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Out of the Depths I Cry Out to You: Liturgical and Ritual Responses to Jewish Communal Catastrophe

Jacqueline Ninio

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1998

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DIGEST

When disaster strikes a community its effects can be devastating not only in terms of human loss but also as a challenge to the community's world-view. When a religious community suffers from a catastrophe, whether it be from the blows of nature or her enemies, people react not just as individuals but as a group linked by the bonds of religious beliefs and doctrines, and it is from within these paradigms that their response is elicited. In Jewish religious tradition, God is the God of history and the God of nature. He is active in the world and in the lives of all peoples. Jewish tradition teaches that nothing happens on the stage of history or within the realm of natural events without the involvement of the hand of God. How then, do Jewish communities respond when disaster strikes them, how do they react when what appear to be blows from their God are directed towards them? Such tragedy calls into question the very foundations of the covenant between the Jewish people and their God. The world, which was once ordered and made sense, is often thrown into chaos. It seems that there is no meaning, there are no rules, and the means by which the people could once affect their own destinies has been cruelly snatched from their grasp.

However, from the depths of tragedy and despair, faced with feelings of fear, hatred, anger, guilt, torment and so much more, the Jewish people somehow rise from the ashes of destruction and move on towards life. They manage to wrest hope from despair, restore faith in their God and give vent to the multitude of emotions felt by the victims, survivors and future generations. One of the ways the community is able to do this is with the use of ritual and liturgy.

There are four phases of liturgical reaction to disaster. The first phase is offered in the face of impending disaster. When tragedy looms on the horizon, the Jewish people have acted to avert the crisis by performing ritual acts and offering prayers to their God. Sometimes these behaviors are innovative responses to a particular crisis and other times they are a fixed part of the liturgical calendar imposed to ensure the world continues to function in an appropriate manner. The second phase comes in the midst of the catastrophe. When Jews have been beset by disaster and tragedy they often turn to their God again in an attempt to affect their destinies and stop the disaster. Liturgy and ritual are used to provide the communities with faith, hope and courage to fight the enemy. They place some power in the hands of a people facing danger and destruction. Tragically, such behavior does not always result in an end to the catastrophe and often the communities are left sitting in the rubble of what was once their lives. They have lost friends, family and loved ones, their property has been destroyed, and all that they held precious been desecrated by their enemies. In the aftermath of such tragedy the survivors feel a range of emotions. The liturgy and ritual assist the survivors in placing the pieces of their oft-times shattered faith and belief back together. In the safety of their holy space they are given the opportunity to confront God and express the range of emotions they are feeling. Prayer becomes the raw and direct communication with God. Therein the communities can face God, confront Him, berate Him, repent before Him, and beseech Him to restore the world to balance and harmony once more. Within their synagogues and sanctuaries, the Jewish community, with prayer and ritual, seize back some power and hope. At this stage the community can begin to remember and memorialize those whose lives were lost in the battle. The final phase is the entrenching of the tragedy in the cycle of Jewish liturgical life. Through ritual and communal prayer Jewish communities centuries after the occurrence of tragic events can empathize, memorialize

and remember the faith and courage of those who came before them and died for the sake of their God. Through these means the later generations can use the past to help them understand their present.

This thesis considers four instances of Jewish communal catastrophe and disaster and the ritual and liturgical responses thereto. The first chapter involves the study of the rabbinic response to natural disaster. The second chapter looks at the liturgical and ritual reaction of the communities to the destruction of the two temples and the subsequent development of Tisha be Av. Therein is also a consideration of the functioning of Tisha be Av as a receptacle into which has been poured the mourning for so many later Jewish tragedies. Chapter Three looks at the destruction during the Crusader period in the Rhineland, focusing on the unique response of the Jews of that time, particularly the development of *Kiddush Hashem*. The fourth chapter is a discussion of the Holocaust and the main ritual and liturgical responses thereto.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my teacher, Dr. Richard Sarason: Thank you for your wisdom, help, support and encouragement.

To Dr. Susan Einbinder: Thank you for your inspiration, understanding and assistance

Thank you to my family for everything

Thank you Avril, Carey and Ian for having faith in me and giving me courage and strength

DEDICATION

In memory of those who cried out to God at times of catastrophe

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INTRODUCTION

The tongue of the suckling cleaves
To its palate for thirst.
Little children beg for bread;
None gives them a morsel.
Those who feasted on dainties
Lie famished in the streets;
Those who were reared in purple
Have embraced refuse heaps...
Their skin is shriveled on their bones,
It has become dry as wood...
With their own hands, tenderhearted women
Have cooked their own children;
...They wandered blindly through the streets,
Defiled with blood...
We have become orphans, fatherless;
Our mothers are like widows...
We are hotly pursued;
Exhausted, we are given no rest...
Our skin glows like an oven
With the fever of famine.
They have ravished women in Zion
Maidens in the towns of Judah.
Princes have been hanged by them;
No respect has been shown to elders
Young men must carry millstones
And youths stagger under loads of wood.
The old men are gone from the gate,
The young men from their music.
Gone is the joy of our hearts;
Our dancing has been turned into mourning.[1]

Throughout its history, the dancing of the Jews has often been turned to mourning, rejoicing to lament and life to death. This people has been beaten and slaughtered, tortured and killed, their bodies ravaged by hunger, pain and suffering. Their hearts have been burdened with hurt, anger, frustration and hatred. Women have witnessed the deaths of their children, men been privy to

[1]Lamentations, selections, translation in The Tanakh: The New JPS Translation, pp. 1432-1439

the destruction of their families, children have seen what nobody should ever witness. This is one of the legacies of the Jews, a legacy burdened with the weight of its own blood and suffering. In every generation more ashes are piled onto the altar of destruction so that it grows ever higher, reaching almost to the very heavens. But, like the phoenix, from these ashes the Jewish people always seem to rise. At those very moments when one would expect the Jews to give up on their faith, their God and their people, they do just the opposite. At times of disaster and trauma, Jews flock to their synagogues and houses of worship. There, they offer their prayers, they beseech their God for intervention, guidance and assistance. Then, even when it seems that God has not provided the longed-for help, as the survivors wallow in the aftermath of tragedy, soaked with the blood and tears of their now dead loved ones, they return to their synagogues and they pray to their God. How is it that in the darkest hours of their history, Jews have maintained their faith and trust in God and wrested hope for the future?

When individuals suffer from tragedy it often brings with it an accompanying questioning of faith, a loss of hope and the examination of the foundations of one's beliefs. This is devastating enough, but what happens when a whole community is struck with the blows of an oppressor? What emotions and questioning occur when the community singled out for destruction or tragedy is the one supposedly chosen by God and covenanted with Him for His special protection? When the Jews are chosen and hit with the force of a catastrophe, whether it be from the blows of nature or her enemies, the people must react not just as individuals but as a group who are linked by the bonds of their religious doctrines and beliefs. As a result, it is from within these paradigms that their response is elicited.

In Jewish religious tradition, God is conceived of as having power over both nature and history. Thus He is integral to the workings of the world and is active in the lives of His people. Jewish tradition teaches that nothing happens on the stage of history or within the realm of natural events without the involvement of the hand of God. If that is so, when disaster strikes a community of Jews it necessitates the involvement, or at the very least, the knowledge of God. How then are these same communities able to remain loyal and devoted to that God? How do they manage to cling to their hopes and traditions in the face of catastrophe and disaster? When the fires of the heavens rain down upon the Jews, where do they find their shelter?

One of the havens for the Jewish people has always been worship, both ritual and prayer. At times of greatest disaster and tragedy the Jews have come together, to be with one another and to find shelter and peace in the arms of the community. When Jews enter the realm of liturgy and ritual, they are immediately transported to the world of the familiar and the secure. At times of crisis the Jews have turned to their rituals and liturgy to help them deal with their crisis, confront the present and find guidance and help for the future. But the worship itself becomes problematic because the God being worshipped is the very one who allowed the disasters to occur. So how do the worshipping communities cope with this dilemma?

At first, when the crisis or tragedy is merely looming on the horizon, the Jewish people have turned to the magical element of liturgy and ritual to help them actively to avert the impending disaster. In each crisis there is a very human need to gain control over the future and so avoid the ravages of the threatened

catastrophe. To meet this need Jews have appealed to their religious tradition. There they found the teachings that with prayer and action God can be reached and the cosmos affected. In various tragedies, whether they be a result of the natural environment, such as plagues, flood or droughts, or a human enemy or oppressor, the hand of God was thought to be involved. As such, appeals could be made to God to intervene and alter the course of events. In this manner the people felt somewhat empowered over their own destiny and they could find strength and courage in the gathering of their community, united to face the impending crisis.

Despite the valiant efforts of the community groups to avert any impending disaster, more often than not, the feared tragedy still struck the community. In many instances, not only did the catastrophe strike, but the victims were singled out for death because they were Jewish. In the aftermath of such tragedy, the Jews remarkably, returned to their synagogues. In part, this was to find strength again in the community, but it was also a means of coping with the disaster. Following any catastrophic event which involves death and destruction, there are a myriad of emotions felt by the survivors. They feel anger towards God, hatred of the human enemy, the desire for revenge, frustration at their inability to stop the tragedy from striking their community, even guilt for their own survival. Often dazed, confused and racked with a mass of conflicting emotions, these people headed for the houses of worship and gatherings of Jews. Once there, prayers and liturgical expressions gave voice to their emotions. The leader, the community and the texts spoke the words the survivors needed to hear. There, in the shelter of community and sacred space, the victims could be remembered and memorialized, the dead paid homage, the oppressors verbally attacked and revenge sought. The deepest and cruelest emotions could be given vent; even

those which in any other context would not dare be uttered were said with gusto. Here, God was chastised and the most frightening possibilities voiced. The people cried out that they had been abandoned by their God, that their future was without Him, the covenant had been broken, there was no more life or hope. Worship can therefore become accusation.

Giving voice to these terrible fears and longings was crucial to the recovery of the people. They could not move ahead without the expression of pent-up anger, frustration, hurt and sorrow. The liturgy and ritual provided a safe and appropriate place for the voicing of these thoughts. However, the liturgical expressions could not stop at that point. If they did, it is unlikely that there would be any hope for the future, any satisfaction from the worship experience and any will or desire to continue the tradition. It was essential, then, that communities which suffered a communal crisis give voice and legitimacy to negative, hurtful emotions, but this had to be juxtaposed with the promise of the future. Liturgy and ritual also fill this need. Through the texts read and chanted in the synagogue, structure and order are again imposed upon the apparent intrusion of chaos. To the community which survived tragedy and those who followed in later generations, the eruption of tragedy in the world can appear to be a sign of the rupture of control and order in the cosmos. It is imperative to impose order on the tragedy, to fit it within the familiar paradigms such that control may once again be placed in the hands of the people and their faith restored in their God. If the catastrophe can be viewed as justifiable, predictable or even somehow normal, then it does not result in the shedding of all previously held views and beliefs. So, it is imperative for the continuity of the Jewish people that disaster be conceptualized in terms of the known and familiar paradigms, or the

paradigms somehow be extended or enlarged to encompass the new experiences.

When the disaster is confronted through the liturgy and ritual of the community, such hope and faith can be wrested from the situation. The very fact that there is a place found for the tragedy within the existing format and rubrics of liturgy endows the situation with a sense of order and familiarity. When people enter the synagogue and hear the disasters incorporated into their system of beliefs, spoken of in terms which are familiar, a glimmer of hope that this current disaster has in fact not ruptured the foundations of all that the community once held to be true, is both comforting and essential to the derivation of meaning from the worship experience. Further, placing these sentiments in the form of prayer serves to enhance the efficacy of the words. Communal recitation of language in the sacred environment of a group of Jews together has an inherent power. First, it is deemed to have an effect upon God and can cause Him to act, or desist from acting, as may be required. Secondly, it bestows upon the notions expressed in the liturgy a veil of legitimacy and assumed validity. Thus the liturgy and ritual encode the world in a format understandable to average Jews, such that they can cope with the crisis and still find meaning in the world.

The liturgical and ritual encoding further serves to wrest hope from the depths of disaster. Most of the services and even the prayers themselves find reason to conclude with a sentiment which expresses trust that the future will be better, that there will be a movement from darkness to the light. Historical examples are often used to give weight to these statements, but ofttimes the hope comes in the form of a scriptural quote which is imbued with the essence of that spirit of looking towards the future with faith. Thus even though the participants have traversed the depths of hell, liturgically or literally, they are brought up to light

and hope once again. This element of liturgical responses to catastrophe is one of the most crucial, for it enables remembrance of the disaster and reverence for the victims whilst also providing for the future and ensuring that there will be one. Thus the participants leave the services having traversed a minefield of emotions and responses and survived to go on living. For this is the essence of the Jewish response to disaster; to look back at the tragedy and then always to turn towards life.

This thesis will study the particular details of the liturgical and ritual responses to various catastrophes which have befallen the Jewish people. It must be noted that there is some difficulty in determining what is liturgy and what merely a private prayer or a poem. For the purposes of this study, liturgy is defined as any prayer or group of prayers intended or used for communal recitation in the context of a worship service. Thus it excludes prayers composed by individuals for their own recitation as well as poetry and prayer which has not found a place in the texts of communal worship. This distinction is especially crucial in the study of Holocaust liturgies. Voluminous amounts of poetry and prayers have been redeemed from the ghettos and concentration camps. However poignant and reflective of the emotional response of the victims to that catastrophe, most have not been used in the liturgical expressions of communities and thus they fall outside the scope of this study.

Another difficulty faced by the task of considering, especially, the ritual responses of communities to their crises, is sifting through the rhetoric imposed by writers after the fact from the reality of the communal response. This was most problematic in the consideration of the actions taken closest to the disaster itself; namely the measures taken to avert the crisis and the behavior of the

victims, both survivors and the dead. This problem arises in part because of the confusion created by any catastrophic event, impending or actual. It also arises as a result of the need for survivors to do homage to their dead and portray them in the most favorable light. Thus the actual deeds of the people may be far removed from their literary depiction. Ultimately this is the challenge of any work which seeks to reconstruct human behavior at any particular moment in history and as such this cannot prevent the undertaking of the study. So the analysis continues and wherever the sources leave reason for doubt, that fact is noted in the text.

Tragically, the scope of Jewish communal disaster is overwhelmingly vast and as such this study has been limited to the consideration of only four instances of Jewish communal catastrophe. Each disaster was selected for its distinctive nature which resulted in different ritual responses from its victims. It is the contention of this thesis that ritual and liturgy are the primary mechanisms by which Jewish communities collectively confront and attempt to avert impending disaster, impose direction upon the struggle against the enemy, and negate the potentially disruptive force of the catastrophe by reconfiguring it to fit within traditional Jewish paradigms. This results in the maintenance of the covenantal relationship between the Jews and God, the giving of a voice and hence legitimacy to the emotions and reactions of the community members towards the disaster and the victims, and the imposition of order and control on a potentially volatile disruption of the cosmic order. Each of the following chapters demonstrates the occurrence of these phenomena in response to four very different disasters.

The first chapter is a study of the rabbinic response to natural disasters. The Jewish people were once a predominantly agricultural community. As a result they were heavily dependent upon the fluctuations of the seasons and the ebb and flow of the natural world. When the cycle of nature did not follow its appropriate course, disaster could strike the community. Since the Israelite God is one involved in nature, such a disaster could not occur without His involvement. Thus, in order to avoid such a catastrophe, a number of seasonal ritual and liturgical practices were in place to appeal to God to maintain the natural order. However, despite all the appropriate enactments, sometimes natural disasters were still unleashed against the people. In such an instance, Israel's friend became her foe and ritual and liturgical measures were instituted to lessen the impact of the enemy and stop the disaster. These traditions also serve to give voice to the frustrations, fears and anger of the victims, especially as they relate to God and His role in the tragedy. This element is crucial, for without justification for God's part in the catastrophe, the world-view of the Israelites would have been destroyed as that could testify to the loss of control over their destiny and their universe. Liturgy and ritual then, show the disaster is a part of a larger plan of the universe, controlled by God, affected by human actions and predictable within the paradigmatic Jewish world-view.

The second chapter will consider the disaster which befell the Jewish people with the destruction of both the First and Second Temples. During the Temple period, sacrifice was the means by which the world order was thought to have been maintained and communication with God effected. When it appeared as if the Temples would be destroyed by a human enemy, it threatened the very foundations upon which Jews of that time based their belief. In the early stages measures were taken to avert the disaster, but it still occurred. This threw the

Jewish community into chaos which threatened to destroy the religious world-view altogether. This did not come to fruition, in part because of the quick liturgical and ritual response of the Rabbis after the second destruction. They introduced new prayers and rituals to replace the old. More importantly, they provided reasons for the destruction and through the liturgy, managed to subsume the events into the covenantal system, such that it was able to remain intact and the outlook of the people could continue through the biblical lens. Further, these liturgies were pivotal in the formation of the paradigm of the Jewish response to disaster. All communal catastrophes after this time have been viewed through the lens of these responses to the destruction. The liturgies and rituals also gave voice to the victims' fears, hopes and emotions.

The destructions found their liturgical expression in the services for Tisha be Av and as such a large part of this chapter will focus on the services and ritual on and surrounding that day. Also, Tisha be Av has become the occasion in the Jewish calendar wherein many other historical disasters are commemorated. As such, it is the receptacle into which Jewish tragedy has been poured in order to subsume the details of each disaster into its rubrics and broader conceptual notions. The analysis will thus focus upon the overarching themes found within the liturgy and the ways in which they conceptualize these tragedies. The Reform and the Conservative movements have had difficulties with aspects of the Tisha be Av service and the underlying reasons for the commemoration. As such they have turned from the traditional liturgies and created their own which are more reflective of their community's attitudes to the disaster and approach to Judaism. These will be considered also.

The third chapter involves a study of the ritual and liturgical responses to the Crusades which struck the Rhineland communities in the twelfth century. In response to this tragedy the Jews behaved in a manner not before seen in their communities. Large numbers of people committed suicide or killed their own relatives rather than be converted or killed by the enemy. This act was clearly an infringement of Jewish law and yet it was performed in a highly ritualized manner and imbued with prayer and expropriated Jewish tradition. The actions of these Jews in response to their crisis was a great threat to Jewish continuity and the relationship between God and the chosen people. The survivors were racked with guilt and wanted to memorialize their dead relatives and friends. One of the means by which the survivors were able to remain within a traditional framework and also have their needs met, was through the institution of various rituals and liturgies. These expressions placed the aberrant behavior of the victims into the traditional Jewish paradigms. The actions of the people, in the prayers and worship, were framed within tradition by reference to such traditional figures as Abraham and Isaac and the imagery and language of sacrifice. So was the tradition upheld, the victims venerated and the dead remembered and revered. The chapter will demonstrate the means by which this was achieved while also giving voice to the needs of the survivors and their often inconsistent emotions, positions and feelings. It will consider the rituals and liturgies instituted on the local level immediately following the disaster, their fate, the means by which the events of the Rhineland in the twelfth century continue to be memorialized and the additions still present in the liturgy which derive from this era.

The final chapter is a study of liturgical and ritual responses to the Holocaust. The Holocaust was a disaster which once again posed a great threat to the

religious order and beliefs. It has been suggested that this tragedy is unique amongst the historical tragedies and as such the traditional paradigms can no longer apply. The relationship of the Jewish people and their God was again in jeopardy as a result of human catastrophe in which God was deemed to be somehow implicated. Once again, liturgy and ritual are in the forefront of the literary responses which attempt to keep the covenant intact and give the Jewish people an outlet through which they may express emotion and receive comfort. As with the other disasters, we will first consider the early attempts to avert the impending catastrophe. Following that will be a survey of the ritual and liturgical reactions of the people in both the camps and the ghettos which reflect the different nature of the enemy in this particular disaster.

The final portion of this chapter deals with the aftermath of the Holocaust and the difficulties finding an appropriate date, ritual and liturgy for the commemoration. This involved much consideration on the part of the liturgists about whether or not the Holocaust was unique and thus unable to be fit into the historical paradigms in the manner of all previous communal tragedies. The creations of different branches of Judaism will be surveyed as well as the unique phenomena of non-Jewish groups and secular groups creating liturgical commemoration ceremonies. As was the case with the previous liturgies, the liturgical form and content reflects greatly upon the communities and the groups for which they were created and the ways in which they conceptualize the tragedy within the paradigms of belief. Since we live relatively close to the events of the Holocaust and liturgy and ritual in this area is in a state of flux, this provides a unique opportunity to observe the fluid boundaries of observances as congregations and the community find what is comfortable and meaningful. However, it also presents a difficulty in that it is hard to draw any definitive

conclusions about the future of these observances and thus to compare them with the more established rituals and liturgies of the earlier chapters. Thus whether or not the Holocaust will eventually be seen as falling outside the paradigm is not yet able to be determined, but conclusions will be drawn based on the current liturgies which show that, for now, elements of the paradigmatic response have been incorporated and it is likely that observances will fit more easily into the traditional models as time passes, as has been the trend thus far.

Thus this thesis will demonstrate the potential of all disasters which strike Jewish communities to rupture the world view and belief system of those same communities. One of the reasons why these tragedies do not destroy Jewish belief is that through the liturgy and ritual they are reconceptualized and conceived of as being part of or subsumed under the covenantal relationship. Further, through the ritual and liturgical responses to the catastrophe- impending, during and in the aftermath- the victims have a forum in which they may express otherwise unpopular or frightening thoughts and emotions. Also these structured periods of time provide the worshippers with a sense that they have some control over their environment, fate and destiny.

CHAPTER ONE:

RESPONSES TO NATURAL DISASTERS IN THE TALMUD

If you hearken to my commandments... to love Adonai your God and serve Him with all your heart and soul. Then I will provide you with rain for your land in its proper time, the early and the late rains, that you may gather your grain, your wine and your oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle and you will eat and be satisfied.
(Deuteronomy 11: 13-16)

Catastrophic events may take many forms. As human beings we are dependent upon many things for our survival. One which is sometimes taken for granted is the environment and the natural world. There is a regularity to the natural order upon which humans depend. Whether or not the rains come in the proper time can mean the difference between life and death. A plague of locusts can send an agricultural community into ruin. As a result, humans, throughout history, have sought ways to control the natural world. We try to establish order in the face of chaos, to mold and shape the environment so that it offers what is needed, when it is needed. Today, this control is sought through scientific inquiry into the workings of the world. It is thought that if the reasons why the natural world behaves as it does can be ascertained, then its course can be changed to avert any disaster which it can inflict.

The Jews of the ancient world were no different. They too sought to control the natural world so that it yielded sustenance, enough for survival. The difference is that they went as far as possible empirically in terms of human agency then they called upon God to intercede in the matters which they could not directly control.

The God of the Israelites was the God of history and the God of nature. Just as God created the natural world and its order, so too did God continue to affect its operation, for eternity. When the crops failed, when the rains did not come, when too much rain came, pestilence, plague and all manner of aberrations in the standard order, were a sign of divine displeasure. Thus, to affect any change in the outcome of God's work, to avert disaster or minimize one in which you were embroiled, it was necessary to communicate with God. The community was required to petition and plead on its own behalf and the means of communication were ritual and prayer.

At the basis of this entire system of prayer and ritual associated with the environment was the assumption that order and structure existed in the world. All occurrences in nature were considered a part of that order, even the aberrations. For if there were no such order, one is left only with chaos. It is impossible to influence and to control blind nature, but if the workings of the environment are part of a plan, then that plan can be understood at a certain level and perhaps even influenced. The Israelites of Talmudic times assumed an order existed in the universe and that behind the structure, pulling the strings to cause events to occur, was God. This God of the Jews was not one who randomly determined events but was rather one who acted according to a plan, and reacted to events on earth. What occurred in the earthly realm then had cosmic ramifications. The same God who caused the rains to fall or not could be reached, and appeals could be made to avert disaster. Catastrophe, then, is purposive and has a moral basis. Disaster is brought in order to affect the behavior of God's people. It can be punishment for past acts or an attempt to cause a certain future behavior. Either way, nature is a means by which God sends messages to His people. What is then required of them is a response.

At times when the natural order is behaving benignly, there are certain behaviors required from the people. Even the normal workings of the environment do not happen in a vacuum or as a matter of course. God uses nature to communicate with His people. If they are performing in a way which is pleasing, nature will provide for their needs. However, when the people do not behave in an appropriate or agreeable manner, nature is God's means of communicating His displeasure. Thus the conduct of the Israelite community has the power to affect God's actions and determine whether or not nature will act as friend, satisfying their needs, or as a foe, thwarting them at every turn, bringing disaster and death.

The first means by which the people could communicate with God and affect His actions was through prayer. In order for the environment to continue along its natural course, it was necessary to petition God at the appropriate times and to offer up the prescribed liturgies-be these sacrifices or words in their stead. For example, one of the most pressing problems for the Israelites living in the semi-arable land of the Middle East, was that of rainfall. If there was a severe lack of rain, drought could ensue, resulting in starvation and death, but an abundance could cause the destruction of the crops, leading also to catastrophe. However, the Rabbis believed that ritual and prayer could and did affect the course of nature. One's words and ritual actions could change the prescribed outcome, for better or for worse. Thus it was crucial that the standard prayers petitioning for rain came only at the prescribed times; not before and not after. The wrong prayer could bring destruction upon the community. Thus Mishnah and Talmud tractate *Ta'anit* devote much of the first chapter to discussing when to begin inserting the petitionary prayer for rain, and when to remove it from the liturgy. It was understood that failure to follow such prescriptions could lead to disaster.

Rain at the wrong time is a curse;[2] at the right time, a blessing. Therefore, although the matter is ultimately in the hands of God, we, by our prayers and actions, can change the course of nature, bringing prosperity or destruction.

The bringing of rain is not only a matter of petitioning but it is also inextricably linked with the morality of the Israelite community. "Four times a year is the world judged: At Passover, through grain, at the Pentecost through fruits on the tree, on New Years Day...and at the Feast (Sukkot) they are judged by means of water."[3] In the normal course of events, rain would begin to fall in the land after Sukkot. If rain fell during the festival it would preclude the performance of the mitzvah to dwell in the sukkah; thus it was hoped the rain would not begin until after that date. In order to facilitate this, the prayer petitioning for rain was not inserted into the Amidah until the last day of the festival of Sukkot.[4] Prior to that it was permitted to make mention of the fact that God was the one who "makes the winds blow and sends down rain." Such words of praise for the might and power of God, reminders to Him of His people's loyalty and gratitude at this pivotal time before the rains were to come, were permitted, but any words which could be construed as a petition for rain were forbidden, for they might be efficacious immediately and bring rain at an inappropriate moment.[5] Similarly, very specific details of the time at which one ceases reciting the petition for rain are provided, for it is as important to stop the rains as it is to make them fall. The key is to assist nature to behave in its normal manner, according to the order and structure the people had come to expect.

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[2]M. Ta'anit 1:1 Rain during Sukkot is a sign of a curse
[3]M. Rosh Hashanah 1:2
[4]M. Ta'anit 1:1
[5]ibid.

There was another ritual associated with the bringing of the rains which was enacted prior to the insertion of the petitionary prayer for rain: *Simhat Beit Hashoevah,* the water libation festival. This celebration lasted for six or seven days and it was reported that those who had not experienced the joy of this festival had never experienced complete joy.[6] It was a week of rejoicing and festivities, accompanied by flute playing, dancing and celebration. For seven days a golden vessel would be filled with three logs of water from Siloam and taken to the water gate. There, blasts from the shofar were sounded and the priest ascended the altar and turned to his right. He took two silver bowls containing two holes the size of which would allow the water and wine to be emptied at the same time. The one containing the water was held to the west and the wine to the east. The people would then say to the priest "Lift up thy hand" and he would pour the two substances.[7] This ritual demonstrated to God exactly what they wished to occur; that water would fall from the heavens and flow down upon the ground inducing joy, prosperity and celebration, represented by the wine. The actions themselves constituted sympathetic magic- mechanically they seek to achieve the desired result by "symbolically" enacting it. Such a public display also enabled the people to participate in a rain-bringing celebration similar to those of the other cultures and religious groups amongst whom they resided. The Israelites could thus compete with the pageantry and semi-magical displays of their neighbors. It gave them a sense of pleading with their God, placating Him, celebrating with Him and bringing Him joy with their offerings in His honor.

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[6] M. Sukkot 5:1
[7] ibid. 4:9

At the end of the first day, the men would descend to the court of the women where there were erected four golden candlesticks with four golden bowls on top and four ladders, each leading to the top of one of the candlesticks. Once the crowd had gathered, four priestly youths ascended the ladders carrying 120 logs of oil in jars which they poured ceremonially into the bowls. Wicks, crafted from priestly vestments were placed inside and set alight.[8] So great was the display that "there was not a city in Jerusalem which did not reflect the light of the water libation."[9] This light was a symbol of God's glory and goodness, and was a further appeal to judge the people favorably at this pivotal time. It also served a practical purpose of enabling the festivities to continue well into the early hours of the morning, for there was so much rejoicing at this time that there was no Israelite who slept other than on the shoulder of his friend.[10]

Once the lamps were lit, the evening's festivities began in earnest. Pious, religious men began to dance with burning torches in their hands singing songs and praises to God.[11] The appearance is that of an Israelite rain dance. The most pious were reported to perform almost superhuman feats in their praises of God. Rabban Gamaliel, when he rejoiced, took eight lighted torches and threw them in the air, and none would touch the other. He then prostrated himself by digging his thumbs into the ground, bending, kissing the dirt and then drawing himself up again.[12] Such behavior added to the carnival-like atmosphere of this great festival of rejoicing and celebration to God. Levites played upon harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and musical instruments standing on the fifteen steps

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[8]ibid. 5:2-3
[9]ibid. 5:3
[10]b. Ta'anit 53a
[11]M. Ta'anit 5:4
[12]b. Ta'anit 53a

leading from the women's court to the court of the Israelites. These fifteen steps were held to represent the fifteen songs of ascent in the psalms; more praises to God.

In the midst of such levity however, it could be possible to forget for whom the celebration was being conducted and to whom the praises were due. Thus another element was added whereupon two priests would ascend the steps to the upper gate. As the cock crowed, the shofar was sounded and the two men turned to face the west. A hush would descend on the crowd, the celebrations halting and an expectant silence ensued. The priests then recited: "Our fathers, when in this place, turned their backs to the Temple of the Lord, and their faces and eyes towards the east. But our eyes are turned to the Lord." The assembled masses would then repeat; "We are the Lord's and our eyes are turned to the Lord."[13] So ended the festivities, with an affirmation of faith and trust in God. It is interesting to note that in most prayers of supplication, petition or praise, there is an invocation of the ancestors as noble paradigms of righteousness. Here instead, they are berated and considered to be less than worthy of God's grace. They are held up as idolaters and unfaithful to their own God. This was probably used as a stern warning to the people gathered for the festival, to keep their eyes fixed upon the Temple and their God. So although the practices of the evening's festivities might appear similar to those of other peoples, they were different, they were intended as praise of the God of the Israelites and it was He alone who would choose whether or not to cause the rains to fall in their appropriate season. It was this God to whom their praise and petitions must be directed.

[13]M. Ta'anit. 5:4

Once the initial water festivities were ended, the prayer for rain was inserted in the daily ritual and the people waited for the rains to come. If the community had been reciting the prayers at the appropriate times and the rains still did not fall, there was a call for more drastic action. A series of three fasts was instituted for three consecutive days. During this time one could eat and drink after dark, as well as bathe, anoint, wear leather shoes and indulge in sexual relations.[14] These initial fasts were for pious, distinguished individuals alone, identified in the *Gemara* as Rabbis, Torah scholars and leaders of the community. The *Gemara* also holds that since fasting is an act of deprivation and not enjoyment, others might choose to join those required to fast.[15] Should the month of Kislev arrive and there was still no rain, a series of three community fasts were instituted. The first two fasts were carried out for three days each, the final fast for seven days.[16] Thus, the response was graduated and finely tuned.

Fasting was a means of self-mortification. Faced with death at the hands of God and a natural disaster, the Israelite community let out a cry to God for attention. They willingly placed themselves one step closer to death in the hope that God would take pity upon them and remove the danger. They behaved as do many victims, hurting themselves in the hope that the antagonist will see there is no further need for punishment. Fasting is also an act of faith. It is a means of dramatically demonstrating that the future is in the hands of God. Life and death are matters for God and, by fasting, the Israelites placed themselves in God's hands; whether they lived or died was a matter for God alone. It is an act by

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[14]M. Ta'anit 1:4
[15]b.Ta'anit 10b
[16]M. Ta'anit 1:5-6

which one cedes control in order to exert control and thus negotiate with nature. This is part of the human need for control, especially in the midst of chaos. The crisis seems more bearable if one has a course of action, if there is some way to take back a small semblance of control. Although fasting is an act whereby one gives up a little control, by so doing one is also taking back some of the power by assuming that the situation can be affected by the community placing themselves in danger.

Fasts were called for a variety of other natural disasters and communal crises which, if left unchecked, could result in mass death and destruction. The Talmud calls for communal fasts to be instituted 1) when the plants or crops have changed in an unusual manner, but not if they are already dried up, for then they are beyond help; 2) if the rains have stopped for forty days, or the wrong kind of rain falls; 3) if buildings which are not liable to collapse do so; 4) if there is a plague, defined as the death of three people on three consecutive days in a town of 500 foot soldiers, or if there is blight, mildew, an attack of wild beasts or swordsmen.[17] As wild beasts were not an uncommon sight, it was necessary to clarify at what point they became a matter for which it was necessary to appeal directly to God. It was decreed that when the beasts were behaving in an unusual manner, that was an indication that they were sent by God as a message or warning; thereupon it was necessary to appeal directly to God for the disaster to be averted. Thus if a beast appeared during the day in the city, and chose to attack only one person, there was a strong probability that the beast in question was sent by none other than God Himself and as such required a petition to Him for its removal.[18] 5)If a city were surrounded by non-

[17]b. Ta'anit 18b-22b
[18]ibid. 22a

Jews, or a ship were tossed at sea it was permitted to sound the alarm and to institute a fast.[19] Thus it can be seen that there is little distinction made between natural disasters and those which are the result of human depredation, such as marauders; all were believed to have originated with God and were therefore within His power alone to contain. For the Israelite, God is the God of both nature and history.

When the third of the series of fasts for the bringing of rain was called there were a number of accompanying rituals and activities which were required from the people. These acts are poignant and powerful additions to the fasting which bring even more solemnity to the day's events. Each one was intended to have an effect upon both God and the worshipping community, reminding them of the gravity of their current situation and the importance of the ritual in which they were participating.

First, the Ark, with the Torah scrolls inside, was carried out to the town square.[20] Once there, burnt ashes were placed upon the ark and the service and ritual were conducted in the open air. The Rabbis asked why the ark was to be taken outside the sanctuary. Rabbi Hiyya Bar Abbah suggested that the people had already cried out to God in the privacy of their sanctuary and now it was necessary to do so publicly.[21] There is some merit to this argument. The Israelites believed that a portion of the blame for the lack of rain must lie with them and such public humiliation was the very least they deserved. Just as fasting was a means of self-beration, so too was the public displacement of their

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[19]b. Ta'anit 18b-22b
[20]M. Ta'anit 2:1
[21]b. Ta'anit 16a

most sacred objects. Thus Rabbi Hiyya Bar Abbah elaborates that we bring the Torah with the Ark into the street to signify that we had a sacred vessel which is now rendered profane on account of the people's sins.[22] If the Torah is shamed publicly, the humiliation will necessarily be transferred not only to the people, but also to God. It was hoped that God would notice the shame that the people had inflicted upon themselves, that they recognized their wrongdoing and were willing to chastise themselves. Perhaps then God would take notice, feel sympathy and cease His punishment.

Further, in the Rabbinic world, it was extremely important to maintain God's dignity and uphold God's justice before the other nations. It was the role of the Chosen People to stand for God and be a light to the nations. The act of taking the Ark to the town square and covering it with ashes was humiliation not just of themselves but also of God. Perhaps in the face of such embarrassment, God would choose to help them and to see that they had been punished enough. Rav Yehudah says that the ashes are placed on the Ark to demonstrate that God is in mourning with the people.[23] God is intricately linked with His chosen ones; their humiliation is His.

However, the ritual was to have a far greater effect upon God than mere public relations in the face of the non-believers. Since the rains were to fall outside, the ritual was moved outside the confines of the sanctuary. This is an instance of sympathetic magic. By moving outside, the people were closer to God; they had a direct, uninterrupted path upon which their prayers could travel. Further, the ritual acted out exactly where the rains were to fall. Perhaps by standing in the

[22] ibid. 16a
[23] ibid.

open courtyard they could will the clouds to roll in and begin to drop their life-giving elixir upon the dry, barren ground. This magical element is most dramatically demonstrated by the story of Honi, who drew a circle on the ground and cajoled God into bringing the rains. When they were not the rains he desired, he stood inside his circle and issued an ultimatum to God, and he was answered.[24] The implication was that the circle itself was somehow efficacious, it was that tangible, physical symbol which compelled God to act.

The symbolic effect of taking the Ark and the Torah out of the sanctuary and placing them in the town square was not felt by God alone. It also had a dramatic effect upon the people who participated in the rite. To see their most sacred and protected objects taken out of the shelter of the sanctuary to the relative dangers of the outside and marked with the ashes of mourning was a very powerful and emotive sight. Further, this act of 'desecration' was undertaken not by the enemy but by the people themselves. There could be no more evocative symbol of the danger and horror of their sins, the sins which had prevented the rain from falling. Rav Zeira said that to see this ritual caused his entire body to tremble, since it evoked such drama, fear and shame. That the Torah should suffer as they did was almost too much to bear.[25] There could be no greater call to the people to change their ways, and there could be no louder cry to God for mercy.

Once the ashes had been placed on the Torah and the Ark, they were placed on the head of the Nasi and the president of the court. The ashes were placed by others, not by the individuals themselves, for the humiliation is far greater when

[24] M. Ta'anit 3:8
[25] b. Ta'anit. 16a

it is performed by another.[26] Further, it increases the drama and public nature of the event; even the highest amongst the people are brought low and humbled before the might and power of God and in the face of their sins. The significance of the ashes is further enhanced by placing them on the forehead in lieu of tefillin so that ornamentation has been replaced with ashes.[27] The ashes are then placed upon the heads of the entire community to symbolize their mourning and repentance before God.[28] This process is a visible, public humiliation and one which evoked great fear, trepidation and humility amongst the people. Their elders, always in control and dignified, are brought low before the people and they, too, are degraded and humbled in order to invoke God's power and might on their behalf, to compel God to save them.

Ashes are a very potent symbol in Judaism. They are used in rites of mourning and evoke memories of the fear and powerlessness one feels when faced with death and loss. They are reminders of the fickle nature of life, that we will all return to dust and are indeed nothing more than dust and ashes.[29] However, there is an even more powerful memory which the sight of ashes can cause the Jew to recall: the ashes of the ram which was sacrificed in place of Isaac. Once before, God was placated with the ashes of a ram, perhaps they will be sufficient substitute in the place of human ashes again. They were offered in the hope that they would call to mind that moment in history when Isaac was spared and God would once more be becalmed. It was thought the ashes also would remind God

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[26]ibid.
[27]ibid.
[28]M. Ta'anit. 2:1
[29]b. Ta'anit 16a.

of Abraham's faithfulness and his merit would be accounted to his descendants for blessing and for good.[30]

The rituals thus described were powerful and alone were no doubt sufficient to strike fear into the Israelites and to evoke the sympathy of their God. However, due to the gravity of the situation before them, there were still further means of beratement, self-imposed suffering and methods of attracting God's attention to their plight. After the ashes were placed upon the foreheads of the people, an elder was called before the community to rebuke them with words of admonition. He reminded the community that the outward appearances of repentance were not sufficient; they must be accompanied by true repentance. He recalled the people of Nineveh to whom God said that sackcloth and ashes were not sufficient repentance; there must also be a change of heart and a real desire to turn away from evil and embrace God and God's laws. The Talmud expounds upon a verse in Lamentations which states that we must turn both heart and hands to God, to indicate that if a man goes to the mikveh with uncleanliness still upon his hands, no amount of water will sufficiently cleanse him, but one who approaches having cast away all his sin, will be purified with the minimum of water.[31] Thus the Talmud teaches that having the appearance of one who has repented is indeed important, but the intention is of equal value.

Until this point the drama of the event had been slowly building. The tension rose with each step in the performance at the town square. Having sufficiently humbled the people, alerted them to the severity of the crisis they faced, and the importance of their individual actions and thoughts, the community was ready to

[30] ibid.
[31] ibid.

pray and to confront God most directly; heart to heart, mind to mind. With words and thoughts, the community now sought to change the course of events and take control of nature and their environment by petitioning God.

The petition to God was a series of additions to the *tefillah* invoking God's active providence in the past.[32] By evoking the power of these moments in history, the community hoped to rekindle in God the spark of love, devotion and justice which caused Him to act in history and save their ancestors. Perhaps such an invocation would stir God to act on their behalf once more. Maybe He would act because of the merit of their ancestors whom He rescued at seminal moments in the past. Further, the simple act of calling these revered ancestors to mind, could inspire them to petition God on behalf of their descendants. Finally, such hearkening to the past served to bring hope to a bewildered, frightened and helpless people. When these prayers were recited, they were said in the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation. When the normal channels had failed to produce the desired results and the outcome of another failed attempt could mean death, the people cried out to God in the most raw and harsh of terms. In this atmosphere, the people needed the security of knowing that God had not abandoned them, that He could hear their pleas and, more importantly, had the desire and the power to save them. So they called to mind times in the past when God had so acted, when God had saved His chosen ones from what appeared to be certain disaster. It was a reminder that God could help and that their prayers and actions were not in vain; they could be answered.

