to make moral or nationalistic statements, preferring to

identify with them personally, drawing direct parallels between past and present.[70] In this way, his aims are similar to Sabath-Beit Halachmi's. Both reclaim a past tradition, modernize it, and apply it personally.

The prayer for an "Encounter with Pain/Illness" also fuses a reading from Psalms with a modern work of literature. Jeanne Wiseberg's prayer is inspired by the book *Talking to God: Personal Prayers for Times of Joy, Sadness, Struggle, and Celebration* by Naomi Levy, one of the first female Conservative rabbis in the United States. Readers are again presented with a mixture of tradition and innovation. The prayer asks God to help one accept the inexplicable and at the same time to focus on one's power to accept the harsh realities of life. It is reminiscent of the Serenity Prayer by Saint Francis of Assisi. It concludes with a petition asking God to take away bitter feelings to make room for love, to wisdom, compassion, and God. This is a prayer that is not particularly Jewish—its universal themes could also be recited by Christians.

The prayer "Finding Love" begins with a *kavanah*, a more mystical approach. The prayer asks to be worthy, to find blessing, and to find holiness in love. It contains the imagery of a union alluding to the *kabbalistic* holy convergence of the masculine and feminine aspects of God. It also uses the liturgical comparison of God to a spring.

The poem "Reconciliation" implies a cosmic unity. The reference to the "lute's string" is from Psalms. Again, the reader is presented with original creations containing biblical and traditional imagery. Sabath-Beit Halachmi explains that he "uses old and new liturgical texts to renew a well worn path."

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[70] "Amir Gilboa," Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, <http://www.ithl.org.il/author_info.asp?id=91>.

Regarding the prayer "Confession," Sabath-Beit Halachmi writes that it is intended for situations when there is a need to purify oneself from past guilt or depression and turn over a new leaf. It is desirable to add a personal prayer or combine it with action--ritual immersion or a personal act of separation. The suggestion to ritually immerse is another example of appropriating an ancient tradition for use in a modern context—clearly the *mikvah* was not traditionally employed when attempting to purify oneself of guilt or depression.

The use of the word *Vidui* is another instance of interpreting classical liturgy in a modern context. Sabath-Beit Halachmi uses High Holiday imagery of a God on high (Mount Horeb) who is all-knowing and creates the world; but also the theme of idol worship so rallied against by the prophets. But he combines these with *kabbalistic* allusions of "broken pieces," "shattered parts of the soul," and Godly light. This prayer combines biblical references with *kabbalistic* allusions and applies them to people's contemporary needs.

Chapter III: Sociological Analysis

After examining how *siddurim* historically approach personal prayer, what remains is an analysis of the society in which these changes are occurring. Do contemporary prayer books meet the needs of today's American Jews? The inquiry focuses around several areas: the priority of individualism; how people self-identify; make meaning; what they seek in their synagogue and prayer experiences; how they define God; and the contents of their prayers.

Individualism

The United States' individualistic thrust is manifest in the values of independence, self-reliance and success. This sensibility admires toughness and strength and fears softness and weakness. It stems from what sociologist Robert Bellah refers to as a crisis of civic membership. Both associational involvement and public trust for government and other individuals have declined leading to a priority of individualism.[71]

Civic membership is the intersection of personal and social identity. Bellah claims that Americans are experiencing a crisis of civic membership due to pressures to disengage from larger society. Because social capital is depleted and both personal identity and security of selfhood are threatened, communities are consequently undermined. The crisis of civic membership affects people in all classes. The elite experience a loss of civic consciousness and social covenant. They want to pursue their own interests with no regard for anyone else. The underclass suffers because various economic and political forces deny them civic membership. Bellah identifies another

[71] Bellah, xvii.

class as the anxious class defining it as those trapped in the frenzy of effort it takes to preserve their standing. For them, this crisis expresses itself as disillusion with politics and uncertainty about their economic future. This crisis is so pervasive that concern for individual survival threatens to replace social solidarity.[72] Bellah further argues that factors such as residential segregation and hostility toward the government also promote individualism as a way of structuring one's identity and world view. Robert Wuthnow, professor of sociology and director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, adds that when young adults turn twenty-one years old, support and socialization comes to a halt. In the absence of institutional sources of support, young adults are forced to be individualistic.[73]

For Bellah, radical individualism emerges as a reaction against the small town and doctrinal church which promulgates narrow and oppressive narratives. It reacts against practices thought to be irrationally constricting.[74] People feel these rigid moral standards interfere with their freedom and enjoyment of life.

Individualism does not serve society well, does not make space for interdependence with others and is only sustainable in times of economic prosperity when Americans imagine individualism as a self-sufficient moral and political guide.[75] Indeed, American Jews say they are caught between the ideals of obligation and freedom. On the one hand, they articulate a concern for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment, and on the

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[72] Bellah, xv.
[73] Robert Wuthnow, After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion, (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2007) 13.
[74] Bellah, 83.
[75] Bellah, viii.

other hand, they cling to the ideals of responsibility beyond the self and family.[76] This dilemma also arises as Jews self-identify and seek to create meaningful lives.

