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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIRCHOT HA-SHACHAR

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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This thesis is dedicated to my family,

Hortense Daitz

Lawrence Meyers

Marian Fox

Eric Meyers

Philip Meyers

and especially to my late father,

Irving Meyers.

It is their continual support of me and my rabbinic studies which allowed me to achieve this goal.

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Throughout the writing of this thesis, their presence has regularly given me cause to recite the Morning Blessings, as I am made aware over and over again of God's presence in the universe.

Chapter One

THE ORIGINAL BLESSINGS

BERACHOT 60b

The blessings which comprise the core element of the section of prayer we now refer to as the Morning Blessings were not, in their original form, considered part of a prayer service at all. Rather, they are blessings selected from a much larger collection of suggested texts to be recited upon taking particular personal and private actions. The collection is found in B. Berachot 60b, where each text is prefaced by an instruction delineating precisely when it is to be said. The form of these benedictions is typified by the initial prayer of the collection, to be said on the occasion of having one's blood let. The blessing is extremely short, opening with the familiar phrase Yehi ratzon - "May it be Your will." (This formula is often replaced in these blessings by the more usual Baruch atah Adonai elo-heynu melech ha-olam - "Blessed are You Lord our God Master of the Universe.") It is simple in content: the prayer pleads for successful completion of the action taken and praises God by acknowledging that such success is contingent on God's power. B. Berachot 60b continues with two prayers which may be said upon entering the bathroom. The essence of both prayers is a request for God's protection. The following blessing, as one might expect, tells us what one should say upon exiting the bathroom. It praises God's creation of the human body and acknowledges its fragility.

Strangely enough, this is the blessing which is eventually denoted as the initial one in the list which constitutes the Morning Blessings as we have it. The Talmud reports a controversy over the proper way to conclude this blessing. Three opinions are put forth and R. Papa concludes that the ending ought properly to be a combination of two of the suggested texts. It is this combination which concludes the prayer as we know it today and which foreshadows a rule of thumb for the future development of the Morning Blessings, namely, "more is better." The listing continues with three blessings to be said on going to bed.

At this point, the Talmud text presents sixteen blessings to be said over various typical morning activities. These blessings have entered the liturgy of the Morning Blessings almost intact. First, there is a somewhat lengthy blessing to be said upon awakening. It thanks God for creating a soul within human beings, acknowledges that at some time the soul will be taken, and affirms that the soul will be returned to the body at the time of the resurrection. Thus, firm belief in the twin doctrines of resurrection and immortality is asserted here in no uncertain terms.[1] The following fifteen benedictions are generally referred to in the literature as the "small blessings" and comprise the essence of the Morning Blessings. The following chart lists the blessings and their rationale, as stated in the Talmud.

Reason	Blessing
When he...	he says...
1. hears the cock crowing	Blessed is He who: has given understanding to distinguish between day and night
2. opens his eyes	opens the eyes of the blind
3. stretches and sits up	loosens the bound
4. dresses	clothes the naked
5. draws himself up	raises the bowed
6. steps on the ground	spread the earth on the waters
7. begins to walk	makes firm the steps of man
8. ties his shoes	has supplied all my wants
9. fastens his girdle	girds Israel with might
10. wraps a turban on his head	crowns Israel with glory
11. puts on a tallit	sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to enwrap ourselves in the tallit
12. puts tefillin on arm	sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to put on tefillin
13. puts tefillin on head	sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the commandment of tefillin
14. washes his hands	sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.
15. washes his face	has removed the bands of sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.

The final blessing in this collection is a much longer

meditation of the form Yehi Ratzon - "May it be Your will." We will see many of this type of prayer throughout the Morning Blessings. This prayer asks for God's protection during the day and closes by affirming the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

It is clear that in their talmudic form, these blessings were in no way intended as required prayer, much less as part of daily public worship.[2] They functioned more along the lines of good advice to the pious person. They underlined the responsibility of the human being to thank God for even the smallest of pleasures in this world, such as the daily acts of washing and dressing which one might so easily take for granted. In addition, they provided a model of behavior, describing each action a human being should take during the morning routine. They were useful suggestions, not legislated obligations.

Nevertheless, these blessings somehow became part of daily private prayer and were eventually even added to the public synagogue service, probably during the time of the Geonim. How did this change in the status of the Morning Blessings occur? It seems that the transition was derived from a talmudic statement found in B. Menachot 43b:

> It was taught: R. Meir used to say, a man is bound to say one hundred blessings daily, as it is written, And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee.[3]

Generating a single authorized series of one hundred blessings was no easy matter, so that eventually a request

came from the Spanish community of Lucena to Natronai b. Hilai Gaon to list them.[4] In his responsum, Natronai notes that each of these blessings was to be said b'ayta u-v'mekoma - "in its own time and place," namely, at home and not as part of the synagogue service.[5] However, he hastens to add that no blessing may be said in the morning prior to washing the hands[6] with the result that the first morning blessing in his listing of the blessings is over washing the hands. Next he lists the blessing on exiting the bathroom, which we saw above, from B. Berachot 60b. Why he chooses to omit the blessings upon entering the bathroom is unclear. Of the small blessings, Natronai lists them as they occur in B. Berachot 60b with four exceptions. He excludes two blessings: 1) "who loosens the bound" and 2) "who crowns Israel in glory." Following the small blessing formula, he adds a new blessing, "who raises the lowly." Additionally, he adds three blessings, hereafter to be known as the Lo Asani blessings, thanking God for not making him a gentile, a slave, and a woman. (These blessings are based on a different talmudic source and their admission into the small blessings will be discussed at length in the next chapter.) Aside from these changes, Natronai's collection of morning blessings parallels those of B. Berachot 60b.[7] In Natronai's mind, they are still intended for private devotion. But the first step has been taken: they are no longer merely suggested; the individual is obligated to say them each day as part of the one hundred daily blessings.

Rav Amram Gaon quotes his predecessor Natronai's responsum in the discussion of the small blessings found in his prayerbook. Along with Natronai, he believes that each of these blessings should accompany the appropriate action. Yet he notes that this is impossible since many of the actions would normally occur before one's hands were washed. Natronai's solution to this problem, to wash the hands prior to saying the blessings and thus to recite the appropriate hand washing blessing as the first of the Morning Blessings, dissatisfies Amram since, for him, the blessings must be recited in their talmudic order and the blessing over washing the hands is almost the last blessing in the Gemara's list. Yet no blessing may be recited before the washing of the hands. The problem is insoluble as Amram sees it. However, Amram continues to tell us that it has become the custom in all Spain for the cantor in the synagogue to recite these blessings publicly for the benefit of those who do not know how to recite the.[9] So, regardless of the technical problem of order, it is clear that these blessings are being recited together, at one time, and are not being said before their appropriate actions. It would seem then, that by the ninth century the trend toward including the morning blessings in the fixed worship service was well on its way, at least in the Spanish community, presumably to aid the ignorant in fulfilling their obligation.

However, the creative minds behind the Palestinian tradition were not interested in furthering this trend.[10]

Rav Saadia Gaon organizes his prayerbook in such a way that these blessings are not connected to the synagogue service at all, but constitute a special section of prayers entitled the Birchot Pe'ulot, the "blessings over actions."[11] This section is sandwiched between the Birchot Re-iyah, "blessings over visual phenomena" and the Birchot Nehenin, "blessings over enjoyment." While these "blessings over actions" are identical to what we know as the Morning Blessings, they functioned in an entirely different way. Like the prayers which surround them, these blessings are to be said over particular actions at appropriate times. They were never intended to be grouped together and inserted into public prayer. Saadia includes in this section the kinds of blessings we are familiar with from B. Berachot 60b (like blessings on entering and leaving the bathroom and on letting blood), plus some new blessings, on leaving the home and on leaving a city. Saadia himself makes the following comment:

> The majority of our people say them together every morning after they exit from the bathroom and do not separate them.[12]

It is clear from the organization of Saadia's prayerbook that he takes issue with his Geonic predecessor, Amram, and insists that the proper blessing be recited over the corresponding action.

In his discussion of the Palestinian rite, Jacob Mann notes "There is no indication in our fragments as to whether this part of the service was recited in the syna-

gogue or individually by the worshippers at home."[13] The contents of the preliminary portion of the morning service to which he is referring are almost completely different from the corresponding section in the Babylonian service and will be detailed in a later chapter. However, it is important to note here that there are four blessings common to both, although they are found in different order. The Palestinian fragment we have available[14] includes the blessing to be said upon waking, Elohai Neshamah, one of the small blessings, "who removes sleep from my eyes," an extended section of Lo Asani blessings, and a text that is clearly parallel to the closing meditation of the small blessings, Yehi Ratzon. These four blessings are interspersed throughout a fragment of early morning prayer which also includes elements found in later sections of the Babylonian tradition, such as the Verses of Song. According to Mann, however, the directions in this manuscript seem to imply that the reader began with the Yotzer prayer "whereas the section containing the so-called Zemirot was recited by one of the congregants at the synagogue and the preceding part was read individually at home."[15] The Palestinian tradition, then, minimizes the public preliminary morning service and implies that blessings of the type we see in the Babylonian tradition are to be said privately, at home.

Another piece of evidence is available from Abraham Schechter's study of the Italian liturgical text Seder Hibbur

Berakot of Menahem b. Solomon. Schechter posits a close connection between Palestinian Jews and Italian Jews from before the Second Temple through the twentieth century and suggests that this text is largely a compilation of Babylonian and Palestinian rituals which became the fixed custom of the Italian Jews.[16] The text includes a number of Babylonian elements including the prayer to be said on awakening, Elohai Neshama, a form of the Lo Asani blessings, and ten of the small blessings. But three additional, previously unknown, small blessings have been added. In this manuscript, the small blessings are clearly designated as tefillat yachid - "prayer of the individual."[17] Schechter argues that they became part of the synagogue service (tefillat tzibor) sometime between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. He bases this on the fact that the latest text available maintaining that these blessings constitute private prayer is Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, printed in 1180, while the earliest extant reference to them as synagogue liturgy is Jacob b. Asher's Arbaah Turim, printed in 1340.

In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides makes his position on the recital of these blessings exceptionally clear.[18] He lists the prayers that must be said in the early morning, excluding at this point any mention of the small blessings. Only after this, does he note the talmudic dictum that a person is required to say one hundred blessings each day. Of the one hundred, twenty-two of them are to be said over

early morning activities and these are the small blessings with which we are familiar. The collection begins with Elohai Neshama and includes every small blessing we have so far observed straight through the Yehi Ratzon meditation. Maimonides includes several other blessings in this section such as blessings said on entering the bathroom and on going to bed. He emphatically states that these blessings are not to be said as one, but must be said at the precise time of their respective mitzvot.

> These blessings do not constitute an order of prayer. Rather, each one of them is to be recited over the action to which the blessing corresponds, at the time of the action.[19]

He continues to point out that the blessing is to be said only when the action is actually taken.

> On Yom Kippur and Tisha b'Av, when one does not wash one must not recite the blessing over washing.[20]

So for Maimonides, if you do not wash, you must not recite the blessing over washing, regardless of the rule requiring one hundred blessings daily. There is no doubt about Maimonides' insistence on the use of these blessings in the home, as the living of daily life calls for them. He finally acknowledges the fact that:

> In the majority of our cities, the people are accustomed to saying each blessing, one after the other, in the synagogue, whether or not the blessing is required. This is an error and it is not correct to do so. One should not say any blessing unless it is called for.

So although the saying of these blessings during public prayer may have already been a widespread practice, in the

year 1180, Maimonides puts himself on the record as being one hundred percent against it.

Yet Jacob b. Asher breaks with his usual habit of following the rulings set by Maimonides by overturning the master's decision on this issue.[21] In the Tur's opening comment regarding these blessings, we find the following statement:

> After one puts on tefillin, one should say the blessings over the natural order of the world even though according to the Talmud they are each to be said in their own time.[22]

Apparently, in fourteenth century Spain, the small blessings were not only recited as one, but also they were reserved until after the donning of tefillin, namely, after the beginning of the public morning prayer services.

After quoting the small blessings and the reasons and times for saying them, just as we find them in the Bavli (beginning with Elohai Neshama and continuing straight through to the meditation Yehi Ratzon), Jacob b. Asher identifies two reasons for his deviation from the talmudic instruction. First, ayn ha-yadaim nekiyot, "the hands aren't clean." We have already seen that the issue of properly cleaning the hands prior to saying prayers was important enough to result in a change in the order of prayer. Jacob b. Asher now reiterates the difficulty. Under normal circumstances, the hands would be washed only after the appropriate time for several of the other blessings. Rather than say them with unclean hands, it seemed advisable to postpone

all the small blessings to the time of the synagogue service, by which time all participants would have washed their hands. Second, Jacob b. Asher says that on behalf of those who are unlearned and are not able to recite the blessings themselves, a law was made to say them in the synagogue, so that these people could respond "amen," thereby fulfilling their obligation. He further disagrees with Maimonides by pointing out that the blessings regarding the natural order of the world should be said regardless of whether the appropriate action is taken. For instance, the blessing over the cock-crow is to be recited even if the individual has not heard the cock-crow on a particular morning. However, ben Asher restricts this ruling in the case of blessings over "things from which the individual derives enjoyment." According to him, one does not say blessings over pleasures such as dressing, putting on one's girdle or one's turban, unless one has actually taken the action. It is clear then that by the time of the Tur, the majority of the small blessings had fully passed over into the public morning service. Ben Asher's final comment regarding the omission of blessings over pleasures not enjoyed is probably a concession to those who would have had difficulty reciting these blessings at the synagogue, as opposed to reciting them at home, to avoid the possible accusation that he is condoning the saying of blessings in vain.

By the middle of the fourteenth century, then, the saying of the small blessings related to actions taken in

the morning had become an institutionalized phenomenon. Due to the emphatic concern with cleaning one's hands before pronouncing any blessing, and to the fear that many people were too ignorant to recite the blessings independently in any case, these very private blessings, which in their original usage forced the construction of a personal relationship between each individual and God, were transformed into a catechism recited at the synagogue. The catechism has remained basically unchanged to the present time.

Having clarified the development of this section of blessings as a whole, let us return to a discussion of several blessings which are of some interest in and of themselves.

1) אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצוונו "Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the universe, who crowns Israel with glory."

Although this blessing is found in the text of B. Berachot 60b, the Geonim opposed its recitation in Europe.[23] It is found neither in Natronai's original responsum nor in Amram's quotation of Natronai.[24] The Geonim omitted the blessing on the following basis: the Talmud specifically states that the blessing is to be said "when one wraps his turban around his head." In a land where turbans are not worn, they reasoned, would it not be inappropriate to say the blessing over wrapping a turban? One can readily see how highly concerned the Geonim were with maintaining the relevance of these blessings. Their impact was to be immediate. One took pleasure in a simple act of life, and one

thanked and praised God for having had the opportunity to do so. To say a blessing over an action not taken was unthinkable to them. These were not words to be read from a mass-produced prayerbook, but were a human expression of pleasure received at the hand of God. Therefore, the Geonim omitted this blessing on the grounds that it was irrelevant. Yet, despite these careful strictures, it seems that the prayer was always said in Spain and probably found its way into a number of Babylonian synagogues as well.[25] The subject is not clarified in our extant sources until much later, in a Tosaphot to B. Berachot 60b, which interprets the blessing as being appropriate to the putting on of any head covering. Here the emphasis is placed on the rule that no one should go about without a head covering of some kind. As a result, the blessing appears in all the later prayerbooks and law codes.

2) ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר נתן לשכוי בינה להבחין בין יום ובין לילה׃

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the universe, who has given the cock intelligence to distinguish between day and night."

The talmudic instruction is to recite this blessing upon hearing the cock-crow. Yet the exact meaning of the blessing and its significance remain a puzzle. The earliest reference to the importance of the cock-crow is found in the Mishnah[26] where we learn that: "Every night they cleared away the ashes from the altar at cock-crow or close to it." We know that the Romans divided the night (6:00 P.M. - 6:00 A.M.) into four watches: Evening, Midnight,

Cock-crow and Morning, and that this cleansing of the altar at Cock-crow signified the daily beginning of the service of the Temple. One theory then is that the cock-crow symbolized the beginning of the new day and therefore a new obligation to praise God.[27]

But the word sekhvi seems to have a double meaning. It does not refer only to the animal creature, the rooster, but is a metaphor for wisdom or understanding. In the book of Job 38:36, for instance, we find the word in the following parallelism: "Who put wisdom in the hidden parts; who gave understanding to the mind? (sekhvi). There are several other examples of this usage.[28] So a second theory suggests that the idea behind this entire part of the service is the acknowledgment of the regular occurrence of life's daily phenomena. Upon awakening, it is the wise person, the person with understanding, who expresses a sense of wonder at the order of nature.[29] The rooster's intelligence itself is of nominal importance. It is the wisdom in the rooster's ability to distinguish the night from the day which is critical and which we are to emulate. By regularly taking note of the transition from night to day, human beings, like the rooster, act as witnesses to God's power and providence. Rashi lends his voice in support of this theory, with a slight emendation. "This blessing should be recited even if one did not hear the crowing of the rooster, for it is just an expression of gratitude at enjoying the benefit of light."[30] Perhaps it is this very pleasing explanation of

the difficult phrase which became common, as the blessing itself appears in every available version of the Morning Blessings.

3) מַתִּיר אסורים ... " - "who loosens the bound."

This blessing is found in B. Berachot 60b in the sequence of blessings which reflects one's morning activity from the time of awakening to the time of leaving the home. According to the Bavli, it is to be said when one stretches and sits up. Oddly, it is not found in Natronai's responsum, although it appears in all other texts of the Morning Blessings with the exception of the purely Palestinian ones. The Tur notes that its author saw in the writings of Amram that since one says the blessing זוקף כפופים "who raises those who are bowed down" one should not say מתיר אסורים "who loosens the bound." On this reading, we would understand Amram as deliberately omitting the latter benediction on the grounds that it is superfluous. Yet the Tur itself questions Amram in this regard, since the Talmud gives a separate reason for pronouncing each blessing.[31] In this matter, the Tur is quite correct; B. Berachot 60b tells us to recite the former "when one stands up" and the latter "when one stretches and sits up." In addition, two of the three available manuscripts of Amram's prayerbook include both blessings; only the third does not. Jacob b. Asher must have seen this peculiar third manuscript and was rightly puzzled by it. We also find the following comment by Hai Gaon: "One blesses 'who loosens the bound' when one

stretches out one's hands; however, this reason will not be found in the Talmud."[32] It appears that Hai Gaon was also at a loss to explain Amram's exclusion of this blessing, and so, sought his own rationale to distinguish it from the blessing over standing up.

4) "מזקף כפופים" "who exalts the lowly."

"נותן לעיף כוח" "who gives strength to the weary."

Neither of these blessings is found in the talmudic source of the Morning Blessings, yet they are both included in various later formulations. The blessing "who exalts the lowly" is found in Natronai, Saadia, the early Italian text Seder Hibbur Berachot, and in two manuscripts of Amram. It has been argued that this blessing is of Palestinian origin due to its unusual appearance in the Seder Hibbur Berachot.[33] Proponents of this theory admit that the blessing does appear in Natronai (who was Babylonian) but deny the inference that it must, therefore, be Babylonian, as not all Babylonian synagogues followed strictly Babylonian rites. Some texts of Palestinian origin could easily have found their way into Babylonian rites. This theory ignores the fact that the blessing appears also in two manuscripts of Amram, noting only the one case in which it does not appear. Whatever the case, the blessing is not found in later Ashkenazic rites, including those of Jacob b. Asher and Maimonides, and it is missing also from modern Orthodox prayerbooks.

The blessing "who gives strength to the weary" first

appears in Machzor Vitry,[34] the eleventh century French rite based on the rulings of Rashi. It appears to be of Ashkenazic origin, although it is added to later Sephardic editions.[35] It does not seem to be mentioned by the Rishonim until the Tur, according to which this blessing is not based on a tangible action, as are most of the morning blessings, but speaks in the language of midrash.[36] It is based on the notion that in the evening, tired from working hard all day, one loses one's soul to God. This blessing thanks God for returning the soul in the morning, calm and peaceful. As late as the sixteenth century, Solomon Luria makes a point of omitting both of these blessings on the simple basis that they do not appear in the Talmud.[37]

The blessings discussed in this chapter constitute the complete original text of the morning blessings: informal daily benedictions, recited at home, as they were prompted by human activity. In the following chapters, we will attempt to reconstruct the course by which these simple blessings developed into a formalized public worship service.

Chapter Two

ADDITIONAL TALMUDIC MATERIAL: MENACHOT 43b

(THE LO ASANI BLESSINGS)

We have seen how the text of the blessings found in B. Berachot 60b constitute the basic building block of the Morning Blessings. To this basic structure has been added a second essential unit. As we have it, it is interpolated after the first three blessings, i.e., the blessings over washing the hands, exiting the bathroom, and hearing the cock-crow. Then instead of the fourth blessing from B. Berachot 60b, the blessing over opening the eyes, one finds three additional benedictions derived from B. Menachot 43b:

> A man is required to say three blessings every day:
> (Blessed are you...) who has not made me a gentile.
> (Blessed are you...) who has not made me a woman.
> (Blessed are you...) who has not made me an ignoramus.

This statement is paralleled in the Palestinian Talmud; In Berachot 9:2 (13b) we find the following statement:

> A man is required to say three blessings every day:
> (Blessed are you...) who has made me an Israelite.
> (Blessed are you...) who has not made me an ignoramus.
> (Blessed are you...) who has not made me a woman.

(The common formal element of these blessings is the phrase Lo Asani. Thus, they will be referred to as the Lo Asani blessings.)

We immediately encounter the convoluted problem of

establishing the proper wording for these blessings. The first issue is whether the initial blessing should be stated in the Bavli's negative form, "who has not made me a gentile," or in the parallel Yerushalmi's positive form, "who has made me an Israelite." The overwhelming majority of texts available favor the negative formulation,[1] in part, perhaps, because the Babylonian Talmud thoughtfully provides us with specific reasons for saying the various blessings. It instructs that one says this blessing because "all the gentiles are as nothing." This is based on a biblical verse, Isaiah 40:17, "All nations are as nought in His sight; He accounts them as less than nothing." Some scholars have argued from this that the term goy - "gentile" is surely the original text of the first Lo Asani blessing.[2] The alternative terminology "who made me an Israelite," is considered an early emendation, and even though it appears in both the Palestinian Talmud and the Tosephta, it was not generally accepted.

Several texts demonstrate a second emendation in that they read shelo asani nochri, "who has made me a stranger."[3] Abraham Berliner, the nineteenth century German historian and liturgist, argues that this emendation obscures the original meaning of the term goy which referred to any person who was not a Jew.[4] The introduction of the term nochri - "stranger," was simply, from his point of view, to satisfy various governmental censors and in no way accomplished the goal intended by the original blessing: "who has not made me

a gentile." He points out that in fact the term was "decidedly incorrect on account of the fact that in talmudic language the meaning of the word nochri is'one from outside the land.' This would have the unfortunate result of excluding even a Jew who is from another land."[5] Berliner concludes by recommending the use of the positive form "who has made me a Jew." He suggests that this is advisable because the prayer already appears this way in a number of prayerbooks.[6] Moreover, ideologically, it is the most meaningful option because it implies that Israel was chosen to fulfill a particular and exalted assignment in the world. Finally, he points out that the original negative phraseology is liable now, as it was in the past, to evoke feelings of hatred towards Jews.[7] Despite Berliner's eminently logical argument, the fact remains that the blessing has entered the majority of our prayer texts in the negative form: "who has not made me a gentile."

The second issue regarding the wording of the Lo Asani blessings is over the use of the term bor - "ignoramus." The Bavli text[8] reports a story in which R. Aha b. Jacob once heard his son saying [Blessed are You...] who has not made me an ignoramus. He said to his son: "Must you go so far?" (כולי האי נמי?) The son replied: "What would you have me say?" The father replied: ["Blessed are You...] who has not made me a slave." The son replied: "To say slave would be the same as to say the blessing 'who has not made me a woman.'" (To say both blessings then would

be redundant.) The father countered the objection by saying that: "a woman is more contemptible." On this charming note, the father's suggestion that the term "slave" be used in place of "ignoramus" is tacitly accepted. In the Tur, Jacob b. Asher acknoweldges that the "slave" formulation is to be used as well as the blessing for not being a woman.[9] But he gives us a different reason for the inclusion of both blessings, namely, that the term "woman" refers only to the characteristic of women's not being responsible for positive, time-bound commandments, and not to any other characteristics in which she might resemble a slave. He thus counters the Palestinian Talmud and the Tosephta which display the "ignoramus" formulation on the grounds that "the ignoramus has no fear of sin." The "slave" formula, preferred by the Tur, is inherited via Natronai and Amram, and is found in present day Orthodox texts.

The third issue is in reality hardly an issue at all, traditionally speaking. It deals with the relative merits of including a blessing in our holy liturgy which baldly states "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, for not creating me a woman." Accusations have been freely made in recent years to the effect that there can be no place for women in a religion so frankly anti-female. Whether or not this is so remains to be seen. Actually the issue, and the discomfort surrounding this blessing, is not as recent as we might think. While the service was probably compiled originally with only men in mind,[10] women certainly prayed, often

utilizing the words of the Amidah, and at various times, under diverse historical situations, they became more fully involved in the prayer service. As a result of such participation, a modification of the blessing was introduced at least as early as the first part of the fourteenth century.[11] Abudraham tells us that "Women are accustomed to substitute for the wording 'who has not made me a woman' the form 'who has made me according to His will.'"[12] The statement seems to imply that the blessing was hardly a new form at the time, and may have been used informally for some time prior to this written occurrence. Tradition demanded that no matter how objectionable, the masculine form be retained. Yet a certain accommodation to the needs of women was made by the regular inclusion of this alternative blessing from the time of Abudraham to the present. In addition, several texts included alternative, feminized forms of the other two blessings as well.[13] It is questionable whether the addition of these blessings actually benefited Jewish women or whether in the long run, they have been used as a tool for the further subjugation of women. To the extent that they have furthered the illusion that women play a separate, but equal, role in traditional Judaism, I would argue that they have, in fact, been harmful to the status of Jewish women.

George Jochnowitz has recently published a manuscript[14] which consists of a fourteenth or fifteenth century translation of the Lo Asani blessings into Shuadit,

the language of the Jews of Southern France until the early nineteenth century. This is a most remarkable and unusual text. The English translation is as follows:

> Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of eternity, who did not make me a slave (feminine form only). Blessed are You...who did not make me a Gentile (feminine form only). Blessed are You...who made me a woman.

This is the only extant text of these blessings written exclusively for women and including the positive formulation: "who made me a woman." Where did this text come from, and what is its significance in the development of these blessings? A clue is to be found on the title page of the prayerbook which bears this inscription: "My sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands,"[15] suggesting that the book was a wedding gift to a sister. Jochnowitz is particularly puzzled by the third blessing because he notes that Medieval and Renaissance translations were always done word for word. According to him, "Hebrew word order was followed slavishly even if the result was ungrammatical or meaningless.[16] He then asks how, given that the translation is super-literal, can it possibly say "who made me a woman?" Jochnowitz suggests that there must exist somewhere a Hebrew original as yet undiscovered. He himself puts forth two theories: 1) Perhaps this blessing is an alternative, competing version of the blessing for women "who made me according to His will." It is certainly understandable that women might have been disgruntled with the normative formulation, and this blessing does appear at ap-

proximately the same time. Yet it is strange that the blessing shows up only this once and doubtful that it ever received enough public notice actually to compete with the more familiar version. 2) Jochnowitz hypothesizes that this prayerbook was commissioned as an original by an important and wealthy man who wanted a very special wedding gift for an independent, thinking woman, his sister. This could be the case only if fourteenth to fifteenth century Provence demonstrated remarkable freedom to alter the conventional form of prayer texts. Further, the prayer would then point to an unusual acceptance of women as equal, even if it were solely on the part of a single individual. Regardless of the fact that little can actually be proved by the discovery of this text, it is nevertheless an intriguing and inspiring find.

All questions regarding the original form of Lo Asani blessings aside, it is clear that these kinds of blessings were good candidates to be included in the list of the one hundred required daily blessings. Moreover, it was logical to include them in the preliminary morning prayers along with the other numerous specific praises of God found there. One commentator describes these blessings in the following way: The worshipper thanks God for the privilege of belonging to a community to which a special place has been assigned in the working out of the divine purpose. As to the other two phrases, in the ancient world, "the position of male freemen was so much higher than that of women or slaves,

that this benediction had a natural origin."[17] In fact, the conditions were so natural that the Jewish community was not the only society to note them. Similar blessings have been ascribed to Plato,[18] who is recorded to have expressed his gratitude for three things: that he was a man and not one of the lower animals, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a barbarian.

Something like these blessings definitely appeared in Persian prayer as well.[19] This version praised the Creator for creating the worshippers as Iranians, as sons of the good religion, as freemen not slaves, and as man and not women. Clearly, if criticism is to be made of the Jewish tradition for this example of its abhorrent treatment of women, the criticism must actually be leveled against a much larger portion of the ancient world.

Ismar Elbogen notes that there are those who prefer the theory that these blessings come from a purely Jewish source.[20] That source is the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, which proclaims that the death of Jesus nullfies differences among the believers, namely, differences between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, women and men. Elbogen notes this theory for the record, but dismisses it, in light of the parallel texts from other cultural settings.