[32]M. Ta'anit 2:2-4

To facilitate the efficacy of these pleas, the shofar was sounded after each blessing whereupon the people answered, "Amen"[33] The sound of the shofar, like so many ritual acts, evoked a myriad of different memories, images and feelings. The blowing of the shofar is linked with all fast day liturgies and hence also with the theme of repentance and forgiveness. Also, there is a very strong connection between the sounding of the shofar and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On these days, too, it is sounded as a means to rouse the people to action, to call to them to repent and turn from their ways. Its mournful sounds also echo a warning that disaster befalls those who fail to heed its call. Further, the call hearkens again to the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac. The tradition recounts that the ram which was caught in the thicket was one of the magical things created on the first Sabbath eve at twilight.[34] As such it possesses magical powers. Its left horn was said to have been used for the shofar with which God sounded the alarum at Sinai, and the right will be used to herald the coming of the messiah and the ingathering of the exiles.[35] Thus the sound of the shofar evokes images of the moment in history when God pledged His covenant to protect His people, and hearkens to the time when it will be sounded again by God when the fulfillment of His promise is reached; the messianic time. The shofar also recalls Abraham and Isaac's faith and sacrifice on Mount Moriah. It was hoped that a blast on the shofar would awaken in the people these images and bring them hope.

The shofar, like the ashes, was not just a reminder to the people, but also a reminder to God. It was thought that through its sound God could be aroused

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[33]M.Ta'anit 2:4

[34]B. Pesachim, 54a

[35]Shalom Speigel, The Last Trial, pp. 38-39

and the memory of His past redemptive acts on His people's behalf recalled. Similarly, the shofar was sounded at the new moon as a reminder to God of His people.[36] The shofar also was thought to remind God of the merit of Abraham so that it might be accounted to his descendants and it might be "as if" they bound themselves upon the altar before God. By sounding the shofar they were saying that they were indeed bound before God as a sacrifice. They starved themselves with a self-imposed fast in order that they too could die for the sake of God's name. They demonstrated that they were faithful servants, who like Isaac, were willing to place themselves on the sacrificial altar. The shofar called forth all these images with its blast, and it was hoped also that the call would be efficacious and perform its intended magic.

Six blessings were added to the eighteen of the *Amidah* during these special fast days. The first, *zichronot,* is the same sequence of biblical verses offered on Rosh Hashanah which invokes God's remembrance of the Jews at pivotal moments in history. Next, *shofarot,* recited on Rosh Hashanah, characterizes the shofar and calls to mind God's acts of redemption. Rav Yehuda disagrees about the inclusion of these two passages and suggests they are only appropriate on Rosh Hashanah. Instead he substitutes 1Kings 8:37, "If there be famine in the land if there be pestilence." and Jeremiah 14:1 "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah regarding the droughts."[37] The final four additions are recitations from various psalms in which the psalmist calls upon God from a position of extreme degradation and sorrow and is answered or declares his faith and trust that God will indeed heed his cry. The first is Psalm 120 "In my distress I called out to the Lord and He answered me." Next Psalm 121: "I will lift

[36]Ibid. 75-76
[37]M Ta'anit, 2:3

my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come? From the Lord God of heavens and the earth." The third Psalm is 130: "Out of the depths I cried out to You..." and finally Psalm 102 "A prayer for the afflicted when he faints."[38]

Once again, the prayers addressed both God and the worshippers. Both were forced to call to mind the prayers of the faithful, those who knew from whence their help would come. They trusted in God and placed their troubles in God's hands, and from thence they were delivered. This imbued the worshippers with a sense of hope and empowerment at a time when it seemed there was nothing they could do. They were reminded that there was indeed a course of action open to them: prayer. With their words they, too, could bring deliverance from the crisis in which they were embroiled. There was hope for them as there was hope for those who came before; all that was required was trust and faith in God. Alongside this it was thought that God, too, would be reminded again of His faithful servants. He would remember the way he helped in the past and perhaps even call to mind the merits of the ancestors and account them to Israel's favor.

Finally, to each psalm was added a concluding benedictory formula which was recited before the shofar blast. Each one recalled an historical event wherein God rescued the Israelite people from otherwise certain destruction. They called upon the God who answered their prayers in times past to answer their prayers that day. The first was an extended conclusion to the seventh blessing in the *Amidah* which invokes "He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah, May He answer you, and hearken to the sound of your crying on this day. Blessed are

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[38]ibid.

You Adonai, Redeemer of Israel." This is a somewhat expanded version of the *geulah* benediction. The second calls upon " He who answered our forefathers at the Red Sea...who remembers forgotten things." Next, the God who " answered Joshua at Gilgal...hearkens to the sound of the shofar." The God who "answered Samuel at Mitzpeh... hearkens to those who cry." The one who "answered Elijah at Carmel...who hearkens to prayer," the God who answered Jonah in the belly of the fish...who answers prayer in times of trouble" and "who answered David and Solomon his son in Jerusalem...who has mercy on the land."[39] These passages, like those which precede them, are designed to evoke, from God, sympathy for His people's plight, and to give the people themselves a semblance of hope by reminding them of the efficacy of prayer and the power of their words. God does listen to the communication from His people and, furthermore, God responds.

Having devoted much attention to the precise formula, language and performative ritual which accompanies the fast, both the Mishna and the Talmud continue with a series of stories about people who have had their prayers for rain answered. Like the recitation, this reminds those who are petitioning God that prayers are indeed answered. However the stories place less emphasis upon the importance of the words and actions of the praying community and more upon the merits of those who offer their prayers to God.

First there is a group of stories about communities which have declared a fast, have prayed and the rain still does not fall. Then when a certain individual prays, the rain comes. The question is asked, what is it that these individuals have

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[39] ibid. 2:4

done to merit the rainfall on their behalf? The answer is given by way of illustrations, that they have performed acts of supererogatory piety, generosity and charity. Ilfa brought rain with his prayers when others were unable to do so. When he was asked what he had done to warrant such special favor in God's eyes, he replied that he brought wine for kiddush and havdalah to those who were unable to afford their own.[40] Another story tells of a city which was spared from the plague because one righteous man loaned another a shovel for burial of his relative.[41] Such small, seemingly inconsequential acts of kindness were enough to save whole communities of people.

The merit was not reserved for the men; women, too, were often paradigms of righteousness. There is the tale of a woman whose neighborhood was the only one left standing following a large fire. At first it was thought the area was saved because of Rav, but upon investigation it was discovered that it was for the honor of a woman whose practice was to light a fire in the stove each day and invite others to use the heat.[42] Another city was spared because of the acts of jesters who make peace between people.[43] Or the story of the prison guard whose act of separating men and women in the cells warranted the reward of saving his city.[44] Thus it is the acts of ordinary people which merit a response from God. One does not have to be a sage and scholar to receive reward from Heaven and to have one's prayers answered; rather, all that is required is an act of charity and benevolence towards someone less fortunate. These stories are a constant reminder to the people that they do count, that their actions could be

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[40]b. Ta'anit 24a
[41]ibid. 21b
[42]ibid.
[43]ibid. 22a
[44]ibid.

the ones which save their community. Great pains are taken to demonstrate that it is in fact often not the rabbis who bring the rain or avert the disasters, but rather the ordinary folk.

Thus these tales are both empowering and cautionary; small actions can have large consequences.

In fact righteousness can override almost anything else in the bringing of rain or averting a disaster. The Talmud relates that Rav decreed a fast but there was no rain until the prayer leader stood and said; "He who causes the wind to blow," whereupon the wind began to blow; when he said "He who causes the rain to fall," the rain fell. The rabbis were puzzled about why the prayer leader was able to bring the rain with his words, when the community had failed to do so with their fasting. Upon further inquiries, they discovered that the prayer leader was a teacher of children. He showed no discrimination between the rich and the poor and he gave of his services freely to those who were unable to pay. It was this which merited the rain and not the fasting of the community.[45] So although the act of fasting is important, it alone is not deemed efficacious. Such is the case also in the story of Rav Papa who decreed a fast during which Rav Nachman had to eat. He did so and was mocked and chastised by the community for breaking the fast. Rav Nachman was so distressed and pained by the events that his prayers reached God's ears and the rain began to fall for his sake alone.[46] Thus, the distress of the righteous alone can cause prayers to be answered, even if they are unable to follow the ritual prescriptions. The same is the case with the rabbi who challenged God, saying, "Samuel alone brought rain with his prayers and our whole community is fasting and praying and yet there is

[45]ibid. 24b
[46]ibid.

nothing!" He was so distressed and upset that God took pity upon him and answered his prayers.[47] Again, the state of mind of the righteous was the factor which moved God to action, and not the fast of the community.

There are traditions which maintain that just as fasting is not necessarily the act which can cause God to save a community from disaster, so too is prayer alone not sufficient. The words of prayer themselves will not necessarily be efficacious. Thus there is tension between ritual efficacy and moral behavior. For example, there is the tale of a community which offered prayers for rain and there was no positive response. Rabbi Akiva came and offered a different formula whereupon the rains came. The people challenged their leaders, asking if it was the case that Rabbi Akiva's formula was more pleasing than their own. The leaders replied that it was indeed not the formula which was efficacious but rather that Rabbi Akiva himself was more worthy of being answered.[48] These tales are empowering for the people who are in the midst of the crisis facing their communities. They are suffering and in the midst of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. It is difficult for them to see that relief could arrive and how exactly it could happen. These tales remind the ordinary people that if they cannot recite the words of the prayers exactly, and if they are not learned and scholarly, or accustomed to speaking with God, it does not matter. What does matter is that they are righteous, good and caring people. If that is the case then there is much they can do. It could be their prayers alone which bring relief from the disaster, it could be their help that the community needs.

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[47]ibid. 24a
[48]ibid. 25b

The rabbis also include in their stories paradigmatic accounts of the people who are righteous so that the readers and listeners know the course of action they must take in order to have their prayers answered. Many of the tales describe the paradigmatic rabbinic Jew. One example is the story about all Israel being on a pilgrimage. They are tired and in desperate need of water. They arrive at a village and ask the ruler for the use of his wells promising that they will be brimming with water from God by the end of the day. The ruler agrees on the condition that if they are not refilled, he be paid twelve talents of silver. When the end of the day neared and no rain was forthcoming, the ruler sought payment of his silver, believing that it would not be possible for the wells to be filled in the time remaining before sundown. The Israelite leader told him to wait, for there was still time. The ruler mocked the Israelite God and went to the bathhouse to celebrate his new wealth. The leader of the Israelites donned his tallit and prayed to God, challenging that all that he did, he did for the honor of God, not for himself. Then it began to rain, but the sun had already sunk beneath the horizon and the ruler returned to collect his money. At that moment the sun appeared again and remained shining until the wells were full.[49] The Israelite protagonist of this story was righteous and acted as the rabbis would hope the congregation would behave, turning to God in prayer and faithfulness at times of distress. The people, too, were on a pilgrimage to honor God, an act favored by the Rabbis. Further, God acted when His credibility amongst the nations was being threatened. All these factors apply to a community waiting for rain. It can begin to lose faith in God's ability to act, it begins to feel embarrassed amongst the other religious groups on account of its God's impotence in the face of disaster, and it worries that there is no course of action. This story, and others

[49]ibid. 20a

like it, show that there is a way to petition God and that is through prayer and righteous deeds, behaving as a good Rabbinic Jew.

In this context, we recall the aforementioned tales of those who act righteously by merely helping others in their need. The deeds performed are often not heroic but rather regular, relatively easy acts of humanity. Most of them involve helping others perform a mitzvah, something which it is in the Rabbis' interest to see performed each day. Women and men are equally able to become righteous and merit great events occurring for their sake. The Rabbis here affirm that, if one reaches a certain plane of righteousness, not only can one's prayers be answered but miracles may be performed on his/her behalf. Such was the case with a certain rabbi who wished to remove the wine from his house which was near collapse. He brought Rabbi Addah bar Ahavah along, for he knew that the walls would remain standing as long as he was in the house. He invited the rabbi inside and there he remained until the wine was removed whereupon the two left the residence and the house immediately collapsed.[50] There are numerous other stories of those who have reached such a level of righteousness that they are worthy of having miracles performed on their behalf. Most are Rabbis, which suggests that the highest merit comes from the rabbinic life of prayer, study and performing the mitzvot.

Another important quality found in these righteous miracle workers is modesty. It was extremely important that they not be credited with the saving power but rather that God be heralded for His actions. The most righteous and meritorious were those who ensured that they received no praise for their deeds, and those

[50]ibid. 20b

who were able to act anonymously received the highest reward. Such was Hanan Hanehba, so named because he hid in the toilet after bringing the rains because he wanted no accolades or praise.[51] Similar is the tale told of the man who took great pains to dress and give the appearance that he was going out to buy grain while he took himself to a place far from the people and there offered his prayer for rain. He was most concerned that he receive no praise for the rain, but rather the praise go to God.[52] There are numerous stories with the same theme, all establishing that it is God who provides the rain and not human beings, no matter how righteous or how astounding their magical powers. This is also an attempt to refute the claims of other peoples and cultures who might argue that their magic can cause the rain to fall independent of God. The Talmud teaches that the true 'rainmakers' are those who do not promote their abilities, for they know that they are successful only because God chooses to listen to their pleas, and not as a result of any innate powers or magical prowess.

The Jerusalem Talmud, too, is replete with tales of the righteous who are able, through the favor they have found with God, to have their pleas for mercy answered. Even a man known as Pentakacha, who committed five sins a day, was rewarded by having his prayers answered after he performed a righteous act. He saved a woman from having to become a prostitute to raise the ransom for her husband by selling his bed and clothes and giving her the money.[53] This is yet another way of demonstrating that there is hope for everyone to have their prayers answered, since the man who committed five sins each day was worthy

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[51]ibid. 23b
[52]ibid. 23b
[53]Y. Ta'anit 1:4

on account of one righteous act. Thus all are capable and each person's prayers are valuable and important, for no one knows who will be the one to bring about the end of the disaster.

Despite all the assurances that prayers will be answered, sometimes they are clearly not answered by God and that eventuality required an explanation on the part of the rabbis. One suggested that perhaps it was like a king who had two daughters. He enjoyed the company of one very much and the other daughter caused him great distress and frustration. When both children come to him with a request he would grant that of the annoying child quickly because he wants her to leave his presence. However the other daughter he keeps awhile so that he may enjoy her company a little longer. It is the same with Israel, argued the rabbis. Sometimes God likes to hear the sounds of His people, their voices rising in song and praise, so he tarries a little in granting the request so that he may enjoy their attention and company for a little longer.[54] Other responses are, however, less favorable and less forgiving of the Israelite people and of God. One suggests that God delays in responding because He wants the people to suffer a little.[55] This explanation does not say whether or not the Israelites deserved the punishment. Perhaps God is toying with His people before bringing an answer to their pleas. This presents an image of an arbitrary God who has no regard for His people's suffering. Also included is the proposition that God only receives prayers when they are sent at the correct time. If prayers are not uttered when God wants them, they will not be answered.[56]Again this seems arbitrary and places the ones offering the prayer at a distinct disadvantage; they

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[54]Y. Ta'anit 3:4
[55]B. Talmud 25b
[56]ibid. 24b

do not know when the appropriate time might be and they can then never be certain that their God will even hear, let alone respond. When disaster strikes, people feel an extreme sense of powerlessness and loss of control. Such explanations as this for God's lack of immediate response do nothing to relieve the victims of these emotions.

In the Rabbinic world-view there was no question that God was the one who was the cause of all events which occurred in the world. It was God who allowed people to suffer and it was God who could alleviate suffering. What was required of the victims was to ask for help. In times of trauma and crisis there is an extreme feeling of powerlessness. The victims feel lost, alone and afraid. At moments such as these, appeal to structure and order imposed upon their lives from an outside source can renew strength and restore some semblance of control and hope. The prayers and rituals provided in Tractate *Ta'anit* create such an order. They provide a strict and rigid system whereby the victims can have an impact upon the crisis in which they are embroiled. The Rabbis tell them that they can do something, that there is indeed order and structure in the world and in their lives, that disasters occur for a reason and their behavior can alter the course of events.

Each of the prayers and ritual acts, as well as prescribing a structured course of action, is intended to imbue the participants with a sense of hope and order. The words and actions recall moments in history where people just like themselves have been rescued and saved. They demonstrate that there is a plan in the universe, that all is not chaos, and that it is their God, the God of Israel, who controls the outcome. Moreover, they are empowered to influence that pattern and order, to arrange a favorable outcome if they but act and behave in a

certain manner. Individuals can have an effect. Each person is important and needed, for it may be his/her action which is meritorious enough to save the whole community.

Alongside this is also the notion that the words of prayer and rituals themselves can be efficacious, distinct from the character of the people by whom they are uttered and performed. Each act and prayer is carefully positioned, ordered and phrased so as to have an effect upon the God to whom they are addressed. If, by their words, they can cause God to recall His past actions in history and remember His attachment to them, they may encourage Him so to act once more. They are also thought to have an almost magical effect. When the shofar is sounded and the ancestors recalled, there may also be enough power to stir them to petition before God on the people's behalf. Words and actions properly ordered can be powerful evocators of emotion and feelings not just within the earthly realms but in the heavenly ones as well. What is performed here on earth has cosmic ramifications and they are not to be taken lightly. Thus, prayer and ritual become all-important means by which one's community can be rescued from almost certain disaster. At times of severe crisis, the communities turned to prayer and ritual to summon the strength and power of their magic to act on their behalf.

CHAPTER TWO:

RESPONSES TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLES

I will establish my dwelling in your midst, and I will not abhor you. I will be ever present among you: I will be your God and you will be my people...But if you do not obey me and do not observe all these commandments...I will spurn you. I will lay your cities in ruin and make your sanctuaries desolate...I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheath the sword against you. Your land shall become a desolation and your cities a ruin.
(Leviticus: 26: 11-33)

Josephus wrote of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE: "One would have thought that the hill itself, on which the Temple stood, was seething hot from its base, it was so full of fire on every side; and yet the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them. For the ground was nowhere visible for the dead bodies that lay on it."[57] The descriptions of the scenes of the Temple's destruction rival in horror those of the Crusader period and the later descriptions of the concentration camps. Jewish history is spattered with the blood of thousands of people, killed for the sake of their religion. During the battles with the Romans over the Judean independence, a large number of Jews lost their lives. However horrific was that fact, it was surpassed by the terror of the concept that with no Temple, there could no longer be any communication with God, no more forgiveness for sin. Thus this event loomed as one of the most shattering for the Jewish community and could have meant the end of Judaism forever.

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[57] Josephus, The Jewish War, vi, 275-276.

That did not occur. The Jews rose from the ashes of the Temple, battered and bruised but not beaten. From the depths of disaster and horror, the Rabbis formed and molded a different Judaism, they introduced rituals and liturgies to replace the Temple sacrifices and by so doing, saved Judaism from being burnt in the fire on the Temple Mount. However, the wounds to the heart and soul of the people were not soothed completely by the continuity of Judaism in a different form, they still needed a balm to cool and alleviate the pain of their wounds. This was accomplished, in part, by the creation of memorial liturgies and rituals as well as the institution of four fasts to commemorate the events of this period and memorialize and mourn the dead.

One of these fasts, Tisha be Av, the Ninth of Av, has, over the years, become the receptacle into which historic disasters and catastrophes have been placed. Each historical tragedy subsequent to the destruction of the Temple is viewed through the paradigmatic lens of the Temple's destruction and the details of the event subsumed by the greater need to see each catastrophe as a revisitation of the destruction. This chapter will briefly consider the reactions of the population to the destructions themselves and the subsequent re-shaping of Jewish practice such that prayer and study become the predominant forms of worship and contact with God. Then, the various liturgies and rituals designated for Tisha be Av will be analyzed.

During the Temple period, Jews contacted God 'indirectly' through priests and offerings. They worshipped, praised and met their God through the bringing of a sacrifice to the Temple and handing it to the priest who then made the necessary arrangements with God Himself. There were a number of occasions during the calendar year when individuals were required to appear at the

Temple and for many, that was the sum total of the religious experience. These visits to the Temple, however few and far between, were the means by which the order of the world was maintained. The bringing of rain, the flourishing of crops, good fortune for individuals and the community were dependent upon the Temple and the priests. How devastating it must have been then, when the means of contacting God and communicating with Him was burned to the ground. This catastrophe called into question the covenantal basis of Judaism and the very existence of the Israelite God. The question was asked: how could an all powerful, omnipresent God allow such devastation to strike His own people? How could He remove from their midst the only means by which His Chosen People could communicate with Him? Was it the hand of God that caused this destruction or, almost worse, was He powerless to prevent it? The most pressing question facing the survivors however, was how it would now be possible to prevent the world from caving in and falling into its foundations, returning to the primordial chaos of *tohu va vohu*.

When faced with this challenge, many Jews turned away from Judaism completely, ~~A large number had been captured and sold into slavery, and in the depths of despair, having no more hope or faith in their God, they adopted the religion of their new masters. Others~~ adopted the Gnostic, dualist solution. On the opposite end of the spectrum was a group which called themselves the *Avelei Tzion*, the mourners of Zion. These Jews rejected the possibility that life could continue as normal in the absence of the Temple. They were plunged into the depths of mourning from which they would not be roused. They refused to have children, for there was no future for them to inherit, so it would be an act in futility and cruelty to bring them into this world. Further, they instituted mourning rites, such as refraining from meat and wine, to be practiced uninterrupted until

the Temple was rebuilt. They did use their energy and grief to work towards the recreation of the Temple, but their efforts proved to be in vain.[58] Further, they were roundly criticized by the Rabbis, now the leaders of the Jewish remnant: "Not to mourn at all is impossible, but to mourn too much is also impossible because the majority of the community cannot live this way."[59]

The Rabbis urged the people to continue to hope and have faith that meaning could be found within the framework of their religious faith. With the destruction of the Temple, God moved further away from His people. His presence was not manifest but rather more hidden and obscured. The challenge facing the Jews who sat in the ashes of the Temple, was to find God again, make contact and discover a new means of ensuring the world's continued existence. The Rabbis became the predominant voice in the resolution of this challenge. They proposed that the covenant with God was not broken by the destruction, it was not over but rather the two parties had moved to a new and different stage in their relationship. The community would now have to take more responsibility for their worship and contact with God. No longer were they able to use priests and sacrifices to reach the Divine, instead they would have to offer their own sacrifices; ones which came from the heart and the soul. The Rabbis insisted God was still present, it was just more difficult to find Him. If one looked, one could see Him in the workings of nature and in the world around them. God could be found and praised in nature, in every day miracles. As such, daily prayers thanking God for His acts in the world, the sanctification of the profane and ordinary to transform it into something holy, was a major feature of the new Rabbinic teachings and practices. Blessings and prayers for daily living were

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[58]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 283-288

[59]Babylonian Talmud, Baba Rathra, 60b as found in Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 290

devised, and the recitation thereof became incumbent upon all Jews. Thus people were encouraged to find God's presence still with them and suffusing their lives with holiness and His spirit.[60] In this manner, the Jews moved from death to life, from despair to hope and from sacrifice to prayer. The people could once again be assured of receiving God's favor and love, forgiveness for their sins and the continuity of the special and unique relationship between God and His people.

Study was also elevated by the Rabbis to the level of the sacrifices. Through the pursuit of learning, an individual was able to be in contact with God. It was more important than ever before, for all people to know and understand what it was that God required from them. It was no longer enough that the priests knew and performed the tasks on behalf of the people, now they were required to each take responsibility for their actions. The Rabbis were available to guide and assist but, unlike the priests, they could not substitute themselves for their people. Initially however, study was a Rabbinic ritual and within their domain. In time, study was incorporated into all aspects of Jewish life and learning, into the liturgy and the home.[61]

Alongside this response of renewing life, hope and faith, the community was still suffering from the grief and pain inflicted by the destruction. Many lost loved ones, friends and relatives to death, slavery or imprisonment. They had witnessed horror and bloody destruction the likes of which had not often struck this people. As a community, they were still in shock, reeling from what their eyes had witnessed but their minds could not yet comprehend. The Rabbis

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[60] Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 287
[61] Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 288-289

recognized the need for everyone, themselves included, to overcome their sorrow and anguish, to deal with the tragedy so that they could move forward into life once more. The only means by which this could be achieved was to confront the pain directly, say what was in people's hearts, minds and thoughts. Once the feelings were expressed, they became legitimate, valid responses to the catastrophe, and the people were relieved of the burden of carrying the emotion inside. Feelings of guilt, anger, terror, fear, hopelessness, faith and hope all found expression in the liturgy, for what more appropriate place could there be to assert and make legitimate the emotions of the people?

In the relatively immediate aftermath messianic prayers already integrated into the daily and festival liturgy, petitioning for the restoration of Zion and the Davidic monarchy took on a new urgency. Later the prayers came to acknowledge that although life can and must continue after the destruction, it is forever tainted and scarred, like the people, from the tragedy. The liturgy expressed sorrow at the loss of the Temple and the lives of so many and it allowed the statement of hope that the Temple would once more be restored to its full glory.

So many aspects of people's lives were infused with an acknowledgment of the catastrophe, in order to encourage life to continue, despite the tragedy. For example, weddings, the paradigmatic occasion for joy and hope for the future, for children and for life, must continue. However, there was a level of joy unable to be reached in the shadow of the horrors witnessed by the people and the mourning over the loss of the Temple. As such, the key was to acknowledge the emotions and not to pretend that life was unchanged by the catastrophe. For example, the building of houses should continue, but a portion of each structure was to be left unfinished, to demonstrate the

incompleteness of the world and of life without the Temple and those who died in order to protect it. Thus life was renewed and reinforced, hope infused into the hearts of the remnant, but still the shadow of the destruction was recognized.

Along with these rituals stating the suffering and degradation of loss, were those offering empowerment, so vital after any catastrophe. The Rabbis asserted, through prayer and ritual, that the Temple could be rebuilt if the people warranted it. Thus the power was invested in the people; it was now up to each individual to bring holiness to their lives, to work to find God again, and then the former glory of Israel could be restored. One of the most overwhelming feelings after a tragedy is the fear which derives from the loss of control and power. Survivors were unable to save their loved ones, there was guilt because the power was wrested from them and their fate and lives placed within the hands of their oppressors. The new Rabbinic model, expressed in these prayers, enabled the survivors to reclaim power and control over their lives and the future. Their feelings were given voice in prayers, wherein they were afforded the opportunity to do homage to their dead, but also they were given the power to control the future, bring order back into the world, and so influence their own destinies once more.

As can be seen, the destruction of the Temple was one of the most pivotal events in Jewish history as it changed modes of worship and ritual practices forever. In the aftermath, many new elements were inserted into the liturgy which remain until this day. However, the destruction had a further impact upon liturgy, history and the Jewish people than the immediate impact of the catastrophe. The mythologizing of the meaning of the destruction by the Rabbis and their successors has led this event to have an elevated role in the

conceptualization of all future disasters. From the events of the destruction, the Rabbis created sacred myth, by reinforcing and revitalizing an old paradigm through which the events of history were forever more to be viewed. The destruction of the Temple was a central feature of the new system of thought and the window through which the past, present and future were forevermore to be viewed. From the destruction onwards, the Rabbis conceived of time in immeasurable, cyclical 'eons' of which there were three; the time when the Temple was standing, now, and the future time to come, the messianic era.[62] In the Rabbinic paradigm, it was the sins of the people which led to the end of time past and the institution of time now and it is those very same sins which constrain us within time now, not progressing to the future time. Every historical event from the time of the destruction fit within the paradigm, "history within time now was thus repetitive, it was cyclical, it was a redundant restatement of the sorry state of affairs that ended time past in the first place."[63] Jewish sacred myth thus conflated all the disasters of recent and ancient memory into one. Each event no longer stood on its own but was rather a repetition of the destruction. This was reflected in the liturgical memorializing and memory of the events of history. Tisha Be Av, the Ninth of Av, became the receptacle for the hurt and frustration felt by the Jews over the numerous disasters which had befallen them since the destruction of the First Temple. "It was hardly necessary therefore to differentiate the accidental details of each and every Ninth of Av catastrophe. From the perspective of Jewish sacred myth, one could integrate the new into the old without changing the old because the new was just the old

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[62]Lawrence Hoffman, Beyond the Text, pg. 82
[63]Lawrence Hoffman, Beyond the Text, pg. 85

revisited."[64] It was for this reason that Tisha be Av was able to represent so many varied events in one commemoration.

The Ninth of Av is one of four fasts that commemorate the destruction of the First Temple. The Ninth of Av is far more significant than the other three, for it also marks a number of other Jewish tragedies. The Mishnah records that Tisha be Av is the memorial for five disasters which have befallen the Jewish people on that day: the destruction of both Temples; the decree that the generation who were freed from Egypt would not be permitted to enter the promised land; the conquest of Betar, the last stronghold of the Bar Kohba rebellion; and the building of a heathen Temple on the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.[65] Since Mishnaic times a number of other tragedies have befallen the Jewish people on the Ninth of Av and they have also been encompassed into the mourning on that day: in 1290 King Edward I decreed that all Jews were to be expelled from England and in 1492 the Jews were similarly expelled from Spain.

Rabbinic myth suggests that it is no coincidence that so many disastrous events have befallen the Jewish people on the Ninth of Av; rather, it is the result of their behavior on that day in years past. The Rabbis call attention to the incident of the spies recorded in the Torah. The Israelites sent twelve spies to scout the land which God had promised the Jewish people. The scouts reported seeing giants inhabiting the land and ten of the twelve advised retreat, thereby suggesting that, despite God's promises to the contrary, they would be unable to defeat the giants and inhabit the land. In response to this report the people began to wail and weep. According to Rabbinic tradition, God, outraged at their

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[64]Lawrence Hoffman, Beyond the Text, pg. 85
[65]M. Ta'anit 4:6

lack of faith and trust in Him, responded; "Since this day you wept without cause I will make this an eternal day of mourning for you."[66] According to rabbinic tradition, this event occurred on the Ninth of Av and is the reason for the abundance of calamities which have befallen Israel on that day. In fact, a number of the events listed by the Mishna did not actually occur on the Ninth of Av but rather on the days before and after that date; however they have been considered to have occurred on the ninth in the mythic memory of Israel. It was important to connect these catastrophes with God and find His hand in any tragedy which befell the Jewish people. If God was involved in the bringing of the disaster, then He could also restore peaceful harmony once again. If it was God, not another powerful enemy, then an appeal could be made to Him and the affliction halted. The alternative was that God had no control at all over the events, which left the people also with no power to alter the course of history in their favor. This would have been too much to bear. In times of crisis it is important to retain some semblance of control, and by placing the disasters within the realm of God's actions, some hope could be wrested from the situation. Just as the disasters of history were preordained and within the control of God, so too were the promises He made, including the covenant and the future redemption.

According to the Rabbis, it is also no co-incidence that Tisha be Av will fall every year on the same day of the week as the previous Passover. The redemption from Egypt which is celebrated at Passover is the sign of God's providence, power and love for His people Israel. It is the beacon lighting the way to the future redemption; God redeemed His people from foreign oppressors once

[66]B. Ta'anit 29a

before and that is the sign forever that He has the power and desire to do so again. Further, the tradition teaches that the one who will herald this future redemption, the Messiah, will be born on the Ninth of Av. Thus hope springs from the ashes of despair. To acknowledge this event, in some communities in Egypt, the women conclude their mourning and dress in white towards the end of the commemoration of Tisha be Av to welcome the Messiah and celebrate the beginning of the redemption. Thus the ritual has a structure; moving from death to life, from mourning to redemption. It anticipates and indeed ritually attempts to hasten and bring about the promised consummation. Hence, it is common to find communities lessen their mourning practices in the afternoon for, one day in the future, the Ninth of Av will become a day of rejoicing.[67] It is interesting to note however that of the forty *kinot*, elegies, recited during Tisha be Av, none make mention of the Messiah.[68] Thus the date of Tisha be Av is imbued with great meaning and hence mythic power.

The ritual movement into mourning occurs gradually, beginning with the first fast on the 17th of Tammuz. The ritual behavior required of the people during this period mirrors the behavior of those who lived through the disaster. Thus the entire period constitutes a re-enactment of the tragedy of the destruction of the Second Temple.[69] The emotional outpourings begin with the fast of the 17th of Tammuz, commemorating the penetration of the wall of the Temple. At this time the people began to realize the dangers which were facing them, and confronted the possibility that there would be more bloodshed before the danger had passed. The commemorative fast is only endured from sunup to sunset and the

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[67]Y. Berachot 2:4

[68]R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, xviii

[69]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 294-299

day is spent in penitential prayer. These activities perhaps mirror those undertaken by the Israelites during the Temple times. They attempted to avert the calamity with fasting and repentance, but all the while was the sense of foreboding and impending disaster. So too do the participants in the commemorative fast, look ahead to Tisha be Av, with despair and unease.

The rituals intensify at the beginning of the month of Av. This time reflects the period of siege in Jerusalem. Each day there was an increase in anxiety and fear, planning for the inevitable battle and continuing attempts to diffuse the situation. The rituals installed for this time recreate those emotions as much as possible, and prepare the worshipping community for the upcoming emotional trauma of Tisha be Av.[70] As such, this three-week period is a time replete with activities. When the month of Av is ushered in, rejoicing is reduced as the preparations for Tisha be Av begin; "when Av comes in, gladness is diminished."[71] The blessing for the new moon is omitted and many of the restrictions which apply to people mourning for their next of kin[72] are in effect for the whole community: for who can look ahead to life, when disaster is waiting on the doorstep.[73] The rites observed nine days before Tisha be Av are those required of an *onen*; one whose relative is dead but not yet buried. The congregation is the *onen,* for the Temple at this time is doomed but not yet buried, it is a time of anguish and despair.[74] There is a debate in the Mishna as to whether these restrictions apply for the entire month of Av or merely for the week before Tisha be Av. The discussion concludes with the decision that

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[70]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, . pg. 295
[71]M. Ta'anit, 4:6
[72]B. Ta'anit, 30a
[73]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 295.
[74]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 295.

mourning rites be observed only for the week before Tisha be Av.[75] Despite this ruling, some communities are more strict and observe some customs from the fast of the 17th of Tammuz, intensifying the practice for the entire month of Av.[76] Even the most lenient of communities will not cut hair or wash clothes, except on Thursdays due to the honor of the Shabbat.[77] A series of special haftarot, readings from the prophets, are recited in the synagogue in the weeks leading to Tisha Be Av. These passages dwell upon the theme of rebuke and Israel's sin. The portions serve to place the congregation in a mood of mourning and, more importantly, repentance.

During the afternoon before Tisha be Av the preparations are intensified further and the mood of the congregation darkens. Torah study is restricted to subjects which are permitted to be studied on Tisha be Av. Thus one may only study Lamentations, Job and other such passages which pertain to fasting or mourning.[78] So begins the last stage of the preparations for the fast.

On the eve of the Ninth of Av one is not permitted to eat meat, drink wine or to consume two cooked dishes.[79] Some medieval commentators refer to communities that observe the restrictions on meat and wine for longer periods before the fast of Tisha be Av; this enhances their mourning by extending the restraints upon them.[80] The meal preceding the fast is customarily one which

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[75]B. Ta'anit, 29b-30b

[76]Rev. Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pg. xii

[77]M. Ta'anit, 4:7

[78]R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, p470

[79]M.Ta'anit 4:7

[80]Machzor Vitry says that there are some who carry out this restriction from the 17th of Tammuz, Sefer Mitzvot Hagadol, in Hilchot Tisha Be Av, reports that some abstain for the whole day preceding Tisha be Av, in R. Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pp. xii-xiii.

would be consumed by those in mourning and consists of a minimal amount of food, typically egg and bread, one of which has been dipped in ashes. The ashes are symbolic of mourning, death and sacrifice. There are reports of great acts of piety associated with consuming food with tears and ashes, both of which can possess magical qualities in Jewish myth. The Gemara reports that Rav Yehudah bar Ilai's final meal before the fast consisted of stale bread with salt, ashes and a jug of water which he would eat seated between the stove and the oven.[81] There is also the story of the Chatam Sofer, a nineteenth century Hungarian scholar, who would begin to cry over the misfortune which had befallen his people, on the afternoon before Tisha be Av. He then collected all his tears in a jar and at the final meal before the fast, he dipped bread in his tears and then in ashes and ate it to fulfill the verse, "For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears"(Ps. 102:10)[82] Such extreme acts were not expected of all people but were held up as exemplary of the depth of emotion and power which can be evoked by Tisha be Av. The final meal before the fast is to be eaten with a somber attitude, in the manner of mourners; sitting on low benches or stools. The *Birkat Hamazon* is recited silently.[83] Preparations such as these heighten the solemnity of the occasion and ensure that when people arrive at the synagogue for services that evening, they are prepared to approach God in the appropriate mood.

The fast of the Ninth of Av, unlike the other three fasts associated with the destruction of the Temple, commences at sundown and concludes at sundown the following day. Fasting is decreed on this occasion as a sign of great

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[81]B. Ta'anit, 30a
[82]R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, pg. xi
[83]R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, p471, Orach Chayim 552:8

mourning and bereavement. As is true of all other fasts, it is also an act of self-mortification. It places the participants' lives in the hands of God whilst also taking some control for themselves. By fasting they are placing themselves one step closer to death, empathizing with those who lost their lives in the many tragedies which befell the Jewish people, and also indicating to God the gravity with which the participants face the day and the suffering and death which it memorializes. The fast is also a means by which the participants act out the tragedy of history. While their ancestors had no control over their deaths, here the participants give up a portion of control in the hope that it will be enough to gain God's sympathy and avert future disasters. In every fast there is an element of repentance and supplication and this one is no exception. The seriousness with which the people approach this day and the task of repentance is evidenced for God by their act of fasting. Finally, it provides a removal of all the distractions which food can induce leaving the mind and body free to concentrate most fully on the task of mourning, repentance, prayer and supplication.

On Tisha be Av it is forbidden to consume any food or drink, bathe, anoint oneself, wear leather or have conjugal relations.[84] These are almost the same restrictions that accompany the fast of Yom Kippur, which, like Tisha be Av, is observed from sundown to sundown. All these activities are considered to be vanity and means by which one can heighten comfort. But Tisha be Av is a day of mourning and commemoration of tragedy and, as such, these activities can have no place in the day. Further, many of these practices are forbidden to

[84] B. Ta'anit, 13a

individual mourners. On this day all of Israel are mourners and, as such, they must refrain from activities which are not permitted by those in mourning.

As is the case with some of the other fasts, it is traditional to visit the graves of one's ancestors, as well as those belonging to the community's martyrs and pious men. Once there, the person implores the dead to intercede with God on their behalf. In Algiers it is customary to blow the *shofar* in remembrance of the ancient fast days in the Temple.[85] The *shofar* also acts as a call to God and to the congregation to take heed of the events of the day and to the congregation to repent and change their ways. Finally, on the evening during the fast, one sleeps on the floor with a pillow of stone. Perhaps this is a means of hearkening back to Jacob's sleep the night of his dream when he slept with a pillow of rocks. During that night he received a message from God which lifted him from his sorrows. Sleeping with stones beneath ones head may be hoped to induce the same result. More likely however it was yet another practice introduced to place the same discomfort upon the congregants' body as they feel in their sorrow-laden hearts at this season.

Tisha be Av is so imbued with imagery and mythic meaning that the attitude of the worshippers and their understanding of the gravity and solemnity of the occasion is vital. To facilitate this understanding and approach, the synagogue building and its environs are drastically altered. The reader's desk and the ark are draped in black and the lights dimmed. The otherwise cheerful mood of the prayer space is dramatically changed. In some synagogues the curtain of the Ark containing the Torah scrolls is removed altogether. This strips the covering

[85] Encyclopedia Judaica, p939

from the most sacred of objects, revealing it, naked and vulnerable, for all to see. The jewels which adorn the scrolls are removed and they, like us, appear stripped to the core before the congregation and God. In some congregations the Torahs are covered with black cloth symbolizing their mourning and darkened state on this saddest of days. The congregation thus enter a synagogue on the eve of Tisha be Av, which is dark, shadowy and eerie. It evokes a sense of sadness, smallness and humility before God. This is not an occasion for merriment but one for wailing, lament and sorrow. One does not even greet one's fellow, for such trivial pleasantries are out of place when faced with the enormity of the tragedy which is being commemorated and as it is remembered it is relived.

The congregants are seated on low stools or on the floor as is the custom of mourners. They remove their shoes and sometimes sit in different seats to heighten their discomfort and provide a sense of displacement. Some will place ashes on their foreheads as a sign of their mourning and sorrow. They are also a reminder of the ashes of the ram who was sacrificed by Abraham in Isaac's stead on Mount Moriah. Just as Isaac was saved, so too, do the congregants hope that they will be spared. Some congregations will roll the Torah scroll on the floor and sprinkle it with ashes whilst reciting: "The crown has fallen from our head" (Lam. 5:16)[86] Again, this is a sign of mourning and the depths to which the congregation have sunk in their sorrow. The Torah, the crown of the sanctuary and symbol of God in the synagogue, has been laid low, thrust upon the ground and desecrated with the ashes of mourning and sacrifice.