Self-Identity

The demand to chose and re-chose one's identity is inescapable.[77] Jews' self-identity is multi-faceted and dynamic. Social identities (e.g., Jew and American), role identities (parent and professional), and individual attributes (caring, just) are all integrated. While one's Jewish commitment is enduring, today's Jews see no need for a distinction between the Jew and the American "inside" them. Furthermore, when asked if they would want to be described by their friends, subjects did not want to be seen as good Jews but as good and caring human beings.[78] Nowadays, each person performs the labor of fashioning his or her own self, pulling together elements from Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires, rather than stepping into an inescapable framework of identity (familial, communal, traditional) given at birth.[79] In fact, they regard the ability to choose from this broad repertoire as part of their birthright as Jews.[80]

Cohen and Eisen identify several ways today's individualistic Jews delineate their Jewishness. They take for granted the opportunity for full participation in every aspect of American society. Their connection to Israel is weak. They are not very interested in denominational differences. They insist on individual autonomy when deciding the details of their Jewish practice. God and spirituality are important, and ritual and texts

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[76] Bellah, 102.
[77] Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980.
[78] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen. The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community within America, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000) 195-6.
[79] Cohen and Eisen, 2.
[80] Cohen and Eisen, 184.

hold positive religious meaning. They want to be Jewish because of what it means to them personally, not because of obligations to the Jewish group. While most Jews express loyalty toward fellow Jews, they do not believe that they are a chosen people specially obligated to help other Jews as opposed to human beings in general.[81]

Jewish survival in and of itself is not sacred. Instead, these rampant individualists focus on the private sphere of self, finding meaning in Jewish life—the private spheres of self and family are most deeply valued.[82] Other research corroborates with these findings, although not all subjects report positive associations to ritual and texts. Moving outward from the center of the self, the second most critical factor in the formation of Jewish identity is played by the family.[83] The influence of individualism has led to the privatization of religion promulgated by a society that sanctions growth, experimentation, and fluidity in shaping personal identity.[84] This internal focus leads Americans to turn inward in their search for meaning. They have moved away from the organizations, institutions, and causes that used to anchor identity and shape behavior. Even community commitments are redefined in terms acceptable to sovereign and ever-questing selves.[85]

Cohen and Eisen find that today's Jews believe their Jewish identity is inalienable. It is seen as an "inner thing," a point of origin, an object of reflection. This view allows them to exercise great latitude in terms of observance, intermarriage, and communal affiliation.[86] Jewishness is an immutable aspect of self, represents an enduring

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[81] Cohen and Eisen, 39.
[82] Cohen and Eisen, 35.
[83] Cohen and Eisen, 186; Jonathan D. Sarna, American Judaism: A History, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004) 5.
[84] Cohen and Eisen, 202.
[85] Cohen and Eisen, 7.
[86] Cohen and Eisen, 185.

attachment to "historical familism," and is a departure from the rigorous individualism Bellah describes.[87] But with this historical familism, choice remains sovereign.

This wholehearted embrace of choice is manifested in a rejection of the notion that Judaism places demands upon individuals. Some respondents even said that Judaism *requires them to choose* the options that they find most meaningful. While their Jewish commitment is near the center of their self-concept, they see no need for a hard and fast distinction between the Jew and the American "inside" them. Furthermore, they are pleased when their social identity as Jew joins with their role identity as parent, for example, to produce a sense of transcendent meaning inside their home and family. However, they are uncomfortable when their social identity intrudes on professional roles.[88] Overwhelmingly, when asked how they would want to be described by friends, it was not as good Jews but as good and caring human beings. This sentiment is indicative of the trend of multiple aspects of identity coexisting independently.

Making Meaning

With the background of how Americans and Jews self-define, it is useful to investigate how one's identity influences how they make meaning. People are driven to make meaning by two main forces. The stimuli of personal ambition and consumerism are one way people are pushed to make meaning. Bellah finds that the middle class imagines that the meaning of life lies in the acquisition of status, income, and authority. People believe that these possessions bring true freedom.[89] They fear that if they give up their dream of private success for an integrated societal community, they will have to

[87] Cohen and Eisen, 196.
[88] Cohen and Eisen, 196.
[89] Bellah, 284.

abandon their separation and individuation, collapsing into dependence and tyranny. Bellah avowedly rejects this fear arguing that the extreme fragmentation of the modern world is the real threat to individuation. "What is best in our separation and individuation, our sense of dignity and autonomy as persons, requires a new integration if it is to be sustained," he articulates.[90]