Both the Greek and the Persian parallels to the Lo Asani blessings are phrased in a somewhat different manner than their talmudic versions, in that they include both the desired virtue and its opposite in the blessing. For in-

stance, while the Greek version praises God for creating the worshipper male and not female, the talmudic version simply praises God for creating the worshipper male. Interestingly enough, these non-talmudic parallels are quite similar in form to the Palestinian texts we have available, in that they follow the practice of including both elements. Genizah fragments yield the following formulations: "Blessed are You...who has created me as a human being and not a beast, as a man and not a woman, as an Israelite and not a Gentile, circumcised and not uncircumcised, a freeman and not a slave."[21] A Persian Jewish text includes all these elements with the following additions: "masculine and not feminine, pure and not impure."[22] An alternative Persian Jewish text reads: "Blessed are You...who has created the first man in His likeness and in His image."[23] In the early Italian rite Seder Hibbur Berachot, each of these double phrases is included as a separate benediction.[24] Numerous variant texts of these Palestinian blessings are available exhibiting minor changes in order and wording, plus the substantial change that the negative blessings can all be found in positive formulation.[25] Saul Lieberman notes, "The formulation of the morning blessings in the Genizah fragments proves that they are quite late and in no way reliable." As proof for this point, he brings the coupling of the phrase "circumcised and uncircumcised" with "Israelite and not Gentile."[26] Both Lieberman and Jacob Mann, a scholar of the Genizah fragments, argue that this indicates a dis-

tinction made between uncircumcised Christians and circumcised Arabs (Moslems). Joseph Heinemann rejects this argument,[27] responding that the Palestinian texts are characterized by repetition and superfluity.[28] Heinemann concludes that "all the variants, when taken together, testify to the fact that from the very outset there were various traditions as to the wording and style of these benedictions."[29]

There is one final issue to clarify regarding the Lo Asani blessings, in light of the Palestinian texts we have seen. At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed a story about a disagreement between R. Aha b. Jacob and his son over whether to bless "who has not made me an ignoramus" or "who has not made me a slave." The reader will recall that the son uses the former phrase and the father responds "Must you go so far?" In a commentary to the Palestinian Talmud, the point is raised that R. Aha's response is out of proportion to the son's offense.[30] Just what does the father find so objectionable in the blessing "who has not made me an ignoramus?" The text notes that even Rashi saw a difficulty here. Rashi, however, solved the problem by suggesting that the original wording of the blessing was not "ignoramus," but "animal," which, as we have now seen, was common in other Palestinian texts. Rashi suggests that this emendation makes the story much more believable. The commentary concludes that "we have no choice but to believe that his (R. Aha's) objection caught on and the true original text, 'animal' was replaced by 'ignoramus.'" Yet, it

is the term "slave" which has found its way into our liturgy and the Orthodox Jew to this day praises God for not creating him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.

Chapter Three

TORAH BLESSINGS AND STUDY SECTIONS

If the material to be examined in this chapter,[1] the Torah blessings and study sections, comprised a single, discreet section of the preliminary prayer service, some orgnizing principle behind the Morning Blessings rubric might be discernible. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The modern Orthodox text presents these elements by inserting three Torah blessings in the midst of the blessings from B. Berachot 60b. The accompanying chart (see p. 32) makes the resulting structure clear. We have assigned different letters to each type of worship material. Where types are repeated due either to a purposeful reiteration at a later point in the service or to an accidental factor like the insertion of a foreign type, the relevant letter appears anew, with a superscript denoting its frequency in the service thus far. A represents blessings from B. Berachot 60b and its attenda as described thus far. B stands for Torah blessings. C is study passages. And D marks still other sorts of material to be discussed in later chapters. As we would expect, (A) the blessing over washing the hands remains at the beginning of the section as it symbolizes the individual's readiness to begin the morning prayer. It is followed by the blessing to be said on exiting the bathroom, Asher Yatzar, which acknowledges wonder at the functioning of the human body.

It is at this point that (B) the three Torah blessings interrupt the order of prayer.

Following them, we find (C) the insertion of three corresponding short sections of study text. The first is from the Torah, Numbers 6:24-26 (the Priestly Blessing), the second is from the Mishnah, Peah 1:1, and the third is from the Talmud, Shabbat 127a.

Following these sections, the small blessings (A^2) continue uninterrupted from Elohai Neshamah to the Yehi Ratzon. At their conclusion, two independent and lengthy sections of the Morning Blessings (D) appear, comprising almost four pages of text. These will be discussed in later chapters.

Following these, and comprising the final section of the Morning Blessings, is an extended study section (C^2) devoted mainly to readings which describe the sacrificial system of the Temple in Jerusalem. We thus have the following pattern: A, B, C, A^2, D, C^2, which can be summarized in the following chart:

Order of Service	A	B	C	D
1	on washing hands on going to bathroom			
2		three Torah blessings		
3			short, threefold study (Torah, Mishnah, Gemara)	
4	the rest of the talmudic blessings			
5				extraneous material
6			long study material on theme of sacrifice	

How did the study passages and their attendant blessings come to be included among the Morning Blessings and why do they appear in such a confused order?

The notion that Torah study should be included in daily prayer derives from the Talmud's injunction that the individual is to study some portion from each of the three sections of the law (Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud) every day.[2] The following three passages became the institutionalized representatives of the three sections: 1) Numbers 28:1-8,[3] also known as Parashat Tamid, the section regarding the regular sacrifices, a description of the proper way to sacrifice the daily offering; 2) Mishnah Zevachim, chapter 5, also known as Eizehu Mekoman, specific instructions regard-

ing the offering of all the various kinds of sacrifices; 3) The Baraitha of Rabbi Ishmael, which constitutes the introduction to the Sifra (tannaitic commentary on Leviticus) and presents his thirteen hermeneutic rules by which the Torah may be interpreted.

These three units of study, equivalent to C^2, appear as early as Natronai's responsum, where they are prefaced by what are clearly fragments of several Torah blessings.[4] According to Natronai, however, the Torah blessings (B) and these study sections (C^2) are placed both together, so that they conclude the small blessings from B. Berachot 60b (A and A^2) and complete the preliminary morning prayers.[5] The three sections mentioned previously (C), which we now consider to be the representative study sections, do not appear in Natronai at all. Natronai's progression would thus follow logically: A (talmudic blessings; there is no separation into A and A^2); B (Torah blessings); C (study sections regarding sacrifice; there is no division into C and C^2). The extraneous unit (D) is as yet non-existent. Thus, Natronai gives us:

Order of Service	A	B	C
1	All talmudic blessings		
2		Torah blessings	
3			study, largely of sacrificial material

The two passages describing the sacrifices, Parashat Tamid and Eizehu Mekoman, are included in the preliminary prayers in lieu of the actual sacrifice which could no longer be made.[6] Behind this liturgical design lies the well-attested talmudic theology by which reading the order of the sacrifices takes the place of the sacrifices themselves. In B. Taanith 27b, we are told the during a discussion of the daily sacrifices, Abraham was said to ask: "Master of the Universe! This holds good while the Temple remains in being, but when the Temple will no longer stand, what will become of them? [God] replied: Already long ago I provided for them the order of sacrifices in the Torah and whenever they read it I will deem it as if they had offered them before Me and I will grant them pardon for all their iniquities."

A second example of this attitude is found in B. Menachot 110a: "'And in every place offerings are burnt and presented unto My name.' 'In every place! Is this possible?' R. Samuel b. Nachmani said in the name of R. Jonathan, this refers to the scholars who devote themselves to the study of the Torah wherever they are. [God says] I account it unto them as though they presented burnt offerings to My name."[7] Thus, the tradition was established that study of the sacrificial passages should be included in daily prayer. The regular Morning and Afternoon prayer services and the Additional service on the Sabbath, were seen as having been instituted as actual replacements for sacrificial service. Logic thus demanded that study of the sacri-

fices themselves should take place prior to the actual services. As a result, sacrificial passages became a crucial element of the preliminary morning prayer.

The third section, Rabbi Ishmael's discussion of the thirteen rules of interpretation, seems to have been included as the representative passage of the Talmud because it was viewed as the key to productive study of the Torah itself.[8] It is surprising, however, that it was chosen over a text of sacrificial nature. It is also surprising in that only the most serious of scholars can penetrate the text or would be likely to use it as a tool in more serious study. Abraham Berliner suggests that perhaps, even at this early date, it was considered a valuable practice just to recite talmudic passages by rote, regardless of whether the worshipper comprehends the meaning of the passage.[9]

In any case, these three texts (Parashat Tamid, izehu Mekoman, and Rabbi Ishmael's Thirteen Principles) clearly comprise the original study section of the Morning Blessings. Taken together with the Torah blessings, this act of study constituted the final element in the required preliminaries to the regular morning prayer service.

Before continuing to investigate the structural development of the study sections (C and C^2), it will prove convenient to discuss briefly the intention and content of the Torah blessings (B) themselves. In B. Berachot 11b, we find the following instruction given by Rab Judah in the name of Samuel: "If one rose early to study [the Torah] be-

fore he had recited the Sh'ma, he must say a benediction [over the study.][10] As one of the joys human beings experience in this world, Torah study is preceded by a blessing. But which study texts command such a blessing? R. Huna states that written Torah requires a benediction; but Midrash does not. R. Eleazar says that both of these require a blessing, but that Mishnah does not. R. Jochanon says that even the Mishnah requires a blessing, but the Talmud does not. Raba concludes that it is necessary to say a blessing over the Talmud as well. Thus:

	Written Torah	Midrash	Mishnah	Talmud
Huna	X			
Eleazar	X	X		
Jochanon	X	X	X	
Raba	X	X	X	X

One can readily see how the opinions in this sugya are structured in a culminating fashion so as to conclude with the view that becomes dominant. At any rate, the issue recurs several times in later literature,[11] so that we find a constant stress on the critical importance of reciting the blessings before study of any kind.

Jacob b. Asher is so concerned about the correct use of the Torah blessings that he includes the following story in his code of law:

> Why are the great scholars unable to make great scholars out of their children?12 Ravina says: "because they are not careful about blessing the Torah first."

> Rav Yehudah said, "What is the meaning of this verse: Who is the wise man who built this and of whom the mouth of God speaks and will say to what it is due that the earth is lost?" This question was asked of the wise men, the prophets, and the angels and no one knew the answer, until the Holy One, Blessed be He, Himself, explained the verse saying: And God said "Do not abandon My Torah which I have given to you. You do not listen to My voice nor hearken to it." What do these phrases mean? Rab Yehudah said: "It means that one did not recite a blessing before studying Torah."

This story clearly illustrates that the Torah blessings themselves are viewed as a critical element in the commandment to study each day.

This very B. Berachot 11b text continues with the three blessings to be recited over Torah study, and they are identical to the three found in our present day text: 1) Praised are You...who has commanded us to study Torah (...la'asok b'divrei Torah). 2) Make pleasant, therefore, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, the words of Thy Torah in our mouth and in the mouth of Thy people the house of Israel, so that we with our offspring and the offspring of Thy people the house of Israel may all know Thy name and study Thy Torah. Blessed are Thou, O Lord, who teachest Torah to Thy people Israel (Ha'arev na).[13] 3) Blessed are Thou...who hast chosen us from all the nations and given us Thy Torah. Blessed are Thou O Lord, giver of the Torah (Natan ha-Torah). Rav Huna concluded by saying: "This is the finest of the benedictions. Therefore let us say all of them." And so we have, right up to the present day.

There exist quite a number of different versions of

the Torah blessing theme, some from different rites, some more poetic than others.[14] From this, Joseph Heinemann concludes that Torah blessings are similar to all private, or non-statutory prayer. The lack of normative uniformity manifests itself in substitutions of long forms for short ones, various combinations of separate benedictions, the inclusion of double eulogies, and a frequent absence of God's kingship in the opening phrase. He further notes that Torah blessings perform a double function in the liturgy. As we know, they are recited as private prayer in the morning before the daily Torah study, but they are recited publicly as well, both before and after the Torah reading itself. Regarding these different usages, Heinemann states, "Almost all of the formal deviations which we noted above occur in the versions which are part of the Morning Blessings, and not in those versions which are recited publicly before and after the Torah reading."[15] So the Torah benedictions belonging to the Morning Blessings, although still quite important, as the rabbis have emphasized, yet maintain the aura of flexibility inherent generally in the preliminary prayer service throughout most of its development.

Let us review now what we know about the structure of the study sections and Torah blessings in the preliminary morning service. In the Modern Orthodox service we find the three Torah blessings (B) inserted into the small blessings of B. Berachot 60b (A and A^2), followed by three short study sections of unknown origin (C). (That is -- A,B,C,

A^2).) Much later, as the final block of the preliminary service, we find a long study section (C^2) which includes the two texts describing sacrificial offerings and the Baraita of R. Ishmael, all three of which are found as early as Natronai.[16] (That is -- A,B,C,A^2--C^2.) However, in Natronai, they represent the only study section and are preceded at this point by the Torah blessings (that is -- A,B,C, simply). The same structure is found in Seder Rav Amram (SRA). Even though two SRA manuscripts include the short study section (C) in addition to the long one (C^2), they are both still found in one unified rubric, together making up the conclusion of the preliminary morning service. (That is -- A,B,[C and C^2]=ABC, still, with C merely expanded.) In these manuscripts it is noted that "These passages may be later additions as they are not found in Natronai,"[17] so it remains unclear at what stage the short study section came into general use.

It is evident from Natronai's responsum that the original custom was to say the Torah blessings toward the end of the preliminary morning service in order that one might then fulfill the requirement to study each day right then and there, and as a result, be more worthy to present oneself before God in the morning worship service. This study consisted of the two passages on sacrifice and the R. Ishmael passage. (That is -- A,B,C.) Elbogen argues that the first change to occur was the repositioning of the Torah blessings as an early part of the Morning Blessings

(That is -- A,B,A^2, -- C). The earliest indication of this change is found in the Tur, so it seems likely that, in the main, Jacob b. Asher is responsible for our double study sections. He states that the traditional order (Natronai's) was difficult for him because he was reciting "verses" before the Torah blessings.[18] It is unclear here what verses he is referring to. If he means our short study section, it would follow that somehow this unit had already been moved to the beginning of the Morning Blessings, as we now have it. Alternatively, he might be referring to any of the prayer texts which are drawn from B. Berachot 60b (A), though why he would call them verses and assume they required a Torah blessing is unclear. More probably then he already had some Torah passages inserted earlier in his service, probably our short study section, and decided to move the Torah blessings so that they would introduce this study unit. Thus, he already had ACA^2BC^2, and decided to move B back until he had $ABCA^2C^2$. He continues to state that "I myself enjoy immediately after saying Elohai Neshamah to recite the Torah blessing and to say after it the Priestly Blessing and then the order of prayer."[19] He does not move or exclude the long study section, but maintains it as the concluding element of the Morning Blessings.

From his stipulation of "The Priestly Blessing," it is unclear whether he includes all three parts of the short study section here or only the first part, the Priestly Blessing itself. Our discussion of this further complica-

tion will be enhanced if we label these three units of C as C^B (Bible component, The Priestly Blessing), C^M (Mishnah component, Peah 1:1) and C^T (Talmud component, Shabbat 127a). The question is (as we have said) whether Jacob b. Asher's specification of C^B in his prayers implies that he did not know C^M and C^T. This is Elbogen's opinion.

So the way it appeared to the average person who observed the practice of the Tur, was that the Torah blessings (B) were recited in the beginning of the Morning Blessings, while the actual text (C^2) itself was not studied until the very end. In other words, the Tur's inclusion of C^B alone did not create the impression that a unit C existed at all. Uncomfortable with this gap, someone after the Tur introduced the short study sections of C^M and C^T after C^B, so that the Torah blessings would not seem to be an "unfulfilled blessing" (berachah le'vatalah). The Torah blessings would then cover all texts studied within the Morning Blessings, including the long study section (C^2) at the end.