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[86] Encyclopedia Judaica, p938

The service itself is chanted in a low, monotonous tone for one should not receive any joy from these prayers. The chant is reflective of the flat, burdensome sorrow of the congregants' grief. The beauty of synagogue music and chant is replaced with the melancholy tones of the Ninth of Av. Many of the dirges and elegies which are recited during the commemoration of Tisha be Av are written in a "limping meter" which is particularly suited to the tone of the day. It has been suggested that this meter originated in the custom of performing a limping dance as a rite of mourning amongst many Middle Eastern communities.[87]

The rubrics of the services for Tisha be Av are not greatly altered from the regular weekday liturgy; however there are a large number of additions which serve to reflect the themes and solemnity of the day of mourning, fasting, and reflection upon the tragic history of the Jewish people. As previously discussed, the evening service takes place in a darkened sanctuary draped in the somber black robes of mourning and tragedy. Thus the atmosphere induces an appropriately dark, foreboding mood amongst the service participants. The service begins as does the regular weekday *ma'ariv*. All passages which make reference to the joy of Torah study are excluded, for there is a prohibition against the study of Torah for pleasure during Tisha be Av. In the recitation of the kaddish, the "*titkabel*" verses beseeching that the community's prayers be accepted, are removed, as is the practice in a house of mourning. Another reason for the omission of these passages is based on a verse found in the book of Lamentations. Therein it is suggested that the gates of prayer are

[87]Theodor Gaster, Festivals of the Jewish Year, p202

closed. If that is the case the "*titkabel*" passage is a contradiction and must therefore be omitted.[88]

The greatest change to the *ma'ariv* service comes after the *Amidah* when the congregation sits on the floor and the text of Lamentations is recited in a doleful, plaintive cantillation. In some congregations before the recitation, the room is completely darkened and an elder stands and announces the number of years which have passed since the destruction of the Temple. He then chastises the community with words of rebuke saying, "Each generation in which the Temple is not rebuilt should regard itself as responsible for its destruction." He is answered with wailing and crying whereupon the lights are kindled once more and the service continues.[89] This element of rebuke has echoes of the rebuke by the community leaders during the time of fasts described in Chapter One and effects a contemporizing and identification with the past calamity. In the case before us, the rebuke is extremely powerful. The congregants are seated in complete darkness, alone, isolated from their neighbors, and they receive a rebuke from the leader for their sins. In this environment, the chastisement is far more significant and frightening than it may otherwise have been, driving them to greater depth of mourning and repentance.

The Book of Lamentations is a significant and extremely appropriate text for the evening of Tisha be Av. According to Rabbinic tradition, the text was written by the prophet Jeremiah in response to the suffering and destruction which resulted from the fall of the First Temple. Lamentations is a series of five dirges. The meter of the text is mirrored by the *kinot* which are recited throughout Tisha be

[88]Isaac Klein, A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice, p249
[89]Encyclopedia Judaica, p938

Av. Of the book's five sections, four are composed in an alphabetical acrostic. The book laments the destruction and describes the horrors and humiliation suffered by the Israelite people, some of whom were slain and others of whom were beaten, tormented and sent into exile. Many portions of the book of Lamentations are written in the "voice" of the city of Jerusalem, weeping and wailing as would a widow over the loss of her husband. There is also an undercurrent of chastisement and rebuke of both God and the people Israel: God, for causing His wrath to pour out excessively upon His chosen people, and Israel for committing the grave sins which induced God to so act against them. The book contains little source of hope and no cause whatsoever for rejoicing or happiness. It is a soulful dirge which covers the congregation with a heavy veil of sadness, sorrow and despair. Even the last verses of the lament do not offer any consolation: "For truly You have rejected us, bitterly raged against us."[90] "The Jewish people has realized, however...that despair is corrosive and must be tempered with hope,"[91] thus it has become custom to repeat the penultimate lines, "Turn us to You God that we may return. Renew us as in days of old." This line is chanted by the service reader and then repeated by the congregation which, until this point, have sat mute and silent listening to the cry of "Jeremiah." Now they are able to participate more actively in the evening with words of plea and hope. Another reason for the repetition of that line is that it is considered to be tempting the evil eye to end a prayer, reading or blessing with a negative, unhappy thought or image. To so end is to leave an opening through which the evil thoughts can enter leading to further catastrophe or disaster.

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[90] Lamentations, 5:22, translation from The New J.P.S. Translation, pg. 1440

[91] Gaster, Festivals of the Jewish Year, pg. 205

Following the recitation of Lamentations a number of *kinot*, poems of lamentation, are recited. The themes and style of the *kinot* for the ninth of Av are considered in greater detail later in this chapter so there will be no analysis of them here. The *ma'ariv* service is then brought to conclusion as for regular weekday services.

The morning of Tisha be Av begins with the regular weekday *shacharit* service. Following the custom of Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, the participants do not don their regular teffillin and tallit. These objects are considered ornaments and since on this occasion we read in the book of Lamentations that God has stripped Israel of all ornamentation, it would be inappropriate to wear them during the morning of Tisha be Av. As was the case in the evening service, there are few alterations to the rubrics but there are many additions to the regular text in order to appropriately mark and commemorate the occasion. The prayer, "*aneinu*," answer us, is included in the repetition of the *Amidah* as it is for all fast days. This is a call to God to hear the prayers of this fast day and to answer the congregation's pleas. It is a cry to understand that the community appears before God humbled and repentant, seeking forgiveness, but also pleading to be heard. Similarly, *Birkat Kohanim*, the blessing of the priests upon the congregation, is omitted as it is for all fast occasions.

The Torah reading for the morning was selected especially to reflect and enhance the theme and mood of the day. The reader recites Deuteronomy 4:25-40. The passage is then divided into three sections, each of which deals with a particular emotion which may have been experienced by both the congregation and those who suffered from the crises which are being commemorated. The first portion describes God's wrath and anger. The reading suggests that it is

these emotions which cause God to act and to exile His people, scattering them amongst the nations. Just as was the case with the Lamentations reading however, this section ends with hope; the promise that, if one seeks God, He will be found. Thus the reassurance that God is there, the covenant is intact even in the aftermath of God's wrath and destructive anger. The congregation is reminded that although God causes disasters, He also saves His people from them.

The second portion reinforces this sentiment even more strongly. It specifically states that God will not forget His people or the covenant He made with them. It is this covenant which is the guarantee that there is a future for God's chosen people sheltered under His protective wings. The proof that the covenant exists and endures is the exodus from Egypt wherein God performed miracles and wonders to ensure His people's escape from the clutches of their oppressors.

The third passage further recounts the miracle of the exodus from Egypt and God's providential role therein. Just as God rescued His people in Egypt, He will do so once again, for the promise is inherent in cyclical nature of history. God redeemed His people once before and He will do so again. The charge is then presented to the people; all that is required of them is that they trust in God. If they can so place their lives in His hands, He will afford them protection from their enemies, and by implication from His own anger. Again, the contemporary worshippers are thrust into, act out and identify with the situation of their ancestors.

The Haftarah follows a similar theme but approaches it from a different point. It recounts the words of Jeremiah, the prophet, bewailing the misfortune which has

come upon him and his people at the hand of God. There is no question here, as there was none in the Torah portion, that the destruction heralded from any source other than God. To acknowledge that such destructive power could have its roots in a human enemy would be too frightening: as long as the misfortune came at the hands of God there was still a hope that it could be controlled. If the actions of the people caused God to respond in the first instance, then by changing their behavior they could change their fortune. This is the point of the reading from Jeremiah. It was the sins of the people which caused God's anger to be kindled against them. Jeremiah asks over and over again, "Why?" And God answers; "it is because of the actions of the people." The reading expresses the depth of God's emotions against His people and the breadth of their sins against Him. The language is horrific and jarring in its descriptions of the state of Israel and God's intentions towards His people, and yet it ends in hope: "Let him that boasts exult in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices kindness, justice and righteousness on the earth for in these things I delight," says the Lord.[92] Again hope is wrested from a hopeless situation, the congregation is reminded that God is not just one of vengeance but also a God of kindness and most importantly, justice. If He is respected and treated with kindness and love by His people, that treatment will be reciprocated.

The reading of the Torah is followed by a large selection of *kinot*, which are recited whilst the congregation is seated on the floor. These elegies are the heart of the Tisha be Av service. Through their words they give voice to the myriad of thoughts, feelings and emotions felt by both the victims of the disasters and the congregation. When disaster strikes a community, there are

[92]Rev. Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pg. 89

many different reactions and theories as to why the tragedy occurred, who is to blame and what is the solution. The *kinot* speak sometimes to God and other times to the people themselves. They admonish, praise and glorify both, they give an outlet for anger, frustration, hurt and grief. By the time the congregation has traversed the forest of *kinot* and reached the other side they are emotionally drained and spent, but their feelings, whatever they may be, about the reasons for tragedy befalling their people, have been expressed and thus legitimized. The achievement of such a goal means that contradictory sentiments are necessarily included, oftimes side by side, but in the realm of liturgical expression, consistency is far less important than is giving voice to emotions and feelings. Once they are expressed they become real and legitimate. Further, the sentiments have reached the ear of God for He cannot turn from their expression. Whether He is envisioned as the oppressor, victim or dumb observer, it is necessary that He hear the sentiments from His people.

The *kinot* were penned by various authors, the most prolific of whom was a man thought to be named Rabbi Eliazar ben Kalir. There is much debate as to the exact identity of this mystery man. His place of birth, residence and even his name are matters for conjecture. The name Kalir was arrived at as the most plausible because it is included in a number of the acrostics found in his poetry. It has been assigned various meanings including that it was derived from the word, *killorin,* which was the name given to a balm for the eyes. It is suggested by those who espouse this theory, that the poetry of the Kalir acted as a balm for the eyes of the congregation which were red and swollen from crying and bewailing the tragedies of their history.[93] Others suggest that the name is that of

[93]R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, pg. xx

his father, his town of birth, or even that it is a reference to cake, referring to the custom of feeding children cake in the shape of letters at their first lesson in Torah, so that learning will be forever sweet to them. The connection to Kalir is that he was so grateful to those who taught him words of Torah and Hebrew enabling him to create his poetry that he took the name as a source of honor to his teachers.[94] The dates for his life range from the second to the tenth century.[95]

As a result of the mystery surrounding Kalir's identity, a number of legends have arisen about his powers, attributing to him magical qualities and superhuman characteristics. One story recounts that when Kalir composed his poetry, the fiery angels would face the celestial throne and encircle him with a heavenly fire.[96] Such legends serve to imbue his words and his piyyutim with great power and force. They have a magical quality which comes about as a direct result of the author's merit. This merit is then transferred to those who recite the words and, it is hoped, that they will then be more persuasive when they reach the ears of God.

Between the elegies of Kalir are a number of *kinot* written by a variety of other authors during different periods in history. There are considerable similarities in the *kinot*. All have a similar meter and almost all are written as acrostics, whether they be of the author's name or the alphabet. The *kinot* placed within the Tisha be Av service all concern a disaster or crisis which has befallen the Jewish people, the majority dealing with the destruction of the Temple. There are a number written to commemorate more specific crises, such as the burning

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[94] I. Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy, 241-242
[95] R. Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pg. xvii
[96] R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, pg. xx. in Orach Hayim, 68:1

of the Torah scrolls in Paris in 1242, and the York massacre in 1190. It is through the use of these elegies that disasters other than the Temple destruction are remembered and commemorated on Tisha be Av. All of the authors use scriptural passages and language to convey their messages. These images are particularly powerful and even more so to the audience for whom they were originally intended, who were more versed in scripture than modern day readers. Through this use of scripture the authors could evoke great irony, as well as strong and powerful images. It also served a more magical purpose: the words and passages were those of God and thus they possess greater petitionary power and persuasiveness. The mere use of such language created a holy piece for it was comprised of divine words and not just the words or the voice of the author. A plea to God so penned could not easily be left unanswered. This language also created poems which were most suited to the liturgical setting for which they were ultimately used. Whether or not that was the intent of the author we will never know.

Despite the difficult nature of the subject matter with which the poets deal, they always end their pieces with words of hope or comfort. Just as the Torah reading could not end with a negative or destructive thought or concept, so too must the *kinot* end with something positive. Again this is for superstitious, cautionary and aesthetic reasons.

The *kinot* describe a range of reactions and attitudes towards the crises which have befallen the Jewish people throughout their history. All are surprisingly powerful and replete with imagery and passages from Biblical sources. As was mentioned earlier, many of the *kinot* concern the destruction of the Temple but it must be understood that although they refer to the Temple, they are not

confined to that disaster alone, for it is the paradigm for all future destruction. All the disasters which are commemorated on Tisha be Av must be seen through the lens of the Temple's destruction. Each one simply revisits the original disaster and thus when the Temple is discussed in these *kinot*, it is also a lament for all disaster.

The first category of *kinot* to be considered are those which berate Israel for her sins and attribute the source of the disaster to them. The sins which the Israelites allegedly committed range in severity but each one was accounted against them and was thus the source of violence against the people. Like many victims of abuse, the authors of the elegies sought a reason for their travails. If they could apportion blame to a specific behavior then, logically, the cessation of that behavior would ensure the eradication of disasters against them. Further, this response maintained the covenant with God intact and imbued the actions of God with logic, meaning and justice. If national tragedies occurred because the people deserved them, then God and His apparent injustice were not to blame. Further, it removed random actions on God's behalf as a possible cause of the crisis, and if God's actions were not random, they could necessarily be controlled and tempered.

One of the most oft-cited sins of the Israelites is that of the slaying of Zachariah. The tale itself is an aggadic motif that has a biblical basis- the story is told in Chronicles and this Zachariah is conflated by the Rabbis with the prophet whose book we have. The motif of slaying priests and prophets is also prominent in the book of Lamentations. Zachariah was the son of a priest who challenged the king and people by asking why they were transgressing God's laws and commandments. The people, filled with arrogance and haughtiness, stoned him

to death and continued in their irreverent ways. As Zachariah was dying he said, "may the Lord see and avenge." The slaying of this prophet was considered such a great sin that it warranted punishment be inflicted upon the Israelites generations later.

The punishment came in the form of Nebuzaradan who was sent by Nebuchadnezzer to the place of the Israelites. When he arrived he saw blood seething in the Temple courtyard. He inquired about the source of the blood and the asked why it was boiling on the ground. The people, burdened with guilt, lied and said that it was the blood of slain animals from the sacrifices. Nebuzaradan was not to be easily fooled and he challenged them stating that he knew that it was not sacrificial blood because it appeared different. They responded that he was indeed correct and that the blood was that of Zachariah the slain prophet and priest. Nebuzaradan was overcome with anger and fear and so vowed to appease the prophet's death and stop the seething of the blood. He slew all the scholars in aberrant community but the blood continued to boil. Then he turned and killed the children and young priests; in all 94,000 were slain but still the blood seethed. Nebuzaradan, mortified at the death and in fear of his own life for having slain so many, cried out in desperation to Zachariah saying, "I have slain the flower of them do you want me to kill them all?" Whereupon the blood rested. Then Nebuzaradan repented for his sin, for he saw that the Israelites received a grave punishment and they had only slain one person, while he had killed tens of thousands so his punishment was likely to be even greater.[97]

[97]B. Sanhedrin, 96b

A *kinah* in the Tisha be Av liturgy recounts this story in vivid detail; " He stabbed the aged by the hundred, and the young men by the myriads... the children were killed while their parents looked on, their mothers too were brought to the slaughter...he continued slaying the women together with their suckling babes, and the blood poured out among them like the River in Egypt..."[98] In the Rabbinic, cyclical nature of time the sin of this slaughter is not just that of the people who committed the act, it is a burden carried by all the generations, thus the congregation reply, "We have sinned.. we have acted perversely... we acknowledge our wickedness."[99]

The sin of the slaying of Zachariah is also mentioned as part of some litanies of Israel's sins; "The five-fold Torah cried bitterly when a priest and prophet was slain on the day of atonement and over his young blood the priests were slaughtered like young goats...on account of the sin of the sabbatical year Israel was exiled from her land."[100]

The sins for which Israel was punished extend further. "Your prophets misled you, prophesying phantoms and deceitfulness; I would fain have pardoned you but...I coaxed them to repent and they replied to Me with insolence..."[101] Thus the very act the congregation is asked to perform on Tisha be Av, repentance, is very powerful; it could have saved the Temple and the people. However, their failure to repent, according to the *kinah*, was the reason for the destruction. It was Israel's failure to heed God's laws which provoked Him to anger and caused the catastrophe to occur: "I am weary of carrying your sins that are loaded high

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[98]R. Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pg. 150
[99]ibid. pg. 150
[100]ibid. pg. 99
[101]ibid. pg. 97

as burdens and so I have punished you."[102] "He has visited your guilt and He grows weary, do not expect wonders and miracles any more."[103] God even waited for ninety years before bringing the punishment of the destruction, waiting and hoping all the while that His children would repent and turn from their evil ways.[104] God left the Temple just before it was destroyed with ten slow steps, hoping with each one that the children of Israel would see the error of their wicked ways and thus turn God and their fate around.[105] Like a father with his children, God waited and hoped that He would not have to punish them. He gave them chance after chance to repent. But they did not turn from their evil ways and back to God and so their punishment was meted out with a force equal to the gravity of the sin.[106] One *kinah*, using Biblical passages, lists the sins of the various groups next to the punishment they received, correlating them to demonstrate that the people received only the punishment they deserved. The effect of all these *kinot* is threefold. First, they maintain the covenant intact, thereby placing the sins of the people within a structure. The disaster, then, was not evidence of their abandonment by God but rather the direct result of their relationship with Him. This fact leads to the second effect, namely, that if the destruction came from God as punishment for sin, all that was required to restore the world to balanced harmony and keep it that way, was to change behavior and repent for their previous sins. Finally these notions apply to all the disasters which have befallen the Jewish people throughout time, thus no matter what the tragedy, there is always hope and faith that something can

[102]ibid.
[103]ibid. pg. 98
[104]ibid. pg. 123
[105]ibid. pg. 118
[106]ibid. pg. 123

be done to avert the disaster because God, who is just, continues to be involved in the workings of the world and of history.

This leads to the second major theme in the *kinot* and that is the anger of God. It was God's anger and attribute of anger which caused the tragedy against His people. It was God's fury which brought down fiery wrath upon the people and as such it was not any inherent power in the enemies themselves. In some *kinot* God's anger is considered to be justified. He was provoked by the actions of His people to so bring a punishment upon them. It was not unjustified and thus the ideal of a good, just and moral God could remain intact. To remove this concept from the theology would be to destroy one of the most important foundations of the traditional view of God and cause the entire edifice to crumble.

Other *kinot* however, are unable to retain their grasp on the God of justice. In the face of such horror and disaster it was not possible for some to maintain faith in the God they once knew. His image had become tarnished and worn. The God of the Israelites could no longer be one of justice for no just God could allow such barbarous acts to be perpetrated against His own people. In these *kinot* the authors provide an insight into the deep hurt and betrayal which touched many of the victims of disaster, and the worshippers who are present at the services. It does not seem to be of any concern that these *kinot* are fundamentally at odds with others which defend God's justice and righteousness. These *kinot* attribute to God very "human" emotions and weaknesses; "How in Your wrath did You hasten to destroy the faithful... How with Your threats did You rebuke the righteous...How in Your indignation have You forsaken Your habitation...How in Your wrath did You direct the vineyard to be destroyed... How in Your storm of rage did You mutter delivering Your

witness...How in Your eagerness did You strive to scatter Your perfect ones..."[107] Here no justification is given or even attempted to explain the wrath of God. Other *kinot* even go so far as to present God with arguments as to why His acts were unfair in the extreme; "For one single (good deed) did Scripture find for King Abijah hope and expectation: for he only of Jereboam's stock will go to the grave. Yet those who were perfect in their deeds submitted themselves to the slaughter...to them even burial was not granted."[108] God has become the enemy. They declare "It is time to fight God in His own house."[109] God is conceived of as a bear lying in wait for His prey, his own people.[110] Or even more shocking are the images of God as one who is wicked, scathing and scheming, a God who desires the terrible horrors which have befallen His people. He is conceived as One who overreacts to the sins of His people with an unreasonable wrath and anger; "He twisted the yoke upon our necks, and He destroyed the Temple, declaring, 'I will punish you for your iniquity, and you will eat the flesh of your children.' "[111] The picture which is painted is of a sadistic God who desires to see the chosen people debased to the point where they will devour their own children. The God of these *kinot* is unjust, unfair and almost evil. He is cruel and heartless in His meting out of divine punishment. His wrath is poured out upon His people with no mercy. Such *kinot* as these give voice to the anger felt by the congregants and the victims for the apparent injustice of their position. They express and thus legitimize further by their liturgical, public recitation, the frustration at the incomprehensible situation.

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[107] ibid. pp. 93-94
[108] ibid. pg. 141
[109] ibid. pg. 124
[110] ibid. pg. 114
[111] ibid.

For other congregants, the possibility that God could be the cause of the suffering is too great a departure, as it was no doubt, for many of the victims of the tragedy. Instead they conceived of God as absent, covered with a cloud and hence screened off from the suffering. God was not the active cause of the destruction and terror but rather He was passive in the face of the enemy. Some expositions suggest that God chose to turn away or withdraw His protective presence.[112] Others depict a more impotent God who is unaware of the suffering of His people. In response to this situation the *kinot* call upon Israel to cry out to God in prayer, to draw His attention to their plight, thereby forcing Him to intervene on their behalf: "Awake Lord, why do You sleep?"[113] they plead. Even more shocking is the concept of God trapped and bound, unable to intervene; "God was bound helpless and in chains."[114]

Other *kinot* charge God with willfully ignoring the plight of His people and turning away deliberately: "You heard my voice, do not hide from my supplication." The *kinah* entreats, "...the frivolous inflamed me with grief yet You hide Your appearance...their darkness covered me like a locust swarm; You heard their taunt."[115] Further, after a graphic description of the horrors which befell the people they cry out "God, will You restrain yourself at these things...avenge the blood...have pity on the people who turn from transgression."[116] Thus there are numerous approaches in response to the question of why God does not seem to be intervening to stop the slaughter and to protect His people. These responses range from angry calls to act, suggesting that God has the power to prevent the

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[112]ibid. pg. 101
[113]ibid. pg. 112
[114]ibid.
[115]ibid. pg. 119
[116]ibid. pg. 128

disaster but is choosing not to intervene, to suggestions that God is bound in chains and unable to save His people from destruction. These depictions of God, for the most part, maintain God's power in the face of the earthly enemy, reassuring the worshippers that God is far from impotent. Further, they place a distance between God and the tragedy. He is no longer the cause of the horrific acts which pounded His people. God is, then, still good, still just and still one who cares for His children.

Arising in part from the charges that God has failed to respond to the cry of His people and to alleviate their distress are the *kinot* which attempt to goad God into responding. They are accusatory and charge God for not acting on His people's behalf. There are responses which chide God about how this tragedy appears in the eyes of other nations. Although Israel knows that it is God who determines history, the enemies are gloating and basking in their own ill-gotten glory. Although the source of the enemy's victory and power is God, they believe that it is they alone who are powerful and mighty. The enemies of Israel thus have no qualms, fears or hesitation about accusing the Israelite God of impotence in the face of their might. The *kinot* urge God to act so as to rectify such an untenable position, the slander of the name and reputation of God. "Incline Your ear O God to the insolence of those who spoke in a barbarian tongue: 'come let us fight Him in His own house,' and regard the mischief of the mockers who boast that the Master is not in His house...to those who say that the Temple shall be deserted, forgotten and forsaken, and it shall be forever devastated."[117] They cry to God, "How long will You be like a warrior, powerless to save,"[118] You are called the God of vengeance, the God of retribution, God of

[117]ibid, pg. 125
[118]ibid. pp. 141-142

war, prove that You are still that God and act on Your people's behalf."[119] Passages such as these are shocking in their boldness. The people who are repenting and crushed can still stand before their God and challenge Him to act. They are questioning God's power and ability to save, reminding Him of His now tarnished image before the nations, that He is an object of disdain and mockery, in the hope that this will stir God's anger and humiliate Him enough to push Him to action. The *kinot* even chastise God for having the audacity to complain about His situation. "Why do You storm and complain: 'What task keeps me here?' "[120] The *kinah* continues to berate God for stating that He has nothing more to do, when it was He who placed the entire people, including Himself, in that position. The gall of a people who, in prayer, would so challenge and deride their God is admirable. It is also reflective of true emotions and real reactions. This makes the prayers in which such sentiments are contained even more evocative and powerful.

Other *kinot* challenge God to act not for the sake of His honor and reputation but rather because He so promised His people. This argument is connected to the important issue of the covenant. God promised to protect this people from tragedy and disaster, yet the enemies of Israel are triumphant against them. God swore to their ancestors that the covenant was eternal and would never be broken, even to the thousandth generation and beyond. "The Lord promised He would never blot out the people of Israel, how is it then that He took out His sword from His sheath to subvert a man in His cause?"[121] A number of solutions are posed to this question which is asked over and again in the *kinot*. Some are

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[119]ibid. pp. 141-142
[120]ibid. pg. 104
[121]ibid. pg. 116

unable to wrest hope and comfort from the situation, declaring that the "covenant of salt has ceased."[122] Others suggest that God has not abandoned them and broken the covenantal relationship but rather that God has merely forgotten. This position offers more cause for hope than the previous one, for if God has merely forgotten His agreement with Israel there is a course of action which can be taken to rectify the situation. They have then not been abandoned and God is still bound to the terms of the covenant whereby He affords His people protection from their enemies and those who seek to do them harm. All that is required is to entreat God and ask the ancestors with whom God made the covenant to do the same and His memory will no doubt be jogged and He will intervene on Israel's behalf.[123]

The *kinot* also address the related issue of chosenness. They counter God, asking how it is that they are the chosen people yet they are suffering such an appalling fate at the hands of their enemies. One *kinah* challenges God with a list of broken promises He made to His chosen ones. "You said that: 'I will surely do you good, and we shall be distinctive, I and your people;' why then when base men profaned Your name did You not pour out Your wrath upon them?...You rejected and despised all the other nations but You took for Yourself a nation from the very midst of another nation; why then did a heathen nation ...say...come let us wipe them out as a nation?"[124] As was the case with the questions posed in the other *kinot*, this too has more than one response. The first comes at the end of the aforementioned *kinah*: the Israelites sinned. The implication is that they broke the terms of the covenant, their obligation

[122]ibid. pg. 101
[123]ibid. pg. 95
[124]ibid. pg. 122

being to uphold God's commandments and to be faithful to Him and His laws. The Israelites failed to adhere to their terms and as a result God is absolved from His responsibility. Other responses are even more disturbing but leave the covenant intact and absolve the Israelites of any liability. They suggest that being chosen means being chosen for sacrifice in God's name. They were chosen not to be protected but rather to please God as ones who would sanctify His name in their deaths as they did in their lives.[125] Still others suggest that the Israelites sinned but solve the difficulty of the covenant and the seemingly disproportionate nature of the punishment by saying that being chosen means that God deals more harshly with those who sin; "I have set my mind at these happenings and I know His judgments are just and right, it will be well with those who fear God and stand in awe before Him. God puts no trust in His holy ones, He is strict with them to a hairsbreadth."[126] Thus God chose those who could withstand the test for which they were selected. The horrors of this world, then, are a test and punishment for the sins now.

Since the covenant remains intact and Israel maintains her position as God's chosen people, it is possible to call upon the original covenantors to assist petitioning God. The *kinot* describe the victims calling upon their ancestors to intercede on their behalf and petition God to end the disaster and death amongst His people. Some have God being unmoved by a parade of ancestors who appear before Him. The "who's who" of Jewish tradition go to God and plead for the people; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob even Moses who had been so successful arguing on behalf of his people in the past. All were unsuccessful and then the women, Rachel, Leah, Zilpah and Bilhah intercede and God is moved

[125]ibid. pg. 139
[126]ibid. pg. 141

to have compassion and stop the destruction, tempering His anger with mercy and compassion.[127] It is not only the ancestors who plead for God to have compassion upon His people; the Torah, too, weeps, the planets are dimmed, the constellations plead before God, even the angels dress in sackcloth and ashes over the destruction of the people of Israel. In some of the *kinot* God is stirred to act on the Israelites' behalf, in others He is not so moved. Nonetheless, the elegies ask that the worshippers call out to God to remember the covenant and more importantly, to remember the merit of the ancestors, attributing it to the people.[128]

Another means by which the tragedies were conceptualized that assisted the readers' abilities to cope with the disaster, was to see them as a part of the larger plan of history. The events were foretold from of old and were thus just a part of God's plan. It was not that God had abandoned His people or that He had broken the covenant, rather it was the contrary. He had conceived of this and intended it from before He formed man and chose the Israelites. Furthermore He revealed it to His people in the Torah with the words "It was evening and it was morning."[129] All the patriarchs, at pivotal moments in their lives were shown the destruction which would befall the Jewish people. For example Jacob saw the future in his dream but, like his descendants, refused to believe that the horrors he witnessed could come to fruition at God's hand.[130] Thus it was not an accident of history but rather part of God's plan. For those with faith this is a consolation on a number of levels. Firstly, it means that God is still in control of the workings of the world, His back is not turned, there is no

[127]ibid. pp. 135-136
[128]ibid. pg. 158, 178
[129]ibid. pg. 105
[130]ibid. pg. 106

cloud sheltering Him from view and therefore He can be reached by prayer and petition. Further, it places some control into the hands of those who pray and petition. For if God is indeed, in control, He can be stirred to action on their behalf through the words of their prayers. Also, it means that the covenant is intact and that God will fulfill the promises therein. The disaster is thus not the end but a part of a larger historical scheme that ends with Israel's redemption. This realization also provided the worshippers with a plan of action such that they knew what was required of them. History was foretold in the Torah, and by careful study thereof and adherence thereto, redemption would come. The Torah was the plan of action, it provided the blueprint. For people who are subjugated, oppressed or victims of terror, action bestows power and provides hope. If there is something that one can do to avert or lessen the disaster, some control is handed back to the victim. Further, it places the disaster within the bounds of a familiar paradigm and thus can act to reinforce faith and hope that there will be a positive outcome.

By contrast to many of the aforementioned *kinot* which suggest that the victims are to blame for the tragedy or that they are somehow responsible for their plight, there are many *kinot* which do just the opposite. The majority of these *kinot* herald from the Crusader period and, although written in response to that catastrophe, have been subsumed into this liturgy as paradigmatic. These *kinot* portray the victims as glorious, pure, untainted human beings. They are people the readers should aspire to emulate. They are the perfect human specimens. These victims die not as pathetic creatures, humiliated and left to die in the streets in a pool of their own blood, rather they died the deaths of heroes, martyrs who sanctified God to the last. They died with God's name on their lips and His prayers in their hearts and so doing they sanctified His name. Their

deaths were not in vain, or a sign of the domination of the enemy, they were yet another means of praising and glorifying God's name. Most of these *kinot* herald from the Crusader times and their aftermath. One of the most renowned is the tale of the ten martyrs. The *piyyut* tells the story of ten figures of the Talmudic era who all died for their Judaism. Although the martyrs died at different times and under different circumstances the stories have been conflated to appear as if their deaths were part of one event. The story of these men is also recounted every Yom Kippur. Each of the ten righteous men died horrific deaths, but never once slandered God. In fact, just the opposite, they went to their graves praising God's goodness and glory. They were "the cedars of Lebanon, the noble of the law, great champions in Mishnah and Talmud, mighty in strength who toiled in purity."[131] Rabbi Akiva for example, had his flesh combed until he died and with his last breath he completed the first line of the shema, dying with the word, "One" in reference to God, upon his lips. Rabbi Chananiah used to expound the law with a scroll on his lap. As a result he was wrapped in the Torah scroll and it was set alight. They placed wet wool over him to prolong his death and make it all the more painful, but Rabbi Chananiah did not once curse God or profane His name. And so the list continues until all ten martyrs have been honored and their great feats recounted in horrific detail.[132]

The leaders of the community were not the only victims who were raised to great levels of holiness in the rendition of the *kinot*. Ordinary people, too, were righteous enough to warrant such elevation. Even the most horrific and brutal of deaths were in sanctification of God's name: "Mourn for the congregation...they assembled together, holding themselves aloof in purity to sanctify the great and

[131]ibid. pg. 125
[132]ibid. pp. 125-126

revered name; each one strengthened the other, helping him to cleave in pure reverence so as not to worship other gods; indeed not man nor woman had pity over the faces that were (radiant) with a glorious diadem, rather they girded themselves with abundant strength to smite the head and sever the spine of their own children...saying; 'Since we did not have the merit to educate you for Torah, we must sacrifice you as if you were a burnt offering...so that we may be accounted worthy with you.' "[133] Thus even the most tragic of circumstances, those which would ordinarily lead to punishment and a response of disdain are converted in the *kinot*, to acts of great merit and worth. They are transformed into holy acts, which were performed by ordinary people. The *kinot* of this kind are replete with the imagery of sacrifice. The victims, especially the young, are viewed as sacrificial objects killed for God's sake alone. Now that there was no longer a Temple at which to sacrifice offerings to God, the streets had become His altar and human flesh the sacrifice He desired. In a *kinah* penned by Kalonymous ben Judah, the poet brings examples from different regions during the Second Crusade and the heroism shown by the victims in each place. In all, the victims are idealized and perform remarkable feats in the face of death. He recounts magical moments where the piety of those slaughtered gave them the strength and the courage to act honorably in the face of horrific death and slaughter. The "fair maidens and tender schoolchildren enwrapped in their schoolbooks were dragged to the slaughter, their faces ruddier than coral, (fairer) than sapphire...In Speyer...handsome youths and venerable men were slain; they were gathered together and gave up their souls heroically and in perfect unison for declaring the unity of God in awe... The congregation of Worms, well tested and chosen, the renowned ones of the land and perfect in

[133]ibid. pg. 127

purity...they gave up their soul bound in love..."[134] In another *kinah* by Kalonymous ben Judah there are more of the macabre images. He recalls fathers reciting the *shema* whilst their sons were being slaughtered, "fair virgins... did whet and sharpen the knife and stretched out their necks...mothers who were afflicted and breathed forth their souls...prepared for the sacrifice as eager as a mother rejoicing to prepare a meal for her children. Betrothed maidens and wedded daughters did exalt as they danced to meet the scourging sword...fathers turned away weeping and wailing, plunging themselves down to be pierced through with their own swords, wallowing in their own blood on the highways. Israel acknowledged the justice when she offered her young ones and instead of dashing their blood (on the altar) she received it in the hem of her garment."[135] Thus were the victims eulogized and remembered for committing suicide, an act forbidden in Jewish law. The victims and the tragedy were viewed through a different lens, one which created heroes and holy ones, pure, unblemished sacrifices slaughtered and burnt by the raging fire of God's wrath. The *kinot* raise the victims to great heights, spurring the readers on to do what they can in their time to follow God's laws and give Him honor, emulating those who died for His sake. Again, the language and repeated reference to the victims as sacrifices, heralds back to the *Akeda*, the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac. This event is one to which the Jewish people refer to benefit from the merit of their ancestors. Abraham was the paradigmatic Jew of faith for he was willing to sacrifice his own son for the love of God. The victims of the *kinot* were the same but they went even further, God did not put a halt to their efforts to slay their children. They were then, better than even Abraham, they had more merit for they were put to the same test as he, and they continued the act

[134]ibid. pp. 133-134
[135]ibid. pg. 141

through to its gruesome conclusion. They made the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of God's name, they sanctified Him with their own blood and that of their children.

Alongside these tales of the victims are *kinot* in which there is a recounting of the horrors witnessed either by the authors or the victims. These attempt to convey the enormity of the loss, suffering and grief, the horror and disgusting inescapable images of war. They are moving and disturbing accounts which, when read by congregants in a synagogue, imbue both the reader and the listener with a sense of the suffering and the human element of the tragedy as well as draw the congregation into the tragedy, making it their own. These are not numbers and statistics but snapshots of moments in the disaster and are therefore more personal and hence powerful. Some of the tales and descriptions are also as horrific and disturbing as they are moving. They can evoke visible reactions of cringing and shudders of fear in the congregation who read them. There are tales of the brutality of the enemy and the results of their disregard for human life: "The young men were the first to be punished and the arrogant enemy came out and against them and killed many multitudes; their fat became intermingled with the secretion; they drew lots over parents and children, and he whose lot was drawn first was slaughtered with the scimitars and knives; young lads who were reared in scarlet licked the dust like serpents, and brides dressed in crimson fainted in the arms of bridegrooms, mangled by sword and javelin."[136] Along with these tales of the enemy's brutality are stories of the degradation of the people themselves. They had become like animals, having lost any semblance of morality or any feature which distinguished them from their

[136]ibid. pg. 128

oppressors. The people themselves, the victims amongst the blood and death turned against each other and even against their own children as depicted in this *kinah* by Kallir: "When I think of how women can devour their own children...how compassionate women could boil their own children so carefully nurtured...how one woman could moan to another 'Come let us boil our shrieking children.'...one woman would make an assignment with another and say 'give me your son (for food)' but that he was already hidden away having been cut into pieces...the flesh of fathers was prepared for their children in caves and ditches...the spirit of infants hover over their swollen corpses about the streets of the city..."[137] *Kinot* such as these attempt to portray the devastation and destruction so terrible that parents were able to slaughter their own offspring. So debased were the people that morality had no meaning and no hold upon them. This is in harsh contrast to the passages which glorify the victims as pure and holy sacrifices. Both were necessary expressions of the situation and, to present a balanced impression, both needed to be acknowledged.

Following the more general *kinot* are a series referred to as the "Zionides." They are a group of *kinot* which speak of the city of Zion and the glory which was destroyed. In many of these passages Zion is personified as a woman, a widow, alone, bereft and weeping for her children and spouse. This personified Zion is also the people of Israel. They too are lost and alone, crying over the blood of their lost relatives and friends, and the city of Jerusalem and all she represented. The city was the crowning jewel in the Jewish national identity. The glory and beauty of the city and the Temple represented on earth the special relationship of the Jewish people with their God. This was the sign to the world

[137] ibid. pg. 120

of the power and might of God and His love for His people. Thus the loss and destruction of the city represented more to the Israelites than merely bricks and mortar. It was the symbol, the tangible proof of God's existence and special relationship with His people which was burned and demolished. This is clearly stated and related in the poems written to Zion. It is in these that the congregation is reminded so poignantly of the extent of their loss when the Temple was destroyed. Again the imagery is powerful, especially in the *kinot* which describe the ravaging of the city as the violation of a woman. In this way a congregation far removed from the Temple and its time really come to mourn the loss of the Temple and the glory which once was Jerusalem. This, even when the Jewish people are once again in control of the city of Jerusalem, is a remarkable feat.

At the end of the *kinot* which lament the destruction of the Temple or various other unidentified disasters are placed a number of elegies which were responses to specific tragedies and are labeled as such. One which has become standard in all volumes in Ashkenaz is the elegy for the martyrs of the York massacre. In that tragedy the people took refuge in a castle at the invitation of the count. They believed that they were betrayed by one of his servants leading the marauding hordes to gather outside the castle seeking blood. The people inside took their own lives rather than submit to the masses. More than one hundred and fifty people died and the few who remained alive were soon killed by the Crusaders. In the *kinah* the victims are idealized and viewed as martyrs who died in the sanctification of God's name. They were pure sacrifices to God:

"They remembered their creator and did not break the covenant, may their blood be more acceptable than that of any lamb or a bullock"[138]

Following this elegy is one penned for the Boppart and the York martyrs. It has a similar theme and content. Then in some of the compilations for Tisha be Av is included a *kinah* dedicated to the six million who died in the Holocaust. This *kinah* is often written by the editor of the prayerbook who, in the introduction, bewails his lack of merit and inadequacy for the task of writing a kinah. But overriding such factors are the compelling reasons to remember this more recent tragedy alongside the others of history. Since there is no person in this time fully qualified to compose such an elegy, the authors felt compelled to compose their own.[139] They attempt to imitate the style and meter of the *kinot* and use much of the same language, imagery and themes. The concept of the victims as our martyrs, holy ones led to the slaughter like an unblemished sacrifice, remains. The descriptions of the events too are laden with images of horror and torture; "They flayed the flesh of our kinfolk and used their skin for their own adornment."[140] Some authorities have argued that there are *kinot* already in existence which can easily apply to the circumstances of the Holocaust and that it was unnecessary and impudent to write another. However, congregations wanted the tragedy of their own time acknowledged and remembered as equally destructive and horrific as the tragedies of the more distant past. It was important for the survivors of the Holocaust and their families to have their grief and sadness recognized on this day of mourning of Jewish national tragedy. By recognizing it in the liturgy they are given permission to

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[138] ibid. pg. 168
[139] ibid. and R. Avrohom Feuer, The Complete Tisha be Av Service, pp. 382-391
[140] ibid. pg. 175

weep for their losses, to plead for their lives and to memorialize their own dead alongside the other martyrs of the Jewish people.

After the litany of *kinot* is over, the congregation rises from the floor for the recitation of Psalm 145 which is jarringly light and upbeat after the droning of *kinah* after *kinah*. A reading about the redemption follows, as is traditional for *shacharit*, but "*lemenatzeach*" is omitted as is the verse "*vezot briti*," for there is no pleasurable Torah study on this day. Similarly, the psalm of the day is omitted as is "*ein K'eloheinu*." These are both too joyous for such a mournful occasion.

With the arrival of the time for *mincha* the mood of the day is lifted slightly as the congregation prepares to move from lament and mourning back to the regular rigors of daily existence; the task is to move forward. Tallit and tefillin are now placed upon the worshippers and the prayers omitted from the morning liturgy are recited, including the psalm of the day. Psalm 145 is once again chanted and the afternoon Torah reading is presented. The passages for the afternoon reading are taken from Exodus. The first, Exodus 32:11-14, recalls Moses interceding on behalf of the people, raising many of the arguments which were themes in the *kinot*, recited earlier in the day. Moses' success is also recalled in this passage. The message is that the pleas which have been uttered to God throughout the day will not fall upon deaf ears, they are not in vain. The God who answered Moses will answer His people again, and He will again "relent of the evil which He said He would do to his people."[141] The efficacy of prayer and

[141]Exodus, 32:14

petition is reinforced through this passage. The next two sections are from Exodus 34:1-10, wherein Moses hews the two new tablets and God inscribes the commandments thereupon. Moses again pleads for His people and begs God's forgiveness upon them. God recalls the covenant and again promises to protect the people from harm and to make of them a great and mighty nation. Once again this wrests hope from the reading for the congregation. They are provided with proof that God does forgive iniquity; afterall He forgave the Israelites' most heinous crime, creating the golden calf. Thus God will forgive again and will not ignore the covenant He has made, and the promises He has given His special, chosen people.