The quest for personal meaning also manifests itself in spiritual pursuits which can be explored within the confines of established religious practice or in an eclectic gathering of disciplines. Relating to those who utilize conventional religious practices, Bellah explains that some people define themselves in relation to a God who challenges, promises, and reassures.[91] The biblical tradition teaches that real freedom lies in acknowledging one's responsibility to the welfare of others.[92] A third of young adults believe that the Bible is the literal word of God. Two-thirds think the Bible is divinely inspired. This leaves a lot of room for personal interpretation concerning the Bible's message and how divine inspiration enters into the human realm.[93]

However, most find religious meaning in more universal disciplines. While Cohen and Eisen do not find what Bellah describes as devotion to a religion of one's own invention, focused on the inner self, they do find a tendency toward "invisible religion" – religion as something to be fashioned by each individual keeping with personal needs and preferences.[94] This invisible religion is bolstered, however, with communal support and institutionalized religious forms.

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[90] Bellah, 286.
[91] Bellah, 83.
[92] Bellah, ix.
[93] Wuthnow, 132.
[94] Cohen and Eisen, 40.

In relating specifically to younger adults, Wuthnow finds several commonalities in the search for meaning. Music is one way this population looks for answers to spiritual questions. Science and philosophy are also more likely to be mentioned by younger adults. Furthermore, the post-Baby Boom generation is also more influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam. Wuthnow additionally finds that factors influencing one to seek in venues beyond one's religion include: being single, not having children, having been to college, and having traveled outside the United States.[95] It is worth noting that external authority, cultural traditions, and social institutions are all shunned by this age group.[96]

Bellah again is quick to offer his opinion concerning how people should create their most meaningful life. He begins with the need for civic engagement. A concern for the common good will benefit the society at large and contribute to the salvation of individual souls. In relating to various classes, he believes the upper middle class needs to reorient its world view so as to use their resources for the common good and not for their own aggrandizement. He maintains that the anxious class needs to engage with larger society through churches, labor unions, and civic organizations. This will lead to a renewed sense of meaning giving coherence to ideas of solidarity and community. Relating to the underclass, he argues that society is obligated to create institutions so that everyone can contribute to the commonwealth in ways that respect their dignity and renew their freedom. He believes that if the under class participates and contributes to larger society, its members will recover a sense of self-respect and agency.[97] In sum, there is an overarching need for a clear sense of solidarity, community, and future shared

[95] Wuthnow, 126-7.
[96] Bellah, 81.
[97] Bellah, xxii.

with the rest of society. Initiatives must be encouraged for economic democracy and social responsibility. All people must accept their material wealth as a gift, and share it with those in need.[98] Bellah's approach focuses much more on how social responsibility affects personal meaning. Regarding individual versus communal obligations, both Bellah and Cohen/Eisen find that many subjects also express feeling torn between obligation to oneself and their communal obligation. One the one hand, they articulate the concern of the "therapeutic" for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment, and on the other, they cleave to the ideals of responsibility that extend beyond the self or even the family.[99]

Turning the discussion specifically to Jewish meaning, Cohen and Eisen identify four ways that Jews make meaning.

- First, personal meaning arbitrates Jewish involvement. Robert Wuthnow, terms this practice spiritual tinkering. He explains that people sift through ideas and practices from childhood, religious organizations, classes, conversations with friends, books, magazines, television programs, and Web sites.[100] Each person interacts with Judaism in ways that fit. This interaction focuses on the self and its fulfillment rather than directing efforts outward toward a group. In addition, these Jews want their Judaism to be non-judgmental.
- Second, Jewish meaning is constructed one experience at a time, drawing on both Jewish and non-Jewish traditions. Most meaning is constructed in the private sphere and during private time.

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[98] Bellah, 296.
[99] Bellah, 102.
[100] Robert Wuthnow, After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 15.

- Third, research shows that Jews show great concern for issues of spirituality and meaning with diminished interest in organized Jewish life.
- Last, identity is more fluid than ever before. Intermarriage, interdating, and close relationships with non-Jews have left their mark.[101]

While one can claim that this self-centered approach diminishes hope for Jewish continuity, it can also be argued that American religion survives and flourishes because people have taken so many aspects of it into their own hands claiming it for themselves and finding deep meaning in whatever way they practice.

The incidence of individually determined religious practices promulgates the notion that there is no need for formal theologies. A systematic and rational belief system is not the goal. Jews are quite comfortable with the status of seeker after an ultimate truth they will never locate.[102]

Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College, cites findings that bolster these conclusions even more. He finds that among observant Jews, only seven percent strongly agree that there is a Messiah and he will come. Only thirteen percent of observant Jews agree that the Torah was revealed by God to Moses at Sinai. Only fifty percent of non-Orthodox Jews maintain that God definitely exists. Uncommitted to a God identified with a specific religion and people, Jews express theological doubts at levels that most Christians would consider of crisis proportion.[103]

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[101] Cohen and Eisen 36-8.
[102] Cohen and Eisen, 197.
[103] Alan Wolfe, The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Life, (New York: Free Press, 2003), 92.