Therefore, we see the structure we have today, confusing on the surface, but perfectly sensible underneath: Torah blessings (B) towards the beginning of the preliminary prayer service, followed by short selections from Torah (C^B), Mishnah (C^M), and Talmud (C^T -- all together equals C). Then a long study section (C^2) at the end of the Morning Blessings as a whole, also including selections from Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud, but primarily descriptions of the sacrificial service. Elbogen notes that this structure

left the door open to free expansion of the later study section, and indeed, numerous texts have been appended to it.[20]

Abraham Berliner concurs with Elbogen's theory to a large extent,[21] but he points to the Tosaphot commentary to B.Berachot 11b, which tells us that all three contents of the short study section (C^B, C^M, C^T) were already at that time fundamental to the Sephardic custom of Northern France. In it, Rabbenu Tam instructs us explicitly that the French have the custom of reciting the Priestly Blessing (C^B), Peah 1:1 (C^M), and Shabbat 127a (C^T), first thing in the morning, and therefore had to include a Torah blessing prior to the recital because they followed the rule established in the Palestinian Talmud that one must say a Torah blessing before early morning study. Rabbenu Tam, however, disagrees with this custom, insisting that the Torah blessing one recites during the regular morning service applies to any text studied from that time until the morning service of the following day. His opinion then is that the study section should be included, but that there is no need at all for an early morning Torah blessing.

Thus, Elbogen cannot be correct. All of C (C^B, C^M and C^T) was known both to Rabbenu Tam and his anonymous opponents, and they differed only on the necessity of including a Torah blessing (B) before them. Jacob b. Asher probably had all three units also, but saw fit to designate C^B alone, since that was the relative unit according to which he described the placement of B in his system, i.e,

before C^B.

In his sixteenth century responsum on the order of prayer, Solomon Luria notes that while ancient custom placed the Torah blessing before the sacrificial passages (i.e., the practice of Rabbenu Tam), the Tur placed it immediately after Elohai Neshamah so as to precede the scriptural verse of the Priestly Blessing.[22] He makes no mention here of the Mishnah or Talmud passages (C^M and C^T) we now include following the Priestly Blessing, yet he includes at least the Mishnah passage, but not the Talmud passage in his later, extended study section. If he omitted C^T, he probably did so because A^2 was talmudic, and he treated it as if it fulfilled the requirement to study Talmud. Mishnah Peah 1:1 and B. Shabbat 127a now figure prominently in virtually all texts of the preliminary morning service. The content of these passages, including instructions in morality such as the necessity to be hospitable to travelers, visit the sick, honor one's parents, practice loving deeds,[23] as well as practicing charity, making peace between man and his fellow, and studying Torah,[24] appeal to the modern person's need for religion to supply moral values. This is so much the case that additional moral instructions have been added to these sections in the prayerbook which do not appear in the original texts themselves. These instructions include "dowering the bride, attending the dead to the grave, and devotion in prayer." One commentator notes that "these were duties the performance of which became ingrained in the

Jewish character. No small share in producing this result may be attributed to the prominence given to the subject in this passage of the early morning prayer."[25] Perhaps then it is due to the positive chord these passages struck in the hearts of the Jewish people themselves which led to their regular inclusion in the preliminary morning service. As a result, the confusing practice of including two study sections and one section of Torah blessings in early morning prayer has become traditional custom.

Chapter Four

THE SH'MA AND ITS SETTING

The fourth main element in the preliminary morning service is doubtlessly one of the most mysterious and romantic of all liturgical passages.[1] It consists of an unprecedented special recitation of the first portion of the Sh'ma (Deut. 6:4-9) in an impressive setting. The Sh'ma is surrounded by five beautiful prayer texts drawn mainly from biblical and rabbinic literature. The setting begins with the following quixotic introduction: "Man should ever be God-fearing in private as well as in public. He should acknowledge the truth, and speak the truth in his heart. Let him rise early and say." There is a controversy over whether the exhortative nature of this opening portion warrants its inclusion in the liturgy as part of the prayer proper. As a result, the Ashkenazim have developed the custom of printing it in small letters.

Following this introduction is a highly moving text drawn from b. Yoma 87b, Daniel 9:18, and Ecclesiastes 3:19, in which God's absolute perfection and power are acknowledged, "Master of all worlds." In addition, the immensity of human humility in the face of God's wonder is carefully depicted. The bulk of this prayer comes from the Yoma passage, which is actually a collection of confessions an individual might say after the Amidah prayer. No less than six variations on the same theme are collected here. Our

particular text also finds a place in the concluding service for the Day of Atonement, where its self-castigating character is especially appropriate.[2]

The next paragraph, "Nevertheless, we are Your People," is drawn from midrashic text[3] and asserts that regardless of the worthless nature of human existence, the Jewish people bears a special covenantal relationship to God, which gives its members both a higher purpose and a higher status than any other creature. God's promises to Abraham are invoked and the line of tradition is drawn through Isaac and Jacob to the entire community of Israel.[4] The passage concludes with an exhilarating affirmation of the value and joy inherent in the special destiny of the people Israel. This entirely negates the previous passage's cynicism and despair, and leads into the Sh'ma, the classic proclamation of God's unity and sovereignty.

Finally, two passages function together to provide a conclusion for the setting. The first, "You were the same before the world was created," is based on portions of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrash Yalkut.[5] It glorifies God's unchanging nature and prevails upon God to redeem human existence. One commentator views the prayer as the pleading of the angels on behalf of humankind:

> When God beholds the peoples of the earth indulging in pleasures while the sanctuary is destroyed, He is ready to destroy the whole world. But as soon as Israel breaks forth with the proclamation of the Sh'ma, the angels respond with [the prayer] "You were the same before the world was created." This pleases God and he decides to retain the creation of

> the world for the sake of Israel's Sh'ma and the angels' hymn.[6]

The concluding section, "You, O Lord our God, are in heaven and on earth," consists of an array of biblical metaphors,[7] all of which look towards the coming of the messianic age. This paragraph is somewhat extraordinary due to its inclusion of the problematic phrase "Our Father who art in heaven." This is the only occurrence of this exact expression in the prayerbook, with the single exception of the Sephardic liturgy for the High Holy Days.[8] There is, however, one mishnaic source in which this phrase appears, Avot 5:23:

> Judah b. Tema said, Be strong as the leopard, and light as the eagle and fleet as the deer and mighty as the lion, to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven.

Although the phrase appears several times in the talmudic period,[9] it becomes frequent only in the poetical additions to the liturgy in the Middle Ages.[10] The following messianic quotation from Zephaniah 3:20 concludes the paragraph:

> At that time I will bring you home; at that time I will gather you; indeed I will grant you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before their very eyes.

This passage ends an exceptionally well-crafted and unusually powerful section within the preliminary morning service. There is no doubt that the entire text is structured around the recitation of the Sh'ma, which is its focal point. The question is: What is the Sh'ma doing in the preliminary morning service to begin with? We know that the recital of the Sh'ma twice daily, morning and evening,

was already an established custom in the first century, C.E. Its significance is due to two factors: 1) it is a solemn theological expression of monotheism as opposed to dualism, trinitarianism, and polytheism; and 2) the first section of the Sh'ma is designated in the Talmud as the formula by which one accepts the burden of "the yoke of heaven."[11] The Talmud records its recital only twice daily, in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:7 which commands that it be said on lying down and on rising up. Nowhere is there to be found a reference to its recital at any other time. So the question remains as to why it appears here in the Morning Blessings.

Ismar Elbogen tells us that this entire section of prayer is actually quoted from the tenth century midrashic collection Tanna d'bei Eliyahu.[12] There, the text includes the following interesting preface as well as an unusual version of the introductory statement to the Sh'ma, "Man should ever be God fearing."

> Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine to the land, not a famine of bread...but of hearing the words of the Lord. In musing thus, a man will feel awe of Heaven at all times, will acknowledge the truth of Torah, and will speak its truth in his heart. He will rise early each and every day and say:13 (The text continues at this point with the Sh'ma.)

One notices immediately that the latter statement does not include any phrase referring to the acknowledgment of the truth of Torah in public as well as in private. It speaks of acknowledging God in one's heart only, namely, in

private. Elbogen entertains the idea that this emphasis on private prayer combined with the prefatory comment referring to a time when there is a shortage of Torah learning, implies that the early morning Sh'ma and these surrounding prayers entered the liturgy during a time of persecution when the open profession of Judaism was disallowed.[14] It is possible that these prayers were added to this preliminary section so that government officials would not take note of them. The Jews then could maintain an appearance of abiding by governmental law without giving up cherished expressions of belief. However, Elbogen summarily dismisses this possibility and presents an alternative solution. He theorizes simply that so much additional material had already found its way into the preliminary morning prayer that a danger existed of actually not getting to the recital of the Sh'ma in the regular morning prayer service until after the appropriate time for its recital. The Sh'ma was therefore added to the Morning Blessings in order to avoid such a circumstance. As evidence for this theory, Elbogen brings an injunction found in Sefer Ha'ittim. In a discussion of Sabbath morning ritual, it is noted that one should not read over the weekly Torah portion at home before going to synagogue, in order not to delay the time of reciting the Sh'ma.[15] Just why Elbogen prefers this explanation, and in fact treats the persecution theory with some derision, is unclear. Yet he strongly casts his vote on the side of the time issue.

However, another authority on the subject, Jacob Mann, has constructed a wide-ranging theory of changes made in the liturgy as a whole due to religious persecution. He argues that such persecutions "naturally aimed first of all at the divine service of the synagogue,"[16] due to the fact that a number of ideas which were publicly proclaimed in the synagogue on a regular basis were "construed by the ruling religions as challenges to their own teachings."[17] These changes often remained as part of the synagogue service even after the emergency of the persecution had passed. According to him, the persecutions in question occurred in both Babylonia and Palestine at precisely the same time that the liturgy was coming into its more or less fixed form. In Palestine, Christianity was the ruling religion under the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine the Great (312 C.E.) until the Moslem conquest of Palestine (634-640 C.E.). In Babylonia, the persecution began at the end of the reign of Yezdegard II (454-455 C.E.) and lasted until the arrival of the Arabs (637 C.E.).[18] Here the ruling religious power was Zoroastrianism. Its fundamental tenet of dualism came into direct conflict with the intense devotion of Israel to the concept of God's unity. It is this very concept, of course, which is the content of our liturgical interest, the early morning Sh'ma. Mann pauses at this point to note the fact that many consider this theory little more than a convenient after-the-fact explanation of texts which are difficult to understand. Against such ob-

jections, he states that "this general and oft repeated tradition of changes in the liturgy because of religious persecutions seems to be well grounded and it would be hypercritical to dismiss it altogether as unhistorical."[19] Having thus dealt with the obvious objection, Mann continues to detail his case for the institution of the early morning Sh'ma as the result of persecution. He argues that "the whole setting of this section suggests a time of religious tribulation and trial when the declaration of the unity of God could only be made in secret, namely, in the home of the individual Jew and not at public worship."[20] He further notes the significance of the allusion to God's action of sanctifying His name in public through the use of miracles, which is highly praised, with the great sacrifice a Jew makes, a mere human being, when called upon to take the much simpler action of praising God's name in public.

Mann's main proof for this theory is found in a passage drawn from the thirteenth century work Shibbole Ha-Leket. There we find an argument over whether the term "in private" should be included in the introductory passage "Man should ever be God fearing." Rabbenu Shlomo (i.e., Rashi) is recalled as insisting that it is inappropriate to include it, because it implies that one does not have the responsibility of declaring God's unity in public, which is to his mind vastly more important.[21] In contrast, an anonymous Gaon is quoted as saying that the phrase means "even in private, in addition to in public." There-

fore, a man is required to say the truth even in his heart.[22] The author then quotes his brother, R. Benjamin b. Abraham, as having the final word on the subject. He reports that:

> My brother Benjamin says it is worthwhile to say "in secret" because as the text appears in Tanna de'bei Eliyahu, it was referring to a generation of persecution where they decreed that the Sh'ma could not be recited, so the people could not do so, publicly. Therefore, they took the yoke of the mitzvot upon themselves in secret. And he said: Blessed is the one who praises His name frequently because during persecutions His name is not praised frequently and only in private. Therefore, we should continue reciting the original text to this very day.23

Mann is quite content to let his case rest on the basis of this thirteenth century source which labels the early morning Sh'ma and its setting as the direct result of religious persecution.

Mann then asks the next logical question: What is the correct time and place of the persecution? He reports the findings of Krauss who argues that the Tanna de'bei Eliyahu is a product of Byzantium and that the religious persecution alluded to in it is that of "a Leo the Isaurian (723) and a Basileos (868)."[24] Mann notes that this is simply impossible for the following three reasons: 1) The entire passage from "Man should ever be God fearing" to Zephanish 3:20 is entirely missing in the Palestinian ritual but does appear in Babylonian ritual. How would it be that the Babylonian ritual, which surely developed at a greater distance from these persecutions than did the Palestinian ritual, would yet be more affected by them? 2) The year 868 is much too late a date. Amram, Gaon from

862-80 (sic. Mann's dates) already includes the whole passage as a regular part of his prayerbook. Amram is now more generally dated from 857-870. But Mann's argument is only strengthened by the earlier terminus ad quem. Mann argues that a midrashic passage, supposedly written in Byzantium, could not possibly have been incorporated into Geonic ritual material so quickly. 3) A close look at Tanna de'bei Eliyahu shows that the author lived for a considerable time in Babylonia and that a good deal of his work depicted the conditions of Jewish life in that country.

Mann concludes that it would be only a matter of logical assumption to say that Tanna de'bei Eliyahu was composed not long after the fanatical outbreak against the Jews in Babylon and Persia under Yezdegard II (454-5). At this time, it is absolutely certain that the saying of the Sh'ma was forbidden as a challenge to Zoroastrianism. The Jewish authorities first insisted that the people recite the Sh'ma privately in their homes before proceeding to the synagogue for the morning service.[25] Eventually, the whole beautiful setting for the Sh'ma was composed so that it functioned as a camouflage for the offensive words of the Sh'ma, and the piece was inserted as a whole into the least suspect part of public prayer, the preliminary morning service. It was unlikely that even a highly inquisitive representative of the hostile government would be canny enough to scrutinize the least important portion of the prayer service in search of the most important religious statement made by

the Jewish people.

The author of Tanna de'bei Eliyahu quotes the whole setting as an anonymous composition of the Babylonian rabbis of the time. Yet it was never included in the Palestinian ritual in this form, although the first verse of the Sh'ma does occur there towards the end of the preliminary morning service. Mann concludes that this appearance of the Sh'ma probably represents a later compromise with the Babylonian custom. So concludes the dramatic tale behind the theory that the early morning Sh'ma and its setting are the result of religious persecution. Whether or not the case is more convincing than Elbogen's simpler assertion that its inclusion reflected a concern over the time element involved, it is surely a more appealing and satisfying account, one that at least this proud member of the Jewish people finds peculiarly moving.