The Haftorah is a selection which is recited on all fast days at the *minhah* service, Isaiah chapters 55 and 56. It is God's call to His people to seek Him and follow the commandments. If one does as God asks he is promised all goodness in the future. It is an uplifting passionate speech, filled with the hope and promise of redemption and fulfillment of the covenant. After a day of doom and despair this is a refreshing passage and one which provides the congregation with a glimpse at the future in store for them provided they remain faithful to God.

The *Amidah* contains the addition of "*nachem*" and the repetition of "*aneinu*," both of which seek comfort and salvation from God and call upon Him to take heed of the prayers of the congregation. The "*aneinu*" prayer is then repeated as a separate benediction, so vital and significant is its plea to God to "hear and answer" our prayers. *Ma'ariv* follows the regular rubrics and has no additions. Upon its conclusion the day of fasting, penitence and prayer is over. The congregation have relived the tragedy of the past, which is, essentially, also their

tragedy and struggle. They have empathized, suffered, cried out in pain, in hope and in anger to their God and to their ancestors. They have been on a long and arduous journey and now they have arrived at the end of the tunnel. Throughout the afternoon the blackness of the previous night and morning were slowly being pushed aside and the light began to show through. Now, at the end of the journey, they are renewed, invigorated and ready to work for the redemption and an end to the suffering and tragedy.

The ritual and liturgy described above are the practices of the Orthodox Jewish communities. The other branches of Judaism have a different approach to Tisha be Av and hence have created divergent liturgies. The Conservative Jews in their prayerbook, Sim Shalom, do not include special services for Tisha be Av although they do have additions which are placed within the regular daily liturgy. There is no accompanying book of *kinot* or evidence that any all-day ritual is observed. Many Conservative Jews do fast on Tisha be Av, attend weekday services, and in the evening which begins Tisha be Av, many attend services and hear the reading of Lamentations and a few *kinot* which are often read from the Orthodox prayerbooks. Some synagogues hold study sessions during the day and instead of reading the *kinot* in the liturgical setting of the sanctuary, they are read in the context of study and discussion. This practice is a compromise between the heavy, ritual-laden practices of the Orthodox Jews and ignoring the *kinot* altogether. By reading them as part of a discussion environment, any difficult theological expressions can be the subject of argument and disagreement. Thus the day and the tragedy are marked and the tragic deaths of the communities memorialized, and at the same time, troubling theological issues are not brought into the realm of prayer. Unfortunately, by so acting, much of the power of the Tisha be Av liturgy is lost. The striking and crucial

elements of the ritual and liturgical progression from deep mourning to hope and a return to life from the journey to the depths is lost. The worshippers cannot achieve the same sense of identification with the victims and the tragedy if they are not acting out the drama and recreating the scenes of destruction. The emotional power is somewhat diminished and the day becomes one of thought rather than emotion.

Many Reform communities ignore the day of Tisha be Av and do not observe any part of the ritual or liturgy. The basis for much of this ambivalence is the fact that most Reform Jews do not concur with many of the assumptions inherent in the day. The first and most central of these is the centrality of the destruction of the Temple to Jewish life and thought. Reform Jews see the ruin of the Temple as a tragic event but also one which ultimately produced a positive effect for the Jews. Reform Jews do not long for a return to the sacrificial worship of Temple days and as such see no need for the restoration of the Temple itself. As such they have removed from their liturgies all references to the rebuilding of the Temple. It is of fundamental importance to the Reform Jew that the Temple's destruction heralded the flowering of prayer and synagogue worship as the primary means of communicating with God. This chain of events is viewed as a positive and necessary step in the developing ever changing relationship with God. Further, the cyclical nature of time and history as a repetition of what has come before in a different form, is foreign to Reform ideology. To the Reform Jew, history is a progression through time, not a revisiting of the central event of the destruction of the Temple. Thus the occasion of Tisha be Av loses most of its power and appeal. The memorial of the ninth of Av is irrelevant to Reform Jews and as such very few have found meaning in commemorating the day at all. Finally, if Reform Jews have countenanced Tisha be Av observances at all,

the traditional services, with their stress on the sin/punishment paradigm, the notion of the people being tested by disaster and many other such theological expressions, are in opposition to most of the basic Reform beliefs about God and His workings in the world. Therefore, even if Reform Jews do commemorate Tisha be Av, they do not do so with the Orthodox liturgies.

In the early days of the Reform movement there was great debate about the ninth of Av and the appropriate observance. David Einhorn, one of the early Reform figures, proposed and indeed wrote a liturgy for Tisha be Av which he believed reflected Reform ideology and attitudes. He stresses that the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent bloodshed were tragic events which should be mourned and commemorated, but alongside that mourning should be celebration. He argued that although Tisha be Av was a day of memorials and sadness, it should also reflect the joy of the new order which came into being as part of God's plan. The Temple destruction was an addendum to Sinai, a means by which God made His new will known to His people. "Reform recognizes the flaming Temple Mount not as a curtailment but rather the continuation of the divine work of salvation, which had begun on flaming Mount Sinai, marking the real beginning of the priestly mission, the conveyance of the divinity to all the children of this earth, for which Israel had been ordained at the Sinaitic choice."[142] He continues and addresses his controversial service: "Oh how many preachers in Israel today strive in vain to find the words which have the magic power to make the long dried out source of tears flow once again; who use the radiant glow of phantasy to breathe new meaning into a long since dried out suffering. Mine is a more beautiful and

[142]David Einhorn, "Tisha be Av and the Modern Jew" excerpt from a sermon quoted in, Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism, pg. 201

easier task, namely that of showing forth the pleasing stately flower that has arisen from the decay, the healing change religious life has undergone threefold through the dispersion of Israel, in that it has gained more freedom, more spiritual depth, and wider dissemination."[143] Thus "the day of sorrow and fasting has become one of gladness and a time of rededication to rebuilding the 'new Jerusalem.' "[144] Thus Tisha be Av was changed by the early Reform movement such that the progression of the day was from sorrow to celebration and gladness.

Einhorn's radical reinterpretation of Tisha be Av was not accepted by all in the movement. Ludwig Philippson respects Einhorn's sentiments but argues that, while there may be room in the liturgy for a day of celebration of the changed relationship between God and the Jewish people, it should not be the occasion of Tisha be Av. He suggests that no matter what one feels regarding the destruction and its benefits, it was still a tragedy as were all the other disastrous events commemorated on that day, and they deserve to be remembered liturgically without being juxtaposed with gladness and rejoicing: "You may institute a holiday for having attained civic liberties, yet what the ninth of Ab contains in utterly sad and touching memories cannot be blotted out by any blessed turn in our destiny. For it is, after all, only a minute fraction of the Jewish race over whom the sun of freedom has risen."[145]

Philippson's perspective seems to have triumphed over the more radical notions of Einhorn, and yet Reform Jews in general maintain a relatively ambivalent

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[143]ibid.

[144]David Einhorn, in Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity, pg. 247

[145]Ludwig Philppson, "We Must Mourn on Tisha be Av" in Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism, pg. 204

attitude, at best, towards the observance of Tisha be Av. It is then fascinating that the movement's prayerbook, The Gates of Prayer contains a service for Tisha be Av. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, it has been combined with the service for Yom Hashoah. This makes an interesting theological statement which is antithetical to much of the classical Reform ideology. The twinning of these two services seems to suggest that both disasters were of equal magnitude and severity. The destruction of the Temple has thus found a place in Reform practice if not thought. The Gates of Understanding, the accompanying explanation or manual to the prayerbook, does little to explain the twinning of these two events. It offers a rationale for the commemoration of the Holocaust on 27th of Nisan and then states "Tish'a be-Av, as the trad. (sic.) anniversary of the destruction of *both* Temples, has for many centuries been a day of fasting and lamentation."[146] The Gates of the Seasons, the Reform guide to practice, also offers little illumination. It lists the tragedies which are commemorated on Tisha be Av and mentions that its observance has been "abandoned" by many Jews as a result of the re-establishment of the State of Israel. It further notes that some still observe it by fasting or attending services, like the one in the Gates of Prayer which serves to memorialize all Jews who died for the sanctification of God's name.[147] Thus the service is universalized and made to apply to all Jews, moving the emphasis away from the Temple. Unfortunately the reference to the establishment of the State of Israel is misleading about the nature of the day of Tisha be Av. Although much of the traditional service expresses a desire to return to Jerusalem and the holy land once more, the establishment of the modern-day state, does not affect that desire and hope because amongst the sentiments is a return in the messianic age. Although

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[146]Lawrence Hoffman, Gates of Understanding, pg. 246
[147]Peter Knobel, Gates of the Seasons, pp. 103-4

Jews are sovereign in their land once more it is still not in an age of peace. That is the longed for return called for in the services and as such it should be unaffected by the fact of the modern-day state.

The service in Gates of Prayer contains a few of the traditional elements of Tisha be Av liturgy but for the most part it is focused on the Holocaust and its effects. The two fast day prayers, *aneinu* and *nachem* are included in slightly altered forms which take into account the establishment of the State of Israel. However, most of the other readings are either directly from Holocaust literature or are so universal as to apply to all disaster. Interestingly, the choices of readings often reflect very traditional theologies and contain many of the elements with which Reform Jews traditionally feel uncomfortable. However, alongside these passages are others which stress the importance of individual responsibility: humanity causes disaster and humanity can also cause it to cease. Such sentiments are included in by using the words of Elie Weisel and other survivors. Thus the service allotted to Tisha be Av is, for the most part, a reflection of its status in the Reform movement.

Reform communities, like their Conservative counterparts, also commemorate Tisha be Av by study and discussion rather than liturgical expressions. This practice is consistent with the Reform approach to the occasion and religious traditions in general. In recent years, there have been a number of local synagogues who have produced their own Tisha be Av services, as have many of the summer camps of the Reform movement. This seems to reflect the general return to tradition found within Reform communities in general, as well as the more practical reason, that Tisha be Av is the only seasonal observance

which falls during the summer camp period.[148] Thus it can be seen that the observance of Tisha be Av is far from uniform within the Reform communities, and it seems to wax and wane with the predilections of various congregations and time periods. However, for the most part, the services created reflect Reform ideology and intellectual pursuits rather than being an emotional response to the tragedies. As such they, like the Conservative movement's offerings, lose a great deal of the impact, relevancy and emotion of the commemoration.

Tisha be Av has been developing and changing since its institution. For the Orthodox communities, those changes are in the form of additions to the liturgy but are not changes in their approach to the destruction and events of history. For these communities any modern historical calamity is merely a re-visitation of a past disaster. As such, all of the historical tragedies occurring to the Jewish people may be fitted into the paradigm of the Temple's destruction. All the liturgy written for one event can then easily be applied to all the others. In order to facilitate that occurrence there is often a blurring of the specific details of the tragedies in favor of a coherent expression of the emotions and theological positions experienced in the wake of a tragic event. The Tisha be Av services of the Orthodox communities are thus particularly powerful, for the blurring of historical details means that all worshippers can somehow connect with the tragedies of the past by associating them with the catastrophes with which they are more familiar. The ritual reenactment and movement of the liturgical cycle and the day itself only serve to enhance the identification of the worshippers with

[148]A careful review of these liturgies goes beyond the scope of this study but an analysis of a number of the services may be found in Elizabeth Torop's Rabbinic thesis: Individual Creative Liturgies within the Reform Movement 1965-1985

the tragedies, and thus enhance the worship experience. The Reform and, to a lesser extent, the Conservative movements have lost much of this power by creating services which place distance between the worshippers and the events, and serve to intellectualize the liturgical commemoration rather than allow it to be an outpouring of emotion. The traditional observances pay scant heed to consistency of language and ideas, instead giving expression to a wide range of theological perspectives in one service. Many of these expressions are contradictory but in the synagogue environment that matters less than giving voice and hence legitimacy to the wide range of conflicting and difficult emotions felt by victims of disaster and the generations of survivors. Thus the observance is made real, relevant and extremely powerful.

The response to the destruction of the Temple then, was the creation of a new paradigm through which the disasters of history were forevermore to be viewed by the traditional community. As a result liturgies were created which reflect that world view and enable worshippers through time to ritually experience the tragedy of the destruction of the Temples as well as remember and memorialize more recent catastrophes.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESPONSES TO THE CRUSADES

If his offering is a sacrifice of well-being...whether a male or a female he shall bring it before the Lord without blemish. He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the tent of meeting...and dash its blood against all sides of the altar.
(Leviticus, 3:1-2)

The spring of the year 1096 saw the beginnings of what would later become known as the Crusader period in the history of Europe. A religious fervor swept over the continent leaving in its wake death and destruction. It was like a tornado passing through with surprising force, wreaking havoc and bringing devastation to all in its path. Then almost as swiftly as it came, it was gone and it appeared that life returned to normal once again. But life would never be 'normal' for the Jews. They were the target of an unquenchable fire of religious hatred. Their communities were decimated and destroyed. The great centers of Jewish learning in Mainz, Worms, Speyer and even as far afield as York were almost destroyed. People were slaughtered and burned in their homes; the chosen people were chosen for death and torture. Caught in the tumult and swept up in the radical religious innovations of the time, the Jews, like their Christian neighbors, "appropriated the old Jewish symbols and adapted them creatively to the needs of the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves."[149] The Jews responded to the threat to their existence in a manner not before witnessed in Jewish tradition. There were instances of mass suicide and slaughter of their own people in ritually charged ceremonies. People took

[149]Robert Chazan, European Jewry and the First Crusade, pg. 124

their own lives and those of their children, family friends and loved ones all in the name of *Kiddush Hashem,* the sanctification of God's name. Ancient Temple rituals were appropriated and adapted to new circumstances, prayers were composed for the occasion and thus the "potential of the rich and evocative symbols (of Jewish tradition) was realized"[150] in a radical and surprising manner. The ritualization of these instances of mass suicide are of relevance to us as an immediate and innovative ritual response to a communal crisis.

In the calm which followed the storm of hate and passion created by the Crusades, the Jewish leaders and communities needed to make some sense of the incredible period of history that they had witnessed and miraculously survived. How to incorporate the events which seemed such a radical departure from normative Jewish behavior into the mythic memory of the people was almost as great a challenge as the leaders had ever before faced. Liturgy was one of the means by which the events were recorded and subsumed under traditional Jewish paradigms. They were divested of their radicalism without compromising the truth and integrity of accounts of the events. The liturgists imbued the events with eschatological implications, linked them to the acts of the heroes of Jewish tradition and at the same time gave vent to the emotions, especially anger, felt by the survivors, towards God and the enemy. The traditional "sin/ punishment" paradigm was discarded in favor of the notion of a divine test of the most righteous who are able to withstand the onslaught. So were the victims idealized and glorified by the texts for committing an act which is, essentially, contrary to Jewish tradition and teachings about the sanctity of life. We find this and more in the liturgical traditions which arose in response to

[150]ibid. pg. 132

the Crusades, and their enormous impact upon Jewish liturgy is still evident today. This chapter will consider, first, the immediate ritual responses to the catastrophe as evidenced in the Hebrew Crusade chronicles. Second, we will analyze liturgical innovations which arose in the immediate aftermath, using the community in York as a model. Finally, we discuss the ritual and liturgical responses that have been universalized and incorporated into the synagogue rite of Ashkenaz and persist today.

The most expansive and comprehensive source for descriptions of the events of 1096 and the later crusades are the Hebrew Crusade chronicles. These texts were modeled, in part, upon Christian chronicles composed during the same period. The distinguishing features of the Jewish texts are that they are composed in Hebrew and that alongside the lengthy descriptions of individuals and the events of the Crusades are interspersed passages of poetry, written in a liturgical meter and style. It has been surmised that the chronicles were originally compiled for a number of purposes: "although it was beyond their powers, they labored to put down on paper every decree and every persecution of their times-first as a record for posterity...second, to strengthen failing hearts here and now."[151] The chronicles further served as a polemic against the Crusader oppressors and as a means of incorporating the events of their times into Jewish communal memory, not as radical departures but rather as an extension of biblical and other ancient Jewish paradigms.

Some authorities have suggested that the chronicles were originally composed as liturgy: "It is apparent from the language of these records that they were written in the first place for synagogue purposes, as reading matter along with

[151]Speigel, The Last Trial, pg. 17

the public recitation of prayers, as liturgical poetry and penitential hymns based on current events."[152] However, despite the fact that they were composed for liturgical purposes and with the intent that they be read in the synagogue as a holy record of the Crusades, the lengthy prose passages made it "difficult if not impossible to assimilate them into the liturgy."[153] Thus it is unlikely that they were ever used as originally intended. This does not diminish their value for our purposes however. They still provide a liturgical response to the disaster and an extremely poignant window into the events of the time and their mythologising through the text. Further, they were translated into Yiddish, evidencing a desire for them to reach a large number of people. The fact that they appear in other works, such as the Minhag books suggests that they were read widely and had a liturgical impact upon the congregations of Ashkenaz.[154] Further, although they were not read in toto in the synagogue, many passages were recited in various synagogue rites and rituals, most notably, on Tisha Be Av, when many of the passages are still read.

The two uses of the chronicles as they are relevant to this discussion are intertwined and it is difficult to extricate one from the other. The first is as a record of the ritualization of the responses of the Jewish victims to the catastrophe which befell them. The accuracy of the chronicles is verified by the fact that many of the contemporary Christian chronicle accounts correspond on most of the salient points. However, "the events actually reported qualify for inclusion only when they fit the narrator's preconceived religious literary schema. Medieval chronicles are, in this sense fictions: imaginative recordings of

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[152]ibid.

[153]I. Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom," in Prooftexts, vol. 2, no. 2, 1982, pg. 43.

[154]D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions." M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1995, pg. 5

experience within a cultural framework and system of symbols."[155] Thus, although the chronicles can provide a relatively accurate picture of the ritual reactions and mythic responses of the people to the onslaught of the Crusades, their accuracy is tempered by the rhetoric and need for the chronicler to make the Jewish behavior normative. This leads to the second relevance of the chronicles to our purpose and that is their merit as liturgy. In this respect the interest lies in the means by which the chroniclers have presented the material, and discerning the underlying assumptions thereof. Thus we consider the religious mythopeic imagination by studying the rhetoric, symbols and language of the texts. This requires a careful study of the themes of the chronicle texts and the symbolism used by the authors.

Four Hebrew chronicles exist for this period. The first, by Solomon bar Samson, concentrates on the First Crusade and the attacks on the communities in Speyer, Worms and Mainz. There are a few discrepancies between his work and the Christian sources, but on points of negligible importance. His chronicle contains the most detailed description of the events in the least poetic style.[156] The second chronicle is that composed by Eliezer bar Nathan. His chronicle contains much more liturgical-style material than that of Solomon. He writes four laments, each dedicated to a different community: Speyer, Mainz, Worms and Cologne. He is more apocalyptic, emotional and prophetic than Solomon but in the factual details he rarely departs from the other chronicles.[157] The third chronicle has come to be known as the "Mainz Anonymous" as it is unclear by whom it was composed and when, and it concentrates for the most part upon

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[155]Ivan Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom," Prooftexts, vol. 2 no. 2, 1982 . n5. pg. 42
[156]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pp. 15-19
[157]ibid. pp. 73-75

the events in the community of Mainz. It has been postulated that it is relatively late in origin due to the inclusion of tales of well- poisoning by the Jews, which phenomenon was later. However it has also been suggested that these passages were later additions to an already existing document.[158] The last source, is the *Sefer Zechira* composed by Ephrayim of Bonn. Ephrayim was a renowned liturgist and, as may be expected, his chronicle contains the most liturgical poetry. He concentrates upon the events of the Second Crusade and includes material about the burning of the Torah scrolls in Paris and the massacre at York. Ephrayim's work expresses similar sentiments to those of the other authors and, again, parallels non-Jewish sources.[159] These works provide us with a glimpse into the events of the Crusades and the people's reactions thereto. The themes which recur assist in our understanding of the way the events were perceived by the participants, but more importantly the way they were incorporated into the body of liturgy and into Jewish memory and mythic imagination.

The chronicles tell us that when the Jews heard news of the impending danger and the beginning of the Crusades they reacted as had their ancestors throughout time when faced with the possibility of catastrophe: with repentance, prayer and charity.[160] The "charity" took the form of offerings of sums of money to the Crusaders, cash which they required for the continuation of their journey to Jerusalem, in exchange for protection from the hoards. In other communities this tactic had afforded a reprieve from the forced conversions and slaughter. All the communities, it was recorded, fasted for three days in an attempt to avert the

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[158]ibid. pp. 95-98

[159]ibid. pp. 117-119

[160]Solomon bar Samson pg. 22, Eliezer bar Nathan, pg. 80, Mainz anonymous pg. 100 as found in Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades.

disaster: "They subjected themselves to great endurance abstaining from food and drink for three consecutive days and nights, and then fasting many days sunrise to sunset, until their skin shriveled dry as wood upon their bones. And they cried out loudly and bitterly to God."[161] Mainz anonymous adds that the prayers offered were lamentations.[162] Marcus suggests that this, in conjunction with the negotiations with the foreign ruler for protection, is evidence of a hearkening to the story of Esther. In that biblical narrative, Esther and her community fasted for three days and offered prayers and supplications to God whereafter they pleaded with the foreign ruler for clemency.[163] However, as we have seen in Chapter One, the act of fasting and praying to God to intervene and avert disaster is a traditional Jewish response to impending catastrophe. By fasting, the Jews were engaged in an act of self-mortification. Abstaining from food and drink placed them closer to death and acted as a cry and warning to God to intervene and prevent the disaster. It was a means of drawing God's attention to their plight by demonstrating their loyalty and devotion to God. This was achieved by the act of fasting wherein they actively placed their lives in God's hands. No longer was it a matter for them alone; they involved God by crying out with both words and actions, for His assistance. Thus they evidenced their absolute faith in Him. Further, by fasting, they imposed a form of punishment upon themselves in the hope that God would be moved to intervene on their behalf. Thus this ritual response most probably finds its roots in the Talmud and not the biblical tale of Esther or contemporary Christian practice.

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[161]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades,. pg. 22
[162]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pg. 100
[163]Ivan Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom," Prooftexts, vol. 2, no. 2. 1982. pg. 44

Unfortunately the pleas of the people went unheeded and the marauding hoards still closed in upon the Jews, leading the chroniclers to suggest that God had hidden Himself behind a cloud in order to obstruct the clear passage of the people's prayers.[164] The notion of God hiding from His people at times of disaster is not an innovative one. It serves the dual purpose of explaining why the prayers were not answered as well as reassuring the people that their God is still present and potent, He has chosen not to act. This answers the detractors who would suggest that God can no longer act on Israel's behalf, and especially the Christian polemicists who argue that the Jews have been superseded and God no longer cares for them. The Jewish response here maintains the covenant intact, providing cause for continued hope in a rescue by God. The flaw in the argument is the fact that the reason for the cloud's interposition is not explained. The chronicles contend that God intentionally prevented the prayers from ascending but provide no adequate explanation yet about why that may be the case. In the classic biblical and Talmudic sources this is the result of the people's sins, but as has been mentioned, this reason was not considered appropriate when discussing these particular victims.

Thus far, the Jews responded to the crisis from well within their traditional boundaries. They fasted, prayed to God for deliverance and offered charity to others and bribes to the Crusaders. All these tactics had proven efficacious in the past; however in this instance not only did they appear futile but also detrimental. Due to the Jews' prolonged fasting, they had no strength with which to fight the enemy; they were even more powerless and vulnerable than before they had entreated their God from whom there had still been no adequate

[164]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pp. 22, 80

response. The chronicles lament this sorry state: "All our wealth did not avail us, nor did our fasting, self-affliction, lamenting or charity, and no one was found to stand in the breach...and even the holy Torah did not shelter its scholars."[165]

In many communities, the next step was to seek shelter and protection from burgher friends or from the local nobleman. This was indeed the case in Worms, Speyer and York. In each instance one of the king's nobles offered the Jews of his community shelter and a haven behind the thick and sturdy walls of his castle. Unfortunately in each city the shelter would be only temporary and eventually the same bloody fate would await them as befell their brethren who remained outside the castles.

The typical pattern was the arrival of the Crusaders to find that most of the Jews had fled and were encamped at various shelters outside the town, hidden by friendly villagers, usually at the request of the bishop. The ones who were not so sequestered were rounded up without much difficulty and provided the option of conversion or death. Many chose death and used the moment to polemicize against the Crusaders and affirm their own faith. At times such an act involved great bravery and deceit on behalf of the person who stood before the Crusaders. An example is the case of David the Gabbai. He was a prominent Jew in the community and well known for his scholarship. When he saw that all was over and he could not defeat the Crusaders, he attempted to wrest a small victory from the imminent defeat. He led them to believe that he would indeed convert if they brought the priest before him. The priest was thrilled at the coup of converting such a prominent Jew, so he disseminated the news and a large

[165]ibid. pg. 29

crowd gathered before the house of David. Whereupon it was reported that David the Gabbai came out of his home and said "You are children of whoredom, believing as you do in a god who was a bastard and was crucified. As for me I believe in the everlasting God who dwells in the lofty heavens. In Him have I trusted to this day, and I will continue to do so until my soul departs. Moreover, I know the truth: if you slay me, my soul will abide in the Garden of Eden-in the light of life. You, however, descend to the deep pit, to eternal obloquy. To Gehenna are you and your whoreson god condemned, and to boiling excrement you are consigned."[166] Thereupon the Crusaders flew into a rage and slew David, his wife, son, daughter, daughter-in -law and the entire household.

Whether or not this and other stories like it ever occurred we will never discern, but it is one of the means by which the chronicler, and hence all those who would subsequently use the text as liturgy, could express their anger and hatred for the enemy as well as polemicize against them. By placing these words in the mouth of David the Gabbai, they could express their deep-seated rage and resentment towards the Christian enemy. Further, this narrative gesture wrests pride from the blood and ashes of defeat. David was killed along with his family and household, but only after striking a blow of humiliation at his slayers. Mintz argues that, in this manner, much of the communal anger towards God was shifted to the enemy.[167] This is partially the case, but there is much evidence still in the texts of anger towards God as well as numerous very good reasons for extreme hatred toward the Crusaders. Further, it added another option to the passive martyrdom seen in other stories.

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[166]ibid. pg. 38
[167]A. Mintz, Hurban, pg. 92

The response of David the Gabbai and those like him accounts for very few of the deaths during the Crusader period if the chronicles can be relied upon in this matter. Many of the Jews chose a different and new path to their deaths. This period saw the beginning of Jewish mass martyrdom. Never before had communities of Jews taken their own lives and the lives of their children, spouses and loved ones. Friend and foe alike were joined in unity to give their souls for the One God. According to the chronicle accounts, these acts of suicide and murder were highly ritualized and followed an eerily similar pattern. But before considering the means by which the act itself was carried out, the thinking which led to such a response must be considered.

Many of the Jews were trapped within castle walls, their brethren had been murdered; their possessions pillaged and homes plundered and burnt to the ground, the sacred objects desecrated and destroyed, and the Jews who remained alive did so only as long as they found favor with the local ruler. The Jews were suspicious and felt trapped and condemned to a fate of certain death. Added to this was the religious fervor of the time. The enemy was not fighting a war for possessions, property or land, although these were certainly motivations, but the war of God. The stakes were therefore much higher: a victory for the Crusaders was viewed as a victory for their God and their religious ideals. The war was of cosmic proportions and involved realms far beyond this earth. In this highly charged atmosphere, the Jews facing almost certain defeat were forced to wrest some semblance of victory from what was doomed to be disaster. They cried out to God, "Why have You forsaken us? Turn Your face back to us and crush the enemy" But the only sound from the heavens was a terrifying, booming silence. The old world-view no longer worked for these Jews;

their actions were already elevated beyond the earthly realms. More than ever before they believed they were fighting a war for God, the battle was being lost and won in this world and in another. An apocalyptic fervor gripped the Crusaders and their victims alike. In this new and radically changed world, a new and radical response was required.

Each day the Jews prayed for a return to the days of the Temple sacrifice; they asked God to accept their prayers in place of a sacrifice. The Temple ritual was familiar and actual. The cyclical nature of Jewish tradition insured that the Temple was a part of the consciousness of the people and its return was longed for and yearned after. [168] In the time when the Crusaders were seeking to restore their presence in Jerusalem, the Jews determined to create a Jerusalem and rebuild the *mikdash* right there in Europe.[169] Then the "omnipresent 'as if' could be removed, the mediating *ke'ilu* that expressed a prayerful anxiety of the worshipper as he pleaded 'may my verbal prayer be acceptable AS IF I had performed the ritual offerings.' "[170]

The Jews saw no way out. They understood that God's will would be done, that they would die for their faith, and they determined that to die at the hands of the enemy would be to taint the sacrifice they were making for their God. Instead they should die pure and unsoiled, at their own hand. Just as the slaughtering of the animals at the Temple appeased God, so too would their slaughter on His

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[168]A. Mintz, Hurban, pg. 95
[169]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, , pg. 51
[170]A. Mintz, Hurban, pg. 97

altar in Europe.[171] Thus the martyrdom "becomes enacted as a form of religious polemic, performed as highly stylized religious drama."[172]

The uniformity of the major elements in most of the episodes of mass martyrdom may be a result of the chroniclers' rhetoric or it may reflect the reality, but the act was nonetheless replete with symbolism and ritual elements. In most cases the victims go with great eagerness and willingness to their deaths. Before children were slaughtered by their parents a blessing was said and then they reply "Amen," thus demonstrating their compliance and willingness to be executed for the sake of the Divine. The blessing recited in most cases was one of those recited before the slaughter of an animal sacrifice. The story of Samuel ben Gedalia offers an example from the massacres in Cologne during the First Crusade. Samuel's son Yehiel wished to die along with the others of his town and he, like they, threw himself in the river in order to drown before the Crusaders could kill him. Unfortunately he was not killed and neither was his best friend. When the two emerged from the river they vowed to die together, in each other's arms. They were about to throw themselves on their swords when Samuel arrived and stopped them. He pleaded with his son that he be given the honor of offering him as a sacrifice to God. He said "Yehiel, my son, stretch out your neck before your father and I will offer you as a sacrifice to God. I will recite the ritual benediction and you will respond, "Amen."[173] This story and others like it evidence the willingness of the victim to die for the sake of God's name.[174] This

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[171]Ivan Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom" in Prooftexts, vol. 2, no. 2, 1982. pg. 42

[172]ibid. pg. 49

[173]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pp. 51-52

[174]It is interesting to note that the notion of stretching out one's neck as evidence of complicity in the slaughter as well as enthusiasm for the task has some basis in Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah. There Israel are compared to a dove, both of whom stretch forth their necks before the slaughter, (Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah, Soncino, 15:2.) This imagery is also used in various midrashic expositions of the Akedah.

serves as a counter to anyone who would suggest that the children were unwittingly slaughtered by their parents. It also demonstrated their piety and faith, that they were so willing to come forward to rise to the challenge to their faith by affirming the one God and being offered as a sacrifice upon His altar.

In other tales women, especially, worked to ensure that the sacrifices would be complete before the Crusader armies invaded their hiding places. They were eager to perform the will of their God and struggled to be the first to stretch forth their necks for the sake of the sanctification of God's name. In a number of instances they threw coins outside to delay the enemy and provide themselves enough time to kill their children.[175] Again, this is a device to demonstrate that there was no pressure on the Jews, that they were truly faithful and pious to the extreme and sought only to do God's will. Further, the polemical force of the story is that it demonstrates the Christians were greedy, lusting after gold coins more than their religious principles.

The texts are replete with references to the sacrifices, the Temple cult and the notion that all who died did so in fulfillment of the ancient rite. Thus the author normalizes the behavior, as did those involved in the sacrifices themselves. By couching their actions in the language and ritual of the Temple sacrifices, their radical acts become less so. Rather than being an innovative response to the crisis they became actors on an ancient stage performing a ritual which was almost as old as the religion itself. "For the moment the millennium that separated the sanctuary from the Crusade is suspended; the vast reaches of exile with the imposed alienation between God and Israel are transcended."[176]

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[175]ibid. pg. 34

[176]A. Mintz, Hurban, pg. 97

The people knew the will of God, they were in touch with Him, in communication with Him, and now they were going to meet Him and dwell forever in the Garden of Eden with the righteous of the nation.

Each story of the individuals who were involved in the Crusades almost surpasses the one that came before in terms of the victim's faith and bravery. There is the tale of Isaac the son of David the *parnass*. Isaac converted to Christianity under duress and the rest of the town was slaughtered. He returned to his mother's home to find his mother and his children still alive. He sat with his mother who was wounded and bedridden after the attacks and told her what he had resolved to do; he would take his children to the synagogue and offer them as a sin offering before the Lord. She tried to dissuade him but he was committed to his plan. He gathered his children and asked them if they were prepared to be offered before the Lord. They assented. Under the cover of darkness he took them to the sanctuary where he killed them as a sin offering before God and sprinkled their blood upon the ark, to evoke their memory before the Lord and he said "May this blood expiate all my transgressions"[177] He then set his home, with his mother inside on fire and returned to the synagogue which he lit up with flames and locked himself inside. The Crusaders tried to rescue him but he knew God's will was for him to die in the burning house of God.[178] Burning the synagogue, killing your mother and children is hardly what would be considered normative Jewish behavior but when couched in the language and

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[177]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pp. 39-41

[178]For a more detailed exposition of this tale see, Susan Einbinder, "Signs of Romance," (unpublished at the time of writing) wherein she notes, for example, the irony that the Crusaders think of him as a Christian and worthy of saving and yet we claim him as Jewish. They Crusaders call to him to leave *ha'ur* the fire, and he answers, in a clever pun on the words, that he is staying in *ha'or,* the light of God. In a similarly clever play on language, they offer him a *toran*, a beam, and he replies that he will hold onto the *Torah.*

symbolism of sacrifice to God it can more easily be assimilated into mainstream Jewish thought and life. One who may otherwise have been denounced as a madman has become a bold hero, a symbol of the repentant Jew returning to his Father in heaven.

Interestingly, it was not just the men who brought sacrifices to God but the women too were involved in the Temple rite. In fact, in the First Crusade chronicles, the women exceed the men in many instances in the demonstration of their love and devotion to their God. The most poignant tale is that of Rachel. She called upon her friends to kill her four children before the Crusaders defiled them. One woman obliged and took one child and killed him. Rachel held out her sleeves to receive his blood as was the custom in the ancient Temple rite. Then the remaining son pleaded with his mother that he should not suffer the same fate as his brother, and he fled and hid beneath a box. The two daughters then came forward. They sharpened the knife to ensure it had no flaws which could render a sacrifice blemished and unacceptable. They then brought the knife forward, extended their throats and Rachel killed them both. Then she called to the son who was hidden beneath the box and he would not come forth, so she dragged him by his heels, screaming and she sacrificed him to God. Then she lay two children on each sleeve, and, their bodies still quivering, she waited for the Crusaders to come.[179] Again there is a predominance of Temple imagery with the victims willingly going to the slaughter, extending their necks and preparing the equipment. This is one of the few stories in which there is an unwilling victim, but the author's purpose here is to further demonstrate how remarkable a woman Rachel was; despite her son's pleas she was able to

[179]ibid. pp. 55-56

sanctify God's name through his death. The inspection of the knife is an act found throughout the chronicles' tales. It is always made clear that the slaughtering knife was sharp and unblemished, thereby ensuring a pure, untainted sacrifice. Further, the word used for knife is *ma'achelet*, the same as the word used in the tale of the sacrifice of Isaac, about which more will be said later. Again, the victims, perpetrators and the chroniclers spare no details in the retelling of the stories, yet the behavior is couched in terms which make it heroic and almost enviable.

In the chronicle's descriptions a story is told and more often than not its outcome is linked to a scriptural passage or verse of which the tale is the fulfillment. For example in the recounting of Rachel's deeds the chronicler concludes by stating "thus was fulfilled the verse "The mother was dashed to pieces with her children." (Hosea 10:14)[180] Once again, this is a device used by the chroniclers to demonstrate that not only were the actions of these people well within Jewish normative tradition but they were also predicted in Scripture itself. This further justifies the acts of the slaughterers and reinforces not only their acceptability but also their admirability. Further, it demonstrates that not only is God a presence in their lives even at this time of death and destruction but also that He is in control of the events. He foretold them in Scripture and this, too, is part of the divine plan for the universe and the Jewish people. The covenant then remains intact and in force.

Before the Jews offered themselves as sacrifices they reinforced the fact that they believed they were performing their designated role in a drama already

[180]ibid. pg. 36

written by God. They were not behaving irrationally or unintentionally, rather they were merely behaving as God required and expected of them. Further, they were in dialogue with the heavens, they cried out to God to take note of what they did for the sake of His name. At the very moment before they were to die, foremost in their minds was praise of God and declaration of their acceptance of their fate as decreed by God. Then, just before they died, the martyrs recited the words of the *Shema*, affirming God's unity. There are a number of reasons why this verse was the one chosen by the martyrs to recite at the moment before their deaths. The first is another means by which they could create a link between their actions and those of the generations who came before. There is a well known tale of the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva at the hands of the Romans. They were scraping his flesh with iron combs and as he was about to die he recited the words of the *Shema*. When his deciples said to him, "Even now, Rabbi as you die you recite the words of the *Shema*?" he replied that all his life he had been troubled by the directive to love God with all one's heart and soul. He knew that he could love God with his heart, but how to do so with all one's soul? The answer was provided by his circumstances, that one should recite the *Shema* as one's soul was being removed from one's body at the moment of death, thus demonstrating that one could love God with the entirety of one's soul.[181] The martyrs of the Crusades believed that they were following in the tradition of their forbears by reciting the *Shema* at the moment of death. Further, it served as a restatement of the reasons for their dying: they were dying for the unity of God's name. Their deaths were to prevent defilement by those who believed that God was not one but three, so at the very moment of their passing they offered the ultimate 'davka': not only would they not convert but they would

[181]b. Talmud, Berachot. 61b.

die with the central tenet of their faith upon their lips. Another final connection to the tradition is reference to the patriarchs and others who recited the *Shema*.

In Mainz the Crusaders arrived at the season of the festival of Shavuot, the commemoration of the giving of the Torah.[182] Thus the air was already charged with an apocalyptic fervor. The time of the giving of the Torah and the formation of the covenant could be the time which heralded the new era and time of peace. As the people were preparing to take their own lives Rabbi Menachem stood and exhorted his fellow Jews: "He cited the words of our Father Jacob, who, just before he died, wished to reveal the time of the final redemption to his children but was prevented from doing so because the Divine Presence departed from him. Jacob then said 'Just as our Father Isaac produced a defect, so perhaps I, too, have been found to have a defect.' Whereupon Jacob's sons all answered, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.' And when our fathers received Torah on Mount Sinai at this season they said, 'We shall do and obey,' and declared in great voice, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.' Thus shall you do this day,' and they wholeheartedly affirmed the Oneness of God, doing as the great sage had told them, crying out with one mouth and one heart: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.' " [183] Thus they connected themselves not only to Jacob and his sons but more importantly to the other group of Israelites who once stood and in unison recited the *Shema*. Then a covenant was made, God spoke to the people and a new era dawned for the Israelite people. The martyrs felt themselves on the brink of the dawning of yet another time for their people. They stood and affirmed God in

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[182]It is important to remember that the chronicles often manipulate the dates to stress their cultic significance. For a more detailed discussion see Jeremy Cohen, Tzion.
[183]Shlomo Eilberg The Jews and the Crusades. pg. 34

unity, with one purpose. They believed that they were fulfilling God's word and mission which would usher in the new age. Thus did they form the crucial link in the chain which would bring together the past and the future as one.

Further connections with the past were made to bolster their actions and give them legitimacy. To this end, parallels were drawn not only with the sacrificial rituals but also with the actions of the patriarchs, most especially Abraham and Isaac. Interestingly and in keeping with the notion that their actions would form the bridge between the past and the future, the comparisons with the biblical tales have the Crusader victims surpassing the feats of their ancestors.

Comparisons are made first with the acts of Rabbi Akiva and his deciples who were martyred by the Romans. They are further likened to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, three who, like the Jews of this time, were tested by the God.[184] There are also parallels drawn with Sodom and Gemorrah, where they were given the opportunity to find righteous men in order to reverse God's decree of death. In the case of the Crusades, no such opportunity was provided. There was no option given by God; their test was thus more difficult and more trying.[185]

The chroniclers make numerous references to the *Akeda*, the trial of Abraham wherein he was commanded by God to sacrifice his son upon an altar built with his own hands. The parallel with the slaughter of the Crusades is compelling. Here the people were once again called by God to prove their faith to Him with the ultimate test: the sacrificing of life for the sanctification of God's name. The accounts mirror the language and behavior of both Abraham and Isaac to further

[184]ibid. pg. 32, 43.
[185]ibid. pg. 107

stress the connection between the two stories. An example may be found in the tale of Meshullam Ben Isaac. He reportedly had a son named Isaac who, like the patriarch with whom he shared a name, was born when his parents were of advanced age. Meshullam stood before the community and his wife and announced that he was to sacrifice his Isaac to God as his ancestor Abraham had done before him. His wife pleaded with him to spare their son this cruel and terrible fate or at the very least to kill her first so she would not have to witness his death. Meshullum was unmoved and replied that he would not tarry for a second. Like Abraham who rose early to go and do God's bidding, Meshullum was eager to complete his task. He told his wife that soon their son would return to God and lay sheltered in the bosom of Abraham. Meshullum then bound his son, as had Abraham, and took the knife in his hand to slaughter him, first reciting the blessing for the slaughter. Isaac responded, "Amen," whereupon he sacrificed his son.[186] There are many stories such as this one which recount tales of parents slaughtering their children. They are written with echoes of the *Akeda* ever present as reminders of the legitimacy of the act in Jewish tradition, for what better precedent could one bring than Abraham himself?