In addition, American Jews tend to pick and choose from among Jewish doctrinal beliefs. They reject, for example, doctrines that seem excessively male chauvinistic or aggressively nationalistic in favor of those emphasizing social justice and spirituality. Like Protestants and Catholics, "contemporary Jews make a distinction between faith, which is important to them, and religion, which they identify with obsolete theological ideas."[104] Instead, they turn to the broad pursuit of Jewish spirituality. This includes: a stress on the inner life, experiential religion, gender egalitarianism, and mystical forms of wisdom and worship.[105] One way Jews have met these needs is through the Jewish renewal movement, pioneered by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Hineni, an Orthodox outreach program. It aims at meeting these needs through: prayer, meditation, feminism, sexuality, ecology, dim lights, bare feet, music, and silence. Love rather than law dominates the movement. God, often addressed as "Yah," represents not the powerful masculine King and Master, but a more personal feminine God, experienced physically, emotionally, and intellectually "as the underlying oneness of all there is."[106] Schachter-Shalomi works to renew Jewish prayer using "experiments" designed to "transform consciousness," and tie the words on the page to the experiences of soul, heart, mind, body.[107] Not surprisingly, the Jewish renewal movement is gaining in popularity.

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[104] Wolfe, 92.
[105] Sarna, 348.
[106] Sarna, 349.
[107] Sarna, 350.

Synagogue Experience

With the background of how Americans' search for and find meaning, one can ask whether contemporary worship and prayer meets the needs of Jewish seekers. Cohen and Eisen find that Jews come to synagogue to enjoy the pleasures of Jewish community and because of their attachment to Jewish tradition.[108] While prayer may be the pretext for coming to services, Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman explains that "the real purpose is achievement of community, the sense of belonging."[109]

Along with a sense of belonging, another often voiced sentiment was the desire for peaceful personal time for self-reflection. Gil, a fifty-year-old physician and an active member of his congregation, explains that, "when going to synagogue people...find something calming and soothing about the service."[110] He reports that in synagogue he thinks about the past week or the coming week, about ways he could relate to people better, and whether he is being as good a father as he could be.[111] Using time in synagogue for self-reflection and self-improvement is common.

Lee, a sixty year old insurance executive active in his synagogue, reports that while he "is not religious" it is very important for him to do something for himself. It is the only time of the week that he can truly get lost in thought for three hours, let his mind wander, and get caught up in the melodies. His week is not complete unless he goes to shul Saturday morning.[112] Note the individualist formation of the purpose of prayer joined to a striking commitment to the Jewish community and its institutions. Lee describes himself as non-religious, but nonetheless, he spends three hours in services

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[108] Cohen and Eisen, 155.
[109] Wolfe, 19.
[110] Cohen and Eisen, 156.
[111] Cohen and Eisen, 157.
[112] Cohen and Eisen, 159.

Saturday mornings engaged in serious contemplation and caught up in traditional melodies![113] Many people seeking spirituality avoid services because they find them of no benefit, but even those who go are more comfortable seeing services as a space for personal improvement as opposed to an affirmation of Jewish ritual or even a reflection on the themes of the prayers.

Worship attendance in itself is viewed as purely optional. Jews, more than any other religious denomination, express this viewpoint.[114] The services that Jews say they want to attend varies. Some research shows that evangelical patterns of worship—joyful, emotional, personal, impatient with liturgy, and theologically broad have increasingly become the dominant worship style for everyone in the United States. Wuthnow found that Jews specifically in their forties most want these innovative "seeker services" including experimentation with contemporary music, concerts, art festivals, poetry readings, and literature discussions. But even this cohort was small. Only twenty-two percent of people in their forties say they would like to have a worship service featuring contemporary music, and young adults are as interested in preserving traditional worship as they are in changing it.[115] Sarna reports slightly different findings. He argues that people seek a compliment of social justice and rationally oriented teachings that appeal to the mind with spiritual and emotive religious experiences that appealed to the heart and soul. These Jews want music, dance, mystical teachings, and healing incorporated into services.[116]

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[113] Cohen and Eisen. 159.
[114] Wolfe, 17.
[115] Wuthnow, 224.
[116] Sarna, 345.