Chapter Five

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE MORNING BLESSINGS

The four main building blocks of the Morning Blessings are now in place. As described previously, these elements reveal a clear structuring of materials which were deemed valuable enough to be included in daily liturgy. We now have before us a pattern of blessings and prayers which appear in sensible order, certain convolutions due to quirks of historical development aside. However, if an individual with this information in hand turned to the preliminary morning service in a traditional prayerbook, this order would not be readily apparent at all. Rather, the text would appear to be a jumbled mass of material strung together in no particular order. The fact is that as the Morning Blessings developed, they became a repository for any and all texts which seemed to be important, but which claimed no specific place of their own anywhere in the liturgical order. The preliminary morning service, as flexible as it was, provided the perfect context for the inclusion of various liturgical strays. As a result, five additional sections are now customarily found in the Morning Blessings and their insertion functions so as to obscure the structure apparent when the text is reduced to its four main elements. These are the five sections in question: 1) Prayer upon entering the synagogue; 2) Prayers surrounding the donning of tallit and tefillin; 3) Hymns; 4) A recital of the Bind-

ing of Isaac with an accompanying setting; 5) Various meditations of the "May it be Your Will" form. In this chapter, I will discuss the inclusion, placement, and development of each of these sections, according to the order in which they appear in the completed text of the Morning Blessings.

Upon opening most any traditional prayerbook to the Morning Blessings, one would first find a short paragraph to be said on entering the synagogue. The paragraph is not a unified whole, but is a weaving together of various biblical texts, beginning with the Ma Tovu, Numbers 24:5, from which the section takes its name. The familiar text reads: "How fair are your tents O Jacob, Your dwelling places, O Israel." Following this, one would find Psalms 5:8, 26:8, 95:6 and 69:14. A fuller collection of texts is found in some prayerbooks.[1] These sections were accepted into the tradition slowly; their use became customary, and eventually they entered the fixed liturgy of the prayerbook.[2]

The reason generally given for reciting Ma Tovu on entering the synagogue is that the "tents of Jacob" metaphorically refer to houses of worship, and the "dwelling places" to houses of study.[3] Yet there has always been some controversy over the use of this text because in its original context, the phrase is uttered by Balaam, the non-Jewish prophet called upon to prophesy against Israel. The Talmud tells us,

> from the blessings of that wicked man you may learn his intentions [every blessing is the reverse of the curse he wished to utter]. Thus he wished to curse them that the Israelites should possess no synagogues or schoolhouses, [for he said] "How fair are your tents O Jacob" that the Shechinah should not rest upon them and "thy tabernacles, O Israel," that their kingdom should not endure.4

As a result, the verse has been omitted from several traditions.[5] Solomon Luria, for example, notes that "In the morning when I come to the synagogue, I start praying with the verse Va'ani b'rov chasdecha, omitting Ma Tovu because these are the words of Balaam, the idol worshipper, whose intent was to curse the Israelites, not to bless them."[6]

This second verse, Va'ani b'rov chasdecha (Psalm 5:8) is found in every available text of the Morning Blessings due to a very important service it provided. The verse contains exactly ten words and as a result, could be used to count the number of men who had to be present in the synagogue before prayer could begin. Rather than point to each man as he was counted, thereby possibly pointing out that man's presence to evil spirits, the counting could take place indirectly through the recital of this verse.[7] In Seder Rav Amram Gaon, these two verses are found not at the beginning of the Morning Blessings, but in a section entitled "Individual Blessings," with a notation that they are to be said upon entering the synagogue. Eventually, they were simply printed in their appropriate place within the liturgy.[8] The final verse in the paragraph, Psalm 69:14, uses the difficult phrase va'ani tefilati lecha,

adonai, eyt ratzon which is generally translated as "I offer my prayer to You, O Lord, at a time of grace." Yet the meaning of the term ayt ratzon was obscure enough to have been commented upon in the Talmud: "What does it mean...'at a time of grace?' What is a time of grace? The time during which the community gathers together to pray."[9] The value of the community gathering together to pray is emphasized throughout this opening pastiche of verses and their recital provides an effective ritualization of the individual's transition from the secular world into the presence of God. Thus, they became fixed as the opening paragraph of the Morning Blessings.

In most prayerbooks, this opening paragraph is immediately followed by the prayer concerning the donning of tallit and tefillin. In some rituals, however, the tallit and tefillin are not put on until the conclusion of the Morning Blessings, just prior to the Verses of Song (Pesuke de Zimra).[10] This testifies to the original private nature of the contents of the Morning Blessings. However, as the blessings themselves grew into an enlarged preliminary service, most traditions came to regard it as more akin to public worship. As a result, the tallit and tefillin tend to be worn throughout the Morning Blessings.

The blessings over putting on tallit and tefillin are found in the Talmud. Listed in B. Berachot 60b as belonging to the small blessings, these benedictions have remained virtually unchanged from the time of Natronai's

responsum to the present day. However, these blessings have been fitted into a much larger setting of meditations which now surround the actions of putting on the tallit and tefillin. The setting opens with Psalms 104:1-2 and continues with a personal statement of intention to fulfill the commandment regarding the fringes, which includes references to the biblical injunctions themselves. Then follows the blessing over the tallit, Psalm 36:8-11, and a short prayer asking that the fulfillment of this commandment be considered in God's eyes as the fulfillment of all the six hundred and thirteen commandments required of a man. The setting for putting on the tefillin is somewhat more elaborate. A lengthy meditation, Hineni Muchan, is said to be derived from the prayerbook of Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (1555-1630).[11] It contains the thought that by wearing the tefillin on the head and near the heart we are made conscious of our duty to utilize both our thoughts and our emotions to serve God. Then follow the blessings on putting on the tefillin as well as three personal meditations which include several biblical verses.[12] The setting concludes with a long quotation from Exodus, Chapter 13:1-16, which makes several references to the notion of placing signs on the hand and between the eyes as symbolic reminders of God's commandments.

The personal meditations which dominate this section of the service seem to be the result of a kabbalistic influence.[13] The meditations may reflect a Lurianic custom of

reciting a certain mystical formula before carrying out any good deed.[14] Kabbalistic thought was based on the idea that the messianic age could only be brought about by the unification of the various parts of the divine being. It is the good deeds of human beings which have the power to bring about this divine harmony. As a result, the custom developed of expressing the desire for such unification verbally, prior to the fulfillment of all commandments. The formula used in this practice occurs no earlier than the sixteenth century and reads: "For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His Shechinah..." the individual undertakes the commandment. The formula was eventually added to and modified in various ways. One later version reads: "Behold, I perform this mitzvah, in fear and love, love and fear, through the hidden and concealed one, in the name of all Israel and in order to give satisfaction to my Creator and Maker."[15] There is indeed a certain similarity between the stated intention in these kabbalistic formulae and the statement of intention in the meditations over the acts of tallit and tefillin. It is not impossible that these prayers were based on the notion of unification the Kabbalists had in mind. And yet the connection seems tenuous to me. The human desire to further ritualize an action taken in fulfillment of a religious commandment would be sufficient motivation for the development of the meditations in this setting. While the kabbalistic link is a feasible explanation for the origin of

these meditations, it has not been shown convincingly that the meditations are actually Lurianic prayers.

Hymns have been a frequent element in all kinds of liturgical works throughout history. The human impulse towards song has often led to supremely stirring and well remembered experiences of prayer. Given a framework for prayer as flexible as the Morning Blessings, it stands to reason that eventually musical settings would be included in it. In fact, two hymns have entered the text, placed immediately after the donning of the tallit and tefillin. In keeping with the main thrust of the Morning Blessings, both of these hymns, Adon Olam and Yidgal, are essentially praises of God's power and providence.

The authorship and date of composition of Adon Olam are unknown, but it first appears in a prayerbook from Cracow in the year 1578.[16] Due to its high quality, poetic power, and deeply religious nature, Adon Olam is often attributed to the foremost religious poet of the Middle Ages, Solomon ibn Gabirol,[17] yet there is no proof that he actually composed this piece. In content, Adon Olam represents a Jewish polemic against Aristotle, arguing that the world was created, and is not eternal in nature, and that God alone is eternal. Due to the final line, "Into His hand I commit my spirit," the poem was often considered a night prayer and came to be included in the bed-time Sh'ma.[18] A tradition of reciting this poem on the death bed has developed as well.[19] However, before the era of printing, this

hymn was sung only on Yom Kippur night and, in some places, notably the city of Worms, that is the custom to this day. In Morocco, the unusual custom has developed of singing this prayer at weddings, just prior to the entrance of the bride.[20] Abraham Berliner notes that Ashkenazic congregations were happy to include in their traditions elements which came to them by way of Palestine and Italy. In particular, poems from the Golden Age in Spain, distinguished by their beauty, achieved places in the liturgy through this process. From the time of printed prayerbooks to the present, Adon Olam has been a normative element in all prayer services.

Likewise, the hymn Yigdal has become a regular part of the daily service in Ashkenazic congregations.[21] While this piece is based on the thirteen principles of Maimonides, there is no truth to the assertion that Rambam himself composed the hymn. Evidence points to the theory that Yigdal was composed in Italy during the fourteenth century. At this time a circle of Jewish philosophers in Rome were deeply involved in spreading the teachings of Rambam. One custom book, published in the year 1383, notes that Yigdal was written by a Daniel ben Yehudan Dayan from Rome, the grandfather of the editor of the prayerbook.[22] This authorship has been widely accepted, though based on the single piece of evidence available.[23] The history of the Yigdal begins with a commentary by Maimonides on the following mishnah:

> All Israel have a portion in the world to come... and these are they who have no share in the world to come: he that says there is no resurrection of the dead...and he that says the law is not from heaven, and a heretic. (apikorus)24

The final term in this mishnah, apikorus, is ambiguous. It has often been translated as "Epicurean" and thereby understood as one who subscribes to the principles of the philosophical system of Epicurus, which denies that God concerns Himself with the realm of human beings.[25] Dissatisfied with these interpretations, Maimonides theorized that apikorus refers to those who do not believe in the fundamental principles of the Torah. He then takes the opportunity to describe thirteen such principles, which are the basis for the later composition we know as Yigdal.[26] It is through this poetic form that Maimonides's principles have become "nothing less than the very yardstick by which modern Jewish 'orthodoxy' tries to define itself vis-a-vis the 'dissenting views.'"[27] This is a most unusual happenstance, given Judaism's tendency to shy away from insisting upon any kind of creedal statement or dogma. Yet due to Rambam's towering stature in Jewish history and the popularity of the poetic setting Yigdal, the thirteen principles have come to be viewed in this way. It is imperative to emphasize then the fact that "Maimonides's list of the fundamental principles of Judaism was not universally accepted either in his time or in succeeding generations."[28] There was no supreme ecclesiastical body prepared to develop and enforce adherence to a creedal statement. These principles reflect

the arbitrary opinions of one man. Moreover, Jakob Petuchowski, in his study of liturgical poetry, notes that both the mishnah on which Rambam based his principles, as well as the principles themselves "can be be understood in terms of a Jewish self-definition vis-a-vis the competing claims of both Christianity and Islam."[29] These principles then are more of a religious polemic reflecting the predominant views of a particular era than an objective statement of the principles fundamental to Judaism. As a statement of necessary Jewish belief, Yigdal fails us due to its parochial, time bound nature.[30] But as a stirring, poetic reminder of Jewish history and Jewish independence in the face of conflicting dominant cultures, the Yigdal hymn ranks among the best liturgy the prayerbook offers.

Following these two hymns, the preliminary morning service continues with the essence of morning prayer, the small blessings. As noted earlier, this section concludes with a meditation utilizing the Yehi Ratzon ("May it be Your Will") formula which is taken directly from B. Berachot 60b. The fourth additional element in the Morning Blessings is a second "May it be Your Will" meditation inserted at this point. This meditation is talmudic and appears in B. Berachot 16b as part of a collection of six such meditations. These prayers are actually the personal reflections of individual rabbis to be said at the conclusion of the Amidah. It is unclear why this particular meditation is inserted at this point. It may be nothing more than a simple associa-

tion of prayers in the "May it be Your Will" form.[31] Following the "more is better" theory of liturgical development, prayerbook editors may have seen fit to include two such meditations instead of one. But why this particular prayer? The text is attributed to Rabbi Judah the Prince and reads as follows:

> May it be Your will, O Lord our God, and God of our Fathers, to deliver us from impudence and from the impudent, from an evil man, from evil hap, from the evil impulse, from an evil companion, from an evil neighbor, and from the destructive Accusor, from a hard lawsuit and from a hard opponent, whether he is a son of the covenant or not a son of the covenant.32

The talmudic text continues, noting that "thus did he pray although guards were appointed to protect Rabbi." This particular meditation may have been included due to the illustrious reputation of Judah the Prince himself. It has been suggested, however, that the guards mentioned here were appointed to protect Rabbi from persecution by the Roman government. In this case, the import of the phrase "whether he is a son of the covenant or not a son of the covenant" may be an acknowledgment of Roman persecution as well as a subtle reminder to the Jews to be aware of and guard against such persecutions. This kind of message had to be hidden from the eyes and ears of the Roman censor which would account for the inclusion of this prayer here in the Morning Blessings where no outsider was liable to pay serious attention to it.

The final additional element in the Morning Blessings

is a recital of the biblical text known as the "Binding of Isaact" (the Akedah), Genesis 22:1-19. Two short meditations function as an introduction and conclusion to this reading, creating a setting for the powerful story. This section was originally found in all prayerbooks excepting those of the Ashkenazim, where it has since been introduced as well.[33] The "Binding of Isaac" finds its place in the text after the second Yehi Ratzon meditation appended to the small blessings. The introduction and conclusion consist of pleas addressed to God for mercy, on account of the virtues of the ancestors. Both of these meditations are originally found in the Musaf service for the day of Rosh Hashanah. The inclusion of the "Binding of Isaac" seems to be based on a midrashic interpretation of one of the sacrificial texts included in the Morning Blessings, Leviticus 1:11. This reads: "He shall slaughter it on the north side of the altar before the Lord; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood all around the altar." Leviticus Rabbah states that "Isaac fulfilled that which is written in the Torah (he shall slaughter), in that he cast himself before his father as a lamb that is to be sacrificed." The recital of the Leviticus passage then could reasonably have led to the recital of the entire "Binding of Isaac" story. A commentary to the Sephardic prayerbook, Seder Ozar ha-Tefillot, notes the following:

> The binding of Isaac is accounted to all Israel as meritorious act and as such it is to be recited every day by those in the diaspora. It will protect

> them from all evil and shame. We should understand the phrase "do not do him any injury" as a promise that the merit of our ancestors will protect [those in the diaspora] from evil. So it says in the Zohar.34

The text then makes note of the fact that it was Isaac Luria and his school who first introduced this passage into daily prayer. It would appear then that the first mention of this custom is to be found in the text of the Zohar. Isaac Luria came upon this and proceeded to include the passage in his tradition of prayer.[35] This powerful symbol of obedience and devotion to God eventually found a place for itself in the hearts of the people and thus came to be included in regular morning prayer. The hallmark of the preliminary morning service at this time still being its flexibility, it is once again extended in order to include this passage. With its inclusion, we come to the end of our investigation into the elements comprising the Morning Blessings.