However, unlike the tale of Abraham in these stories, there was no angel intervening to stop the slaughter, there was none to stand in the breach. The Jews were called like Abraham, but they were given no reprieve. Their acts then surpassed those of their ancestor, the paragon of faith. They actually sacrificed their children leading the chronicler to exclaim, "Let the ears hearing this and its like be seared, for who has seen the likes of it? Did it ever occur that there were one thousand *Akedot* on a single day? The earth trembled over just one offering

[186]ibid. pp. 103-4

that occurred on the myrrh mountain. Behold, the valiant ones cry without; the angels of peace weep bitterly. But the heavens did not darken nor the stars lose their radiance! Why did not the sun and the moon turn dark when one thousand three hundred holy souls were slain in a single day--among them babes and suckling who had not sinned or transgressed-- the souls of innocent poor peopie? Wilt thou restrain thyself at these things, O Lord?"[187] The people had surpassed the deeds of Abraham. For him, who did not actually slaughter his child, the heavens dimmed and the earth reflected his sorrow and anguish. But for those whose acts exceeded those of Abraham in courage and in faith, there was nothing but silence. At Sodom and Gemorrah, there was a chance for reprieve, but here there was none. This is also a rhetorical topos-- it emphasizes how much these writers were aware of themselves as caught in a new historical situation. In the past the ancestors had interceded with God on the people's behalf; now there was nothing but the sounds of the slaughter echoing from the heavens. This evoked dual emotions from the people, both of which are reflected in the words of the liturgy of the chronicles.

The first, and most obvious response, is anger towards the God who would ask this of them. This act which on one level is so heinous is being sought by a God who is supposedly merciful and just. This leads them to cry to God, to challenge Him; "Where is our justice? Where is our reward?" Yet alongside this emotion is one of pride and accomplishment. Reflected in the liturgy is a cry to God to take notice, that they had surpassed the very acts of those who came before. They were challenged to a test of cosmic proportions, the ramifications of which would reach the very heavens themselves, and they not only succeeded but excelled

[187]ibid. pg. 83

at their task. They offered their children, they actually slaughtered them, unlike Abraham, and their children went willingly, even eagerly. Unlike Isaac, who remained mute throughout his ordeal, the victims here died with praise of God upon their lips. They wholeheartedly assented to their fate and accepted it upon themselves with joy and love. Thus they not only transcended the acts of those who came before, but they were also now the new paradigm which the subsequent generations would be required to emulate.[188]

It is not only these sections about the ancestors in which one finds expressions of anger and frustration towards God. Sprinkled throughout the chronicle literature are questions hurled at God. Forceful and accusatory, they challenge God, asking where He is in their time of struggle, how long can He remain quiet and unmoved by the slaughter of his people, even if it is what He seeks of them. Sometimes the anger is placed in the mouths of the victims themselves: as Rachel saw the knife which would be used to sacrifice her children, she "cried loudly and bitterly and smote her face crying, and said 'Where is your grace O Lord?' "[189] God is further condemned and chastised: "Wilt Thou restrain Thyself for these things, O Lord?," then He is goaded in the hope that He will spring into action on His people's behalf: "Avenge the spilt blood of Your servants!"[190] "Will You not punish them for these deeds? How long will You look on and remain silent while the wicked consume?"[191]

Accusations and questions such as these serve two very important purposes. First, they give voice to the anger and hurt felt by not only the people but more

[188]A. Mintz, Hurban, pp. 98-100
[189]Shlomo Eilberg, The Jews and the Crusades, pg. 111
[190]ibid. pg. 110
[191]ibid. pg. 50

importantly by the survivors. They remained, while their families and friends were taken and slaughtered, and God did nothing. They are hurt, betrayed, feel abandoned and alone. The God of the Torah, the miracle worker, God of marvels and wonder was silent and unmoved in the face of their actions. They made the ultimate sacrifice, paid the greatest price, and nothing came from the heavens. This leads to the second purpose of these passages. Notably, none of them suggest that God was unable to act or that He had lost His control or power; rather He chose not to intervene. This is a crucial distinction. If any of the other contingencies were in effect true, then there would be an end to the covenant and the Crusaders would have won an important battle. Hope in the future and faith in God was dependent upon the endurance of the covenant. If it was ended, then everything was for naught. So the chroniclers couch the criticisms of God within the paradigm, so that the feelings of anger are expressed without the loss of hope and faith in God and the covenant itself. Why God chose not to intervene is not really addressed beyond the fact that God wanted the sacrifice and needed it; He required such behavior from His people.

This reality leads to the surprising absence of the sin-punishment paradigm. In the past all Jewish disasters had been explained in terms of the sins of the individuals which caused the divine punishment to occur as retribution. However, in this instance, apart from a few phrases which appear as if the writers felt compelled to at least pay lip service to the ancient explanation for disaster, there is no reference to the sin of the victims. Rather they are portrayed in idealized terms, paragons of the faith and upholders of God's law, not only in the manner of their deaths already described, but in their lives before the tragedy struck. Describing the city of Mainz, the Chronicler writes: "An iron stylus writing upon a folio would not suffice to record her numerous good deeds

extending back to ancient times-- the city in which was to be found simultaneously Torah and greatness and riches and glory and wisdom and modesty and good deeds, where prohibition was added upon prohibition so as to assure scrupulous adherence to the teaching of the Talmud."[192] Sin is dismissed as an inadequate explanation for the suffering and slaughter: "No prophet, seer or man of wise heart was able to comprehend how the sin of the people infinite in number was deemed so great as to cause the destruction of so many lives in the Jewish communities. The martyrs endured the extreme penalty normally inflicted only upon one guilty of murder. Yet it must be stated that God is a righteous judge."[193] So how to reconcile the two? How maintain the integrity of God and the covenant while also maintaining the faultless, idealistic righteousness of the victims? A different paradigm was required to replace that of sin and punishment. The paradigm was found in the stories of Abraham, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah: the divine test. God tests those who are righteous and blameless and thus able to withstand the test itself. Thus the tragedy became a result not of extreme wickedness but rather of extreme goodness. Suffering was no longer punishment but a sign of divine favor and love. Blows and beatings of this measure occur to the generation who can withstand the onslaught and who, being wholly good, can sanctify God's name and glorify Him here on earth. This is also pervasive in the contemporary Christian world, with its views of the intercessionary powers of the saints. Further, hearkening back to the Temple imagery, the martyrs' blood can serve as atonement for the whole generation and those who come after them. Just as Isaac's blood is accounted to future generations for good, so too will the blood of these offerings, pure, holy and untainted, serve to temper God's judgment of

[192]ibid. pg. 29
[193]ibid. pg. 25

generations of Jews to come. The chronicler and the congregations who recite his words plead with God: "May the blood of His devoted ones stand us in good stead and be an atonement for us and for our posterity after us, and our children's children eternally, like the *Akedah* of our Father Isaac when our Father Abraham bound him upon the altar."[194]

The deaths of the martyrs further serve to hasten the day of the coming of the Messiah. The text calls for the worshipper to plead: "May their merit and that of the others who were slaughtered, stabbed, strangled, burned, drowned, stoned, and buried alive...be good advocates for us before the Most High God so that He may redeem us speedily from the exile of the wicked Edom, speedily in our own day rebuild the walls of *Ariel* and gather in the scattered ones of Judah and Israel who are dispersed..."[195] Thus once again the need to preserve the covenant intact and normalize the aberrant behavior of the Jews was accomplished with deft textual parallels and by hearkening to traditional and familiar notions and imagery.

The news was not all bad for the victims, however, for they would receive some justice and reward for their suffering .The text is heavily imbued with eschatological messages and discussions of the victims dwelling with the righteous in the Garden of Eden. These notions are spread throughout the text. Sometimes the community leaders exhort the victims to comply with the directive and commit suicide with the promise that soon after the pain will come the bliss and security which accompanies residence in paradise. The victims themselves offered in one voice: "Let us bear the yoke of the Holy Creed for...then we will

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[194]ibid. pg. 49
[195]ibid. pg. 58

merit eternal life, and our souls will abide in the garden of Eden, in the speculum of the great luminary...Happy are we who do His will, and happy is he who is slain or slaughtered or who dies attesting the Oneness of His name. Such a one will not only be worthy of entering the World to Come and of sitting in the realm of the saints who are like the pillars of the universe; he will also exchange a world of darkness for one of light, a world of sorrow for one of joy, a transitory world for an eternal world."[196] Thus there was some justice in the acts God was requiring of the victims; they would receive their reward for the suffering they were required to endure, they would be blessed and rewarded for their actions forevermore. In this way the victims and the survivors who would hear and recite the chronicles could wrest some comfort and hope from the horror and seemingly inexplicable suffering. Once again, the telling in this manner enables the covenant to remain intact and God to appear just and righteous.

Finally, there is great attention paid to the details of the suffering and recounting of the events in the chronicles and other liturgical texts which will be considered later in this chapter. There is no attempt to shield the reader from the horror; the events are described in meticulous, graphic detail: "The hands of compassionate women strangled their children in order to do the will of their master and they turned the faces of their tender, lifeless children toward the Gentiles...When the enemy came into the chambers they smashed the doors and found the Jews writhing and rolling in blood; and the enemy took their money, stripped them naked and slew those still alive leaving neither vestige nor remnant..."[197] Or another example from the chronicle of Ephrayim of Bonn: "The Bishop ordered that all the slaughtered saints be collected on wagons--all the choice severed

[196]ibid. pg. 110
[197]ibid. pg. 110

limbs; hips and shoulders, thumbs of hands and feet...together with everything else that remained of their bodies and had them buried in his garden." [198] These words were written to be recited in the synagogue before the congregation. The language is harsh and descriptive. From the evocative accounts one can easily conjure up images of the rivers of blood, the twitching bodies twisted and dying in pools of blood, limbs torn from bodies, babes, mothers and fathers lying dead and cold one beside the other. This was exactly the intent of the liturgy: to place the reader in the position of those who witnessed the slaughter and the aftermath. In order to fully experience the horror and understand the grotesque scenes, the reader cannot be spared the smallest detail or be sheltered in any way from being a witness. To remember the martyrs is also to remember their deaths in a real way. To understand the anger towards God and the enemy, the distant observer must be brought before the reality of the event; the space between them and the deaths must be bridged, time and space traversed and the reader immersed in the time which thus becomes both then and now. It is then that one does justice to the texts, the memories and the events themselves.

Following the Crusades, life began to return to some semblance of normality and, in turn, the communities began to seek ways to remember and memorialize the heroes and saints of this most remarkable period in their history. As we have seen there was a need to normalize the behavior of the Jews and also to do justice to the memory of those loved ones who had not survived the incredible onslaught of the Crusaders. The realm of ritual and liturgy seemed the most appropriate place in which to carry out this task. As Schechter said, "What could a German Jew or Jewess who had the misfortune to visit our globe during the

[198] ibid. pg. 128

twelfth century when Europe went religion-mad and could only be tamed by Saracenic devils or unwashed saints--what could they do better than pray or cry?"[199]

Since the ninth century, the prayer service has been relatively fixed in structure and content. Thus any additions to the services took the form of artistic poems, hymns, elegies and petitions which could easily be inserted into the existing rubrics. Hence the most obvious means by which to memorialize the dead of the European communities was with the composition of *piyutim* and *selichot*. These elegies were recited locally and a number of them found their way eventually into the normative liturgy for various occasions throughout the year. Many of the *selichot* written at this time have been incorporated into the liturgy for Tisha Be Av where they are mostly stripped of their discreteness and swallowed by the consuming power of the cyclical nature of Jewish mythic time. There, they become one of many expressions of Jewish suffering and pain, linked with the destruction of the Temple and all the catastrophes which came before and afterwards; the *piyutim* are absorbed into a tradition greater than themselves. The contents of these *kinot* and their use in the context of Tisha Be Av observances was considered more fully in Chapter Two.

There are many *selichot* and *kinot* which survived from this time; thus, we have a large selection from which to proceed with an analysis.[200] Unfortunately many are less than specific regarding dates, names and places, so often it is unclear to which particular event the *payyetan* is referring. One reason may be that the

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[199]S. Schechter , "A Hebrew Elegy" in Jewish Historical Society of England. Transactions. vol. 1, 1893-4, pg. 10

[200]For a list of elegies from this period see Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy pp. 258-261

readers were already well abreast of the relevant information. Alternately, it may be a function of the poetic form and the concern of the later authors to begin to normalize the patterns of behavior and absorb them into the Jewish historical memory, which is necessarily cyclical in nature and hence less concerned with specific dates and names. Thus the blurring of details of time and place is a deliberate act on the part of the authors. It is more likely that the first suggestion was the dominant reason however, because the other liturgical responses are extremely concerned with remembering dates, names and places. Due to this absence of specific information and the volume of *piyyutim* and *selichot*, this analysis will concentrate, in the main, upon the two Hebrew elegies which were written, in part, in response to the massacre of the Jews of York in 1190, as exemplary of the other *piyutim* written in response to the Crusades throughout Europe.

Two *kinot* were composed specifically in to memorialize the events in York. There is evidence that the city of York was becoming a center of Jewish learning on par with Mainz and Worms. The scholars there were in contact with their counterparts in Europe and were thus kept abreast of the latest developments in liturgy and *halacha*. The Jews were well integrated into their community and lived relatively peacefully besides their burgher neighbors. But trouble had begun brewing for the Jews. The first blood libel accusation occurred in Norwich in 1144, and there were undercurrents of a problematic nature. During the coronation of Richard the First in 1189 another incident occurred. A delegation of Jews, including two prominent Jews from York, attended the coronation but by order of the King were not permitted to enter the hall and present their gifts to him. However, the crush of the crowd of people outside the hall pushed them inside. The crowd noticed this infraction by the Jews and set upon them,

believing that they were transgressing an edict of the king. Some Jews were severely injured and the others fled. One of the injured was a Jew from York named Benedict. As a result of his injuries he was easily captured and forced to convert to Christianity. By that time a rumor had developed and spread throughout the court that all Jews were to be slaughtered by edict of the king. The crowds of people who had converged upon London for the coronation were gripped by a religious fervor and began to attack the homes of the Jews. They set a good portion of the city alight and many houses were razed. The light from the burning homes provided them with the ability to see and thus continue their destructive rage throughout the night. The Christian chronicler William of Newbury, from whom we attain all knowledge of these events stated; "Jews were either roasted in their own houses, or if they came out of them, were received with swords...soon the lust for booty burning higher brought on a repletion of the slaughter and avarice got the better of cruelty."[201]

The next morning Benedict was called before the King where he recounted his conversion. The Archbishop of Canterbury then dismissed him saying: "If he will not be a Christian let him be a devil's man."[202] Benedict died later that day and could not be buried in either the Jewish or the Christian cemetery. The king, fearing for the safety of the Jews of his kingdom, sent out letters and messengers demanding that the Jews be permitted to live in peace and that no harm should be done to them. Unfortunately, Richard I then left the country to go on his crusade. Troops were gathering throughout the land to join their king on his journey and this led to an inevitable heightening of religious fervor. Added to this was the season of Lent, a time of increasing religious passion. The first

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[201]Romain, The Jews of England, pg. 38

[202]R.B. Dobson, "The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of March 1190." pp. 24-25.

incident of violence against the Jews occurred in Norwich in February, 1190 and the outbreaks occurred all over the country.[203] The Jewish community in York was one of the victims of violence and the events have been recorded in great detail.

The events in York began when a mob converged upon the home of Benedict, the man who had died in London during the coronation riots. They set his home on fire with his wife and children inside. The Jews, realizing they were in grave danger, fled to the warden and begged for his assistance and protection. He offered them shelter in his castle. The warden however, left town and when he returned and wanted to enter his castle, the Jews, afraid he would betray them, refused him entry. He then went to the sheriff who, whether by coincidence or not, happened to be in York with a large number of county soldiers. The sheriff was outraged at the Jews' behavior and arrived at the castle with his men in tow to reclaim it for the Bishop.

Unfortunately, the sheriff and his troops were joined by the armed masses who believed that the attack upon the Jews had the royal seal of approval. A crowd soon gathered outside the castle ready to attack the Jews inside and were soon in the "grip of religious frenzy and ready prey to the hysterical ravings of a maverick white robed hermit"[204] When the sheriff was confronted with this increasingly irrational crowd he soon realized it was a mistake to storm the castle but by then it was too late: "He could by no influence of reason or

[203]R.B. Dobson, "The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of March 1190." pp. 24-25.
[204]ibid. pg. 27 The hermit was crushed to death by a stone and was the only Christian casualty of the event.

authority keep back their inflamed minds from carrying out what they had begun."[205]

The Jews inside the castle managed to defend themselves and hold the mob at bay for a number of days but when the siege machinery was brought to the castle, the Jews realized the futility of fighting back against the mob. They were aware that death would be the outcome for them all should they choose to continue battling the forces amassed outside the castle. Further, if they remained inside, they would soon run out of food and water and the result would be the same: suffering followed by death. As this realization dawned, on the Sabbath eve of March 16th, Rabbi Yom Tov of Joigny, a renowned *halachist* whose opinions are found in the margins of the Talmud, made a moving speech, rousing the people to take their own lives rather than be slaughtered and hence defiled by the enemy. Rabbi Yom Tov was French and he encouraged the English Jews to follow the path of their brethren in Europe. He stated that it was evident that it was God's will that they should die, thus they must fulfill His bitter request and not allow themselves to be profaned by the Christians but rather that they should offer themselves as sacrifices to God, pure and untainted, as had their ancestors. He then asked those who were not willing to so act to leave and he began to weep. The detractors left and those who remained set fire to their possessions, buried those which would not be destroyed by the fire so the enemy would receive no reward for their treachery, then they set about slaughtering one another.

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[205]Romain, The Jews of England. pg. 42

When the Crusaders returned the next morning they were faced with the carnage which had taken place under the veil of darkness. The castle was being consumed by flames, and a few bedraggled survivors struggled from within, converted and told of the horror they had witnessed behind the castle walls. Thereupon the surrendering Jews were brutally attacked by the crowd. The mob would not be satiated even then until all their debts to the Jews had been forgiven, thus demonstrating a very strong economic motive for their behavior.

When the King heard of the outrage which had been perpetrated in his name and against his specific orders not to harm the Jews, as well as the financial detriment to him as a result of the forgiving of the Jews' debts he sought to punish those involved. Unfortunately they had fled to Scotland and were nowhere to be found. He relieved the warden and the sheriff of their posts and the Jews who had been forcibly converted were permitted to return to their faith.[206]

There are two *kinot* composed to commemorate the events of this massacre. The first was penned by Joseph of Chartres shortly after 1190. It is written in Hebrew and in the style of many of the *piyyutim*, as an acrostic. The second was written by Menachem ben Jacob of Worms, whose full name was Menachem ben Jacob ben Salomon ben Menachem,[207] and entitled "Kinah for the Boppart and York Martyrs of 1190." This *kinah* is also composed in Hebrew but is more generalized than Joseph's lament. Menachem was a contemporary of the

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[206]Events described from the chronicle of William of Newbury, as found in Tovey, Anglia Judaica pp. 16-25, and Romain, The Jews of England pp. 37-44

[207]Schechter, "A Hebrew Elegy" in Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions, vol. 1, 1893-1894, pg. 9

martyrs of York and it has been suggested that much of the information for his poem was derived from eyewitness accounts.[208]

The *selichot* and *kinot* composed after this massacre and the other events of the Crusades contain many of the themes found in the chronicle literature and the same meticulous attention to the graphic and gruesome details. The recounting of the events in this manner served to give expression and hence legitimacy to the anger, hurt and abandonment felt by the remaining people. Further it served a cathartic purpose of enabling the communities to express their deepest emotions and have them reinforced in the holy space of the synagogue.

The absence of God and His apparent ambivalence towards His chosen people is a dominant theme in the text by Joseph of Chartres. Once again, it served the purpose of giving expression and legitimacy to the feelings that God had abandoned the people and chosen them not for favor but for suffering. The reason for God's departure is not explained beyond the fact that it was the slaughter and sacrifice of His people that He desired and thus He removed His protective presence and shelter. Another theme which is recurrent is that of God closing the gates of prayer or concealing Himself behind a cloud. "O God! Lords other than Thee have possessed us; the waters of treachery have almost ended us. While Thou wast as one dumb, hiding Thy face- the breaker came and smote mother upon children."[209]

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[208]ibid. pg. 9 Schechter suggests that some of the accounts may even have been from the perpetrators of the acts against the Jews.
[209]C. Roth, "A Hebrew Elegy on the York Martyrs of 1190," Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions," 1945-1951 vol. XVI, pg. 217.

Alongside the statements about the absence of God from the historical arena at this time of sacrifice are the expressions of anger and disappointment towards God. "Anger has arisen according to the number of days of the sun; I moan, "Why did the Lord impose it?"[210] Further, God is evinced as the cause of the tragedy: "He waved His mighty sword; His hand has dealt calamity."[211] The *selichot* composed at this time express the most basic emotions of the people and hurl their anger and accusations towards their unmoved God. "The Jewish poets of the crusading period gave vent to the feelings which they dared betray only to their God."[212] These feelings of anger and violation were not reserved for their God but were directed also against the enemy who had forced the extreme Jewish reaction. They cry to God to take revenge upon the Crusaders. The people saw that the Crusaders were suffering no retribution at the hands of the government officials or the king, despite their protestations that they did not support the behavior of the Crusaders. Thus the people sought justice from on high. They realized that the drama in which they were involved was cosmic in nature. Much of the rhetoric and the behavior of all during this period was other-worldly. It was centered beyond the earthly realm; thus justice was sought from beyond. This was a very human need and reaction to the anger: "All of us, I am sure, appreciate the noble sentiment expressed in the words: 'Lord forgive them for they know not what they do' But on the other hand, I venture to think that such a declaration from the lips of a man who is not on the point of suffering himself, but is the witness or historian of the sufferings of others when the mob has attacked his home, murdered his wife and children, tortured his friends, plundered his sanctuaries and cast his holy books into the fire- the man, I

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[210]Ibid.

[211]A. Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pg. 171.

[212]S. Schechter, "A Hebrew Elegy," in Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions, vol. 1, 1893-1894, pg. 10

venture to think, who under such circumstances should suppress his natural sentiments of resentment, would prove himself neither divine or super-human, but simply inhuman."[213] Thus the rage pours forth from the pages of these laments. God is first reminded of the outrage committed against Him by the enemy: "Behold, O Lord! they would scale the heavens if they could. Even as they tore down the curtain in Thy house, while reveling in blasphemy: Raving like madmen they intended evil against Thee; they imagined devices they were powerless to fulfill." Then God was called to action; "Exalted One! Thus render retribution to his successors; pay them sevenfold. Fulfill the position of those who hope in Thee. Let the righteous rejoice to have seen Thy vengeance"[214] This particular elegy even ends with the final praise of God couched in terms of revenge: "With musical instruments I will crown my praise of Thee, O God, who granteth me revenge."[215] Thus the poems give voice to the anger and need for the people to believe that there is justice and those who perpetrated these acts will receive just recompense. Further, if there is some semblance of justice involved then it is possible to maintain belief in the continuity of the covenant with God. If justice will be served eventually then the covenant remains intact and the events are thus not evidence of God's abandonment of His people, but rather the disaster finds its roots elsewhere.

If the covenant remained intact the question raised by the survivors is "Why?" Why did this tragedy occur? The answer in the past was couched in the paradigm of sin and punishment. However, the survivors were unable to countenance such a memory of their beloved. The victims of this tragedy were

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[213]ibid. pg. 14
[214]ibid. pp. 12-13
[215]ibid. pg. 13

not described as wicked sinners but rather as ideal Jews, paragons of faith and upholders of the tradition and law: "O how dear were these friends and how strong were the leaders! Yet there, the rich were not regarded more than the poor; the wise of lore and understanding of speech-- the glory of Israel, her chariot and her horsemen. Their speech was pure refined (like silver) in a furnace, whether it was lengthy or short , as (in) Judah and (in) Galilee; holy mouths taught the laws of all kinds... they put incense before Thee, and whole burnt offering upon Thy altar."[216] Thus the victims were extolled and elevated beyond ordinary people and made akin to saints. They were as far from sin as human beings could be, so why was this suffering brought upon them? As a divine test. Thus the *payyetanim* connect the martyrs with the generations who came before and transform their suicides into martyrdoms, their aberrant behavior into the norm. Some of the greatest Jewish leaders were tested by God, not because they sinned but rather because they were perfect and uniquely able to withstand the test. Now, for the first time, not individuals alone but a whole generation was considered worthy of the test. They embraced God's decision and justice, thus exceeding the faith and fortitude of their ancestors who were individually tested. By so connecting the actions of the Crusaders' victims, the synagogue poets absorbed their behavior into the traditional paradigms and removed any quality of uniqueness which may have existed in their behavior. The success of the *payyetanim* in this task is evidenced by the number of *piyyutim* conveying these sentiments which are to this day included in the synagogue ritual for various holy days, not all of which commemorate the massacre in Europe at this time.

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[216] Clifford's Tower Commemoration Book, pg. 76.

Another means by which the payyetanim normalized the act of suicide and managed to turn it into yet another mitzvah, *kiddush Hashem*, was to couch the events in terms of the Temple. As earlier expressed, the Temple was not something distant to the Jews of this time. Although it had not stood in Jerusalem for hundreds of years each day the Jew prayed that his prayers would be acceptable as a substitute for the sacrifice which he longed to offer in the Temple once more. With the advent of the Crusades, the people were given the chance to recreate the Temple and to actualize their offering: an offering more precious than an ox or a sheep, the offering of their own souls and that of their loved ones. "They remembered their Creator but did not break the covenant, may their blood be more acceptable to Thee than that of a lamb or young ox." [217] The people were meticulous, making sure that the sacrifice was offered with the proper blessing and care was taken to demonstrate the willingness of the victims: "Towards their mothers' bosoms children stretched forth their neck, while the father blessed the sacrifice he was about to offer."[218] As with the chronicles, the aim was to counteract the detractors who would argue that parents ruthlessly slaughtered children. Instead the victims were painted as pure, innocent and ready to do the will of God and fulfill the terms of the covenant they had with Him. Although it is not as apparent in these two elegies, there is also a hearkening back to the story of Abraham, for the normalizing purposes aforementioned, and to demonstrate that these victims surpassed the acts of their ancestor who was not required to slaughter his own

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[217]C. Roth, "A Hebrew Elegy on the York Martyrs of 1190," Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions, vol. XVI. pg. 218

[218]S. Schecter, "A Hebrew Elegy," Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions, vol. 1 1893-1894,, pg. 12

child. "Those holy ones did not hold back their only children from Thee; for their father's manner they too maintained."[219]

Just as Abraham's act was accounted as meritorious on behalf of Israel, so too was it hoped that the acts of these brave individuals would be accounted to their people for good. The *piyutim* are replete with suggestions that the blood of the martyrs acted as atonement for the sins of the future generations. For this reason their deaths were not in vain and the survivors could rest a little easier knowing that there was a benefit to them for the suffering of not just their relatives and friends but also their own distress. "They did visit Thee in their agony when Thy visitation was upon them: each one gave up his soul and yielded forth his blood. May this be pleasing to the great King, like the offering in His shrine: aye, the Land atoned for his people."[220] Thus as offerings in the Temple, and as the offering of Abraham's son provided merit for the future generations, so did the people now hope would be their fate after the acts of bravery and faith performed by their generation.

Further comfort was provided for those who remained behind, many of whom possibly only survived by converting to Christianity and then back again, by the notion that the martyrs could now rest in peace with God and their ancestors in paradise. The survivors thus pray that this will indeed be the outcome for the victims. They plead "May their dust rest in the bond of eternal life: this is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord and the merit of their righteousness."[221] Thus those who remained were able to offer assistance to their dead by

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[219]C. Roth, "A Hebrew Elegy on the York Martyrs of 1190," Jewish Historical Society of England, Transactions, vol. XVI, pg. 218.
[220]ibid. pg. 219
[221]ibid.

interceding on their behalf with God. Since one of the greatest difficulties faced by those who survive disaster is feelings of guilt and helplessness, this sentiment gave the survivors a purpose and a means by which they could still act on behalf of their relatives and friends who gave their lives for their God, and the benefit of which would be reaped by the survivors. Again, the elegies provide a dual purpose: to help those who came afterwards and to normalize the behavior of the martyrs and incorporate them forever into Jewish historical memory.

Finally, comfort is further wrested from the acts of the martyrs by viewing their deeds as a necessary step towards redemption and the messianic future.

One of the most notable features of the *piyutim* and *selichot* is their use of biblical passages and language. Like the great midrashists who came before, they were masters of the text and they twisted and turned it to serve their purposes. Zunz said of them " they took the gems for their pearl necklace from the midrash and the string from the Bible."[222] but the necklace they constructed from the tradition was a twisted and contorted form, "the sacrilege which had been perpetrated against the Jews on the plane of history was mimicked by doing violence to the sacred texts."[223] The *payyetanim* took the texts and created from them images and statements never intended by the authors of the original texts, they borrowed from the most daring of midrashim and placed them within the liturgy, striving to make the most heretical acceptable, and they succeeded. The most clear example of this effect is found in the famous *piyyut* penned by Isaac bar Meshullam. He took from a midrash which looked at a biblical passage

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[222]Zunz in Poesie 126, cited from Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy, pg. 231
[223]D. Roskies, The Literature of Destruction, pg. 72

which when read in its plain sense asks "Who is like You amongst the Gods?"[224] The midrash adds one consonant to render the passage "Who is like You amongst the dumb?" Isaac seized upon this interpretation to pen his *piyyut* which hurls accusations and anger towards the God who was silent whilst his people were led to the slaughter. It further goads God into action, attempting to rouse Him from His slumber and take note of the suffering of His people. However striking is this example, the use of biblical text is found in all the *piyyutim*, including those we have been considering from York. Once again the use of classic texts places both the *piyyutim* and the acts they describe well within the paradigms of Jewish tradition and acceptable behavior.

Thus the *piyyutim* memorialize the dead and incorporate their acts into the corpus of Jewish tradition and liturgy. Today the *piyyutim* are not found together in any one service, although as previously mentioned, the greatest concentration of the medieval *piyyutim* is to be found in the service for Tisha be Av. A number of these *kinot* also appear in the liturgies commemorating the Sabbath and other festivals.

Probably the most widely known of these is the *Av Harachamim* prayer found in Orthodox liturgies for the Sabbath. It is recited every Saturday morning after the Torah is returned to the Ark. The author of this prayer is unknown and a number of stories have developed which provide the prayer with a magical origin and hence divine sanction and greater power inherent in its recitation. It was reported that the text mysteriously appeared in the reader's desk in the synagogue at Worms after the Crusaders passed through and wrought their

[224]Exodus, 15:11

destruction. Some suggest its source was Abraham, for his name appears in an anagram in the opening words.[225] If indeed it was believed to have originated with Abraham, that would give even further weight to the text for it then has its source with the one in whom the legitimacy for *Kiddush Hashem* found its source. Originally the prayer was recited only on the two memorial Sabbaths designated in memory of the Jews of the European communities harmed in the Crusades, but later it was incorporated into the regular *Shabbat* liturgy.[226] The text implores God to remember the "pious and righteous and pure, the sacred communities who sanctified themselves for the sanctification of the Divine Name." The prayer then extols the virtues of those who were martyred and requests that God remember them and all others who so died for His name. Then it implores God to avenge their deaths by quoting an extensive number of scriptural passages all of which mention God's power and intent to take vengeance upon His enemies. Although the prayer was penned as a response to the Crusades, it has been easily incorporated into the liturgy and absorbed into the tradition. The time of the events has become irrelevant, it is the details which become important.

Alongside the *selichot, kinot* and other special martyr prayers, books were compiled called "Memorbucher." These texts were so named either after the platform (*almemor*) upon which the books rested or from the Latin phrase meaning "to remember". The Memorbucher contained the names of all those members of a community who were martyred during the Crusader riots. These books, unlike the Chronicles, pay scant attention to the details and are, for the

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[225]D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions." MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1995. pg. 10

[226]S. Freehof, "Hazkarath Haneshamoth", H.U.C. Annual, vol. XXXVI, 1965, pg. 179

most part, just lists of names. This period in history was marked by the attention paid to individuals and their names. In the chronicles, the "Memorbucher" and, to a lesser extent, the *piyyutim*, there is much care taken to record and later recount the names of individuals. The community was not an amorphous, nameless mass, but rather a group of distinct individuals. The memorialization of individuals by their families was already a well established custom by this time, but communal memorialization was still developing. The memorializing by name of each individual served a number of purposes. First, for any remaining relatives, it was a means by which the whole community acknowledged their loss by paying respect and homage to their dead. It further brought the community together as a family. At this time of memorial, each person was to mourn the dead as if they were their own kin. The community, like a family, acknowledged the depth of the loss. Also, the recitation of names humanized the tragedy. Later generations who had not known the individuals and probably would not be moved by the mention of "the martyrs" were more likely to be emotionally roused by the recitation of names. Names are such an important part of identity and humanity; thus when trying to dehumanize an enemy, the first sacrifice is likely to be the name and any connection to the family. The memorial books ensured that the name of the person and their family would never be taken from the individuals. Thus, those who remember do so not in a vacuum but rather from a position of knowledge and connection. The books then were an extremely important tool of memory and memorial.

Thus it can be seen that there were a number of varied literary responses to the Crusades. The question that must now be addressed is, when and how were these *selichot, kinot*, chronicle texts and "Memorbucher" used? To answer this question, the *minhag* books are an invaluable tool; however there is still much

disagreement as to what in fact was and was not practiced, especially because a number of the reported practices seem to contradict explicit directives in the Talmud.

In the aftermath of the Crusades the people sought a means by which they could remember and memorialize their dead. The most appropriate solution seemed to be the institution of a fast day and a day of mourning for the victims. In the past, fast days were not only used as an attempt to avert disaster but also as a means of remembering the devastating effects of tragedy. Fasting was an act of self-deprivation and as such it was important for the surviving generations to remember by feeling some of the pain of the victims. This was achieved by depriving one's body of food and drink. Further, since the victims themselves fasted hoping for reprieve from their bloody fate, it seemed appropriate to fast in sympathy with them.

Unfortunately, a number of factors conspired against this option. First were *halachic* pronouncements which suggested that there could be no more fast days added to the liturgy, a ruling that was supported by statements made by Rashi to the effect that the persecutions of his time would be observed on Tisha be Av.[227] Secondly, two of the massacres occurred during or proximate to Jewish festival days, the killing in Worms on Rosh Hodesh Sivan and the deaths in Mainz during Shavuot, the day of rejoicing over the giving of the Torah. Thus even if it were appropriate to add new fast days to the calendar, it was not considered prudent or acceptable to do so on a festival day. Finally, as Wachtel points out, each community suffered on a different day so the establishment of a

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[227]D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions." MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1995., pp. 6-7

universal fast day would necessarily be problematic for the communities whose suffering did not occur on that day. "Could the Jews of Mainz mourn their dead on the 23rd of Iyyar or on the first of Sivan, (the dates of the attacks on Worms) when their own memories were of the loss they suffered on the third of Sivan? I suggest they could not anymore than a devoted child could feel justified observing the Yahrzeit of a parent on a day other than that upon which it traditionally falls."[228] Added to this was the fact that fasting on the day of the Yahrzeit of a loved one was fast becoming established practice in Ashkenaz. Thus it appeared that there were many reasons which together conspired against the calling of a universal fast day to memorialize the dead of these communities.

The absence of a universally observed fast day did not prevent the communities from instituting their own fast days in memory of their dead. There is evidence that many of the Rhineland Jews declared fasts which had remarkable longevity of observance. Scholars agree that there were local fast days and some were well documented in the halachic sources, while others appear to have faded into obscurity.

The community of Worms declared two commemorative fast days to mark the fate of their community; the dates of the two attacks, the 23rd of Iyyar and Rosh Hodesh Sivan were designated to be commemorative days. The first was a full day fast and the second only half a day as a result of the fact that it was also Rosh Hodesh, the beginning of the new month and a joyous occasion.[229] At the

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[228]ibid. pg. 8

[229]David Wachtel had done a comprehensive study about the history of this fast day and I shall be drawing heavily upon his extensive research. I am indebted to him for making it available to me.

outset, the fast day was established and the prayerbooks and minhag books provide a description of the procedure for its observance: "On the 22nd day of Iyyar before *minhah* we change the covers of the table (on which the law is read), the curtain (in front of the ark), and the covers (of each individual Sefer Torah) (to the black ones)...and they are left there even on Shabbat, until after the new moon of Sivan. And all that we regularly say in the synagogue, the *psukei de zimra* and the *tefilah*, we now shorten and say in a quieter voice than on all other days...and we say the following *selichot* (seven different penitential poems and dirges are listed), and we recite verses...and also the *ana Habet* with the verses that begin with the word 'avenge'...also the confession...*Av Harachamim.* We recall the souls of the holy ones killed here in the holy community of Worms on that very day in TaTNU...After we leave the synagogue, we go to the house of life (cemetery) and we circumambulate it and when we reach the graves of the holy ones we recite the supplications composed for this occasion...we do not celebrate any feasts or happy occasions between the 23rd of Iyyar and the New Moon of Sivan. On the Sabbath between the two decrees...we do not wear Sabbath cloak...(for the Sabbath prayer) we speed up and shorten the melody...(the balance of the service is gone into in detail, including the melodies to be used; again *Av Harachamim* is said and the Memorbuch is read)..."[230] The customs for the commemoration on Rosh Hodesh Sivan are similar yet not identical and they conclude with the removal of the mourning rituals which have been in place since the 23rd of Iyyar.

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[230]From *Wormser Minhagbuch des R. Jousep Schammes,* vol. 1, ed. Erich Zimmer, Mifal Torath Chachamy Ashkenaz: Jerusalem 1979. 102-106 as found in D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions," Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree, Columbia University, 1995. pp. 14-15

Amongst the customs for this memorial day are found many of the traditions which are also part of the service for Tisha be Av. This firstly indicates how similar the Jews of Worms considered the two tragedies. Many of these rituals were discussed in detail in the context of the last chapter about Tisha be Av so their consideration here will be necessarily curtailed. The covering of the synagogue in black sets the mood and the tone for the following days and services. From the second the worshippers stepped inside the sanctuary they recognized that they were in the midst of a period of mourning and sadness. Just as they were symbolically draped in the black of mourning, their hearts covered with the darkness of the memory of the events of the crusades, so too was the synagogue covered in a blanket of black. The Torahs, the symbol of God's love and presence, usually adorned in the clothing of the priests, are shrouded in black, symbolic of the congregation's feelings of abandonment by God and reflective of their deep and profound sadness at this time. By so altering the synagogue environment the leaders ensure that there will be an atmosphere appropriate to the occasion and one which evokes and echoes the mood of the worshippers.

The prayers which usually evoke happiness and feelings of joy and security are either omitted from the service or recited in a manner which will curtail any happiness which may otherwise have resulted from the prayer. There is acknowledgment that after tragedy life continues, prayers must still be recited, but in the atmosphere of intense mourning it is impossible to so do in the usual way. The service is then supplemented with *selichot* and prayers written for the martyrs and the survivors, echoing the themes already outlined. They aim to present the worshippers with a full sense of the horror of the event no matter how distanced they may be from witnessing it. Alongside is the need to

acknowledge feelings of guilt and shame felt by the survivors as well as their anger and frustration with a God who turned away and did not intervene on their behalf. Finally are the *kinot* which placate the survivors by affirming that the actions of the martyrs were accounted to them for good and that as we reap the rewards of their deeds here, so too, are they receiving reward commensurate with their deeds in paradise. Finally it is stressed that their acts were not in vain and that they have worked to hasten the day of the arrival of the messiah.

Also during this time the Jews of Worms visit the graves of their loved ones and the martyrs. They circumambulate the cemetery and when they reach the graves of the martyrs recite prayers written for the occasion.[231] This is a means of communing with the dead in the hope that they will take note of the acts performed in their honor and memory and that will inspire them to intercede on behalf of the community with God. It was believed that the righteous dead had access to God and, like the ancestors of the tradition to whom they were at least equal, they could plead with God for the sake of their people. The community of Worms sought to be forgiven for their sins and to do honor to the martyrs and certainly prevent such a tragedy from recurring and thus they performed this rite to stave off future disaster and prevent more suffering.

As time passed, the fast continued to be observed by this community. Wachtel attributes its longevity to a number of factors. Firstly, one of the fasts fell on Rosh Hodesh Sivan. This event was commemorated with precise regularity and by interlinking the fast and Rosh Hodesh it would be difficult to by-pass the date. Rosh Hodesh in the month of Sivan would always have the peculiar distinction

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[231]D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions," MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1995. pg. 14

of being both a day of mourning and celebration. For this reason also there are a number of reports preserved about the fast and discussions of its appropriateness in the halachic literature. Further, the fast was declared at a time of great messianic fervor and it was placed in close proximity to the festival of Shavuot, the commemoration of the giving of the Torah and the making of the covenant. This time in the calendar is always imbued with a sense of eschatological hope. Also, it is the period during which Rabbi Akiva and his deciples are mourned and is already a period of semi-mourning for martyrs, so the addition of the martyrs of the Rhineland was most appropriate. Finally, the degree of destruction in these communities was significant and its effects felt for generations, thus it was easier to continue the fast since people could identify with it and were, for a long time, suffering the ill-effects of that period.