Wuthnow also analyzed the use of the virtual church in religious involvement among young adults. He found that only twenty percent of young adults have visited a religion web site in the past thirty days.[117] Furthermore, virtual churches are not replacing real churches but adding ways to find information beyond one's congregation. Synagogues are unlikely to become obsolete. However, they have no monopoly in religious practices. While religious life may be grounded in the traditional practices of the congregation, individuals piece together spirituality on their own and in their own ways. Wolfe argues that American religion survives not because it instructs people in the right way to honor God but because people have taken so many aspects of religion into their own hands. Forty-one percent of young adults consider it just as important to spend time in nature as to talk to clergy.[118]

Prayer Experience

People's relationship with prayer is also highly individual. Tony, an engineer in his fifties, who didn't go to synagogue until he started saying Kaddish for his mother fifteen years ago, discusses his relationship with prayer:

> Sometimes when I talk to myself out loud, and say why don't I make a serious effort, and think of the things I need to do, it borders on prayer, talking to God. When I go to services...there is not so much *kavanah* there. In other ways there is.... Just to be here, making some sort of an

[117] Wuthnow, 201.
[118] Wolfe, 36.

> effort, that's a mitzvah, doing the best I can at the moment. I shouldn't be too hard on myself. Maybe there is an element of real prayer in that.[119]

Like many American Jews, Tony worries his form of prayer is not legitimate. Doubts about what "should" be said, in comparison to the set prayers in the *siddur*, weakens one's confidence in a prayer's authenticity.

Lee, cited previously sharing his thoughts about synagogue, also shares his sentiments regarding prayer:

> During difficult days I ask God for help, on good days I thank God for my family's well-being, my being, that I have a wonderful life, a comfortable lifestyle, that I'm delighted to have my health... I don't think, sometimes, that we take the time out in life to really appreciate what we have.... When everything else fails, you know you always have the good Lord above looking over you and you know that you always have someone to talk to.[120]

Lee's prayers primarily focus on gratitude and thanksgiving.

Wuthnow found that prayer is less frequent among young people. Forty-seven percent of Americans in their twenties pray every day, while seventy-two percent of those in their late forties and older do. But meditation fares even worse. Eight percent of Americans in their twenties meditate compared to thirty-one percent of those sixty-five and older. It is possible that serious engagement in disciplined spiritual practice may be

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[119] Cohen and Eisen, 166.
[120] Cohen and Eisen, 160.

something that young adults do not make time for until they are older or that they are simply disinterested in devotional activities.[121]

Given this universal desire for *kavanah*, devotion, intensity, and intention, even many Orthodox Jews find that they cannot easily pray in the presence of others. They therefore call what they do at home prayer, or *tefilah*, reserving for the experience of liturgy what they call *davening*, that process by which prayer takes place.[122]

Bellah maintains that by reminding people of their relationship to God, prayer establishes patterns of character and virtue that should operate in economic and political life beyond the sanctuary. Prayer reminds people that their utilitarian pursuits are not the whole of life. A fulfilled life is one in which God and neighbor are remembered first. Bellah's analysis does not coincide with what the research shows people are looking for in their quest for meaning, although prayer may inadvertently function the way he describes.

Addressing prayer books themselves, Wolfe argues that contemporary prayers stress religion's universal truths rather than emphasize reverence for God. Going to services is sacred in that it marks a break with the busyness of the work week, but it is not sacred in the sense that it marks an occasion to honor God.[123] Along similar lines, Cohen and Eisen find that today's American Jews are not very interested in the putative truths about God or the words transmitted on the page. They respond strongly to whatever enhances self-development and fulfillment, whether it be social action projects, Yom

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[121] Wuthnow, 128.
[122] Wolfe, 20.
[123] Wolfe, 19.

Kippur fasting, or an inspirational sermon.[124] Interestingly, while some Jews report that they are distinctly uncomfortable with the act of prayer, they still pray.

Women especially report a difficult time with male God-imagery and prayer language. While men do not express the same dislike for male God-imagery, alienation from traditional imagery for the divine—the Commander and Redeemer of Israel who appears on every page of the prayer book—was prevalent for them as well.[125]

Liberalized versions of biblical morality subordinate the themes of divine authority and human duty to the intrinsic goodness of human nature. In accord with rampant individualism, the power of human choice is another emphasized premise. Regarding religious obligation, more and more churches and synagogues hold a relaxed sense of duty, authority, and virtue, almost encouraging a rejection of institutional religion. Many Americans envision themselves existing independent of tradition and community and then, perhaps, choosing traditions and obligations that suit their beliefs.[126]

Defining God

Americans' definitions of God offer greater insight into their prayers. Research shows that Jews do not expect to find God in synagogue. The God in the *siddur* is very different from the God in which they believe—too commanding and "too Jewish."[127] Gil, one of Cohen and Eisen's aforementioned subjects, defines God as "the best that all

[124] Cohen and Eisen, 190.
[125] Cohen and Eisen, 162.
[126] Bellah, 63-5.
[127] Cohen and Eisen, 155.

of us can be in a secular sense." A similar sentiment is expressed by a Presbyterian pastor who views God as the fulfillment of one's higher self.[128]

Gil also understands God as "a primal force—a spirit that causes things to happen,"[129] not as a being endowed with consciousness and purpose. Indeed, in Cohen and Eisen's sample of fifty people, only fourteen percent believe in a personal God who hears prayer, intervenes in human life, or rewards humans after death in accordance with the deeds in this life. Forty percent describe God as a force in nature.[130]

Rebecca, a financial manager in her late forties, also believes in a beneficent God, but not a God who issues mitzvot to the Jewish people. Furthermore, she reports that she feels connected to God whenever she feels awe, but "has a very difficult time with male imagery and prayer language. Alienation from traditional imagery for the divine is common among all subjects.[131] Indeed, the God in whom subjects believe is not a particularly Jewish God. Today's Jews are not seeking a commanding, particularist God.