Chapter Six

PALESTINIAN TEXTS

Throughout this work, I have both made reference to and quoted from various Palestinian texts. These texts reflect a ritual which flourished through the twelfth century C.E. and functioned as an alternative to the Babylonian rite which eventually dominated in matters of liturgy. This domination became so complete that the existence of the Palestinian rite became known in modern times only after the discovery of the Cairo Genizah. Until this time, the wording and order of prayer in all known rites followed Seder Rav Amram Gaon, which was based on the responsum written by his predecessor, R. Hilai b. Natronai Gaon. The Palestinian texts display a number of general characteristic elements which differentiate them from Babylonian texts. These include: 1) the custom of reading the Torah on a triennial cycle; 2) alternative Torah blessings; 3) a totally different recension of the eighteen blessings of the Amidah; 4) various small textual differences. On investigating the Morning Blessings, it became clear that three collections of Palestinian texts would be of use in understanding variant attitudes towards this particular section of prayer. These are the Italian rite Seder Hibbur Berachot, discussed by Solomon Schechter, the Persian rite, discussed by E.N. Adler, and various Genizah fragments of pure Palestinian text, described by Jacob Mann. Elements in these texts

pertinent to the discussion at hand have been referred to throughout this work. Now I would like to discuss briefly each of these works as a whole, in order to present a more complete picture of the Palestinian treatment of the Morning Blessings.

Seder Hibbur Berachot begins by exhibiting one of the hallmark characteristics of Palestinian texts, namely the inclusion of otherwise unknown piyutim, or liturgical poems. This one, entitled Ani Keraticha El, was composed by Abraham b. Jacob, and is inserted prior to Ma Tovu. The version of Elohai Neshamah in this text exemplifies the small variant readings available of texts common to both Babylonian and Palestinian ritual. In this prayer, several words are excluded;[1] in one case an extra letter is added to provide a grammatical correction;[2] and numerous extra vov's (ו), the Hebrew prefix meaning "and" are added, a purely Palestinian characteristic.[3] Regarding the small blessings, this text includes ten blessings in common with the Babylonian rite,[4] three completely original wordings,[5] and five variations on the Lo Asani blessings.[6] From the following remark found in the text, it would seem that the custom of wearing the tallit had not achieved great popularity during the period in which this text was utilized. "Those of the wise men who are accustomed to wearing fringes put on the tallit at this time, look at the fringes, and say the appropriate blessing."[7] Finally, this text includes only one Torah blessing, which utilizes the main elements of two of the

Torah blessings known in the Babylonian rite, Ha'arev-na and Asher bachar banu, and excludes completely the first Torah blessing, La'asok b'divrei Torah.

The liturgy of the Persian Jews is preserved only in manuscript form and has otherwise been only somewhat cursorily described in a published work.[8] Yet is is clear that this rite and the texts found in Genizah fragments have one main characteristic in common. In both of these Palestinian-based rites there is no clear demarcation between the Morning Blessings and the following rubric, the Pesukei d'Zimrah or Verses of Song. Rather, there is to be found only a single extended section of texts appropriate for preliminary morning prayer in general. This section draws on material we are familiar with as belonging to the Morning Blessings, as well as material from the Verses of Song. In addition, several original elements are included. The Persian text begins with a partial listing of the one hundred daily required blessings which appears to consist mainly of a lengthy section of small blessings. In addition, there are included several talmudic passages, variations of the Lo Asani blessings, and a somewhat unusual extended Torah blessing which is similar to that found in the Seder Hibbur Berachot. The Sh'ma and its setting as well as the sacrificial passages appear in their entirety as in the Babylonian rite. A final section composed of psalms, unfamiliar meditations of the "May it be Your Will" form, and the long alphabetical which begins the Verses of Song as we know it,

the Baruch She-amar, concludes this version of the prayers recited prior to the regular morning service.

The Genizah fragments which include references to the Morning Blessings have been published and carefully described by Jacob Mann.[9] It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the content or style of the Morning Blessings as preserved in this rite due to the fact that the Genizah did not provide us with a single complete text which begins at the beginning of public morning worship ritual and continues straight through to the morning service. Rather, what we have available is something akin to a handful of pages torn out of a prayerbook. That material which appears in these fragments must have been used regularly, but we are in no position to conclude that it was all that was used or that other elements we know from the Babylonian rite were not included as well. All we know is that at the very least, this much material was included in the Morning Blessings of the Palestinian rite.

The preliminary morning service which takes form when these fragments are pieced together is a combination of what we know as the Morning Blessings and the Verses of Song. As in the Persian text, there is no clear demarcation between the sections. Moreover, elements from one are randomly placed in what would seem to be the domain of the other. The section begins with a prayer of the "May it be Your Will" form asking for the worshipper to be spared from harmful experiences. This text is parallel to the "May it be

Your Will" meditation found at the end of the Babylonian small blessings. The small blessings in fact follow at this point in the Palestinian tradition, but consist solely of an extended Lo Asani prayer. None of the small blessings related to morning activity seem to have been included here. A variant Torah blessing appears at this point followed by a prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and a "May it be Your Will" meditation which is clearly a morning prayer, based on the suspected evil effects of bad dreams. This lengthy and beautiful prayer concludes with yet another version of the Torah blessing and is followed by numerous selections from the Psalms. This gives the impression that the text is now reflecting the section of the service known as the Verses of Song, but several elements of the Morning Blessings are yet to be included. Selections from Psalms and Prophets follow, cited in the name of R. Yochanan, a Palestinian Amora, as the thanksgiving prayer for rain. Then follows a curious combination of a small blessing from the Babylonian rite, "who brings sleep to the weary," and the Elohai Neshamah. Finally, there is a fragment which includes the Sh'ma minus the elaborate Babylonian setting, numerous quotations from the Psalms, a short confession of sins, and several sacrificial passages.

This fragment completes the information we have regarding the Morning Blessings in the Palestinian rite. We are left with more questions than conclusions. The only clear statement which can be made regarding these texts is

that they are intended to be a preliminary prayer experience which would take place sometime before the prescribed morning service actually begins. How much of this material was said privately and how much publicly? Was there a strict order to the various elements? Did this section develop naturally in the home as did its Babylonian parallel? Or was there some other reason for creating a prayer experience prior to the regular morning services? For now, the answers to these questions remain a mystery. As the Genizah fragments are uncovered, catalogued, and studied further, perhaps we will glean more information to aid us in comprehending the import of the Morning Blessings in the Palestinian rite.

Chapter Seven

A THEORY OF THE MORNING BLESSINGS

More than any other scholar, Solomon B. Freehof has attempted to devise a framework to explain the development of the Morning Blessings as a unified whole with liturgical rationale behind it.[1] While we have viewed the growth of the preliminary morning service as an unstructured response to a variety of needs which resulted in a slow accretion of material, he suggests that this material was organized around a single dominating principle. Freehof believes that consciously or unconsciously, the Morning Blessings were developed as a reflection of the regular morning service (Shacharit) so that it provides a preliminary glimpse of what is to come. This structure functions so as to put the participant at ease psychologically: the worshipper faces no jarring elements during the transition from preliminary prayer to the morning service and is in fact mentally prepared to concentrate on what is to come due to the repetition of structure.

The main motivating factor in Freehof's development of this theory is his equation of the small blessings with the blessings of the Amidah, based on the fact that the blessings in each of these compositions number eighteen. He notes that originally there were fifteen small blessings, as they are found in Berachot 60b. The blessings over tallit and tefillin were dropped from this section of the

service when it entered the synagogue, as we have seen, lowering the total to thirteen. At this point, Asher Yatzar, originally to be said on exiting the bathroom, was added, thus raising the total to fourteen. With the addition of the three Lo Asani blessings, the total became seventeen. Finally, the non-talmudic small blessing ....magbiha shefalim, "who exalts the lowly," was added, bringing the total number of small blessings to eighteen. Freehof admits that this parallelism to the eighteen benedictions of the Amidah could be accidental, but he is not prepared to see is as such.[2] "Even if all this were an accident, which is very unlikely, once the 'accident' occurred, the thought of the regular Shmoneh Esreh and then certain parallelisms in the Birchos ha-Shachar with the ideas of the Shmoneh Esreh immediately come to mind."[3]

According to Freehof, four particular similarities between the small blessings and the Amidah are evident: 1) the second blessing of the former, Elohai Neshamah, and the second blessing of the latter, Atah Gibor, are parallel in meaning; 2) the blessing over the cock-crow (#4 in the small series) is parallel to the Amidah's fourth petition that asks for knowledge; 3) the three Lo Asani blessings are added to the small blessings at their particular place in order to insure that the above two blessings, parallel in meaning, would be parallel in order as well; 4) the first "May it be Your Will" meditation found at the end of the Morning Blessings functions in precisely the same man-

ner as Elohai Netzor, the concluding meditation of the Amidah. Freehof concludes his argument on this portion of the Morning Blessings by pointing out that "The similarity of thought between it (the Morning Blessings) and the prayers of the Shmoneh Esreh put into the minds of the various early liturgists the thought that this sequence of blessings was indeed a sort of early morning Shmoneh Esreh."[4]

Next Freehof argues that the second "May it be Your Will" meditation, that was appended to the small blessings, is actually nothing more than a number of personal petitions woven together into one prayer. He notes that the Tur specifically allows the individual to add personal petitions at this point, and that Saadia Gaon too suggests such petitions in his prayerbook. Based on the possible inclusion of this type of material here in the service, Freehof postulates that the intention was to create a parallel to the Tachanun prayers found in the Morning Service. "Thus, the Birchos ha-Shachar developed both a preliminary Shmoneh Esreh and also a Tachanun immediately following it."[5]

Freehof's third argument is based on an explanation of the peculiar existence of two study sections in the Morning Blessings: one short, including a Torah blessing; and the other long, without its own Torah blessing. He explains that one should view the original placement of the Torah study section as after the small blessings (see Chapter Three) and concludes, "The proper place for the sections of Torah study is after the eighteen small blessings. Thus,

the Birchos ha-Shachar is in the proper liturgical sequence: the Shmoneh Esreh, the Tachanun and the Torah reading."

To be sure, Freehof sees also a duplicate of the Sh'ma in the preliminary service. For him, the early morning recitation of the Sh'ma has a firm legal basis, in that it is considered a mitzvah to recite the Sh'ma as close as possible to dawn. However, it had to be placed out of sequence, near the end of the Morning Blessings, since it could not be recited until the day had fully dawned. "Thus," he informs us, "the Birchos ha-Shachar contains all the main parts of the regular morning service."[6] He further notes that the inclusion of the hymns Adon Olam and Yigdal at the opening of the Morning Blessings completes the parallel picture with a section corresponding to the Pesuke d'Zimra, the Verses of Song. He summarizes with a re-statement of his thesis: "The entire section is a miniature of the morning service; or, if not quite as exact as a miniature, what surely seems to be a preliminary sketch of the morning service."[7]

To Freehof's credit, he takes the opportunity to step back from his theory at this point to discuss the development of the various elements of the Morning Blessings as we have traced them in previous chapters. He takes great pains to detail the process by which the original morning blessings said in the home developed into an entire section of fixed prayer and later entered synagogal liturgy. But in the end, he returns to a defense of his theory, ar-

guing that regardless of the external circumstances which led to the extension of this section of prayer, there existed a more subtle, perhaps subconscious psychological desire to create a parallelism in structure. To this effect, he states,

> Perhaps it should not be described as a preliminary sketch of the morning service because that would imply that it was carefully drawn up for that purpose, which is hardly the fact. It just developed in this direction in the private devotion at home. But it was aided in that direction by the increasing of the small blessings to the number eighteen. Perhaps the correct description of the process would be that the Birchos ha-Shachar became an informal "preview" of the morning service.8

Solomon Freehof has gone to great lengths to impose a structure on what remains essentially an unstructured body of material. While his description of the Morning Blessings as they developed in the home and were transferred to the synagogue corresponds in the main to the picture emerging in our own investigation, his attempt to classify this section of prayer as wholly structured seems to this author to require an unwarranted stretch of the imagination. Imposing the structure of the morning serivce on the preliminary morning blessings may provide a useful way to grasp the contents of the blessings, but emphasizing the point to the extent of calling it an explanatory theory seems to go beyond the information we have available.

For instance, we may grant that it is intriguing to consider the possible similarities between two bodies of prayer which consist of numerous short blessings, such as

the Shmoneh Esreh and the small blessings. However, there is no indication that one is necessarily modeled on the other. Freehof's generalizations do not hold up under close scrutiny. Even though the number of small blessings in the Ashkenazic tradition is fixed at the magical number eighteen, other traditions exist (e.g., Machzor Vitry and Siddur Rashi)[9] where the number of small blessings is nineteen or twenty-one. Secondly, while Freehof notes that the Seder Hibbur Berachot, which was developed under Palestinian influence, also arrives at eighteen small blessings, he fails to emphasize the fact that they are almost a completely different set of blessings. When he does note the fact, he justifies his theory by explaining that regardless of the content of the blessings, the author still found it necessary to include the same number of blessings that appear in the Amidah. This is a most unconvincing ex-post-facto justification. Moreover, as Joseph Heinemann clarifies, Freehof takes no note of Genizah texts which "certainly do not display any of the regularity or purposeful structure and arrangement which he claims to have found in the later rites." Similarly, Freehof's argument that several of the blessings are parallel both in placement and content is ill-conceived. The Morning Blessings are praises of God; they are said as the human being experiences life's pleasures which are provided by God. The Shmoneh Esreh are petitions; they are said after God's praises have been sung, when human beings finally permit themselves to make requests of God. These

are two completely different functions, and as such must be viewed as an argument against the parallel development of the texts. Moreover, Freehof's specific examples are weak: 1) Elohai Neshamah may be parallel in meaning to Atah Gibor, yet the latter is wholly non-representative of the blessings of the Shmoneh Esreh and is, in fact, a blessing of praise rather than a petition. It proves nothing to point out that these two blessings are similar in content. 2) The assumption that the Lo Asani blessings were inserted at a specific point in order to maintain a parallelism between two similar blessings, praise for the cock-crow and for God's gift of knowledge, is highly unlikely. Had such a motivation existed, surely it would have been reflected somewhere in Geonic literature. In addition, the Lo Asani blessings are inserted in a patently logical position: they separate the two blessings regarding bodily functions from the remaining blessings which deal with other kinds of activities. 3) There is every reason for the Yehi Ratzon meditation which concludes the small blessings to appear parallel to the Elohai Nezor meditation which fulfills the same function for the Shmoneh Esreh. They are both the private meditations of individual talmudic rabbis. There is no reason why such meditations could not be interchanged at will or why any of the other private meditations could not be substituted for them. All of the private meditations of the rabbis are essentially parallel in content and are logical conclusions to any large section of blessings. The similarity Freehof points out

actually signifies nothing. Likewise, there is no reason to assume that the interpolation of the second "May it be Your Will" meditation was in any way intended to parallel the much lengthier and much more intense Tachanun of the morning service. Several alternative reasons for its inclusion were discussed in Chapter Five of this work. Moreover, while it could be argued that the complex Tachanun was an outgrowth of the shorter and simpler "May it be Your Will" composition, to argue in the opposite direction, namely, that the "May it be Your Will" functions as a parallel reflection of the Tachanun, is stretching the point to support an already weak theory.

Freehof engages in oversimplification by explaining the significance of the original placement of the Torah study sections and Torah blessings with such meaningful fervor. His point that the original placement of this section caused the Morning Blessings to follow the exact order of the regular morning service is circumstantial evidence. Not only were the later codifiers so unconcerned about such a parallelism that they changed the order of the blessings without a second thought, but also the extent of the parallelism itself is highly exaggerated. The mere fact that a Torah study section followed the small blessings does not justify the conclusion that it possessed the same psychological impact as the public Torah reading itself.