The second fast day about which we have information is that commemorating the destruction in the community of Blois. The major extant source for the observance of this fast day is the Chronicle of Rabbi Ephrayim of Bonn. Therein he makes mention of the fast and refers to the fact that it is observed in France, Germany and England: "Wednesday the 20th of Sivan 4931 was accepted by all the communities in France, England and the Rhineland as a day of mourning and fasting, of their own will and at the behest of the illustrious scholar our master Jacob son of Rabbi Meir (Tam) who wrote letters to them and informed them that this day is worthy of being declared a fast day for all our people...and thus did the Jews accept it."[232] Based upon this text it has been presumed that the 20th of Sivan was instituted as a universal fast day contrary to the talmudic rulings previously mentioned. However, Wachtel makes a very strong and

[232]as cited in Yerushalmi, Zakhor, pg. 49

convincing argument that there was no such fast day and that Ephrayim of Bonn had indeed misinterpreted the letter upon which he bases his supposition that there was such a fast on the 20th of Sivan. Wachtel notes that, unlike the fast in Worms, there is no mention of this seemingly greater fast in any of the halachic literature, minhag books, synagogue ritual books, mahzor references, codes, responsa literature or even vernacular reports of observances. This is highly unusual and leads to the conclusion that Ephrayim was mistaken.[233]

Those who argue that there was indeed a fast on the 20th of Sivan contend that, following the Chemelnicki massacres in the Ukraine, the fast day was reinvested with meaning and observed there. Rabbi Shabetai Katz reported that he would adopt the practice of his brethren in observing a fast on this day, for his community had now suffered the same fate as those in the Second Crusade for whom the day was instituted as a fast. He saw the events of his time as a repetition of those earlier calamities and thus subsumed the events of his time into the existing ritual. The supporters of the theory that this fast was continually observed cite this Rabbi's reference to the fast as proof of its longevity. However, Wachtel makes a very strong argument that the Rabbi knew of Ephrayim's discussion of the fast, rather than any direct experience of the fast itself, and suggests that this is no proof at all. Further, he argues that it is unlikely that the community in Blois was able to sustain any tradition for such a period of time when they were so decimated by the Crusade and then expelled from their dwellings and exiled from their homeland.[234] I find Wachtel's

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[233]D. Wachtel, "The Ritual and Liturgical Commemoration of Two Medieval Persecutions." MA Thesis, Columbia University. 1995. pp. 21-25, see these pages for a very thorough discussion of the texts and the misinterpretation by Rabbi Ephrayim of Bonn.
[234]ibid. pp. 26-29

arguments persuasive that there was, before 1648, no universal fast day commemorating the massacres of the Second Crusade.

By a strange twist of fate, the introduction of the fast after the Chemelnicki massacres created a fast day memorial for the Jews of Blois and the other communities affected by that crusade! *Selichot*, *kinot* and other liturgies were written in response to the more recent massacre but they were soon discarded in favor of those composed to commemorate the Second Crusade. Thus was the massacre of 1648 homogenized into the earlier one and the commemoration continued until the eve of World War II.[235]

Although there was no universal fast day, it appears that there was indeed a day upon which the martyrs of the Crusades were memorialized. This is evidenced by the headings of the Memorbucher and the customs as recited in the *minhag* books of Ashkenaz. It has been suggested that the custom of yahrzeit developed as a result of these remembrances of the communal dead to provide the same honor to the family's dead that was afforded to the martyrs.[236] It became established custom soon after the massacres in the Rhineland during the Middle Ages that there would be a special Sabbath set aside for their memorial. There was debate about whether or not it was necessary to say kaddish for martyrs as it was inevitable that they spend their days in paradise simply by reason of the manner of their deaths. So the recital of kaddish at the memorial was probably not included but certainly the memorial lists were read and the prayer, *Av Harachamim,* was recited on their behalf. The date of this

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[235]regarding the development of the 20th of Sivan see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor, pp. 50-51.

[236]S. Freehof, "Hazkarath Neshamoth," H.U.C. Annual, volume xxxvi, 1965. pp. 179-184

memorial service was fixed as the Sabbath between Pesach and Shavuot nearest to Shavuot. This seemed an appropriate date for a variety of reasons. The first was that it was near to the dates of most of the massacres. Shavuot falls on the 6th of Sivan each year. The community in Cologne was attacked the day after Shavuot, Mainz on the third of Sivan and Worms on Rosh Hodesh Sivan. Thus there is a clear connection between the time of Shavuot and the deaths. Further, the period between Pesach and Shavuot is already designated as a time of semi- mourning and the counting of the Omer. During the Omer the Jews remember Rabbi Akiva and his disciples who were martyred and suffered horrific deaths at the hands of oppressors all the while affirming their faith and trust in God. Much of the behavior of the martyrs of the Crusades was modeled after the accounts of these men, and they were quickly incorporated alongside Rabbi Akiva into the Jewish mythic memory. Parallels between the two circumstances were drawn almost immediately, making the Omer period more than appropriate for a memorial to the dead of the Crusades.[237]

As time passed there was a further crisis in the Rhineland, the Black Death Massacres. These events, unlike the Crusades, lasted for a period of years rather than months. The demand was made for a memorial for them as was instituted for the victims of the previous massacres. The date of the Sabbath between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha be Av, closest to Tisha be Av was suggested. As it is also a period of semi-mourning and preparation for Tisha be Av, it was deemed an appropriate date for a memorial service. Further, Mainz suffered the most casualties of all the cities affected and the massacre there occurred on a date proximate to Tisha be Av. So the date of yet another

[237]op. cit. 67 pp. 179-184

memorial Sabbath was fixed and aptly named "Black Sabbath." Thus the Crusade liturgy not only served as a memorial to the dead of that time but also as a precedent for the fixing of later memorial dates to remember and commemorate communal suffering and death. Further, these days were commemorated beyond the confines of the community itself and extended to all of Ashkenaz and perhaps beyond.[238]

A number of customs which have their origins in the Crusader period have found their way into the liturgy and are recited to this day as additions to various services and festival liturgies. The first of these is the use of the Rosh Hashanah *Aleinu* prayer at the conclusion of every service. It has been argued that the origin of this usage is generally traced to the fourteenth century. There are reports from the community in Blois of the Jews being sentenced to be killed as a result of blood libel accusations. As three were thrown into the flames to be burnt to death the victims and the community of thirty-two Jews recited "Aleinu Leshabeach."[239] Thus by virtue of its recitation in this instance, it became known, with the *Shema*, as a declaration of faith.

The prayer is a *piyyut* the origins of which are presumed to date to the period of the Talmud. It provides a comprehensive theological statement. The *Aleinu* begins with praise of God and then discusses the fact that the Jews were chosen from others to be God's people. Then it continues to praise God and

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[238]An 800th anniversary commemoration occurred in York with the participation of both the Christian and Jewish communities in 1990. The commemoration took the form of a week of services, seminars and musical events. It is of interest to note that the Christian community participated alongside the Jewish groups and the services were a combination of both religious traditions. For more information see the "Clifford's Tower Commemoration Booklet," Clifford's Tower Commemoration Committee. 1990

[239]Susan Einbinder, "Pucelina of Blois: Romantic Myths and Narrative Conventions" Jewish History, Vol. 12. pg. 3 and pg. 20 note 16.

pray for the coming of His kingdom when all shall be united in worship of His great name. This is an important message to send to a people persecuted for their differences. This prayer assures them that in the end they will triumph and all will come to see the error of their ways and join together with the Jews and their God. Originally, this prayer was recited only once a year as part of the Malchuyot portion of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf service. However, it came to be recited close to the end of every daily service. It has been suggested that this was an innovation of the Middle Ages as an act of defiance against the Jews' oppressors. The message of the prayer, as already mentioned, was an important one for an oppressed and demoralized people to hear. This, in combination with the knowledge that martyrs went to their deaths with this prayer on their lips as a declaration of their faith gave it great power and meaning. Later, portions of this prayer would be censored by the church, so great was its effect and important its message.[240] Further, the *Aleinu* is a prayer of messianic hope. It encourages the worshippers to look ahead to a future wherein God will be ruler and they will be able to enjoy a time of peace and happiness. Persecution then, is only a temporary state as are their deaths, for in the messianic time all will be restored to life in paradise on earth. This fact enhances the appropriateness of this prayer for recitation at the moment of death and the conclusion of a service.

In summary, this was a period which saw a plethora of liturgical creativity and innovation to respond to the circumstances of the lives of the people. Caught in a religious fervor, they responded with commensurate fervor and originality. The genius however, was that by couching their actions in traditional language and

[240] Encyclopedia Judaica, volume 2, pp. 555-559

symbolism, they managed to normalize their behavior such that it appeared to be a standard Jewish response to suffering and crisis. The liturgy was the means by which they were able to absorb the behavior into the standard texts and the cycle of Jewish time. This disaster was viewed as equal to those of the past and the victims as surpassing the faith and loyalty of their ancestors. The victims were idealized and placed on an untouchable plane above the ravages of reality. They were conceived of as precursors of the messianic time, atonement for the sins of generations of Jews, martyrs, holy people and saints. Their deaths were construed as being for the good of the future generations and thus not in vain. Their aberrant behavior was normalized, so much so that martyrdom became not only an acceptable way for Jews to die but a mitzvah. This is due in no small part to the chroniclers and the *payyetanim* who memorialized the dead and portrayed them in this manner. The vehicle of liturgy allowed the descriptions to be easily assimilated into the existing paradigms. Further, those who remained needed to remember and honor the dead. They craved a public, communal response and the only way to ensure it would occur in an appropriate form was to include it in the liturgy and then it could be controlled. A force pulling against this was the fact that all who were left in the wake of the destruction were not independent witnesses. They were enmeshed in the situation and suffering from their own emotions of guilt, torment, and rage. From this position it is impossible to be objective and there is a need to give voice to their suffering. Thus amongst the passages of hope are also ones which condemn God and hurl accusations and anger at Him and the enemy. This is a natural response to crisis and it is crucial to give it voice.

Over time however, the liturgy of the Crusades has been stripped of its discreteness and absorbed into the normative, annual liturgy. The events are

memorialized only in the communities which suffered and, even then, they are not regular events in all of those areas. Instead the Jewish people need to view events as part of the cycle of history, one event not unlike another. The Crusades and their innovations are subsumed in the greater need to assimilate the events into the tradition. Thus the greatest liturgical contribution now offered by the Crusades are the *selichot* and *kinot* which have been incorporated into the Tisha be Av services, the few additions to the Sabbath and festival liturgy and a legacy of *kiddush Hashem*. Cyclical liturgy receives primacy over history, the facts are forgotten but the emotions and sentiments are not, for they are incorporated into timeless paradigms. The power of Jewish historical memory is the ability to divorce it from the historical details, to mythologize it to see the events as a part of a metahistorical pattern, so that they cross all the barriers which could lead to an inability to connect with the events thousands of years from where one is now.[241] The victims of the Crusades and their immediate survivors would no doubt be horrified. Their concern was to humanize the tragedy and ensure that individuals would never be forgotten. In a sense that is true, the stories of individuals will be incorporated into memory forever but not because they were individuals in the Crusades, but because they could be individuals then, now or tomorrow.

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[241] Yerushalmi, Zakhor, pp. 51-52

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

And you shall take two stones of lazuli and engrave upon them the names of the children of Israel, six on one stone and six on the other...as stones of remembrance of the Israelite people.
(Exodus 28: 9-12)

The Holocaust is the Jewish communal catastrophe of our time. Unlike the previously discussed disasters, there is only a small distance between the events and the writing of this document. Time is not a buffer which could provide perspective and some objectivity; the event is too close, too real. Survivors still live, telling their tales, their haunted eyes speaking the words which they are unable to formulate. The rivers of blood shed by the Nazis still flow close to the surface, an ever present reminder of the need to do homage and honor to the dead. But the shadow of their presence hangs, an ominous cloud above those who would memorialize them, threatening to close in if justice and meaning cannot be found for their deaths.

Theologians and philosophers, human beings are still searching for that meaning, clutching at straws, grappling to make sense out of a tragedy which, it would seem, cannot be believed even by those who experienced it. Hannah Arendt speaks of the survivor as one who has returned from an alien planet, a civilization about which we know nothing and have no language to describe. They have experienced a place which has a logic that is no logic at all and as such is completely unfathomable. "There are no parallels to life in the

concentration camps. Its horror can never be reported for the very reason that the survivor returns to the world of the living, which makes it impossible for him to believe fully in his past experiences. It is as though he has a story to tell from another planet...all parallels create confusion and distract attention from what is essential."[242] The evil which was perpetrated during the Holocaust is inconceivable even to those who witnessed and suffered it. Primo Levi poignantly said, "We became aware that our language lacked the words to express this offense, the demolition of a man."[243] Language had always been able to cope, to communicate horror and lunacy, terror and corruption, but it has been stretched by this event to its limit. The mind has reached the terminus at which it is no longer able to understand. Words cannot contain the terror. So how to deal with the tragedy, how fulfill the human need to create order and meaning from this alien experience?

There are so many questions. Buber asks: "How is a life with God still possible in a time in which there is an Auschwitz? The estrangement has become too cruel, the hiddenness too deep. One can still believe in the God who allowed those things to happen but can one still speak to Him? Can one still hear His word? Can one still, as an individual and as a people, enter at all into a dialogic relationship with Him? Can we still call to Him?"[244] Herein lies the tension and the paradox. There is a need to hear from God, to be with God, to talk, to chastise and to grapple with the events, but there are no words, there is not the language even to describe and understand what happened, let alone communicate it. Yet there is also the compulsion to do so. The ghosts of the

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[242]Hanah Arendt, Totalitarianism in Power, pg. 144
[243]Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz, pg. 22
[244]Martin Buber, On Judaism, "The Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth." pg. 224

Holocaust are still with us, the victims are ever present, the survivors are still picking up the pieces and all Jews grapple with the meaning. At this time there is a need to turn to God and to be with God. The Jews look to their liturgy, searching for a response, a way to communicate with God, an answer to the ever present questions: why, how and where were You? In the synagogue the Jew can confront God with these questions. As it has been in the past, liturgy can be the outlet for emotions of rage, terror, repentance and fear. There, the words of tradition could help to understand what had happened or not to understand but just to feel and to memorialize those whose lives were lost.

How exactly this should be accomplished has been the source of much debate and dispute. Only in recent times has some consensus been reached about an appropriate memorial to the dead and commemoration of the Holocaust. The composers of liturgy suffer from so many difficulties: "For who among us, who then oh knows a rhyme for the rattle of lungs shot to pieces, a rhyme for the scream of the gallows, who knows the meter, the rhythm for rape, who knows the meter for the bark of machine guns, a sound for the new smothered scream of a dead horse's eye, in which no further heaven is mirrored, not even in the blazing of villages, what press has a sign for the rust red of goods trucks, this world in flames red, this dried up blood encrusted red on white human skin? Go home, poets, go into the forests catch fish, chop wood and do your most heroic deed: Be silent!"[245] Silence, it would seem is the only adequate response, but to remain silent would be to hand Hitler a posthumous victory.[246] So Jews must speak out, cry out to God and to humanity, speak of the unspeakable, mention

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[245]Wolfgang Borchert, "In May, in May, cried the Cuckoo" as found in The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination. pg. 35

[246]Emil Fackenheim, "Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future, Judaism, 16,3 Summer 1967, pg. 295

the unmentionable and try to fathom the unfathomable. This chapter will explore the various attempts to give voice to the Holocaust in synagogue liturgy and ritual. First will be a brief survey of some of the ritual and liturgical responses found in the ghettos and camps. Then we will move to the aftermath of the Holocaust, as the world began to know of the horrors, and consider the debates within the Jewish community about how best to do homage to the survivors and victims of this event. Finally, we will survey the liturgies which have been compiled in response to the Holocaust. We will discuss texts from most denominations of Judaism, followed by a brief study of the phenomenon, unique to the Holocaust, of interfaith liturgies, U.S. government services and those written for Christian groups to commemorate an essentially Jewish tragedy.

It is difficult to determine what exactly were the ritual and liturgical responses of the Jews during the Holocaust. Although vast amounts have been written and much ink spilled documenting the horrors and the terror of this period, there has been a dearth of comprehensive material about this issue. Much has been said about the behavior and actions of individuals during this time, in personal memoirs and stories and tales recounted to authors. This vast literature provides glimpses into the worlds of the ghettos and camps, but how much the actions of these individuals can be universalized is unknown. Further, we necessarily rely upon the fading memory of survivors who often fear the memories they struggle to recall and recount. As such they are tainted by the ravages of time and of history.

The material in this portion of the chapter is derived from two major sources. The first is the body of Halachic responsa written in answer to various *she'elot,* questions, presented before the remaining rabbis in the ghettos and camps. The

most comprehensive of these works, although by the author's admission this too is far from complete, is the work of Rabbi Ephrayim Oshry. He was interred in the Kovno Ghetto where he answered the questions which were brought before him. Rabbi Oshry wrote notes of his answers on small pieces of paper torn from cement sacks. He then hid the papers in tin cans and buried them within the ghetto. After the war he retrieved the shreds of paper and attempted to expand his brief notes and record his responsa in full.[247] Before the war, Rabbi Oshry was a Talmudic scholar of some renown and in the ghetto he was one of few rabbis who were alive to be able to consider questions of halacha. He made most of his rulings without the benefit of consulting any law codes and made his decisions based on his memory and as much advice as he could obtain from other rabbis. Many questions necessitated immediate answers which he provided and later conferred with his colleagues to ascertain their responses. All of his decisions were made on the understanding that they were "hora'at sha'ah," emergency rulings, which would apply only to the period in which they were immediately suffering and would not serve as legal precedents. Their value to this study is that they provide a window into the world of the ghettos and the camps, the behavior and concerns of those interred there. However, as mentioned, it is difficult to know how widely disseminated was the material and how many then followed the instructions. There are a number of other responsa written during this period to which there will be some brief references, but the majority of the information was gleaned from those penned by Rabbi Oshry.

The second major source for the information in this portion of the thesis comes from compendia of tales and stories of remarkable and heroic events of the

[247]Rabbi Ephrayim Oshry, Responsa from the Holocaust, pg. ix and xiii

Holocaust. Most of the stories to which we will make reference concern special occasions such as festivals and life cycle events, or incredible acts performed by and for other human beings such that the survivors remembered them and recounted them to the authors. These tales provide another peek into life in the ghettos and camps and the manner of existence therein. Unfortunately, although the tales often speak of the actions of large groups of people, the events are recorded often because of their deviation from the norm rather than because they evidence the usual behavior. Thus, while considering the examples used herein one must bear in mind that they do not apply to all the victims and survivors. But at this early stage after the events, singular tales and stories comprise most of the information from which we can legitimately draw.

During the Holocaust the Jews faced an enemy unlike any other before confronted in their long history of persecution and oppression. Before Hitler there had always been a discernible motive for the acts against the Jewish people. Whether it was for economic, religious or military reasons, the Jews had posed a recognizable threat to their enemy. The enemy then attacked the Jews, reduced their power and influence and so removed the threat they were perceived to pose to the enemy, whereupon the Jews were able to return to their lives and relative normalcy. During the Crusades, for example, the battle was, for the most part, religious. As such, the Jews were presented with the option of conversion or death. If the Jews converted or chose not to identify themselves as Jews, they were spared and left to live their lives. The destruction of the Second Temple was a battle for military hegemony and victory. Once the land and power was acquired by the enemy, the war was over. With this new battle against the Nazis none of these motives was applicable. The Jews posed no military threat to Hitler, they were not an economic burden, he did not wish to

convert them, but rather this enemy wanted to annihilate the Jewish people for no easily discernible motive other than pure, unadulterated hatred. Thus for the first time there was no escape for the Jewish people, there was no reprieve and there would be no end to the war as long as one Jew remained alive. For the first time the Jews faced an enemy who wanted nothing other than their destruction and who possessed the power and the capacity to accomplish its perverted goal. This new set of circumstances elicited from the Jews a new and distinct response.

In the first "phase" of the war the Jews were rounded up and placed in ghettos. In these closed communities lived all manner of Jews from the most religious to those who did not even recognize themselves as Jewish. Gathered from all corners of the lands and placed behind large brick walls, some viewed this as the beginning of the messianic time. As the Scripture predicted, Jews were being collected and brought together from the four corners of the earth and dwelled together in a close community. Jewish cultural life was flourishing as it had not done in years. Secular Jews were turning back to the tradition, groups were formed for all manner of cultural activities from Yiddish folk theater to singing, dancing and poetry. There were academies of learning where scholars came together to study sacred texts and to further Jewish knowledge. There were schools for the children, prayer groups and all manner of religious activities. Jews helped one another. Societies were formed to give aid to the less fortunate and collections were made to ensure there would be distribution of food to the most needy. An organization was established to document it all, for many believed that this time heralded the messianic age.

However, it was not long before the reality of death and disease infiltrated the world of even the most staunch believers. Each day in the ghettos saw new, even more harsh restrictions and laws. Each day brought more starvation and death. News of the death camps was filtering through the ghetto walls and the dire nature of their situation soon became apparent. The Jews realized that their deaths were what the Nazi oppressors ultimately desired and if it were not through starvation or disease, it would be at the end of a Nazi gun, boot or gas pipe. In the past, a response to such a dire circumstance was the option of *Kiddush Hashem*, taking one's own life, thereby dying for the sanctification of God's name. This seemed to be an appropriate act of defiance when the enemy sought conversion or money or military victory but when it wanted nothing other than death, it seemed to be too easy to give it to them by taking one's own life. In fact, Rabbi Oshry and others commented with pride about the few numbers of instances where Jews felt compelled to take their own lives, even when living in the depths of hell on earth. He wrote: "I cite proudly that in the Kovno Ghetto there were only three instances of suicide by people who grew greatly despondent. The rest of the ghetto dwellers trusted that God would not forsake His people."[248] Thus the mass suicide found during the Crusader period was not evident in the Holocaust, and in fact it was frowned upon as an example of not placing one's faith in the hands of God. There were reported instances of suicide of large numbers of people, but they are few and far between and received condemnation from those who survived, rather than praise and admiration.[249]

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[248]Rabbi Oshry, Responsa from the Holocaust, pg. 35

[249]For example in the Pruzana Ghetto 41 persons made a mass suicide pact, agreeing to meet in the home of the chairman and kill themselves by drinking poison. The last members alive would then turn on the oven, allowing the gas to leak out and kill anyone still surviving. They carried out the act as planned and all but one survived for the poison was ineffective. The next day the survivors faced not only the SS but also the wrath of the community who condemned their actions as cowardly. As reported in Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance in Nazi Occupied Europe During World War II, pp. 691-2

Similarly, as Rabbi Oshry and others have suggested, suicide of individuals was also rare. There are a number of responsa which deal with the issue of when it is appropriate to offer one's life and whether in those circumstances it would be ruled as suicide or kiddush hashem. The questions are heart-wrenching and clearly it pained the rabbis to provide the answers. For example, a man approached Rabbi Oshry and asked if he was permitted to kill himself in order that he be buried in a Jewish grave rather than a pit or be turned to ashes. The Rabbi responded that he must certainly not take his life for such a purpose even though he was certain to suffer a cruel and terrible fate at the hands of the enemy.[250] Rabbi Oshry did note that, technically, based upon the actions of King Saul who fell on his sword rather than be captured by the enemy, an argument could be made that one can commit suicide in these circumstances, but to publicize this is forbidden. "For this might give aid to the wicked oppressors who often have complained that these Jews do not commit suicide as did the Jews of Berlin. A thing like this constitutes a profanation of God's name, as though Jews do not trust in His lovingkindness and are not sure that He will save them from the defiled and accursed hands of the oppressors...This is exactly the murderers' wish: to create a pandemonium of despair among the Jews in order to uproot in their hearts all hope or expectation of God's salvation"[251] Thus, unlike the Crusader period where the very act of suicide before the enemy came upon them was seen as the ultimate act of faith, during this period it was just the opposite.

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[250]Robert Kirschner, Holocaust Responsa, Rabbinical Thesis, pp. 149-162
[251]ibid. pp. 161-162

This same observation applies to the notion of sacrificing one's own loved ones for the sanctification of God's name. A father asked whether it was permissible to bribe the guards to release his own son from the selection to be sent to the gas chambers the next day, when he knew with certainty that if he redeemed his son, another would be taken in his place. Rabbi Tsevi Hirsch Meisels deemed the question one for which he could not provide an answer. The father then vowed, based on the fact that the Rabbi did not explicitly permit it, that his son must remain in the group to be sent to the gas chamber. He further rationalized, that, since the next day was Rosh Hashanah, and his only son was to die on the same day that Abraham reputedly bound his own son Isaac upon the altar and offered him to God, his son would now be that same offering. Perhaps, he thought, his son's ashes, like those of the ram which replaced Isaac, could atone for Israel and redeem them all from their captivity. This man was not condemned for his actions but it was not a practice followed by other Jews as had been the case in the Crusades.[252] This is one of the few instances where the *Akedah* is brought to mind and the notion of *Kiddush Hashem* linked thereto. Again, the previous ideal of *Kiddush Hashem* no longer held true.

Thus a new definition was required for the ideal. First, it was understood that all those who were sent to their deaths and were killed for being Jews were considered martyrs who had died for *Kiddush Hashem.* Just like their ancestors who were put to death for their beliefs, the Jews of this time who died for their faith, even if they had no choice, were deemed to have sanctified the divine name.[253] There are many tales of those who died in exemplary ways and went

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[252]Robert Kirschner, Holocaust Responsa, Rabbinical Thesis, pp. 283-290
[253]Hillel Zeitlin as found in Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance During the Holocaust pg. 437

even one step further in fulfillment of the mitzvah. Since they had no control over the fact of their deaths, the manner of that demise became of central importance. Thus it was this aspect which became ritualized and imbued with essential relevance. The most obvious means by which one could affirm faith and devotion through death, was to die, as had Rabbi Akiva, with the words of the *Shema* upon one's lips. One who recites this prayer at the time of death is ensured a place in the world to come.[254] Reciting the central tenet of faith at the time of death intimated that, although there was no consent to die, if the choice had been provided, the victim would have chosen to uphold their faith and belief. Similarly, the pronouncement of *Ani Ma'amin*, "I believe in the coming of the Messiah," served to give the victims some control over their deaths and offer a form of resistance to their murderers.

Another similar act of both defiance and faith was the recitation of the prayer for *Kiddush Hashem* before one died. It was seen as a means by which one could affirm ones' commitment to God and Judaism, as well as transforming death into an act of holiness. Jewish tradition makes much of using a blessing to dedicate ordinary acts to God and this is what was hoped to be achieved by reciting the benediction. The transformative effect of the prayer was so great that it was considered crucial that the wording be absolutely correct. This was the motivation for a question asked of Rabbi Oshry concerning which of two traditions was to be followed regarding the wording of the prayer. His ruling was about one word which does not dramatically alter the text, but such was the power of the words that the Rabbis wished to be certain that the text they were

[254]Midrash Bereishit, 124 as found in Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance During the Holocaust pg. 455

teaching and helping people memorize was correct.[255] To this end, there are reports of young girls walking about the ghetto with the text inscribed in the covers of their prayerbooks which were carried on their person at all times, so that should the situation arise where they would be required to say the blessing, it was readily available and accurate.[256] The text of the prayer was as follows: "Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to love the revered and awesome Name, which was, is and will ever be, with all our hearts and all our souls, and to sanctify His name among the multitude. Blessed art Thou, O Lord who sanctifies His name amongst the many."[257] Following the blessing one recites the *Shema* and the sanctification is complete.[258] Thus the victims ensured their deaths would not be in vain and they took a semblance of control from their murderers. Further, as was evident in previous chapters, such ritualization and sanctification of the moment of death serves to help place the victims within the traditional paradigms of Jewish suffering. They, like the victims of the Crusades, were righteous, faithful servants of God who died during the course of a divine test wherein they affirmed their God and surpassed the feats of their ancestors in righteousness.

A further element in the redefinition of the concept of *Kiddush Hashem* is the related notion of death with dignity. If one is to die at the hands of the oppressors, it should be accomplished by providing them with the least satisfaction. This may be achieved in a number of ways. The first, is the most

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[255]op. cit. 11 pp. 174-178
[256]ibid. note 6. pg. 181
[257]I.J. Rosenbaum, The Holocaust and Halacha, pg. 65 quoting Rabbi Oshry *Mi-Ma'amikim* vol. 2 pg. 28
[258]ibid.

openly defiant and of which we have seen elements during the Crusader period, namely chastising and degrading the enemy before they take your life. This was the case in a case of a humorous ghetto tale wherein Hitler stands before the Jews announcing a series of harsh decrees. Throughout his speech one Jew stands with a smile on his face. Hitler stops his diatribe and demands to know at what the young man is smiling. The man replies: "I am thinking of Haman and his terrible decrees. What a wonderful holiday we have because he was overthrown- there is laughter and feasting and drinking. I am thinking of what an incredible holiday we will have after you are overthrown."[259]Such was a story from the town of Kedainiaei, where the Jews were standing in a pit waiting to meet their deaths by firing squad. Suddenly, a butcher from the community leaped out of what was to be his grave and he attacked the German officer by biting into his neck until he died.[260]

However, this too seems to be the exception. It was more important to go to ones' death with quiet fortitude and dignity, or even better, reciting words of Torah or praising God. There are many tales of exemplary men and women who strove to end their days in such a manner: Jews who entered the gas chambers singing and dancing,[261] or the Rabbi who organized a Sabbath service at the pit which they had just dug and into which they would soon fall dead. He managed to give his "congregation" some bread, a homily and Sabbath spirit. They were shot at the pit singing *Shalom Aleichem,* welcoming the Sabbath angels and dancing with joy that they had the opportunity to usher in the Sabbath at the

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[259]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 325.
[260]Zvi A. Bar-On and Dov Levine, Toldoteha shel Machteret, as found quoted in Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance in Nazi Occupied Europe During W.W.II, pg. 440
[261]Moshe Prager, Sparks of Glory, pp. 9-13 pp. 34-40

moment of their deaths.[262] "Freedom to choose between one's life and one's religious faith was converted to the option of going to one's death degraded and dejected as opposed to confronting death with an inner peace, nobility and upright stance, without lament and cringing to the enemy. This new option became...another aspect to *Kiddush Hashem* during the Holocaust."[263]

Alongside the newly defined concept of *Kiddush Hashem* was the relatively new response termed "Kiddush Hahayim," the sanctification of life. This notion has been attributed to Rabbi Isaac Nissenbaum who first introduced it during a speech at a secret meeting of the underground in the Warsaw Ghetto. At the time he was 72 years of age, a respected leader, teacher and writer. He said "It is a time for *Kiddush Hahayim*, the sanctification of life, not *Kiddush Hashem*, the holiness of martyrdom. In the past the enemies of the Jews sought the soul of the Jew, and so it was proper for the Jew to sanctify the name of God by sacrificing his body in Martyrdom, in that manner preserving what the enemy sought to take from him. But now it is the *body* of the Jew that the oppressor demands. For this reason it is up to the Jew to defend his body, to preserve his life."[264]

But merely living and surviving was not necessarily sufficient. The Nazis tried to wipe from the face of the earth every last semblance of Jewish tradition and custom. All aspects of worship were banned early in the war, synagogues were closed and gatherings of Jews forbidden. The battle was about religion and the oppressors sought to pervert Jewish tradition whenever they possibly could.

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[262]G. Herschler, The Unconquerable Spirit, pp. 49-51
[263]I.J. Rosenbaum, The Holocaust and Halacha, pg. 62
[264]Joseph Rudavsky, To Live with Hope To Die with Dignity, pg. 5

Most of the *aktions*, the roundups, were scheduled to occur on Jewish holy days, thus twisting the dates from holy and joyous to warped and horror-laden. For example, before Rosh Hashanah, 1944, Joseph Mengele went to the block which held the 3,000 children at Auschwitz and he selected 1,000 of the weakest and most emaciated to be sent to the gas chambers the next day. Then, one day before Yom Kippur, he set up a pole with a bar and had the remaining 2,000 children pass underneath the staff. Those who did not reach the height of the bar were sent to their deaths.[265] The irony and the perversion were not lost. At the time of year when Jews pass under God's staff and He decides who shall live and who shall die, the Jews were forced to pass before Mengele, so that he could play the role of God, and that year he would decide who would live and who die. Similarly, when the Nazis knew it was Yom Kippur and a time when observant Jews would fast, extra rations were handed out. On Purim, the time the Jews celebrate their rescue from the hands of the enemy and the hanging of their oppressor and his ten sons, the Nazis rounded up ten men from the Polish shtetl, Veylun and hanged them before the crowd in "honor" of the festival.[266] Such was the Nazi attack upon the Jewish body and the Jewish soul. The enemy in the Holocaust sought the perversion and the annihilation of the Jewish religion, so what better way for the Jews to bring sanctity and holiness to life than to continue to observe the holy days and festivals despite it all. Thus, the regular ritual and liturgy took on an even greater significance and meaning during this period. This was not a time for innovation directed towards the creation of new rituals, for that would provide the Nazis with a partial victory

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[265]Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance in Nazi Occupied Europe During W.W.II, pp. 417-418

[266]Moshe Prager, Sparks of Glory, pp. 106-109. A similar tale is told of the Nazis wanting to hang two people in Lask on Purim to avenge Haman's death: G. Hirschler, The Unconquerable Spirit, pg. 29

in that they would replace the old and contribute to the destruction of Judaism. Rather, the creative impulse and the response to the oppression was to try, using whatever means were at their disposal, to adhere to tradition and commemorate the festivals, life cycle events and other holy occasions.

There are so many remarkable stories of groups of Jews in the ghettos and in the camps going to great lengths and placing themselves in extreme danger in order to perform rituals or in some way acknowledge the festivals and life cycles. Often this enterprise involved stretching the strict halachic rules to their limit, and it is here one finds incredible tales of creativity and bravery. There are so many instances, but brevity dictates we only recount a few.

The desire to eat *matzah* during Passover was a driving force behind many risking their lives to find a means to fulfill the commandment. The most poignant is a tale from the ghetto where they had managed to acquire some flour to make *matzah.* Under the cover of darkness a group of men went about the task of baking the dough with great haste so that it would be acceptable for use. A Rabbi supervised the work, and they realized that they, like their ancestors in Egypt were baking bread under the veil of darkness, in great danger which evoked the need for haste. As they worked the men began to sing the words of *Hallel.* Unfortunately, this alerted the guards to their presence. They burst through the doors of the bakery and when they saw what the Jews were doing, they beat them, smashing the *matzah* into tiny pieces and killing one of the bakers. Early the next morning, children came and gathered the blood-spattered crumbs of *matzah* and that evening, at the *seder,* they held the crumbs in the air

and recited "This is our Passover Sacrifice."[267] There was no bone representing the Passover sacrifice at that Seder, but there was the more horrible sacrifice of a human life. Thus the festival was commemorated, the elements were included and the Nazis had beaten them but had not prevailed.

There are similar tales recounted about making *matzah* in the work camps, building a *sukkah* in Auschwitz and in the ghetto, improvising for all the festivals. The Sabbath posed a particularly difficult problem for those Jews who did not work on the Sabbath day. Many Jews were able to remain alive as long as they were useful to the Nazis in factories and other work places. Ingenuity often made it possible for the observant Jews not to have to work on the Sabbath and holy days. Of course, it is permissible to break the laws of the Sabbath if one's life is in danger, as indeed was the situation of the Jews at this time, but to do so was to give the Nazis a a spiritual victory, to admit they had chipped away a little more of what made a person human. Thus people tried to do small things to acknowledge the Sabbath; to read the prayers, to light Sabbath candles, or to eat an extra morsel of bread saved from the day before. Each of these acts was done at great risk. One of the most ingenious stories is that of a workshop wherein the supervisor allowed the Jews to "sew" on the Sabbath without threading their needles, to "iron" without heating the iron and to "work" without really working. This was available to them as long as they met their quotas and gave the appearance of working whenever a supervisor should pass by.[268] Thus the people continued to cling as much as possible to their traditions and their faith. This was their resistance and this their innovation.

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[267]Moshe Prager, Sparks of Glory, pp. 48-9
[268]Moshe Prager, Sparks of Glory, pg. 84-88

Alongside the observance of Sabbaths and holidays there were many questions posed to the Rabbis about appropriate prayers and language to use during this time of disaster. The Jews, despite the restrictions and the dangers, continued to pray. They hid wherever they could and recited the ancient prayers and blessings. There seemed to be comfort found in reciting the familiar phrases and blessings, chanting what was known and remembered by the participants. There were poems and liturgical style pieces composed in the ghettos and the camps but it seems that their use in daily prayers amongst the people was rare. They were not disseminated widely and seemed to be written for the poet and posterity rather than for recitation in public worship.[269] There was a general distinction between the synagogue and the realm of poetry created in the ghettos and camps. Rudavsky argues that this creative expression by the Jews in the ghettos and camps by individuals, most of whom were not poets or artists before the war, was another means of resistance. It was a way to cling to their humanity and the essence of each person which made them different. Further it was an outlet for frustration, anger, fear and all the other multitude of emotions that were elicited by life in the ghetto or the camps: "Such artistic and literary expressions were, in effect, an active manifestation of a basic characteristic of Judaism: the will to live and the determination not to succumb to dehumanization, but rather, do everything possible to remain human."[270]

The work of these poets has, ironically perhaps, found its way into the liturgy with the creation of services to commemorate the Holocaust. The texts will be discussed later in that context, for it appears that in the ghettos and camps, although poetry was a release and served any number of purposes, it was really

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[269]Joseph Rudavsky, To Live with Hope, To Die With Dignity, pg. 104
[270]ibid. pg. 105

not used in a liturgical setting. This is probably because those who were leading the prayer groups were, in the main, Chassidic and Orthodox Jews who found meaning, value and power in the traditional texts. For them, it was neither necessary nor appropriate to add to the liturgy that they possessed. As a result many of the issues surrounding prayer at this time, like the celebration of festivals, were concerned with how to appropriately use the liturgy already in their possession rather than to create new words reflective of their situation.

To this end the Rabbis were asked to rule upon numerous questions of law. One of the earliest issues was one which is a response common to almost all Jewish disasters and that is the appropriateness of calling a fast to attempt to avert the disaster. The cosmic and ritual import of fasting has been discussed at length in earlier chapters of the thesis so it will not be recounted here, rather we will consider the response of the rabbis to the question of whether a fast should be called "on account of the murders and calamities, owing to our many sins, that have befallen our fellow Jews in Germany."[271] This question was asked of Rabbi Hayyim Eliezer Spira in 1933. At this early stage, this rabbi believed that the disaster facing the Jews of Germany was actually the birth pangs of the messiah and the beginning of the movement which would bring the Jews back to their tradition and their community. He argued that when the ban on Jewish stores was implemented by the Germans there was no reason to ordain a public fast, for most of the Jewish shop owners were profaning the Sabbath by opening their businesses on that day. However, the Rabbi also recognized that there were observant Jews who were suffering as a result of the ban and other restrictions imposed upon the Jews and these righteous people should not suffer for the

[271]R. Kirschner, Holocaust Responsa, pg. 20

sins of the others. Further, news had reached the Rabbi that the Germans threatened his homeland as well as Poland and Hungary. So the circumstances reached far beyond countenancing the opening of stores on the Sabbath. Thus he ruled that each person should act in accord with the Rabbi of their town, with the knowledge that it was eminently appropriate to ordain a fast in this matter. He then considered the question of whether he should ordain a world-wide public fast such that all Israel would fast on a single day and recite prayers, psalms and plead for repentance. The Rabbi found that he could not countenance such a fast for there would be Jews who would not comply with his decree and if they comprised more than ten percent of the population who should fast then it would not be effective. Thus, he could not in good conscience ordain a world-wide fast.[272] The Jews were faced with an enemy whose tentacles reached almost across the Eastern European Jewish world. All faced the same threat to their existence and communication was good enough that they knew of the danger faced immediately by their brethren in Germany, and imminently for Eastern European Jewry. However, this time the Jews were deemed too sinful to be rescued by fasting. If they would not repent there was no hope for them. Thus the pious would do what they could to save the believers but it was an age of apostasy and assimilation in which the ones who had turned from their tradition could find no safety. It should be noted that this responsum heralds from the early days of the Nazi period when the full extent of the catastrophe which would face the Jews could not be known or even imagined. For this Rabbi and for many others this was the beginning of the messianic age and could not be jeopardized by the wrong kind of fast. Local communities however, wherein the environment was controlled and the Rabbi could be

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[272]ibid. pp. 20-24

assured of compliance with directives, were encouraged to fast, pray and repent in order that they be saved.

There is some evidence of different groups offering such prayers and repentance even as the door to death was being opened before them. When all hope appeared lost, the Jews still clung to the tradition and the methods of their ancestors. There is the story of the Jews of a Polish village called Dzialoshitz. The entire Jewish community there was given three days to pack their belongings and prepare for their evacuation. When the decree became known among the Jews there was panic and a meeting was called to try and decide what should be done. It was suggested that the only course of action was to fast and to repent for their sins in the hope of averting the evil decree. So for the three days they were given, the village Jews fasted and offered prayers of repentance. They visited the cemetery where they prostrated themselves on the graves of their ancestors, and especially on the graves of those who were considered holy men, in the hope that they would intercede with the heavens and secure their rescue. They also made sure not only to seek forgiveness from God but also from their fellow human beings. At the end of the three days the Jews gathered in the market place ready to be deported. Before they began to move, the whole community recited the *shema,* and then they began their last journey.[273]

Once again it must be stressed that it is impossible to know how widespread was this practice, whether different communities also turned to the traditional acts of prayer and fasting when faced with deportation orders. There are,

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[273]Prager, Sparks of Glory, pp. 126-130

however, enough similar tales to suggest that this was not such an exceptional case. It is interesting to note that the talmudic injunctions discussed in Chapter One, call for three days of fasting and prayer as a first step towards averting disaster, and this was the exact time period allotted to these Jews. They visited the cemetery, which we have already seen in previous chapters is an essential part of the self-mortification ritual of fast days. So again we see many Holocaust victims turning to the tradition and seeking the answers to their troubles therein.