And yet, there are also Jews who believe in God's personal providential care. Lee, the aforementioned middle-aged insurance executive who is extremely active in his Jewish community, does not see God as a force, but instead believes in a God who hears and answers prayer (a view held by twenty percent of the sample).[132] Along similar lines, one subject sees God as always watching over her. She mentions that her perception is grounded in unhappy childhood years, and she will always retain the picture of God formed then. Lynne, a lawyer belonging to Conservative and Orthodox synagogues, sees God as a "best friend, an angel on my shoulder" and believes God gives her the strength

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[128] Bellah, 229.
[129] Cohen and Eisen, 156.
[130] Cohen and Eisen, 157.
[131] Cohen and Eisen, 162.
[132] Cohen and Eisen, 160.

to get through difficult situations. Lynne does not see God as a judge. Wuthnow finds that Jews and Christians are generally inclined to worship a supportive God who encourages self-assurance and demands a discipline that legitimates the way of life to which they are already committed.[133] Even in the situations where God is highly personal, people nevertheless want their particular form of Judaism validated.

Wuthnow finds that many young adults believe that God is simply a mystery that cannot be understood by humans, and many others affirm that emptying one's mind is the only way to relate meaningfully to God.[134] The finding that Jews feel completely free to pick and choose among the attributes ascribed to God in Jewish sources underscores the trend towards spiritual tinkering as well the highly individualized nature of religious life.

Contents of Prayers

The current research on American self-identity, quest for meaning, and attitudes towards worship, prayer, and God suggests that the actual prayers Jews recite exemplify meaningfulness.

Cognitive doubt does not preclude prayer. Thus, many prayers center around praising God. Extolling God's goodness co-exists with an awareness that God's world contains much evil. Recitation of prayer to God, however, often has little to do with God. It is primarily an occasion for personal reflection as opposed to centered on other Being. (The Hebrew verb for prayer, *le-hitpalel*, is reflexive).[135]

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[133] Robert Wuthnow. After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950's. (Berkeley: University of California Press 1998) 85, 101.
[134] Wuthnow, 125.
[135] Cohen and Eisen, 164.

Another approach in liberal prayer books is to put little emphasis on revering God and instead stress religion's universal truths.[136] The Reform and Reconstructionist movements have devoted tremendous energy to revising their prayer books over the years. However, research shows that the feminist adjustments and new formulations of the words might not compel Americans. Many subjects use the words on the page as a springboard for a personal religious experience.[137] There is little direct relevance to the content of the words themselves. Given that many subjects also report that they prefer to be alone and meditate, the words of the *siddur* may not be so crucial. Clearly many people look to the text for comfort, inspiration, and guidance. And yet, *Eloha'i N'tzor* is about speaking the words of one's heart. The Rabbis intuit that generating one's own words is a way to break from the stimulation of the sensory world and open one's heart to the longing, the praise, and the truth that lie within.

[136] Wolfe, 19.
[137] Cohen and Eisen, 177.

Conclusion: Implications

Several important findings arise from the analysis of contemporary *siddurim:* the use of original compositions, God language, prayer contents, inclusivity, additions to required prayers, other forms of prayer, and the goal of prayer.

Original Compositions: Prayer books such as *Kol Haneshama* create original compositions based on a prayer's general theme. Some *siddurim* go further, inviting people to compose their own meditations. The presence of loose translations based on a prayer's general premise, and the encouragement of a worshipper's creativity are widespread phenomena in contemporary *siddurim.*

God language: Current prayer books move decidedly away from masculine, hierarchical God language. New names for God may be gender-neutral such as YAH / BELOVED ONE; they generally emphasize God's softer more compassionate side. Even the characterization of God as teacher, source of truth, or salvation is worded so as to appeal to worshippers' need for a comforting, all-knowing, and pure divine figure.

But American Jews perceive God in a variety of ways: transcendent, mysterious, evolving, a Kaplanian natural force, an immanent feminist presence, and a Buberian partner in meeting. Prayer books subsequently provide several options for worshippers to choose from, even inviting the creation of new names for God.

Marcia Falk's feminist interpretation deserves special mention. She attempts to move beyond all anthropomorphic imagery and imagines God as "Source of Life," "Flow of Life," and "Breath of All Living Things." She replaces the formulaic *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam* with "*N'varech,*" eliminating images of God as male

and as the One who hierarchically dominates creation. Moreover, she prefers not to localize divinity in a single word or phrase believing that divinity can be found wherever one's hearts and minds are stirred.