Freehof's final argument, namely, that the addition of the early morning recital of the Sh'ma and the singing of

hymns became a psychological necessity due to the fact that they would complete the organizational pattern of the morning service, loses all of its impact once his earlier arguments establishing such a parallelism are weakened. He views the final inclusion of these elements as the finishing touch to his theory; I view their inclusion as an as yet unexplained phenomenon. He is particularly unable to explain the placement of the Sh'ma. He notes that it must be recited towards the end of the Morning Blessings because it cannot be said before dawn. Yet this very explanation invalidates his hypothesis that the elements of the Morning Blessings are intended to parallel the elements of the morning service.

In contrast to Freehof, Joseph Heinemann is highly suspicious of any theorizing as to the reasoning behind the development of the liturgical order. According to him, "It is doubtful whether any measure of regularity can be discovered in the order and structure of these prayers. Indeed, any 'order' would seem to be merely the result of random combinations of such prayers."[10] I suggest that the truth lies somewhere between these two conceptions. There does appear to be some reasonable structuring of the Morning Blessings; they do not appear to be random combinations of texts. These prayers still reflect the logical development of morning ritual in the home and its institutionalization and formalization as the ritual moved to the synagogue. But to theorize that the compilers of this liturgy had an agenda, be it overt or covert, actually to reflect the

structure of the morning service in the structure of the Morning Blessings is no more than a simplification for the sake of explanation. I must agree with Heinemann, who sees Freehof's theory as absolutely unconvincing. The authors of such theories, concludes Heinemann, "leave me to doubt whether the 'regularity' and the 'systematic construction' which these authors have claimed to discover may not be, in fact, the result of their own ingenious constructions."[11]

Chapter Eight

A MODERN VIEW OF THE MORNING BLESSINGS

As a whole, the Morning Blessings presents us with a highly unusual and peculiar collection of texts. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, each element has its own extraordinary story to tell, and in the end, a logical pattern of organization has emerged from what originally appeared to be a random combination of disparate texts. Yet, the critical question remains as yet unanswered: What is the fundamental meaning behind the liturgical unit we designate as the Morning Blessings? We need to understand what function these prayers have served throughout their development in order to understand what meaning they can add to our experience of prayer today. How can the material found in the Morning Blessings best be utilized to fulfill the needs of the modern religious individual?

As we saw in Chapter One, the main section of the Morning Blessings, those blessings found in B. Berachot 60b, was originally intended as home devotion. Their function there is clear: they acknowledge God's goodness and power which is behind all the things we value in life. The saying of these blessings imparts a sense of humility to the worshipper. They emphasize the understanding that the success of all human effort, in the final analysis, is dependent on God's creative power. Behind all the joys we experience, there must be an unshakable understanding that

human beings do not exercise complete control over the universe. The point behind praising God as we complete every action normally taken in the morning is to translate these very abstract concepts into small, concrete pieces of behavior which, when taken together, testify to our acknowledgment of the presence and power of God in our lives.

But a fundamental problem curtails the effectiveness of these blessings, certainly in the modern world and already visible in the world of the Geonim as well. This problem is reflected in the Geonic decision to move these very private prayers from the realm of the home to the realm of the synagogue. According to Amram, this move was probably made to aid the ignorant in fulfilling their duty to pronounce the 100 daily blessings. But what was the rationale behind the recital of those 100 blessings? Surely it was not an arbitrarily imposed, legalistic injunction. Rather, the recital of the 100 blessings must have been intended to maintain the individual's awareness of God throughout the day. In order to achieve this goal, people were trained to relate their daily activity to an awareness of God's presence. When you wake up, bless God. When you stretch and sit up, bless God. When you take your first step of the day, bless God. Under these circumstances, one can see that the particular words used to praise God were irrelevant. It was the regular acknowledgment of God's presence that was important. But once someone wrote down these blessings, once the language became absolutely fixed

and individuals were taught to say these specific blessings at these specific times, the sense of God's presence as utterly infusing every aspect of existence must have been lost. Instead came the simple knowledge that there were 100 blessings one was supposed to say every day. God required 100 blessings, as part of the responsibility of being a Jew, so Jews recited 100 blessings daily. And what happened when the blessings became fixed in this way? They were moved from the home to the synagogue, so that even the ignorant, who were unable to learn the correct blessings, could participate in this mitzvah passively, by responding "Amen." The instant these blessings were removed from the private realm, it became impossible for them to fulfill their original goal: to acknowledge God's presence in all aspects of daily life. Our first task then is to recapture the original sense of the blessings before they were fixed as synagogue prayer: how do we experience anew the pervasive presence of the Divine in daily life?

The other element of real substance in this preliminary section of prayer consists of the Torah blessings and the two Torah study sections. The inclusion of this element reflects a fundamental principle of Jewish life, namely, that it is valuable to search for God's presence in the texts we consider to be divinely inspired. Yet the meaning of the word "study" for the Geonim was very different from its meaning for twentieth century Jews. The two study sections in the Morning Blessings reflect the two tradi-

tional understandings of study. First, the tripartite short study section, including sections from Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, epitomizes the traditional Jewish emphasis on memorizing. To study a text was to memorize it. One could never go over a text too many times. Therefore, it was hardly a misnomer in the traditional world to call this daily repetition of a short passage "study," while it is a problem for us. In the modern world, to study generally implies to delve deeply into, to learn about, to understand more clearly. As a result, the repetition of this "study" section hardly qualifies as study to us at all. Second, the longer study section at the end of the Morning Blessings is clearly a substitute for undertaking the sacrificial procedures themselves. As modern, liberal Jews, we no longer maintain the ideal of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem nor the attendant reinstitution of sacrificial practices. Moreover, we no longer see prayer as a secondary means of communication with God, as compared to the primary mode which is replaced, actually offering the sacrifices. Therefore, daily repetition of the sacrificial passages under the guise of study has become a meaningless pursuit for the modern Jew. It would seem then that in order for a study section in the Morning Blessings to be meaningful to Jews today, it would have to reflect the modern understanding of what it means to study, first, by eschewing pure memory work, and second, by expanding the theme of study to go beyond sacrifice. The material cov-

ered in Chapters Two, Four and Five of this work was added to the Morning Blessings for a variety of historical and aesthetic reasons. None of this material reflects the implementation of any principle basic to Jewish prayer. The Lo Asani blessings are added to the small blessings in order to count towards the 100 blessings required daily and were formed against the background of parallel cultural practices. The inclusion of the Sh'ma and its setting may reflect a history of religious persecution, or it may simply reflect the need to say the Sh'ma earlier than it could be said in the regular morning service. Neither of these functions are helpful in the creation of a successful modern conception of prayer. The remaining additional elements of the Morning Blessings function mainly to lengthen and beautify the rubric under discussion. The prayers on entering the synagogue give form to the unit, identifying its preliminary status immediately. The blessings over tallit and tefillin certainly belong here, once it is clearly understood that the Ma Tovu has initiated the public worship service. The hymns, Yigdal and Adon Olam, seem to have been included simply because they are so appealing. What better way is there to prepare oneself for prayer than through song? The second Yehi Ratzon functions as a formalizing element by lengthening the prayers in the preliminary morning service and by imparting an especially serious tone to them. Finally, the Akedah is a curious expansion of the Morning Blessings which the Zohar understood as an explanation of

Leviticus 1:11 (you shall slaughter it; it equals Isaac) and which was therefore included in the Morning Blessings as protection for diaspora Jewry. Not a single one of these elements was included in the Morning Blessings to fulfill a specific overall function that goes beyond that element itself.

We have before us then a lengthy body of archaic liturgical text, most of which cannot be successfully utilized in a meaningful way by the modern Jew. The Morning Blessings reflect a society in which it was desirable to spend hour upon hour, in schul, reciting texts before God. From a modern perspective, it is clear that Jews are no longer interested in devoting such hours to participation in lengthy, obscure, communal prayer. Yet, while we may be prepared to leave the preliminary morning service as a whole behind, the two elements described previously which are built on principles fundamental to Jewish existence must be revitalized so that modern Jews will continue to fulfill the spirit of the Morning Blessings. These two elements, the small blessings and the Torah study sections, have a great deal to offer the modern religious person.

There are three paths the modern liturgist may take in coming to terms with the material in the Morning Blessings. The first, which we may call the Traditionalist option, is characterized by a commitment to the structure and flavor of the traditional Morning Blessings text. The idea here is to retain as much of the tradition as possible

without coming into conflict with the principles of modern liberal thought. This is the perspective adopted by the editor of the Gates of Prayer, the New Union Prayerbook.[1] This recension of the preliminary morning service retains the two main elements of the Morning Blessings, i.e., the small blessings and the Torah blessings and study sections, in their traditional, convoluted order, although both elements are somewhat modified. Some of the small blessings have been removed.[2] Others have been translated into English in an interpretive manner,[3] while still others remain in their somewhat awkward traditional form.[4] Two of the three Torah blessings appear here, while the study section is reduced to a compilation of some elements from Peah 1:1 and B. Shabbat 127a. The study section consisting of sacrificial material is omitted. The Sh'ma has been removed in consonance with the Reform stance against unnecessary repetition, yet the setting for the Sh'ma appears in partial form, thereby retaining the taste of the traditional text. A short blessing over donning the tallit begins the service, and is followed by the traditional Ma Tovu. All other additional elements of the Morning Blessings, namely, the hymns, the Yehi Ratzon, and the Akedah, have been deleted.

This section of the prayerbook is introduced by the following instruction: "The Morning Blessings might be used for private prayer. In the synagogue, all or part of them may be read or sung."[5] This instruction reflects the tra-

ditional ambivalence over whether this material is intended for private meditation or for public worship. So in all of its aspects, this version of the Morning Blessings is actually an edited version of the traditional text. The manner in which it is presented implies the attitude that these printed words are the sole correct ones by which we may fulfill the daily prayer requirement. An individual familiar with the Morning Blessings from a more traditional context would recognize them here and would feel as if the obligation to recite them had been fulfilled when praying from this text. An individual unfamiliar with the traditional text would doubtlessly be somewhat baffled by this peculiar assortment of blessings, loosely related to morning activity and filled with archaisms which s/he is instructed to read or sing, publicly or privately.

The two remaining options for utilizing the material found in the Morning Blessings are based upon resolving the issue of whether these blessings should be said privately or publicly. One's stand on this matter must determine the content and form of a new version of the Morning Blessings. Additionally, in presenting these options, I make two assumptions. The first is that there are two basic theoretical functions inherent in the Morning Blessings: to praise God by acknowledging God's presence in the world and to emphasize the Jewish tradition of commitment to study. These then are the questions which must be answered: What and how shall we praise? What and how shall we

study? The second assumption is that the traditional order in which the Morning Blessings occur is of no intrinsic value and may be sacrificed to a more logical progression.

Assuming that the Morning Blessings should be said at home, then we would have a second alternative which we may label the Personalist option. The person choosing this option would in effect be turning time backwards in an attempt to recapture the sense of spontaneity and personal piety which must have existed in the original formulation of the Morning Blessings. Individuals would have to be taught, from the earliest ages, to respond to all good things in life with a blessing. A blessing, in this instance, would be any sentence beginning with the words "Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe..." and completed with a spontaneous description of the valuable experience, emotion, or possession at hand. I envision this as a kind of directed personal prayer, a continuous process which is bounded by the individual's response to early morning activity such as waking, getting up, looking out the window, washing and dressing. The pattern, once established, could be utilized at any time throughout the day, so that Jews are encouraged to develop a firm sense of God's presence behind even the most mundane of daily events. Alternatively, specific fixed morning blessings could be composed and taught to all religious school children, so that they are aided in taking the first step towards developing a personal relationship with God, characterized by the continu-

ous saying of blessings. In conjunction with this, daily study of any Jewish text would be introduced into the home. I see no compelling reason to recite any text by rote three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. Yet ten minutes devoted each morning to reading and discussing any section from the vast literature at our disposal would provide a way for modern Jews to become more familiar with Jewish texts as well as a way to teach the value of study in the Jewish tradition.

A decision to say the Morning Blessings publicly at the synagogue would constitute a third, or Congregational option. It would share with the Traditionalist option the assumption that these blessings do not differ in essence from any other section of prayer in the liturgy. Here, too, one would thus develop a fixed set of blessings which would relate in a general way to the lives of everyone present at services. These blessings would be recited in unison as are any other blessings from the prayerbook. Opting for this method would imply that it is valuable to praise God for the good things in the world but, unlike the Personalist approach, that a fixed, public recitation of those things expresses our praise sufficiently. The Congregational option differs from the Traditionalist approach in that it is feasible only if the blessings are removed from the framework of the morning altogether and instead are creatively worded anew so as to respond to various experiences, emotions, or possessions encountered by the twentieth cen-

tury Jew in the course of daily existence, through which God's presence might be sensed.

To be sure, some of the original contents of the Morning Blessings might be preserved, such as "...who provides clothes for the naked," and "...who provides rest for the weary." Other blessings might be entirely new and creative, such as "...who creates the new day for my enjoyment," "...who creates the beauty of nature," "...who gives me strength to continue working," "...who sustains me with meaningful work," "...who provides entertainment for my pleasure," "...who creates nurturing relationships." Through reading such blessings, we would be reminded of God's presence and power behind human behavior.

In a fixed liturgical setting of this type, a study section could be included through the regular recital of institutionalized representative sections of text just as we find in the short study section of the traditional morning blessings. The sections preserved there are in fact particularly appropriate to modern life and could be utilized in the synagogal setting. Both this study section and the re-interpreted small blessings could be inserted into the regular morning service prior to the Bare'chu. Alternatively, a serious morning study session, similar to the one I suggested for introduction into the home, could precede every morning service, but in this case it would be a public, congregational event. Such a session could be short, yet might function so as to familize the average Jew

with a greater expanse of Jewish literature.

Thus, there are at least three ways by which the essential functions of the Morning Blessings rubric could be maintained for twentieth century Jews. Opting for the Traditionalist approach would afford us the indulgence of retaining the sense of antiquity which pervades the Morning Blessings, while assuring us that the liturgy will not offend our modern sensibilities. But we must carefully consider the long-term effects of praying from archaic texts, even well-edited ones, when it is possible for us to create new texts and new rituals which may be more meaningful to modern thinkers.

Opting for the Congregational approach would give us the assurance that the two principles fundamental to the Morning Blessings would be well communicated to our people. Yet by its very nature, this option removes the responsibility for acknowledging God's presence and participating in Jewish study, from the individual, and places it solely on the community. Do we, in fact, want to give these values the status of communal functions or do we not need to emphasize their crucial importance to the everyday, private life of the individual Jew?