Sometimes questions arose about the applicability or appropriateness of reciting certain blessings in their current situation. The words of prayer were more than just words, they could have an effect in both the earthly and the cosmic realm. Prayer had the ability to move God to act or force Him to desist from intervening. Thus saying the appropriate blessing with the correct wording was all important. Rabbi Oshry was asked whether or not it was appropriate to recite the blessing which is part of the daily benedictions and thanks God for making the individual free. They asked the Rabbi how it was possible for Jews who were living in the ghetto, in forced labor camps to thank God for not making them slaves. The Rabbi responded that there is an interpretation that states that this particular blessing thanked God for spiritual freedom, so despite the physical captivity, the blessing must still be recited.[274]

A similar question was raised about the *Birkat HaGomel,* the prayer recited upon being delivered from a dangerous situation. Should Jews who have been saved from an *aktion,* a particular round-up, recite the blessing? Rabbi Oshry ruled that they should not since they were still in danger of being murdered.[275]

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[274]Rabbi Oshry, Responsa from the Holocaust. pg. 85
[275]ibid. pp. 40-41

The Rabbis' rulings were sought on many other wide-ranging issues. Initially, they were more strict in their decisions but as the war progressed and life became more and more difficult the decisions were appropriately lenient. Oftentimes people's lives were in the Rabbi's hands. It was important, for instance, to convince observant Jews that it was better to eat non-kosher meat than to die of starvation. The Rabbis became more lenient about the laws of Passover each year in the ghetto as food supplies become more and more difficult to obtain.[276] It was in relation to these activities that the small amount of liturgical creativity entered the prayers of the religious. A prayer was written by the Rabbis of Bergen Belsen to be recited before eating *chametz* during Passover. It is modeled on the blessing for eating *matzah* but adapted to their unfortunate circumstance: "Our Father in heaven, it is known and revealed before Thee that it is our will to do Thy will and to observe this festival of Passover through the eating of *matzah* and not violating the prohibition of *hametz*. For this our hearts are grieved- that our enslavement prevents us and we are in danger of our lives. Behold, then, we are prepared and ready to fulfill Thy command of 'Thou shalt live by them and not die by them;' and to carefully heed the warning, 'Take therefore good heed and guard thy life very much.' Therefore it is our prayer unto Thee that Thou keep us alive and preserve us and redeem us speedily so that we may observe Thy statutes and do Thy will and serve Thee with a perfect heart. Amen."[277] By so composing the prayer the Rabbis give legitimacy to the act of eating *chametz* during Passover as well as acknowledging before God that, had they been able, they would have eaten only

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[276] I. J. Rosenbaum, Holocaust and Halacha, pp. 99-108

[277] ibid. pg. 99 and Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance in Nazi Occupied Europe During W.W.II, pg. 336.

food permissible during the feast. It is further, a thinly veiled plea to God to rescue them from a fate worse than that suffered by their ancestors in Egypt. Not only are they enslaved but they are dying and God has not rescued them. The people clung to the remnants of their faith and their tradition and tried as best they could to uphold the laws and retain some of their Jewish identity.

Despite all the obstacles, many of the Jews continued to pray, to beseech God and to cry out to Him as best they knew how. They clung onto life by adhering as closely as they could to the traditions and customs of their faith. Prayer gatherings were held wherever space could be found: attics, basements, pits, washrooms, cemeteries and hospitals. Even in the barracks where physical movement was denied, prayer services and worship took place.[278] Often the prisoners relied upon the memory of another prisoner to recall the words of the siddur or the Torah. The people improvised and attempted to sanctify life by introducing some of their remembered customs and traditions.

After the war ended, there was little call for any communal commemoration; rather, it was a time during which all Jews fought to understand what had happened and to cope with their own role in the event, whether it was survivors, the non-European Jewish world and even the non-Jewish community. There were both practical and theological problems to confront and the enormity was almost overwhelming.

Initially, there were a number of local remembrances which were mostly short-lived. There are records of gatherings in the United States to mourn the victims.

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[278]Bienenstock, Analysis of Jewish Religious Observance in Nazi-Occupied Europe During W.W.II., pg. 243

The first recorded memorial occurred on December 2nd, 1942 when over five hundred thousand workers stopped work for ten minutes to mourn the victims. On April 19th, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, thirty thousand Jews gathered before City Hall in New York City to hear the mayor and others honor the victims of the Holocaust. The Central Council of Liberated Jews in Germany, a group comprised of survivors, commemorated a memorial annually, on the 14th of Iyyar, the date of the liberation of the Landsberg Camp. On that day the group would gather, listen to speeches, chant *El maleh rachamim*, and sing *Hatikvah*. This commemoration was short-lived, like many of the communal observances we discussed after the Crusades. There were few Jews left in Germany to continue the observance, and many of those who remained were traditional Jews who observed the *Pesach Sheni*, which fell on the date of the commemoration. In 1946 the Chareidi community of Hungary established that the 20th of Sivan, the date already memorializing the victims of the Chmelnicki massacres, would be expanded to incorporate the Holocaust victims also. *Selichot* were composed for the occasion and the memorial consisted of adding these prayers to the daily liturgy.[279]

It was not long before all these expressions disappeared. These commemorations were always local and held little appeal beyond their own constituents, and even then, in most cases they did not survive for any considerable time. In the main, the European commemorations were hampered by a shifting and diminishing population. The American examples were never intended to be expanded to become annual events or observances.

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[279] The information contained in this paragraph was gleaned from Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pp. 20-22

During the late 1940s as people began to emerge from the camps, it began to be clear just how many people had been killed during the war. Everyone, it seemed, was touched in some way by the hand of death, almost no European Jewish family was spared from the hands of death. However, many people did not know the details of their loved ones' deaths. In many cases it was assumed that those who were missing were in fact dead, but families most of the time did not know the dates of the deaths. Everything was in a state of confusion and turmoil. The Jewish population, which had already been transported great distances by the Nazis, was still shifting and moving. People searched for relatives, stories about relatives, looking for some information. Often that information was unknown and unobtainable. Many were left with more questions than when they began the search. It became apparent that many people would be left without ever knowing when their relative died, or in some cases, whether or not they were actually killed. This left a difficult dilemma regarding the recitation of *kaddish*. The memorial prayer for the dead is traditionally recited on the anniversary of the death of certain relatives by the surviving family members. How was this possible when the survivors did not know if and when their relatives had died?

These questions were posed to the Chief Rabbinate in Israel and they responded by designating the 10th of Tevet as a general *kaddish* day. If one did not know upon which date to recite *kaddish* one should do so on this day. The Rabbinate further legislated that on the 10th of Tevet the whole city should recite kaddish because the extent of the devastation was so great that no one could be certain that they did not have the obligation to recite *kaddish*. So, to err on the side of caution, all should recite the prayer. Further, candles should be lit, psalms 46, 79, 83 and 130 recited, *El Maleh Rachamim* chanted and *Ani*

Ma'amin sung. Hence, the day was more than just an occasion to recite the *kaddish*, it was a step towards decreeing a day of remembrance of the Holocaust. In fact it was referred to as *Yom Hashoah*, Holocaust Day, for a number of years and only later became referred to as "*Kaddish* Day."

The choice of the 10th of Tevet is interesting for a number of reasons, some of which contributed to its demise and inability to capture the imagination and the hearts of the broad populace. The 10th of Tevet was already decreed as one of the four fast days that mourn aspects of the destruction of the Temples. This particular fast was in memorial of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem.[280] Of the four fasts this one was the least acknowledged and it was not broadly observed as a day of mourning. Greenberg suggests that the choice of this day to observe Yom Hashoah was a political one and it was hoped that by so allocating the day as one of mourning for the Holocaust victims, it could be revived and more people would fast and remember both disasters.[281] Further, it continued the rabbinic tradition of subsuming all disasters into the same paradigm. Jewish mythic memory, as we have seen already, sees each new disaster and crisis as a repetition of previous catastrophes and thus the distinctiveness of particular events is collapsed and reconfigured within the general paradigmatic disaster, the destruction of the Temple. By allocating the 10th of Tevet as the day of mourning, they were upholding the paradigm and the centrality of the Temple to even this most recent and horrific of catastrophes.

Unfortunately for the Orthodox Rabbinate, the choice of this day and the few prayers suggested did not satisfy any of the various groups seeking a

[280]Zechariah 8:19, II Kings 25: 1-2, Jeremiah 52:14 and Ezekiel 24:1-2 from ibid. pg. 23
[281]Rabbi Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 330

remembrance. There were a number of difficulties with this date which made it ultimately unacceptable as the day of memorial for the Holocaust victims. First, there is no intrinsic connection between this date and the Holocaust events if one does not accept the notion of history and time as represented by the traditional Jewish world view. Many of the groups who sought a memorial day did not accept that position. They viewed the Holocaust as a unique event in the annals of Jewish history and felt it an abomination to subsume it within the context of other disasters. As an event, it stood alone, so too must it stand alone in memorial. "The choice of a memorial day that sought maximum continuity with the past was a non-starter. That fact is a powerful statement of the theology and common sense of the Jewish people"[282] Further, there were no rituals suggested for this day, nothing to capture the hearts and imaginations of the worshippers; it did not address their needs or their feelings and as such was doomed to fail. Further, one of the largest groups seeking a memorial day were the former ghetto fighters and partisans. They were one of the most vocal groups during this period. These survivors had fought against the enemy and had demonstrated great bravery and military might despite their disadvantages. In the newly formed state of Israel, a state created by the might of a small, tiny band of disadvantaged fighters, these partisans found pride in the military struggles of the Jews during the war. It was this aspect of the Holocaust they sought to address and remember, not God's role or lack thereof. The 10th of Tevet failed to satisfy this need.[283] It was suggested that the 10th of Tevet was never intended to be a day of general mourning and commemoration but rather a day which would exist only as long as the survivors were alive and needed to

[282]ibid. pg. 330
[283]ibid. pp. 229-330

recite *Kaddish*. Thus its demise was the intended result and not a failure at all.[284] This seems unlikely, since the naming of the day and addition of psalms is more consistent with a lasting memorial than a ritual limited by time.

Since the 10th of Tevet was not broadly accepted as the date for a Holocaust memorial, how was the community to choose a date which would appeal to all groups, and was the need for a memorial great enough to warrant the designation of a new holy day? As David Roskies so eloquently warns, "When the unit of destruction is not the individual but the collective, when an entire Jewish population of a town or city is gone, and when the disappearance of each community is known by a date and there are enough dates to fill the calendar, the task of remembrance threatens to eclipse all."[285] So how to choose a date? Interestingly, during the period immediately after the war, the 150,000 survivors in Israel were not the ones pressing for the establishment of a memorial day. They were so heavily laden with guilt for having survived that they sought to forget the horrors and divert attention away from them. Instead, they sought to run away from the memories of the horror and terror, and concentrate on adjusting to life in a new land and an essentially foreign culture.[286] Further, the survivors did not know how to describe what had happened to them, there was no forum and there were no words. It seemed so unreal, as if it had happened to someone else.

The Zionist groups also hoped to divert attention away from a Holocaust memorial day. There was a sense of shame felt amongst the Israeli community

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[284]Joel Wowelsky, in Tradition, summer 1989, pg. 51, as quoted in Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 24
[285]Roskies, Against the Apocalypse, pg. 4
[286]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 328

towards the Eastern European Jews. The Sabra image was one of a fighting partisan who struggled and fought for survival. The Jews of Europe were seen as passive victims led like sheep to the slaughter, weak and diseased. These Jews must be forgotten and buried to make way for the new Jew: the Jew of power, might and victory, the tanned Israeli who tilled the soil and built up the land, not who toiled over books of Talmud, growing weak and frail. Further, the Holocaust occurred in the Diaspora, the place which held the history of the Jews but not its future. It was viewed by the Zionist groups as a doomed community, a place which represented the failure of Judaism and not the success. To memorialize these communities would be to see them in a favorable light and that was not desired. These groups then sought memorial buildings and statues to placate those who desired them and then to turn from the past and look to the future.[287]

Alongside the Zionists another group seeking to repress the image of the weak Eastern European Jews were the partisans and ghetto fighters. As previously discussed, they had nothing about which they felt shame. They had stood before the enemy and fought to avert disaster. They were not weak and passive but took the situation in hand and fought for their fellow Jews' rights and freedoms. For this group, the memorial day should honor those who fought to survive and the obvious choice of date was April 19th, the day of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. When this date was proposed, the Zionist groups objected and argued that the date should be at least the date on the Hebrew calendar. Unfortunately that date was the 15th of Nissan, the first night of Passover. To commemorate any aspect of the Holocaust on that night threatened to forever

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[287]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 327, Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 27

tar the joyous festival of freedom with the brush of despair and gloom.[288] Placing the memorial on the first day of Passover would accomplish one of Hitler's goals: to destroy forever the Jewish association of festivals with happiness. It was for this reason he chose to commit some of the worst atrocities of the war on Jewish holy days. This date would also focus the attention on the fighters and by so doing rob the other victims of a valid memorial. This approach also failed to acknowledge the new, expanded definition of *kiddush Hashem* and the newly forming notion of *kiddush hahayim*, discussed earlier, thereby reducing the meaning of the deaths of most Holocaust victims. Thus the partisans were alone in their call for a memorial on 15th of Nissan.

Against this background of struggle and debate, Mordechai Nurok, a member of the National Religious Party, addressed the Israeli parliament in April of 1951. He called to his colleagues, "The heavens cry forth, the earth cries forth, and Israel is crying."[289] He then made a plea for a single day of commemoration for the victims of the Holocaust and he proposed that the 27th of Nissan be designated "Holocaust and Ghetto Rebellion Day."

As a religious Jew, Nurok and his contemporaries had much at stake in the formation of a memorial day. The religious communities had suffered the greatest and most devastating losses to their numbers. The Nazis, early in the war, specifically targeted religious leaders, teachers and scholars. Thus, much of the Orthodox rabbinate, leadership and communities were dead.[290]

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[288]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 330-331, Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 27

[289]*Divrei Haknesset*, April 12th, 1951. as translated by Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 27

[290]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 328-329

Nurok chose the 27th of Nisan as the date for a number of reasons. Firstly, and possibly most importantly, it was not during the period of Passover, thus the holiday could conceivably remain little touched by the Holocaust memorial. It was also a reasonable distance from Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Hazikaron, the occasions upon which Israelis remember those who fell during the War of Independence, and then celebrate the joy of the formation of the modern-day state. The positioning of Yom Hashoah a week before them, created a link between the two events but made neither one dependent upon the other. There was great criticism of those who saw the state of Israel as reward or compensation for the Holocaust. The two events are unavoidably connected in a "dialectical tension: they are forever twinned, without softening the tension between destruction and redemption and without betraying the character of either event. It could not have been better orchestrated by providence than it was."[291] The proposed name of the day, *Yom Hashoah veha'gevurah* including in the title, "heroism," was seen as a way to placate those who wanted the memorial to highlight the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, without having to commemorate it on the exact date of its anniversary and so taint Passover. Finally, hoping to placate the Orthodox Jews, should the 27th of Nisan fall on the Sabbath, it would be postponed until its conclusion.

Although Nurok thought carefully about the proposed date, and it was accepted by a vote on the 12th of April, there followed two years of debate and discussion about its appropriateness. The Orthodox groups argued that there could be no memorials during the month of Nissan, a time wherein eulogies are forbidden.

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[291] ibid. pg. 339

The partisan groups did not wish to compromise on the date of the uprising and were not placated by the addition of *gevurah* to the title. The survivors were ambivalent. Thus although the date found its place on the calendar, there was little evidence of any united commemoration for a number of years. Different groups still held their own separate memorials, each giving their commemoration what they perceived was the appropriate emphasis. For example, the Labor movement made Mordechai Anilewicz, the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the center of their day and held political rallies. The kibbutzim created their own services, and the date allocated to bring people together to commemorate together merely served to highlight the differences amongst groups.[292] And then there were the majority of people who did nothing at all to honor the day.

In an attempt to rectify the lack of unified activity on Holocaust Commemoration Day the government enacted legislation in 1959 calling for a public commemoration. At the same time, Ben Gurion, then the prime minister, felt the need to demonstrate to the world both the importance of the Jewish state and the power it provided Jewish people everywhere. The result was the capture and trial of Adolph Eichmann. This was a pivotal event in the history of Israel, influencing the Israelis' perception of themselves and, more importantly for our purposes, their attitude and approach to the Holocaust. The trial afforded the survivors their first public forum for expressing what had befallen them in Europe, in the ghettos and camps. For the first time, the Jewish people and the world heard eyewitness accounts detailing the extent of the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews of Europe by the Nazis. Survivors shocked and

[292] J. Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 28

astounded observers with tales of their treatment. "The curtain of shame was lifted and the enormity of the Holocaust revealed."[293]The Israeli public, the Zionist groups, even the ghetto fighters and partisans were forced to confront the reality of the Holocaust and to acknowledge that heroism and resistance could not be measured in the same terms as was the case for other disasters. In this instance, just living and surviving from day to day was an act of bravery, resistance and heroism. The survivors' struggles and torment were acknowledged publicly and given legitimacy. As a result, the survivors themselves were relieved of a portion of their feelings of guilt and shame. The atmosphere in Israel was thus changed by the Eichmann trial.

In 1961 the *Knesset,* reflecting the changing environment in Israel, enacted a law closing all public entertainment on Holocaust Memorial Day. Radio and television stations were instructed to play only material relating to the Holocaust. Further, the government decreed the 'day' would begin, like other Jewish festival occasions, at sundown. This gave the day a less secular and more religious character. The name was changed to "Holocaust, Rebellion and Heroism Memorial Day," still attempting to cater to the Sabra attitude. Finally, it was decreed that a siren would sound at which time the whole country would pause for a minute's silence in honor of the victims.[294] This last element has proved to be the most poignant and moving element of Yom Hashoah to this day. The sudden halt of all noise and activity other than the long haunted wail of the siren is a powerful and moving ritual. It is unlikely the *Knesset* realized the inherent power of such a ritual when the law was enacted, but it crosses all religious, social and political barriers. It is an observance in which all may participate, and

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[293]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 334
[294]op. cit. 49, pg. 29

they do. Further, it hearkens back to the call of the *shofar* used in the past to awaken the Jewish people and to attract God's attention in order to communicate with Him.

Following this period, *Yom Hashoah* gained adherents and the practice of commemoration increased. There are a number of reasons suggested for this change. The first is the impact of the Eichmann trial and the fact that a more broad-ranging acknowledgment of the day was mandated by the government. Further, in 1967, Israel was faced with the trauma of the Six Day War. Although it resulted in a swift, almost miraculous victory for Israel, it put an end to any naive hopes that the world would help and protect the Jews. On the eve of the war, the Jews stood, poised once again on the brink of annihilation. A foe, greater and more powerful, sought her destruction and there was nobody upon whom they could rely other than themselves. At that moment, the tough Sabra was faced with the same sense of helplessness and abandonment felt by the Holocaust victims. They stood alone and it was humbling. From that day forth, they were less ashamed of the Eastern European Jews and felt a certain empathy with them. After this time, although the day was still officially called *Yom Hashoah ve Hag'vurah,* the day was often referred to as simply *Yom Hashoah*, Holocaust Memorial Day. There was no more need for the other terms; now, finally, the Israelis understood.[295]

For the next few years the levels of observance continued to increase. There was one more attempt to officially change the date in 1977. Menachem Begin was the Prime Minister and Rabbi Joseph Sloveitchick, the leader of the United

[295]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 334

States Orthodox community, supported his efforts, lending them weight and force. The proposal was to move the date to incorporate Holocaust memorial with all the other disasters remembered on *Tisha Be Av*. Both leaders expressed a fear that if the day was not incorporated into the already existing tradition, once this generation died, so would the observance of *Yom Hashoah*. The Orthodox movement was also in support of this suggestion for it incorporated the Holocaust into the collapsible mythic time which suggested all disasters were connected and part of the cyclical history of the Jewish people. It was suggested that *kinot* be composed and inserted in to the already existing *Tisha Be Av* service.

The motion failed and Rabbi Greenberg suggests a number of reasons which contributed to its demise. First, the ultra-Orthodox communities were not able to assure the public that a significant number of additions would be placed in the service for *Tisha Be Av* to do appropriate justice to the event. On the other side, the partisans and survivors did not want the Holocaust subsumed under the old paradigms. This was a tragedy unique in Jewish history and deserved prayers and a day which was unique to the event. Adding to this concern was the fact that during the previous decade, there had been a significant spread of *Yom Hashoah* observance on the 27th of Nissan. Although nobody was completely satisfied with the date, there was a logic inherent in its choice and it was a day set aside specifically for the Holocaust. Finally, the Yom Kippur War further removed the arrogant haughty attitude of the Israelis towards the Holocaust victims and survivors. The Israeli community had suffered losses, they experienced death and gained humility before the victims. Also, by this time, much literature was being produced along with film, television, art and oral testimony which spoke about the Holocaust. Information was available, the

survivors had recovered enough to begin to tell the tale and the more that was revealed, the more important it became to acknowledge and commemorate the day.[296] The community had moved beyond the point where the date and form could be changed such that it was subsumed into the traditional paradigm, it had already been imbued with its own importance, relevance and holiness. Rituals and traditions were being formed and created, with the mix of secular and religious elements appropriately reflecting the reality of Israeli society and the needs of the people. It was their understanding of the events of the Holocaust and the course of history, including God's hand therein, that shaped the date chosen and the observances enacted. The rituals, like the date, combine both secular and religious aspects to tell the story and mark the events.

It is fascinating to note that the secular government of Israel has established a new holy day in the Jewish calendar. This date was not mandated by God or by rabbis but rather, by the leaders of a nation. Admittedly, Israel is a nation uniquely connected to the Jewish people but the establishment of such a date is unique. This response has not been seen prior to modern times in the history of the nation and is reflective of the nature of the event and the people: "To those who grasp the context of the new cycle, *Yom Hashoah* fits the parameters of a holy day perfectly. The flaws and the all-too-human admixtures provide the necessary cover to enable the day to make a credible, persuasive statement about history, God, covenant and meaning. A more visibly sacred day would have sharply limited credibility in the present cultural context. A formal holy day could not be accepted by many Jews. The non-observant would feel excluded by the Halachic/sacred dimension; secularists would lump it into the category of

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[296]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 336-338

a fairy tale, which is their conception of religion; the Orthodox would be misled into assimilating this tragedy into the earlier ones as if nothing has been changed by the Holocaust."[297]

Another unique aspect of *Yom Hashoah* is the fact that it has been adopted by other governments and Jews outside the State of Israel. American Jewry accepted the date of 27th of Nissan as the one for Holocaust memorials to be held but, in a strange twist, the United States Government also saw fit to acknowledge that date with a fitting annual memorial.

In the United States, the President's Commission on the Holocaust was established in 1979. One of their tasks was to find an appropriate means by which the United States government and people could commemorate the Holocaust. A bill was presented to Congress on July 20th, 1979 by Senator John Danforth, an Episcopalian minister: "I am introducing a joint resolution designating April 13th to April 19th 'Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust.' The resolution authorizes and requests the president to issue a proclamation calling upon the American people to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and to reflect upon the pernicious nature of bigotry and the dangers of tyranny and oppression."[298] The choice of these dates ensures that the Holocaust Memorial day can be observed annually on the 27th of Nisan, the same day as was proclaimed by the Israeli Parliament. Originally, the Senator sought to commemorate the Holocaust memorial on the day that the Americans liberated Dachau. In the American memory that day had begun to be

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[297]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 337

[298]Congressional Record, July 20, 1979. As found in Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 43

mythologized by both the survivors, who longed to be loyal and committed participants in their new homeland, and the liberators. Unfortunately the reality of the liberation was far from idyllic. It was reported that when the soldiers liberated the camp they were fearful of the grotesque, ill, and, in many cases, highly contagious prisoners. They came in, saw the horror and promptly returned to the safety of their camps. The prisoners were abandoned for a few more days, starving and dying. Then some soldiers, from pity and good motives, gave the prisoners treats from their supplies. Unfortunately, the chocolates and other food items were too rich for the emaciated prisoners' systems and many died from the effects of the food.[299] Had this day been chosen as the memorial date it would have been disastrous. Either the liberation would have been remembered in its nostalgic veil of lies or it would have been a day of national shame and guilt. Further, like those in Israel who wanted to choose the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as the date, it shifts the emphasis onto one group of people and gives less weight and attention to the others. In the case of the United States, the emphasis would have been on the acts of their country rather than the victims and the enormity of the Holocaust as a total, essentially Jewish event. Upon hearing these arguments the Senator agreed that the most suitable date would be that chosen by Israel, as representative of the Jewish people.

It is interesting and of some worth to note that the title given to the day by the United States focuses not on the heroics or military deeds as was important in the initial framing in Israel, but rather the focus is upon the victims. Joel Sisenwine has argued that this is a result of the differences between the American civil religion and that of Israel. He notes that in the United States

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[299]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 334-335

generally, there was a much greater identification with and sympathy for the victims than for those who stood up to their oppressors.[300]

Thus after a lengthy period of debate and discussion as well some time and space for healing and recovery, a new day of memorial was adopted and accepted by most Jews in Israel and around the world. The question now focused not on the date of the memorial but rather on the specific details of the observance on that day. One of the major difficulties confronted by all groups is the struggle to find a place for the Holocaust within Jewish tradition: "Any attempt simply to fit the Holocaust into classic modes of prayer, ritual and affirmation must confront the radical countertestimony to hope and faith in the Holocaust. It is questionable whether any traditional system can tolerate such tensions. On the other hand, it would be another victory for Hitler to have the Holocaust destroy the traditional Jewish prayer service or synagogue."[301] Thus the formulation of a universal commemorative event or service, ritual and liturgy is extremely complex and complicated. Such endeavors have been hampered by a number of other factors.

The first is the diverse nature of the different groups of people seeking to find meaning in this day. The range spans Jews and non-Jews, the more traditional to the least traditional, those who believe in God and those who, after the Holocaust, can no longer believe in God. The range of emotions felt by these groups is equally diverse. Similarly, the size and purpose of gatherings on this day range from the purely religious to the more political. Even the newly created memorial centers have become "sacred space" for the remembrance of the

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[300] Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pp. 41-44
[301] Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 326

Holocaust and thus must be taken into account when compiling an appropriate memorial service for *Yom Hashoah.*[302] Added to these problems is the fact that many have not yet confronted the Holocaust and considered how it changes and affects their values and beliefs. "Since rituals are formulations of the beliefs and values that undergird the covenantal way, this void is particularly problematic in trying to formulate a model for *Yom Hashoah.*"[303] Further, such rituals and liturgies take considerable time to become cemented and entrenched within the hearts and minds of communities. As a result, there is a plethora of widely divergent texts for *Yom Hashoah.* Each text is reflective of the group for whom and by whom it was written. There are some elements of similarity and many more of difference. The discussion here can therefore only be a survey of these texts. There are so many in use, some published, but the vast majority, at least within the Reform Jewish community in America, are local observances which remain unpublished. We will consider selections from published prayerbooks of the different denominations within Judaism in America and in Israel. Also we will look at a group of unpublished liturgies created mostly by rabbis for specific communities. Then we will consider a selection of published, creative alternatives to simply modifying a regular service. Next we will study some of the interfaith offerings as well as the United States and Israeli governments' ceremonies.

Many Orthodox communities still do not observe *Yom Hashoah,* and believe that the most appropriate forum for addressing the Holocaust is during the observance of *Tisha Be Av.* As discussed in Chapter Two, the 9th of Av has become the receptacle for the commemoration of Jewish communal disasters.

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[302]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 326
[303]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 325

Therein they are subsumed, one into the other, until the particulars of each catastrophe become less important than the circular motion of Jewish history and time. Adherents of this philosophy do not view the Holocaust as unique in the history of the world or the Jews and as such it can be more than adequately memorialized on the day upon which all other historical disasters are remembered.

Given that the *Tisha be Av* ceremonies were deemed to be the most appropriate for such a commemoration, the question arose about how best to address the Holocaust during the twenty-four hour memorial. Many of the elegies already contained within the service, especially those composed during the Middle Ages, are reflective of the experience of the Holocaust victims, however none adequately addresses the differences and the particulars of the twentieth-century European event. Although dwelling upon the particulars and differences between the different disasters is discouraged, for it has the potential to then shatter the paradigm which suggests that all disasters are merely revisiting the destruction of the Temples, there is still a need for some specificity in order to adequately address the Holocaust and its victims, thereby providing them with a legitimate memorial and satisfying the survivors and their families. This posed a great difficulty, for, from a traditional perspective, who was equal to the task of composing such a lament, who was sufficiently holy and gifted to presume to write a new *kinah?* The dirges already found within the liturgy were written by human beings, but men of great holiness and piety. There are tales of these men writing with the Holy Spirit beside them guiding their hand. It was thus difficult to find a person willing and able to compose such elegies.

The Orthodox prayerbooks for *Tisha Be Av*, generally contain at least one elegy specifically written and dedicated to the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust. We will consider the offerings of the Artscroll service which is used in many modern Orthodox congregations throughout the world. The work contains two *kinot* dedicated to the martyrs of the Jewish people during World War Two. Then we will briefly examine the work composed by Reverend Abraham Rosenfeld for his book of *kinot* for *Tisha Be Av* published in England and used both there and in the United States. In many of the congregations wherein these texts are read on *Tisha Be Av* it is in addition to a prayer service or addition of prayers to the regular daily liturgy on 27th Nissan.

The two *kinot* found in the Artscroll prayerbook are introduced with a discussion of the reasons for including such prayers in a book for *Tisha Be Av*. They remark "Torah Jews recognize that all Jewish misfortunes have their roots in the tragic events of Tisha be Av. Therefore we designate no new days of mourning to commemorate later events, but include them in our Tisha B'Av *kinnos* service."[304] Then, the footnotes provide legitimacy for the author and his ability and worth to compose the elegy. The first was penned by Admor Harav Shlomo Halberstam, a descendant of one of the "most illustrious Rabbinic and Chassidic dynasties."[305] The Rav suffered great personal loss in the Holocaust and arrived in America with little other than the clothes on his back. From this lowly position he rebuilt the House of Bobov, the academy of learning run by his family for generations. He now has disciples and followers just as his family had for generations in Europe. Thus he is eminently qualified to pen a *kinah*: he suffered in the Holocaust and he is clearly a pious, holy man who works with God by his

[304]Rabbi Feuer ed. The Complete Tisha be Av Service, pg. 382
[305]ibid.

side, for how else could he have recreated his family's legacy here? He wrote the elegy before the edition of the prayerbook and was asked if it could be included. He responded "For years I had wanted to express my grief over my personal loss and *k'lal Yisrael's* loss, in a special *kinah* but I hesitated. I felt that in order to compose a *kinah* one must be on the exalted level of R' Eliezer HaKalir who wrote with the *Ruach Hakodesh*, Divine inspiration. Moreover he was a master of Kabbalistic secrets and knew the mystical incantations of the ministering angels. Still many Chassidim required a vehicle to convey their personal sorrow on this bitter day...then I was...studying the laws of *Tisha B'Av* and I read ...it is a mitzvah for each and every individual to compose kinnos for weeping and moaning and recite them on this bitter day...when I read these words...I saw a clear sign from heavens that the time had come to compose a *kinah* over the last *Churban.*"[306]

The second *kinah* was composed by Rav Shimon Schwab. He was also a prominent scholar in Germany before the war and had studied with the great masters. He left Germany relatively early, in 1936, and took up a position in the United States. In 1959, he recounts, that Rav Breuer asked him to compose a *kinah* saying "each of us is either a refugee or a Holocaust survivor. We have all lost family and friends in this *churban*...We must not forget nor can we allow our children to forget. Eight centuries ago German Jewry was slaughtered by the Crusaders...perhaps 5,000 (were killed). In World War II one thousand times that number were killed...If German Jewry composed *kinnos* to commemorate the evil on that day how much the more so must we compose one over the Holocaust."[307] Again although the elegy was composed for a specific

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[306]Ibid. pp. 382-384
[307]ibid. pp. 384-387

congregation by an eminent member of the congregation, it has been widely used and now is adopted by the prayerbook. In both cases it was important for the editors to establish the legitimacy of the authors by showing their backgrounds, piety and humility. Thus they ensured as best they could that the *kinot* would be accepted.

Neither one of the *kinot* are written with an alphabetical acrostic which is the familiar trademark of many of the traditional laments. However, they retain the meter and content we have come to expect from these texts, especially those written during the Middle Ages. Both *kinot* contain a number of refrains and themes familiar to the reader and therein is their comfort and appropriateness in the context of *Tisha be Av*. Just like the Crusader victims, the victims of the Holocaust were viewed as pure and innocent, unblemished sheep led to the slaughter with the praise of God upon their lips. The authors focus on the scholars, teachers and rabbis who were innocent victims with whom their worshipping community can most identify. Even the children, the most innocent, untainted of all the victims are described as "precious children in school."[308] The images of the dead as sacrifices to God as part of a divine test akin to the *Akeda* appear again, as does the hope that the blood and ashes of these martyrs will be accounted to their descendants for righteousness as was the blood of Isaac and the ashes of the ram during the *Akedah*. The elegies both end with hope, the messianic hope that the world will soon be redeemed and all will live in peace and harmony under the rule of God. The overarching theme of these *kinot* is that of memory. The constant refrain is the call to God to see and remember what was done to His people during the Holocaust. Therein is their meaning. If

[308]ibid. pg. 387

God can see that His chosen ones passed the divinely imposed test, if He will just remember that they went to their deaths reciting the *Shema*, that they gave their lives to protect His Torah, these pure and untainted offerings, then their deaths were not in vain, there is meaning to be found in the tragedy and the hope of a future free from such horror can be realized. There is no anger hurled at God, no questioning of where God was, why He did not intervene, but rather a plea to remember and account it for Israel's merit. Accordingly, the sin-punishment paradigm, so prevalent in earlier writings, is not found in reference to the Holocaust. Instead the writers turn to the rhetoric of the Crusader period, where sin-punishment could not be an adequate answer to the question "why"? Instead the punishment is called to be hurled at the enemy.

There is a constant cry for revenge. The anger is turned not towards God as has been the case in other writings, but rather at the human enemy who inflicted the pain. God is thus separated from the event and not held accountable for any element thereof. Rather, He is the savior, the one who will bring redemption and punishment. In this manner the covenant between God and His people is maintained, there is hope for the future and validity in traditional practices. Further, the anger of the worshippers is expressed and released in a safe and appropriate way which will do no harm to the foundations of their faith.

Reverend Rosenfeld, in his compilation of *kinot* sees the Holocaust as an event integrally linked and connected to the return to Israel and the re-establishment of the State. He makes reference to the talmudic statement that at the time of the destruction of the Temple, God preferred to exile the people and destroy the Temple than have to destroy the people. Rabbi Rosenfeld sees the Holocaust as a reversal of that decree; many people were sacrificed and then the remnant

returned to their land. He notes that the dispersion was not a negative event for it, too, served God's purpose of bringing the light of Torah to the world. For these reasons, the Holocaust is inextricably connected to Israel and to the destruction of the Temple. Thus, he concludes, *Tisha Be Av* is an incredibly relevant and forceful day, the observance of which must continue forevermore.[309]

Rabbi Rosenfeld's elegy, unlike the other two, is much more traditional in form, being an alphabetical acrostic and beginning with hurling an accusation at God. He calls to God and suggests it was His hiddenness and anger which caused this tragedy to befall His own people. By so doing Rosenfeld placed responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust clearly upon God. The victims are extolled as was evident in the Artscroll *kinot*. They are described as pure, pious holy ones who went to their horrific deaths singing God's praises, reciting the *Shema* and *Ani Ma'amin*. This is followed by a description of the horrors endured by the suffering children of Israel, a reminder to the congregation and to God of the atrocities of the war, the inhumanity of the enemy, and almost by implication, God Himself. Finally, Rabbi Rosenfeld concludes with a plea for peace, redemption and hope. As with almost all the *kinot*, this one ends with a positive note, a prayer for the future.[310] Thus God was reaffirmed in His might, glory and hiddenness. The traditional paradigms were taken out, dusted off, and reapplied to this newest of catastrophes such that it was new only in its enormity and details. The relationship between God and Israel remains unchanged and unaffected by the Holocaust; it is subsumed into the traditional rubrics, theology and mythic memory.

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[309]Abraham Rosenfeld, Kinot for the Ninth of Av, pp. x-xi
[310]ibid. pp. 172-175

The Orthodox authorities in Israel offered a proposal for a pattern of observance for the 27th Nisan. First the Chief Rabbi suggested the reading of a version of *El Malei Rachamim* which was adapted to include a specific reference to the Holocaust victims. In addition he called upon the congregations to recite psalms, study certain passages of Mishna and read the poem *Eli Eli* composed by Yehudah Leib Bialer. The Tel Aviv Chief Rabbinate proposed further the recitation of *El Maleh Rachamim* on the Sabbath preceding *Yom Hashoah* and the lighting of a memorial candle on the evening of 27 Nisan. Psalms 79 and 83 are also to be recited.[311] Psalm 79 pleads for God to turn His anger away from His people, to forgive their iniquity and deliver them from the hands of their oppressors. Finally it calls for vengeance upon their enemies and redemption from suffering. Psalm 83 is more specifically rousing God to take vengeance on His people's enemies as He has done in the past, to once again behave as the God of history, intervening to save His people and wreaking havoc with their enemies. In both these psalms we find a return to the sin-punishment paradigm, but more forceful is the cry to God for justice and vengeance.

Thus the observance suggested by the Orthodox Rabbinate in Israel, like that of the *Tisha Be Av* additions, does not offer any challenge to the traditional views of God and His relationship with Israel and history. The God of the psalms and the God of Orthodox Jewry is not altered or affected by the Holocaust. Rather, the tragedy is placed within the standard formulations. There is an outlet for Israel's anger as it is directed away from God and towards the enemy. The observance also affords the worshippers an opportunity to empathize with the

[311] Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 52

victims and offer a tribute to them by the recitation of *El Malei Rachamim* and *kaddish*, both prayers which seek help and peace for the dead. Their deaths thus find meaning in the scheme of history and their souls find peace with God. The Orthodox observance on the 27th of Nissan is relatively unemotional, however, and there are no examples of contemporary writings other then the poem "Eli Eli." The focus, even on this specially allocated day, is the connection with the Temple and previous Jewish suffering rather than the specific horrors of the Holocaust. The elegies for *Tisha be Av* provoke an emotional response from the worshippers to some degree, but the offerings on this day do not. Thus the effect upon the worshippers is necessarily lessened as the drama of events is not presented in a way which will tug at their heartstrings and affect them on an emotional level.

The first liturgical offering for *Yom Hashoah* by the American Conservative movement came in 1966 when Rabbi Abraham Holts composed a Hebrew prayer based upon the confessional recited on *Yom Kippur*.[312] However, this piece was not composed for recitation on 27 Nisan. The first suggestions for that occasion came from Rabbi Reuben Hammer, in Jerusalem, in 1970. He, like the Orthodox Rabbinate, composed a version of *El Maleh Rachamim,* which included specific references to the Holocaust, an *Iyyun tefilah* for the *kaddish* and a responsive reading.[313]

The Conservative movement had no official liturgical material for the 27th of Nisan until the publication of its prayerbook, Sim Shalom. The book contains a

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[312]Avraham Holtz, "Viddui", in Conservative Judaism, pp. 1-2

[313]R. Hammer, "Suggestions and Material for Yom Hashoah" unpublished, referred to in J. Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pg. 53 and note 75.

section devoted to *Yom Hashoah*, and the section is so titled. It appears at the back of the prayerbook which includes services for Sabbath, festivals and weekdays. The *Yom Hashoah* readings are found under the general heading "Additional Readings." Thus it is placed outside the rubrics of prayer services and in the portion of the book reserved for readings related to specific themes such as God, prayer, and the national anthems. By so placing the text, the movement is making a statement about the status of *Yom Hashoah*. It is clearly seen as a holy day unlike the others in the calendar, and it has been suggested that this reflects a belief on the part of the movement that *Yom Hashoah* has its place on the periphery of observance rather than in the heart of Jewish tradition.[314] That is perhaps too harsh a criticism. The texts offered by the Conservative movement are reflections and readings, therefore most appropriately placed in that section. The selection is titled *Yom Hashoah*, not Holocaust readings or some other such title. They chose to label the selection for a specific occasion. So rather than being evidence of diminishing the value of this memorial day, its placement merely demonstrates that this commemoration is unlike other special days in the manner in which it is observed. Further, the introduction to the prayerbook suggests that these readings be added to the regular liturgy for the day on 27th of Nissan. Thus the 27th of Nissan, liturgically, is a regular day on which one simply adds special readings. Also the section is introduced by describing the 27th of Nisan, stressing the imperative to remember the Holocaust, uttered by those who lived and died during the war. It continues: "There is no adequate reaction to the Holocaust, but we must not ignore it and we must not forget its victims. These pages do not constitute a service or a fixed liturgy. It is suggested that they be used as a supplement that

[314]ibid. pg. 54.

may be incorporated into any of the regular services on Yom Hashoah. The narrative portions of the selections may be varied from year to year."[315] Thus the editors acknowledge the difficulties of dealing with the Holocaust in any manner; any offering seems inadequate and insufficient. Despite this, the movement has chosen to address the Holocaust and the day with a liturgical selection. They have left the contents of the service fluid and open to change as they recognize the still developing state of Holocaust liturgies. Thus it had to be addressed and a suggestion for observance made, but it is acknowledged that it is only a beginning and the first steps towards creating their own liturgy.