Prayer's Contents: Quite remarkably, the prayers' contents are universalistic. Contemporary prayer books reserve particularistic thought to more public expressions of prayer. But private prayer often turns to universalistic concerns. In *Lev Hadash*, for example, worshippers pray for a clean heart and willing spirit. *Mishkan Tefillah's* prayers relate to contemporary concerns such as pursuing life's work with full attention and facing life's trials with honor.

This universalistic accent is, no doubt, directly related to the intense personal focus on the individual. When left to the prompting of their own hearts, it is assumed that individuals will petition for something akin to human growth and enrichment, not anything distinctively Jewish. In this vein, many prayers relate to the societal focus on the individual. *Paths of Faith* asks God that one's words of prayer and heart's meditations be acceptable—affirming the goodness which results from each person serving God according to their own strengths. Similarly, given that American Jews are largely disinterested in commandedness, some prayer books such as Falk's, promote "truth and kindness, peace and justice" as God's promises, rather than references to God's commands.

Inclusivity: In keeping with the universalist emphasis discussed above, all of the prayer books have an anti-chosenness rhetoric. They deliberately embrace human diversity and include other peoples in the Jewish prayer for peace. Falk explains that by

embracing a multiplicity of Divine images, one affirms the unity of all creation and celebrates diversity.

Additions to Required Prayers: Contemporary *siddurim* provide additions to required prayers. Many prayer books include notes and commentaries for worshippers who feel that the translation is unsatisfactory or who need further explanation. Extensive alternative reading sections with varied theologies are also common.

Beit-Halachmi, in particular, claims that his book is only worthwhile if it is continually refreshed by readers. The best thing people can do with his prayers and blessings is to edit them and use them in a personally meaningful way. He asks readers make additions and personalize his creations. Beit-Halachmi epitomizes post-modernism and the computer era by providing a prayer book that demands continual contributions from its readers.

Other Forms of Prayer: Some *siddurim* move beyond traditional Jewish *davening* and, for Reform Jews, even beyond the recitation or singing of prayers. *Kol Haneshama* includes breathing and visualization exercises based on a prayer's theme, under the assumption that such mental imagery can yield a sense of harmony and balance, a sense of one's place in the order of things, fresh perspective, clarity, and energy. Worshippers are guided to focus on their sense of unity with the divine, as well as their links to all other breathing vessels of God.

The need for private meditation is recognized by most of the siddurim. *Kol Haneshama* explains that meditation addresses the desire for a sensory experience, a feeling of connection with other human beings, a need for relaxation, and a need to find God within oneself.

Connected to these new forms of prayer is the employment of prayers in novel contexts. *El Halev*, for instance, seeks to infuse spirituality into events such as falling in love, finishing a degree, or getting engaged. This mixture of tradition and innovation is increasingly common. *Paths of Faith* includes a special section of readings for Troubled Times, Prayers for Healing, and a Betrothal Prayer. *Lev Hadash* offers the option to continue with "Prayers and Readings on Various Themes" including: doubt, prayer, synagogue, human nature, dreams, loyalty, and suffering. The editors clearly recognize a need for supplementary personal prayers, which cover both standard liturgical occasions as well as innovative ones, arising out of a personal search for spiritual meaning in all aspects of life's journey.

Goal of Prayer: Beit-Halachmi seems to speak for the rest of the prayer book sample by understanding the goal of prayer as balancing one's personal, individual needs with those of the community. His goal is for individuals to find moments in their lives that respond to blessings, but to sanctify these moments within a community, within Jewish tradition. In addition, he identifies the need to renew Judaism in one's lifetime by giving new meaning to existing texts, as well as the desire that prayer be personal and expressive of one's current feelings.

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Turning to a sociological analysis of the personal and spiritual needs of contemporary Americans, this query seeks to determine whether *siddurim* meet these needs. Americans' relationship to individualism, chosenness, making meaning, the purpose of prayer, prayer's contents, and God all inform the analysis.

Individualism: American Jews feel caught between the ideals of obligation and freedom. But in practice, they insist on individual autonomy when deciding the details of their Judaism, they want to be Jewish because of what it means to them personally, not because of obligations to the Jewish group; it is the *private* spheres of self and family that are most deeply valued. All of this points to a highly individualistic society that sanctions growth, experimentation, and fluidity in shaping personal identity. This internal focus leads Americans to turn inward in their search for meaning. Contemporary *siddurim*, with their individual options and encouragement of personal meditation, reflect this trend.

Chosenness: American Jews do not believe that they are a chosen people; and certainly not specially obligated to help other Jews as opposed to human beings in general. As noted, the embrace of human diversity in relation God language and the Prayer for Peace manifest this trend.