By opting for the Personalist approach, however, we would combine a reverence for the tradition of our ancestors with an awareness of the special needs of twentieth century Jews. We would attempt to recapture the original goal of the small blessings, namely, their use as a medium

through which the human being can remove him/herself from the immediacy of this world and indulge for a short time in an awareness of God's power in the universe. We would re-awaken in ourselves the desire for knowledge of the tradition and would pursue that knowledge through both family oriented and personal study. By returning the ritual of the Morning Blessings to the home, its place of origin, we would open up the possibility of a re-awakening of personal piety in our lives and enhance the sense of spirituality so often lacking in modern existence. By teaching prayer and study as integral parts of our day-to-day activity, rather than as the domain of the synagogue alone, we will make the words of our tradition a reality: truly, the gates of prayer will never be barred.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Israel Abrahams, A Companion to the Daily Prayer Book (New York: Herman Press, 1966), p. 15.

2. Ismar Elbogen, Ha Tefila b'Yisrael b'Hitpatchutah ha-Historit (Tel Aviv: Dvir Co. Ltd., 1972), p. 69.

3. The Hebrew word for "what" - mah is numerically equal to one hundred. Thus, the text presents proof for the rule requiring one hundred daily blessings.

4. Abraham I. Schechter, Studies in Jewish Liturgy (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1930), p. 89.

5. Louis Ginzberg, Geonica, vol. 1 (New York: Hermon Press, 1968), p. 114.

6. 'Otsar Hage'onim, vol. 1 (Berachot). Edited by Benjamin Manasseh Lewin (Palestine, 1928-1942), p. 135.

7. Ginzberg, Geonica, p. 115.

8. Seder Rav Amram Gaon, Pt, 1. Edited by David Hedegard (University of Lund, 1952), p. 6.

9. Ibid., p. 8.

10. Elbogen, p. 68.

11. Siddur Rav Saadia Gaon. Edited by Simchah Assaf, Israel Davidson and Issachar Joel. 2d ed. (Jerusalem: Mekitsei Nirdamim, 1963), p. 3.

12. Ibid., p. 89.

13. Jacob Mann, "Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service," 1925. Reprinted in Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy, ed. by Jakob Petuchowski (New York: Ktav, 1970), p. 382.

14. Ibid. Ms. Cambridge Add. 3159, no. 2.

15. Ibid.

16. Schechter, pp. 2-3.

17. Ibid., p. 89.

18. Mishneh Torah, Sefer ha-Ahavah: Hilchot Tefillah, section 7.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. "Jacob ben Asher," Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 9, p. 1215.

22. Tur, Orech Haim, section 46.

23. Abraham Berliner, Ketavim Nivcharim (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1945), p. 20.

24. 'Otsar Hage'onim, p. 138, but the blessing does appear in a later manuscript of Amram.

25. Schechter, p. 51.

26. M. Yoma 1:8.

27. Abrahams, p. 16.

28. B. Rosh Hashanah 26b; Tur, Orech Haim; section 46.

29. Abrahams, p. 16.

30. Rashi to Genesis, chapter 14.

31. Tur, Orech Haim; section 46.

32. 'Otsar Hage'onim, p. 133.

33. Schechter, pp. 51-52.

34. Machzor Vitry. Edited by Simon Halevi Hurwitz (Nuremberg: Mekitsei Nirdamim, 1923), p. 57.

35. Berliner, p. 20.

36. Tur, Orech Haim; section 46.

37. The Responsa of Solomon Luria. Edited by Simon Hurwitz (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1938), p. 105.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Natronai's Responsum, Siddur Saadia, The Tosephta, Seder Rav Amram, and the commentaries of Alfasi and Asheri.

2. Berliner, p. 21.

3. See Abrahams, p. 16.

4. Berliner, p. 21.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Berliner also notes that there are some who suggest that the blessing is only to be said upon meeting a gentile. Like the other morning blessings, it should be said over a particular event.

8. B. Menachot 43b.

9. Tur, Orech Haim; section 46.

10. Abrahams, p. 17.

11. Ibid.

12. Abrahams, p. 17.

13. Berliner, p. 21.

14. George Jochnowitz, "...Who Made Me a Woman," Commentary, Vol. 71, No. 4 (April, 1981), pp. 63-64.

15. This is based on the blessing of Rebecca in Genesis 24:60.

16. For instance, the Hebrew word olam was regularly translated by "eternity," instead of by "universe," although olam can mean either, depending on the context. For other examples, see Jochnowitz, p. 64.

17. Abrahams, p. 17.

18. Elbogen, p. 70 and Abrahams, p. 16.

19. Ibid.

20. Elbogen, p. 70.

21. Joseph Heinemann, Prayer in the Talmud (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), p. 164.

22. S. Assaf, Sefer Dinabourg (Jerusalem: Beit ha-Midrash L'Morim Ha-ivri B'Yerushalayim, 1933), p. 121.

23. Ibid.

24. Heinemann, p. 165.

25. Saul Lieberman, Tosfta Kifshutah, Vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955), p. 120, note 71.

26. Ibid.

27. Heinemann, p. 165.

28. I.e., "masculine not feminine" follows "a man and not a woman."

29. Heinemann, p. 166.

30. Louis Ginzberg, Perushim Vechidushim Birushalmi (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1941), pp. 280-290.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. For the text itself, see Birnbaum, pp. 13-15 and 27-45.

2. B. Kiddushin 30a.

3. In the Sephardic ritual, Numbers 28:1-10.

4. Ginzberg, Geonica, Vol. 2, pp. 114-116.

5. At this point, Natronai comments, matchil b'tefilla - "now the prayer begins."

6. Elbogen, p. 70.

7. Other examples of prayer being offered in place of sacrifice are Hosea 14:2-3, B. Berachot 26b and Avot de Rabi Natan IV.

8. Berliner, p. 22.

9. Ibid., p. 23.

10. If after the Sh'ma, one need not say a separate Torah blessing because the attending blessing, Ahavah Rabbah, functions as a Torah blessing.

11. See: 'Otsar Hage'onim, p. 30; B. Berachot 11b; Ginzberg, Geonica, p. 116; Tur, Orech Haim, section 47.

12. B. Nedarim in the section Eilu Nedarim.

13. In some texts, Ha'arev na is not taken to be a second Torah blessing, but is viewed as a continuation of the first Torah blessing. It is argued that if this were a blessing by itself, it would open with the Baruch

formula, and that its status as a complete blessing is questionable due to the fact that the worshippers do not respond to it with "Amen." See Heinemann, p. 167.

14. Heinemann, pp. 168-169.

15. Ibid.

16. Many other texts have now been included, such as Exodus 30:17-21; Leviticus 1:11; Exodus 30:34-36; B. Keritoth 6a; Yerushalmi Yoma 4:5; B. Yoma 33a; Numbers 28:9-15.

17. Seder Rav Amram Gaon, p. 27.

18. Tur, Orech Haim, section 47.

19. Ibid.

20. Elbogen, p. 70.

21. Berliner, p. 22.

22. The Responsa of Solomon Luria, p. 104.

23. B. Shabbat 127a.

24. Peah 1:1.

25. Abrahams, p. 14.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. For the text itself, see Birnbaum, pp. 23-24.

2. The Sephardic tradition adds the following passage based on the Ecclesiastes text: "and the preeminence of man over the beast is naught, for all is vanity, save only the pure soul which will hereafter render its judgment and account before the throne of Thy glory." It also adds Isaiah 40:15, "The nations are but a drop in the bucket, reckoned as dust on a balance; the very coastlands he lifts like moats."

3. Michilta to Exodus 15:19 and Midrash Yalkut, section 253.

4. References are made to the following passages: II Chron. 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; Genesis 22:2; Exodus 4:22.

5. Yerushalmi Berachot 9b and Midrash Yalkut to Numbers, section 836.

6. A.Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932), pp. 77-78.

7. These are based on the following passages: Jer. 14:-22; Isaiah 44:6 and 11:12; II Kings 19:15.

8. Abrahams, p. 23.

9. B. Menachot 110a; B. Rosh Hashanha 3a.

10. Abrahams, p. 23.

11. M. Berachot 2:2 and B. Berachot 13b and 14b.

12. This section may be found at the end of chapter 19 of Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu. See Elbogen, p. 71.

13. Tanna d'bei Eliyahu, p. 118.

14. Elbogen, p. 71.

15. Sefer ha'ittim, p. 253, as quoted in Jacob Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service of the Synagogue Due to Religious Persecutions," HUCA, Vol. IV (1927), p. 248.

16. Mann, "Changes," p. 242.

17. Ibid., p. 243.

18. There are no recorded changes in the liturgy due to earlier persecutions in Palestine (Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 C.E.ff and Hadrian from 135-138 C.E.) because at these times the practice of Judaism as a whole was prohibited. Therefore, the traditions could not be modified.

19. Mann, "Changes," p. 245.

20. Ibid., p. 247.

21. Shibbolet Ha-Leket, section 191.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 249. Krauss' statement may be found in Studien z. byz. jud. Geschichte, 146-7.

25. Mann, "Changes," p. 250.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Examples are Siddur Rashi, section 417; Machzor Vitry, p. 56; and Seder Rav Amram Gaon, p. 53. See also Abrahams, p. 6.

2. Berliner, p. 18.

3. Elbogen, p. 68.

4. B. Sanhedrin 105b.

5. The verse has been omitted from Shevilai Emunah by Aldavi and is rejected by Solomon Luria in Responsa #64.

6. The Responsa of Solomon Luria, p. 107.

7. Berliner, p. 18.

8. Ibid., p. 38. He also notes Psalms 5:9 as something to be said on exiting from the synagogue.

9. B. Berachot 8a.

10. This is so in Machzor Vitry, p. 64 as well as in the Authorized Daily Prayer Book, edited by Hertz, pp. 44-49.

11. Idelsohn, p. 80.

12. Psalm 146:16 and Hosea 2:21-22.

13. Idelsohn, p. 80.

14. Louis Jacobs, Hassidic Prayer (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 140-142.

15. This formula is derived from Elijade Vida's Reshit Hokhmah. See Jacobs, p. 143.

16. Berliner, p. 19.

17. Elbogen, p. 69.

18. Ibid.

19. Abrahams, p. 8.

20. Elbogen, p. 69.

21. It is the tradition in Sephardic, Italian and Yemenite congregations to conclude Friday night services with

Yigdal and Saturday morning services with Adon Olam. In these congregations the hymns do not appear in the Morning Blessings at all.

22. Elbogen, p. 68.

23. Elbogen (p. 69) suggests Emanuel b. Shlomo as the author of the hymn on the basis of the fact that it is similar to his other poems and appears at the same time as does his major work.

24. M. Sanhedrin 10:1.

25. Jakob J. Petuchowski, Theology and Poetry (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1978), p. 22.

26. See Birnbaum, pp. 153-156.

27. Petuchowski, p. 24.

28. Ibid., p. 23.

29. Ibid. See further: Louis Jacobs, Principles of Jewish Faith (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1964), pp. 1-32.

30. Attempts have been made to change the wording of Yigdal to make it more appropriate to twentieth century thought. Thus we find in Petuchowski (p. 25) the following analysis of changes suggested by the Reform movement. "...to express the belief in a messianic age rather than in a personal Messiah, and in spiritual immortality, rather than in physical resurrection." Yigdal was also adapted by a Unitarian minister, the result being Hymn #54 in the 3rd edition of the CCAR's Union Hymnal, entitled "Praise to the Living God."

31. Two other short meditations of this form are found in the Morning Blessings. They appear to function as transitions between various sacrificial texts. See Birnbaum, pp. 28 and 30.

32. In B. Shabbat 30b, we find a parallel text with only slight deviations.

33. Birnbaum, pp. 20-24.

34. Seder 'Otsar ha-Tefillot, p. 135.

35. Idelsohn, p. 78.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. I.e., the pronoun היא after טהורה. Also excluded are the phrases אתה בראתה and אתה נפחתה. See Schechter, p. 88.

2. The article ה is added to אלהי נשמה.

3. I.e., ואתה נטלה and ואתה משמרה. See Schechter, p. 88.

4. These are: "who sets free the bound," "who opens the eyes," "who raises up those who are bowed down," "who exalts the lowly," "who gave the cock wisdom," "who makes firm the steps of man," "who spreads the earth on the waters," "who girds Israel with might," "who has supplied all my wants," and "who clothes the naked."

5. These are: "who awakens the sleeping," "who gives speech to the dumb," and "who gives rest to the weary."

6. These are: "who has not made me a gentile, like the gentiles of the lands," "...circumcised and not uncircumcised," "...a slave to any other creature," "...who has not made me a woman," (שלא עשיתני אשה) and who has not made me an animal" (שלא עשיתני בהמה).

7. Schechter, p. 84.

8. E.N. Adler, "The Persian Rite," Jewish Quarterly Review [O.S.], Vol. 10 (1898), pp. 601-607.

9. See Mann, "Fragments," pp. 382-395.

Notes to Chapter Seven

1. Solomon B. Freehof, "The Structure of the Birchos Hashachar," HUCA, Pt. 2, 23 (1950-51) pp.339-355.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

9. Ibid., p. 344.

10. Heinemann, p. 8.

11. Ibid., p. 9.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1. Gates of Prayer, pp. 283-289.

2. Namely, on washing the hands, "who has not made me a woman," "who spreads forth the earth," "who provides for all my needs.

3. Namely, "Blessed is the Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has implanted mind and instinct within every living being," and "Blessed is the Eternal God whose power lifts the fallen."

4. Namely, "who brings freedom to the captive," and "who girds our people Israel with strength."

5. Gates of Prayer, p. 283.

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APPENDIX I

THE ORIGINAL BLESSINGS: B. BERACHOT 60b

	Entering Bathroom	Letting Blood	Asher Yatzar	Elohai Neshamah	Cock Crow	Opens the Eyes	Loosens the Bound	Clothes the Naked	Raises those Bowed Down
Ber. 60b	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Natronai			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seder Rav Amram			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Siddur Saadia	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Palestinian Fragments (Mann)				X					
Seder Hibbur Berachot				X	X	X	X	X	X
Rambam	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tur				X	X	X	X	X	X
Birnbaum			X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	Brings Forth Earth	Makes Firm the Steps	Supplies all my Needs	Girds Israel	Crowns Israel	Tallit	Tefillin	Washing the Hands	Removes Sleep from the Eyes
Ber. 60 b	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Natronai	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Seder Rav Amram	X	X	X	X	X*	X	X	X	X
Siddur Saadia	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Palestinian Fragments (Mann)									X
Seder Hibbur Berachot	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Rambam	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Tur	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Birnbaum	X	X	X	X	X			X	

	Yehi Ratzon	Additions
Ber. 60 b	X	none
Natronai	X	raises the lowly
Seder Rav Amram	X	heals the sick raises the lowly (some mss.)
Siddur Saadia	X	raises the lowly; on leaving a city; on leaving home
Palestinian Fragments (Mann)	X	many: see text
Seder Hibbur Berachot	X	many: see text
Rambam	X	on going to bed
Tur	X	strength to weary
Birnbaum	X	strength to weary

Appendix II

TORAH BLESSINGS AND STUDY SECTIONS

Natronai	SRA (variant manuscript)	SRA	Practice received by Jacob b. Asher	Tur	French custom known to R.Tam	R. Tam	Today
1. A (inc. A^2)	A (inc. A^2)	A(inc.A^2)	A	A	A	A	A
2. B	B	B	C	B	B	C	B
3. C (C^2 only)	C(inc. C and C^2)	C(C^2 only)	A^2	C	C	A^2	C
4.			B	A^2	A^2	B	A^2
5.			C^2	C^2	C^2	C^2	D
6.							C^2