Making Meaning: Because of rampant individualism, religion is seen as something fashioned by each individual in keeping with personal needs and preferences. Personal meaning arbitrates Jewish engagement. Interaction focuses on the self and its fulfillment rather than directing efforts outward toward a larger group. In addition, Jews want their Judaism to be non-judgmental. Most meaning is constructed in the private sphere, and during private time with God, American Jews tend to pick and choose from among Jewish doctrinal beliefs. This is evident in the myriad of prayer options and varying theologies presented in *siddurim*.

Jews largely turn to the broad pursuit of Jewish spirituality. This includes: a stress on the inner life, experiential religion, gender egalitarianism, and mystical forms of

wisdom and worship. The Baby Boom generation began experimenting with Buddhism, in particular, and the post-Baby Boom generation has continued this search for spirituality beyond Judaism, without, abandoning Judaism in the process. Prayer books seem intent on recognizing this "syncretism," or at least meeting it with a specific Jewish parallel.. The *Shiviti* meditation in *Kol Haneshama* is a traditional Jewish art form used for meditation. It is based upon the biblical verse: "I have set *(Shiviti)* Yah always before me."[138]

Purpose of Private Prayer: Private prayer is viewed as a peaceful personal time for self-reflection and self-improvement. Similarly, services are seen as a space for personal improvement, as opposed to an affirmation of Jewish ritual, divine commandness or even a reflection on the objective theological themes of the prayers. The rise of Healing Services or yoga during Shabbat morning services both speak to this phenomenon.

Prayer's Contents: Many prayers center around gratitude and thanksgiving, but not reverence or fear of God. They appeal to a universal God, who provides equally universal truths. The original compositions in *Lev Hadash* which broaden the scope of prayer topics, include doubt, human nature, dreams, loyalty, and suffering.

God: Many Jews report a difficult time with male God-imagery and prayer language as well as alienation from traditional divine imagery such as the Commander and Redeemer of Israel. The God in the *siddur* is considered both too commanding and "too Jewish." Instead, Jews define God as "the best that all of us can be in a secular sense," or the fulfillment of one's higher self. This conception of God is certainly found

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[138] Psalms 16:8.

in contemporary *siddurim*. Marcia Falk refers to God as a "mysterious source" and favors God as a process rather than a Being.

Both Jews and Christians seek a supportive God who encourages self-assurance and demands a discipline that legitimates the way of life to which they are already committed. This too is reflected in prayer books such as *The Book of Blessings* which shifts from God's commands to God's promises. Instead of employing the customary commandments in the *V'Ahavtah* such as affixing *m'zzuzot* or wearing *t'fillin*, Falk writes of the promises of "truth and kindness, peace and justice." Falk moves away from a sense of obligation to one of promise .

Wuthnow finds that many young adults, particularly, believe that emptying one's mind is the only way to relate meaningfully to God. The meditation exercises in many of the *siddurim*, especially in *Kol Haneshama*, respond directly to this appeal.

This analysis reveals significant overlap between what contemporary Americans want from their prayer experiences and what current prayer books provide. However, there are several areas of disconnect.

First, given that many subjects report preferring to be alone and meditate, the words of the siddur may not be so crucial. Are *siddurim*, then, a necessary part of prayer? At the same time, however, considering that many people find printed words to be a helpful springboard for organizing their thoughts and inspiring their personal prayers, it seems foolish to discount the benefits of a book's guidance.

Second, the tension between individualism and communal obligations still remains. Americans consistently turn inward in their search for meaning. They insist on individual autonomy in creating their Jewish practice and desire prayers and rituals that

are personally meaningful. Obligations to other Jews are unattractive. And yet, in their very search for personal meaning, they desire a supportive Jewish community. Cohen and Eisen find that Jews come to synagogue to enjoy the pleasures of Jewish community and to satisfy their attachment to Jewish tradition.[139] Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman explains that "the real purpose [Jews go to services] is achievement of community, the sense of belonging.[140]

Thus, American Judaism is faced with a disconnect between staunch individualism and a desire for communal membership. However, it is possible to mediate between these two poles. Jews allege that the purpose of their prayer is highly individualistic, but at the same time, they display a striking commitment to their community and its institutions. Hence, while Jews may claim to desire only personal time and space during prayer, once they have been given time for this self-reflection, they often are able to transition into the communal sphere. American religion survives--and even flourishes--because worshippers have been given the license to take so many aspects of it into their own hands, claiming it for themselves and finding deep meaning in whatever way they practice. One of the fundamental aspects of Jewish continuity is the juxtaposition of personal and communal meaning within a prayer setting. Given that today's Jews are dually committed to claiming what they consider to be Jewishly relevant as well as investing in the communal good, a future of compelling and meaningful Judaism holds great promise.

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[139] Cohen and Eisen, 155.
[140] Wolfe, 19.

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