The readings comprise a series of vignettes, glimpses into the world of the victims and survivors. In the main, the passages are personal testimonies and stories of remarkable individuals and communities. There is even a reading about a non-Jew who saved her Jewish neighbors. There are very few poems; most of the pieces are prose and the effect is that it feels almost as if the people are speaking to the reader from the pages of the book. Somehow the worshipper knows that each of these stories of individuals represents the stories of thousands, millions of people. To speak their words, to read their words gives a humanity and poignancy to the memory. Six million is so hard to conceive and to grieve for such a number is almost impossible. But to cry for these individuals is easy, it is possible to identify with at least one tale and so doing the congregant feels pain, sorrow and loss. It is then that the numbers become meaningful, when they mean half a million "old rabbis," thousands of Janusz Korczaks, a million "young Jews." By providing these tales, the tragedy is

[315]Rabbi Jules Harlow (ed.) Siddur Sim Shalom, pg. 828

humanized for the congregants; it is more real, causing the people to feel the pain: this is when the liturgy is most powerful and effective.

The stories focus on the victims as individuals. There is no blatant theologizing or attempt to justify or to understand. Rather, there are stories and tales of victims, their friends and families; glimpses of the horror and the atrocity without much mention of God, His role, His punishment or hiddenness, the sins of the people, the Akedah. Almost all the paradigms found in the earlier liturgies are absent here. The "sins of Israel" are mentioned only once and then it is in the form of a rhetorical question, not in answer to the question of "Why"?[316] This prayerbook attempts to offer no answers, no theological statements, only a picture of a few frames in the ugly movie that was the Holocaust. There is no move to shy away from the details of the camps and death: "flames were leaping up from a ditch, gigantic flames. They were burning something. A lorry drew up to the pit and delivered its load-little children. Babies!...around us everyone was weeping...Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent sky."[317]

There are no questions, there are no answers, just statements of fact and feeling. This allows each person to draw their own conclusions or just to feel the pain and the sorrow. Prayer is not envisaged as a time for answers and arguments; it is an escape from that into the realm of emotion. The Conservative prayerbook does not attempt to provide answers, the overarching theme is

[316]ibid. pg. 831
[317]ibid. pg. 834

remembrance: the purpose of Yom Hashoah is to remember the horror, the degradation and the suffering. That is all.

The selection concludes with the recitation of *Kaddish* with the names of the various concentration camps and ghettos interspersed. This is a creative addition also found in a number of the Reform services discussed later in this chapter. It is unclear what is the intended effect of mixing these two elements. Perhaps the names can now only be associated with death and thus they are read in the prayer which, although it has no mention of death, Jews associate immediately with memorials for the dead. Maybe it is to remind the congregation that they are reciting *Kaddish* for the many who were murdered in those places and now have noone to recite the prayer on their behalf. Or maybe someone just thought it would be an effective and appropriate way to remember the millions who died in each one of these places, the names of which immediately conjure up images of emaciated bodies, piles of human flesh and the movie footage and photographic evidence very few have been spared from viewing. Whatever the purpose originally, it performs all these functions when recited or read by congregations.

Along with the additions for *Yom Hashoah,* the Conservative movement also address the Holocaust in their movement's Passover *Haggadah.* Therein are a number of alternative readings for insertion after the third cup of wine. The section is entitled "In Every Generation" and contains readings, ancient and modern, demonstrating the cyclical nature of the Jewish historical experience. The aim is to "enhance your own Exodus experience...so that the old may

become new and the new become holy."[318] Amongst the readings is a passage about the Warsaw ghetto uprising which occurred on *erev* Passover, 1943 and a poem by Bunim Heller about Passover in the Ghetto. Also included is the prayer composed in Bergen Belsen to be recited by those who were forced to eat *chametz* on Passover. Following are a number of readings, prayers which link the Seder night with the Holocaust and a call to remember the events of that time. Finally, a plea is made, just as it was in the Vilna Ghetto in 1942, to the souls who are missing to join in the seder: "We were all in Mitzrayim. We were all at Sinai. We were all in the hell that was the Holocaust. And we will all be present at the final redemption."[319] In these passages, the very connections with history and the repetitive nature of Jewish tragedy and time which were avoided in the prayer book, are blatantly displayed and stated. This is due to the different nature of the festival of Passover. Inherent in its meaning, symbolism and power is the notion that each Passover, Jews relive the Exodus experience. The Seder meal is a reenactment of that time in history; from slavery to freedom, from bondage to redemption. The traditional collapsing of time is integral to Passover, so much so that statements such as the one above about the Holocaust are very much at home and easily enmeshed within the theme. It is interesting however, that after going to such lengths to ensure that Passover was not tainted by the stain of the Holocaust, the Conservative movement chose to place it there anyway. They have done so successfully, without destroying or detracting from the festival itself. The fears held by those who opposed any Holocaust commemoration on this day have not been realized with this liturgical addition. Further, it should be remembered that it is an optional section of the *Haggadah* which also includes readings about Soviet Jewry and their plight.

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[318]Rachel Anne Rabinowitcz, Passover Haggadah, The Feast of Freedom, pg. 94
[319]ibid. pp. 94-96

Reconstructionist Jews address the Holocaust in the introduction to their prayerbook for Sabbath and Festival occasions. The Holocaust is listed as one of the events which has shaped Jewry of the twentieth century and spawned the need for a new prayerbook more reflective of the changed circumstances. Thus the new Reconstructionist prayerbook professes to include newly composed texts which reflect the reality of the state of Israel and the Holocaust.[320] However, there is no service or even reading designated for *Yom Hashoah*. There is one reading in the selection suggested for Passover titled "In Germany at the end of W.W.II." The text speaks of a group of survivors making themselves a new life after the Holocaust and forming as settlement: "Kibbutz Buchenwald."[321] This addresses the issue of the resettlement of survivors but is clearly not intended for use in remembrance of the Holocaust. There is no reason provided for the lack of material or even acknowledgment of the existence of *Yom Hashoah*. This is remarkable given that there are observances for the other modern commemorative holiday of *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

Reform Judaism made its first official declaration about the commemoration of *Yom Hashoah* in a 1977 resolution of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. There they stated: "We call for the commemoration of Yom Ha-Shoah annually on the 27th of Nisan. We urge our colleagues to develop activities within their congregations that help their congregants recall this period of history. We call upon our colleagues to observe the solemnity of this day by refraining from any activity not consistent with its spirit."[322] The resolution does not

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[320]David Teutsch (ed.), Kol Haneshama: Shabbat ve Haggim, introduction
[321]ibid. pg. 812
[322]C.C.A.R. Yearbook, volume 87, 1977, pg. 87

prescribe any specific practice for the occasion and in the spirit of Reform Judaism leaves that decision to individual congregations. They also cite as the motivation for such an observance the fact that without it, the memory of the tragedy will "fade into oblivion."[323] Thus the primary reason for the Reform community's commemoration is memory, and that will be reflected in the liturgical offerings emanating from this source.

Two years before the resolution of the CCAR encouraging Rabbis to observe *Yom Hashoah,* the new Reform Prayerbook, Gates of Prayer, was published. The book contained a service to commemorate *Yom Hashoah*, intended for use on 27th of Nissan. The companion to the prayerbook, published two years after the Gates of Prayer, explains the rationale for the service and its twinning with the service for Tisha be Av: "The Martyrdom of European Jewry under the Nazis has given a renewed impetus to the commemoration of Israel's suffering generally, and of this the culminating tragedy, in particular. Gradually, and by consensus, 27 Nisan, anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Rising, has come to be the main date for this commemoration and has been so proclaimed by the CCAR. Tisha be Av, as the trad. (sic.) anniversary of the destruction of *both* Temples, has for many centuries been a day of fasting and lamentation."[324]

The combination of these two services is very interesting. Tisha be Av is a day largely ignored by the Reform community. Few people fast and there is no observance akin to the Orthodox commemorations studied in Chapter Three. This is, in part, a result of the diminished emphasis placed by Reform Judaism on the Temple and sacrifice. This movement saw no need to pray for the

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[323] ibid.
[324] L. Hoffman (ed.) Gates of Understanding, pg. 246

restoration of the Temple and its sacrificial cult. Although they saw the destruction of the Temple as a tragic event, it was also the one which allowed Jewish worship to progress from animal sacrifice to the more refined level of synagogue prayer. The connection between the two days, stressed in the explanation, is that they are both responses to Jewish disaster and catastrophe. Maybe the editors hoped that this would draw some attention to the little known and practiced observance of Tisha be Av and inspire worship on that day. The contents of the service however are heavily weighted towards Holocaust memorial with very few readings and selections from traditional liturgy for *Tisha Be Av.*

The mistake in the guide about the 27th of Nissan being the date of the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising is a common error made by assuming that due to its proximity to the uprising it was in fact on that date. It is interesting to note that there is no mention that the date was decreed by the Israeli government as a day of mourning for the Holocaust victims. Clearly, this is of less importance to the editors of the prayerbook than the fact that the 27th of Nisan had been adopted by the people as the day upon which Holocaust memorials should be held.

The service opens with a reading about memory and the importance of remembering tragic and catastrophic events. Just as the Conservative readings focus on the imperative to remember, so do the Reform selections. In fact, a number of the readings are identical. The Gates of Prayer differs from Sim Shalom in that it includes mainly poetic-style material. There are no personal testimonies or recounting of events, rather the tone and form is more liturgical. The readings are embedded within the rubrics of daily worship and the option of

an evening or morning service is provided. Underneath the traditional blessings are placed, rather than translations, readings which combine the theme of the prayer with the theme of the day. There are a plethora of references to God and pleas to Him for deliverance from danger and forgiveness for the sins His people may have committed. It is very surprising to find statements supporting the theology of a God who brings disaster as punishment for sins in a Reform prayerbook. One of the many reasons for the decline in observance of Tisha be Av was that the day is so imbued with the sin-punishment paradigm, a principle with which Reform Jews took exception. When this is taken into consideration along with the fact that few, if any, Reform Jews would acknowledge a belief that the Holocaust was inflicted by God as punishment, it is all the more shocking to discover these passages in the Gates of Prayer. Equally as surprising is the inclusion of the *aneinu* prayer, discussed earlier. This prayer was traditionally inserted into the *Amidah* for fast days, including the ninth of Av. Its words have been adapted slightly but the meaning remains the same: a plea to God not to turn from His people at times of distress and sin. Similarly the prayer which follows, *Nachem*, is also part of the traditional liturgy of a fast day, Tisha be Av. Again, it reflects the theology that God has the power to redeem and rescue His people should He choose to so intervene. The tense of some of the words has been changed to "reflect the altered circumstances of our time in which our mourning, though intense, is tempered by the partial redemption we have experienced, especially through the creation of the State of Israel but also through the growth to maturity of American Jewry."[325] It is unlikely that the majority of Reform Jewish congregants will read the text of that prayer and see it as a celebration of Israel and the growth of American Jewry. Despite this, the

[325]ibid. pg. 248

motivation of the editors remains important: to connect disaster and destruction with the redemption of our time which is manifest in the flourishing of Jewry in the United States and Israel.

The Reform prayerbook includes an aspect which will be found repeated in many of the creative services considered later, namely the addition of a song in Yiddish. The Yiddish language and folk tunes were a central feature of the culture of European Jewry before the War. Through these songs and poems, people expressed their deepest emotions and forged a bond with their heritage and people that was difficult to break. There are numerous tales of tunes sung in the camps and ghettos which brought tears to the eyes of the inmates, such was their power to evoke memory and emotion. The Yiddish culture was a large part of each victim and it threatened to die with them in the camps. The inclusion of such a song in the service then serves a number of purposes. First, it can stir old memories buried deep within the souls of the survivors, images of their parents, their homes and their families. At the same time, singing these songs shows deference to the Yiddish culture and evidences a promise never to forget, and to preserve at least a little of what was lost. The song chosen here adds another dimension, for it was the song of the partisans, a song of hope and power, a song of struggle and humanity from within the depths of darkness. This song has been so widely sung and used that it now has the power to evoke feelings in a very broad spectrum of people. It is a song of courage and defiance and as such is one with which survivors and others alike can now identify and within its tune and words find hope and strength.

Another feature found in services almost across the spectrum is the inclusion of *Ani Ma'amin.* This prayer, based on Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith is

found in the Orthodox daily liturgy. It was reported that many went to their deaths during the Holocaust with the words of this prayer on their lips. Even at the hour of their deaths, the victims continued to have faith and hope in God. Similarly, the reading before the *shema* acknowledges that Jews throughout the ages who were killed for their religious beliefs spoke the words of the *shema* as they were dying. The Gates of Prayer, like the Orthodox elegies, stresses the faith of the victims and their devotion to God and their beliefs; even as they lost their lives, they did not lose their hope or their faith. The Reform text suggests that this declaration of faith links them to us and as with the generations past who also recited these words. This is also sung and presumably included because of the song version that was sung in the ghettos and the camps.

In 1983 the Reform Movement published The Gates of the Seasons, a guide for Reform Jews describing Reform observance of all the festivals in the Jewish calendar that aimed to "describe and recommend those *mitzvot* of the...Jewish calendar that might add depth and beauty to the lives of modern Jews."[326] The section about *Yom Hashoah* is introduced by describing the setting aside of the 27th of Nissan as a day of mourning by the Knesset and mentioning the CCAR resolution which called for its observance by the Reform community. The duty to set aside this day as one of remembrance by Reform Jews is described as a *mitzvah*. This term is traditionally used to refer to the commandments given by God to the Israelites. By designating the observance of *Yom Hashoah* as a *mitzvah*, the editors of the book have significantly elevated the importance of acknowledging and commemorating this occasion. Whether or not the committee has the power to allocate the status of *mitzvah* to a newly created

[326]Rabbi Peter Knobel, Gates of the Seasons, pg. ix

holy day is debatable, but it does serve to reflect the perceived importance of this day to Reform Jews. The reason for observance is that "anti-Semitism and Nazism did not die with the end of World War II. The *Sho-ah* is a constant reminder of the potential for evil which lies beneath the veneer of civilization. The seeds of the Holocaust must not be able to find fertile soil again."[327] Thus, the *mitzvah* arises from the importance of the need to remember and thereby ensure that evil, the likes of which was perpetrated during the Holocaust, can never be permitted to flourish again.

The obligation to observe *Yom Hashoah* may be fulfilled in a number of ways. One may attend memorial services, wherein it is important not just to remember the Jews, but also the righteous of the nations who assisted and rescued Jews at great danger to themselves. Another means of remembrance could be the lighting of a candle accompanied by reading passages from the Gates of Prayer in the "special prayers and readings" section titled "In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering." Therein are readings gleaned from numerous sources, both modern and biblical, connected by the common theme of Jewish suffering. There is one new piece penned by Chaim Stern, the editor, which has echoes of the Holocaust; the other passages are more broad references to disaster and calamity.[328] Along with these activities it is suggested that one may choose to engage in study or discussion of the events of the Holocaust and the means by which it can be prevented from occurring again. To further enhance the spirit of suffering inherent in the day, it is proposed that one eat a simple meal on the eve of *Yom Hashoah* as an "act of identity with those who were in the

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[327]ibid. pg. 103

[328]Chaim Stern Gates of Prayer, pg. 408; the general section of readings is pp. 407-411

concentration camps and slowly starved to death."[329] Finally, the importance of establishing a permanent memorial to the dead is emphasized and as such one should give *tzedakah* on this occasion to institutions which preserve their memory.[330]

The giving of these suggestions places a Reform twist upon the traditional methods of remembrance and averting disaster. We have already seen that when faced with tragedy, the Jews have traditionally prayed, given charity and fasted. Here, the Reform committee is suggesting that its congregants offer prayers, eat less food and give money to relevant institutions. However, the reasons provided for these actions are not the same as would be offered to a more traditional group. Although in both cases the desired result is the aversion of disaster, the Reform Jews believe it will occur, not as the result of God intervening when He sees their acts, but rather by human means. Reform Jews perform these acts as a memorial, to remember and then understand the Holocaust. It is from this understanding that prevention will be possible. Once human beings remember and understand the Holocaust, it can be avoided.

The suggested activities in the Gates of the Seasons are notable because they are observances which may be performed as part of a community but most may also be done as individuals or in small groups. Thus the act of remembrance on *Yom Hashoah* can be removed from the synagogue into the home. Rabbi Greenberg suggests that this is the direction into which Holocaust commemoration activities must move. He argues that so much of Jewish ritual and tradition occurs in the home and that it is "the secular sacred space, the

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[329]Peter Knobel, Gates of the Seasons, pg. 103
[330]ibid. pg. 103

primary victim of the destruction, the source and focus of life response."[331] Thus along with synagogue commemorations, he recommends ritual observances which may be conducted in the home. The recommendations in the Gates of the Seasons are a first step in that direction and an attempt to address that need.

Since the publication of these Reform offerings there has been a remarkable number of services created by individual synagogues and congregations for their own local use. This suggests that the service provided in the Gates of Prayer has failed to address the needs of Reform Jews. It has not managed to find a place within many of the synagogues and as such the congregants and Rabbis have turned to their own resources for alternative answers. There are remarkable similarities within these various creative services evidencing a common desires amongst Reform Jews in the United States. Much has changed in the Reform movement since the compilation of the Gates of Prayer, not the least of which is the fact, noted earlier, that the 70s was the time during which *Yom Hashoah* was slowly becoming recognized as a memorial day. The editors of the prayerbook were thus writing a service for a new holy day, relatively close to the event for which it was ordained, having no real precedents before them or experience of such services. Further, at that time, survivors were beginning to speak and to write, there was confusion and turmoil about the place of the day in Reform liturgy. In this environment, the editors had to compose an appropriate liturgy. In a sense, it was too early to fix a text but it could also not be ignored. Thus the committee did their best but unfortunately, their offering has not stood the test of time. Instead, congregations have felt empowered to create their own liturgies. This, in itself is an interesting phenomenon. So many Reform

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[331]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 326

congregations in the United States have created their own liturgies for *Yom Hashoah*.

For this thesis I have studied thirty-four creative services. Along with these I have looked at the work of Elizabeth Torop who compared an additional thirty services.[332] The services fall into three categories: those composed only for the observance of *Yom Hashoah* on the day of the 27 Nisan, those compiled for the Sabbath evening closest to the 27th of Nisan, and services designed for interfaith purposes. There are remarkable similarities among the texts for all these occasions so they will be considered as a unit despite the different occasions for which they were compiled.

Almost all the services consist of a mixture of song and readings, the readings, for the most part, being in the form of poetry and short excerpts from larger prose passages. A few of the services attempt more radical departures from the rubrics expected in prayer services. For example, one congregation chose one day, Yom Kippur, and introduced the service participants to various individuals who described what they were doing on that day during the Holocaust. Thus the voices of many different victims are heard as well as the opinions of those who were not in Europe and their lack of concern with the unfolding tragedy.[333] Texts in this form, however, are the exception and for the most part the structure is familiar and comfortable. The services are mostly Xeroxed sheets and contain images and pictures. This is a feature unique to Holocaust liturgies. Many of the pictures are grotesque, shocking and disturbing. In combination with the images

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[332]Elizabeth W. Torop, Individual Creative Liturgies Within the Reform Movement, 1965-1985
[333]Temple Beth Elohim, Wellsley, MA, "Yom Hashoah Service"

evoked by the texts of these services, the pictures enhance and strengthen the emotional response to the worship experience.[334]

All the services have a place for the lighting of candles, usually at the beginning of the service. Most times, the congregation lights six candles, each representing one million victims. Often there is a reading accompanying the lighting of each candle, designating it in remembrance of a more specific group of victims; children, parents, political prisoners, righteous gentiles. This ritual seems to resonate with people whether they be Jewish or Christian. For the Jewish community, the lighting of candles in memorium is an ancient and familiar custom, so this act extends the ritual from individuals to groups of people. Further, it is a visible and tangible means of acknowledging reverence, sorrow and the vast numbers involved in the slaughter. It has been suggested that the universality of this practice could lead to the creation of a six-branched menora specifically for use on this occasion, that families will light it in their homes and synagogues and churches light at communal commemorations. As yet, no such menora has been adopted.[335]

Another almost universal practice is the use of silence. This is not usually a feature of Reform liturgy but it seems eminently appropriate for this occasion. Often the congregants are asked to enter the dimmed sanctuary in silence, thus creating a somber, solemn mood. A period of silence then occurs during the service and is usually preceded by a reading which suggests that sometimes silence can be the only response to a catastrophe of this enormity. Following the

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[334]For an example see, Bet Shalom Synagogue, Hopkins, MN. "Service for Yom Hashoah"

[335]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 343-344, see there discussion of the symbolism of the menora and the appropriateness for Holocaust memorial, also a discussion of the project by Yad Vashem to commission such a menora and its subsequent failure.

silence however, the other side is always presented, namely, that silence, although sometimes the only response, is not always the correct one. If there had not been a conspiracy of silence during the Holocaust, it might have been averted. As such, to ensure it can never happen again, congregants are called upon to remember the Holocaust, to learn from it and then to speak out. Such a message was at the heart of the CCAR resolution about Yom Hashoah, and it still forms the basis of most Holocaust services. The message is that human beings caused the Holocaust, and human beings can prevent it from being repeated, if they learn from what came before. A related feature found in many of the Christian and interfaith services and found less in the ones purely for Jewish congregations, is the statement by Pastor Martin Niemoeller. He spent a period in a concentration camp and spoke these now famous lines: "First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out- because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out -because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out-because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out-because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me- and there was no-one left to speak out for me."[336] As is to be expected, the silence and complicity of the world and the Church are much more central themes in the Christian services and the interfaith ones than is the case in the Jewish texts. However, the majority of the liturgies make some mention of the responsibility borne by the world community. Again the emphasis in all these liturgies is more on human responsibility than on God.

[336]Littell and Gutman, Liturgies on the Holocaust, pg. 190

However, God does not escape unscathed and there are various references to His absence, hiddenness and responsibility scattered throughout the services. One of the most common passages used in this context is the powerful and poignant tale told by Elie Wiesel of the public hanging of three members of the camp. One was a young boy who was not heavy enough to be killed instantly by his weight pulling on the rope. As such he dangled on the end of a rope, writhing in pain whilst the prisoners were forced to file past. When one asked "where is God?" Wiesel replied "Hanging there on the gallows." This reading is tragic, horrific and incredibly powerful. It provides one answer to the question of where God was, and that reply is disturbing and shocking. However, it is a legitimate feeling of many individuals in the congregation and the inclusion of readings such as this one give voice and hence credence to such opinions.

Alongside these passages which question God are readings which describe the horror and the grotesque images found in the Holocaust. There is no shying away from the reality of time in the camps and ghettos. Testimonies and descriptions of the brutality are included to ensure that the enormity of the Holocaust is felt by the congregation. There is no attempt to gloss over the nature of life and death in those times. A common reading in this regard is the poem by Nellie Sachs, "O the Chimneys."

The services also confront the fact that the world is no longer the same. The Holocaust was a seminal event in that it changed the world and what humans believed was possible forever. Further, this fact inevitably changes the relationship between God and His people. A number of readings convey this message but none more clearly than the oft-used poem by Ruth Brin which parallels the events at Sinai with the events at Auschwitz. The thrust of the

poem is that in Auschwitz a new covenant was enacted between God and the Jewish people and as such nothing can be the same again; " At Sinai we heard the revelation of God who spoke to Moses and us. At Auschwitz we seek the revelation of God who is silent and hidden."[337] But the message is still one of hope, for the poem concludes with the reaffirmation of God and the repetition of the *Shema*.

Despite these readings and the foray into the darkness, the overwhelming message of all these services is one of faith and hope. The act of remembrance reinforces the promise made to the victims that the world will never be allowed to forget, and never again be allowed to have such a tragedy befall any people. The emphasis is on the triumph of the human spirit. If those who suffered so much can live and die with faith and hope, then the least the worshipper can do is struggle to match that optimism, despite it all. Even though the world has changed forever, the response must be one of faith and trust in humanity to do good. If the victims had this attitude, then the worshipper should match it. Thus into the chaos and trauma is brought courage and empowerment. There is something which can be done, there is no need to despair; although the world has changed, human beings still have the power to bring good and to impose order and hope.[338]

One of the most prevalent means of demonstrating that faith and hope is with a reading before the *shema* which focuses on the faith of those who died in the Holocaust and before with the words of this prayer on their lips. They were heroes for this act, and by reciting the *shema* the worshipper acknowledges that

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[337]Ruth Brin Harvest, in Bet Shalom, Hopkins MN. "Service for Yom Hashoah." pg. 4
[338]Elizabeth W. Torop, Individual Creative Liturgies Within the Reform Movement, pp. 273-295

heroism and is connected to those who came before. Similarly, there are a number of poems, a combination of which appear in all the services, conveying that same message. Many were composed by children, and are therefore simple yet poignant. They contain such power because children who should not even know such evil exists in the world, were forced to witness what nobody should bear. They did so, and retained hope, courage and faith in the future and in humanity. The words of these children cross all boundaries and denominations, and their message is the one central to the aim of the services. The most common are "The Butterfly," Alena Synkova's, "I'd like to go away alone," Hana Senesh's "Yesh Kochavim" and "Ashrei Hagafrur," Anne Frank, especially the statement about her belief that people are good at heart, the anonymous statement from the cellar wall in Cologne, "I believe in the sun," and the anonymous poems by children in Tereizen, "On a purple sun-shot evening" and "Birdsong." A portion of this selection of poems appears in almost all of the services. Their message is one of hope and trust in humanity and in God.

The spirit of hope, faith and trust is further supplemented by the almost universal inclusion of three songs: "Eli Eli," "The Partisan Hymn" and "Ani Ma'amin." Each of these tunes has its own association with the Holocaust. The Partisan song is a reminder of the power and heroism of all those who stood to fight, whether with arms or their undiminished faith and observance of ritual. "Ani Ma'amin," has already been discussed and "Eli Eli" has the dual meaning of being a poem composed by a resistance fighter, hence evoking images of opposition to the enemy, and a prayer to God for the simple things to continue. Again, the overarching message is of faith and hope.

In this spirit is the common conclusion of the services with the singing of *Hatikvah*, the Israeli national anthem. This is usually the only mention of Israel in the context of these liturgies. This is probably because of the need to ensure that Israel is in no way perceived as a reward for the horror of the Holocaust. The formation of the state of Israel is however a sign for the future and a reason to hope and believe again. After the darkness the light did dawn, there is strength in the people who rose from the ashes to live once more in their own land. This is reason to go on and to remember, it is not a prize or compensation, it is the realization of dreams. Thus, the secular anthem has become a symbol for so much more and hence finds its place at the end of these liturgies. It causes the congregants to look forward to the future, to Yom Ha'atzmaut, a week away, and to the future of the people Israel.

Finally, the services all contain the *kaddish*, be they Jewish or interfaith liturgies. Many of them intersperse the names of the camps within the prayer. Again, it is unclear what this is to achieve. Perhaps it is a reminder that one can no longer praise God and pray the words of this memorial prayer without thinking of the camps, the hatred and destruction and questioning: "where was God?" *El maleh Rachamim* is also featured in many of the liturgies, thereby providing the memorial prayer for those who had nobody to recite it for them. In a sense, the services serve as funerals for the dead who had no proper burial. The poetry and testimony comprises the eulogy and the act of remembrance their grave marker.

Alongside the creation of liturgical material to be used as part of a regular synagogue service for the Sabbath or weekdays have been a number of more radical attempts to create evening services which stand alone as specifically for

Holocaust memorial. Amongst this group are a number of scrolls penned by different authors for use on *Yom Hashoah*. They reasoned that five other Jewish festival occasions tell the story of certain historical events by the recitation of a *megillah*. Such a re-telling of the Holocaust story could find legitimacy and a place within the synagogue service and thus be preserved in the traditions thereof. Further they are creating a new holy document, such was the enormity of this tragedy that it cannot be subsumed within other texts like Lamentations, or as has been suggested, also Job; this event requires a new holy document.[339]

One of the first offerings was written by Albert Friedlander and modeled on the scroll of Lamentations. This connection was significant, for it is Lamentations which is read on *Tisha be Av*, to commemorate all the other historical Jewish tragedies. By modeling his scroll on the Lamentations text, he is making a strong statement about its inapplicability to the Holocaust. This is a tragedy unlike any other and as such it needs its own scroll, its own lament. However, such was the power of the Lamentations text that there is not a complete departure therefrom. That text has served as the embodiment of Jewish laments for centuries so cannot be wholly discarded. Thus Friedlander's scroll is shaped upon that text but is also original and thus able to reflect the new reality of the post- Holocaust world. As the text was written by an English Rabbi it has found its broadest acceptance and use in that country.[340]

The *Megillat Hashoah* has the same structure as the book of Lamentations. It has five chapters, each of which tells a story without the presence of a narrative

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[339]for discussion of the use of Job for Yom Hashoah, see Arthur Waskow, "What is the Sacred Text for Yom Hashoah?" Shema, April 15th, 1994

[340]I. Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 346

voice. Just like the texts in Sim Shalom, the powerful stories stand alone and can of themselves evoke strong emotional responses in the congregants.

A second effort to create a *megillah* was undertaken by Abba Kovner in his scroll *Megillat Ha-edut*. This work was written and partially edited by the author before his death. He did not specify the manner in which the text was to be used but Rabbi Greenberg refers to it as a "liturgical masterpiece."[341] However the text is extremely long and as such could not be read during a synagogue commemoration of *Yom Hashoah*. It has been suggested that perhaps he intended that passages be read during services and the text studied as part of an all-night vigil of study, or as part of a program of study during the year.[342]

Like the authors of the midrash and many of the older Jewish texts, Kovner was "so suffused with the texts, language and models of the tradition that he was able to evoke past paradigms of liturgy and memory in the process of writing a chronicle of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history."[343]This skill is absent from many of the authors of *Yom Hashoah* texts and results in a weakness in the documents they produce.

Yet another scroll, The Six Days of Destruction, was penned by Elie Wiesel and Albert Freidlander. As was the case with the Orthodox elegies, the choice of author for this service was of fundamental importance. Elie Wiesel, as survivor and author, has acquired for himself a more elevated status than almost any other Holocaust survivor. He is vocal about the Holocaust and injustice and his

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[341]ibid. pg. 347
[342]ibid.
[343]ibid.

words have an added legitimacy and credibility derived from the mere fact that he is a survivor. He writes in the presence of the souls of the dead, they are in his heart, his memory, and they speak through him. He is the Jeremiah of our age, witness to the tragedy, the voice from the darkness offering chastisement, courage and in the end, hope.[344] In the forward the question is asked "Whom could we approach who could take on the awesome role of neo-biblical authorship? The answer, obviously, was Elie Wiesel."[345] Further, the choice of Elie Wiesel was sure to give the finished product exposure and endorsement amongst the non-Jewish communities as well as within some of the more modern Orthodox groups. Wiesel is so entwined with the Holocaust that he has become the symbol thereof amongst so many broad-ranging communities that his authorship was fundamental to the text's acceptance. Albert Friedlander is a well known and respected British Reform Rabbi about whom it was written, "Just as obvious was the selection of Albert Friedlander to prepare the liturgy with as full an understanding of the subject matter as is humanly possible and with a sensitivity of which he is so uniquely possessed."[346] Unfortunately, the choice of a Reform Rabbi for the second part of the project as well as the fact that the book was commissioned by the Reform movement, necessarily reduces much of the credibility lent by Wiesel among the Orthodox denominations. As such, the document, however good, could not be used and accepted universally. Rabbi Greenberg raises the further issue about whether any text with names attached can or should become the universal Holocaust liturgy. He cautions that once names and movements are connected to a document of this nature, some of its power is lost to those who object to that person or group.[347]

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[344]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 361
[345]Elie Wiesel and Albert Friedlander, The Six Days of Destruction, pg. 2
[346]ibid.
[347]Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pg. 358

The project began as an adjunct to the publication of a book of the five scrolls, each read on a different Jewish festival occasion. It was proposed that a sixth scroll be written for use on *Yom Hashoah*. Elie Wiesel was commissioned. However, after some consideration it was realized that it was not appropriate to include this new scroll along with the others that had formed an historical unit. Further, the creation of a separate scroll for the Holocaust would make it more accessible to non Jewish audiences. Then it was proposed that services be included as part of the book such that a unit of worship was created for use in both synagogue or church. The scroll would cross the religious boundaries and two services would be included, one for Jewish worship, and one which could be adapted to the church setting. As a result of these changes, the book received the endorsement of such high church officials as Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the late Archbishop of Chicago, and Rev. Dr. William G. Rusch, the Executive Director, Office of Ecumenical Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Both men provide praise of and support for the project in the forewards and stress the relevance and importance of this day in Christian traditions.[348]

The *megillah* is aptly named The Six Days of Destruction for its text describes six days which mirrored the six days of creation. There are always opposites in constant tension and the same is true of the creation, just as there was creation, there was its opposite, destruction, waiting in the wings, coming to fruition with the events of the Holocaust. The scroll describes six events, six windows into the world of the Holocaust. Just as the six days of creation represent all, these

[348]The discussion of the phenomenon of Christian services on Yom Hashoah will be discussed later in the chapter.

six individual stories represent six million. That figure is too great for the mind to grasp and also too easy for in its enormity is anonymity. One does not think of six million as mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, as our own loved ones; it necessarily becomes an amorphous mass of nameless, faceless, tangled arms and legs united in death. The scroll puts faces on those bodies, gives names to the mass of limbs and thus they become human, they are transformed into people, and then the congregation can remember and mourn.

Each day of destruction is introduced with a quote from that day of creation. It is then twisted into its perverted, destructive form found in the Holocaust. The passages end in the form of prayer, sometimes ironic other times pleading, at all times poignant. Then we are taken into the lives of six groups of people and are constantly reminded that each one represents many. And we follow the destruction as the noose closes around the neck of the Jewish people, the reader is taken in ever closing circles to the final horrific day.

Thus the *megillah* transports the congregation down the paths to death through the stories of individuals who represent communities and generations of Jews. The text is difficult and is probably not as effective read aloud in congregations but to be studied and learned its passion and emotion are overwhelmingly powerful. It is unclear how widespread is the use of the scroll, but it would seem it is used very sparsely, even amongst Reform communities. The language of the text is not easy and deserves reading on more than one occasion to uncover the layers of meaning. This is its strength and its weakness. It can be tolerated for many years in a row, each time finding something new in the text but at the same time, for congregational, liturgical use, it may be too complicated.

The liturgies at the back of the *megillah* were intended to supplement its reading and provide the liturgical framework. The author suggests that once a person has read the scroll and been taken to the icy depths of evil one needs to be warmed by the comfortable fire of traditional prayers and worship. For this reason there are two services, one for Jews and one intended for interfaith purposes, because one needs to address God in one's own language and within the familiar.[349] There is even a word to those who can no longer pray, to take up the scroll and read it as a book of memory, a secular text to study and learn, and most importantly, to remember. The text is not liturgy alone and in that sense this enterprise is like the Memorbucher of the Crusader period.[350]

The Jewish service begins with a feature found in many services; the creation of a somber mood. The lights are to be dimmed and a candelabra placed at the front of the room. Six candles are lit and the hymn *Ani Ma'amin* is being sung. Then a reading about silence and six minutes of quiet wherein it is suggested congregants read one or all of the six days of destruction. A long passage dealing with memory, silence and the need to speak follows. Then the service continues with poetry by various authors about the Holocaust, antiphonal readings searching for meaning and understanding, interspersed with Yiddish songs. The service ends with the chanting of *El Malei rachamim* and recitation of *kaddish*.[351] The service language is mainly poetic and mostly written in English. It confronts the difficult questions and attempts to provide a picture of the extent of the devastation, loss and suffering.

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[349]Elie Wiesel, The Six Days of Destruction, pg. 68
[350]ibid. pg. 69
[351]the text of the interfaith service will be considered in that section.

One of the most daring of the creative services is Night Words, written by David Roskies when he was 23 years old. The service was published by B'nai Brith but has not found wide acceptance largely due to its length, but also its complexity and daring. The service requires a 'cast' of over thirty people who both participate and read the text. There is a significant amount of movement and ritual involved in the service and the congregation does not sit passive through the event. Many of the incorporated rituals are designed to make the participants feel uncomfortable and awkward. They take off their shoes which are then piled in the center of a darkened synagogue wherein music is playing and congregants instructed to be silent. Later in the service numbers are written on the arms of various participants, clothing is torn and the ritual of *chalitzah* is appropriated and twisted. In this service Roskies has written in the classic style of the authors of the midrash. He has drawn from a multitude of sources ranging from Biblical and midrashic to philosophy and theology. He interweaves the texts in a brilliant fashion such that a description of the Crusader riots is applied to the Holocaust, the *Akeda* forms part of the story of a nurse in the *Einsatzgruppen* and the building of the tabernacle is juxtaposed with the construction of scaffolding in Auschwitz. Interspersed is a good balance of Yiddish songs and readings with transliteration for those who can not read the Yiddish text.[352] There is great power in a service such as this, a service which is both a performance and an experience. However, that power is diminished over time. The recitation of this text could not be an annual event and retain its brilliance and potency and therein lies the service's failure. However, such a creative liturgical response is unique to the Holocaust amongst all the Jewish commemorative liturgies.

[352]David Roskies, Night Words

Another published service comes from Adam Fisher. His service is different from the others in the amount of choice provided to the congregation. He begins his book with a number of ritual activities which may be used to enhance a service experience or to offer a tribute and memorial in the home. For example, he suggests lighting candles, giving tzedakah, reciting the names of individuals who died in an all-night vigil of memory, wearing black ribbons or placing yellow tulips, which remember the Dutch who were the only ones to actively help the Jews and wear the yellow star forced upon the Jews. The first section of his book contains a Reform morning and evening service. The middle section contains a wide selection of readings under numerous topic headings which progress in chronological order from life before the war through the ghetto, resistance, abandonment by the world, righteous gentiles, liberation and life after the war. Further, he has not shied away from the areas of difficulty by including a section of readings about implications for our time including God, Jewish continuity and the task of humanity. The final section contains the concluding blessings. Fisher then provides different options for using this multifaceted text. He suggests either reading the service and adding a selection of readings, combining the service with a speaker and not using the reading selections, using the readings alone as a tool for study and discussion or using a different service and adding the readings. Clearly, Fisher is trying to create a liturgy with the most possible options and hence give it the widest circulation. It seems, unlike any previous time or holy day, that this one is developing into an ever changing liturgy. No one text has managed to hold the interest of people so perhaps this is the answer, a liturgy which is both fixed and flexible, has a basis in tradition with non-traditional elements. It combines both ritual alternatives and text options and remarkably does so with a presentation which is simple and easy to use. He has further managed to include readings and texts which cover

a very broad base of both authors and meaning, poetry, personal accounts and song. Thus the service is adaptable for each community, yet has an element of fixidity which may enable the work to become entrenched in people's hearts and minds, and thus outlast the other offerings so far discussed.

The Israeli Reform movement, in its recently published prayerbook, *Ha Avodah Shebalev,* presents a service for *Yom Hashoah* placed amongst the festival services. It appears in its calendrical position, after *Purim* and before *Yom Ha'zikaron*. The Israelis have retained the use of the term *Hag'vurah* in the title, thus emphasizing the continued importance of heroism in the Israeli psyche. The service begins with the Deuteronomy passage beseeching the Israelites to remember Amalek, the traditional enemy of the Jewish people. Thus they connect this most recent calamity with the archetype of evil in tradition and hence all previous disasters and catastrophes. Much of the service is poetry by Yizchak Shlav, (*Moreh)*, Abraham Shlonsky,(*Haneder)* and David Polish, (*Techiyat Hameitim)*. They also include the partisan song and *El maleh rachamim*. The most interesting feature of the Israeli service is that along with the *gevurah* in the title is a passage by Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the resistance and hero of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. This, combined with the inclusion of Ezekiel's passage about the resurrection of dry bones, serve to emphasize heroism and the formation of the State of Israel. These themes have a much greater significance in Israel, as earlier discussed, than they do in the Diaspora communities and as such the inclusion of these texts is both logical and necessary for a meaningful liturgy in that community.

Along with religious observance has come the new phenomena of secular memorials to the victims of the Holocaust. As already mentioned, the United

States Congress has enacted legislation decreeing an official government observance on the 27th of Nisan. Individual states have followed suit and many now conduct annual Holocaust observances.[353] The United States Army also holds a memorial ceremony.[354] The federal government's ceremonies were originally held in the White House and then later, in the Capitol Hill rotunda. Now they are commemorated in the new Holocaust Museum. Thus services have been moved out of the synagogue and a new sacred space has been created inside a memorial museum.

When the government came to decide upon an appropriate service to commemorate the Holocaust they found it was a difficult undertaking. Hence, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council was formed to both define and promote the official observance of the 27th of Nissan. The council comprises fifty-five citizens appointed by the President, five senators and five members of the House of Representatives. Their mission is to promote awareness of the need for commemorative activities on that day and to provide materials for use in such memorials. The stated reasons for such activity are to recall the victims and events of the Holocaust and thereby prevent it from happening again.[355] Each year the council publishes a book, Days of Remembrance, offering press releases, sample services, readings, suggested activities for observance and commemoration. Each of the books contains the text of the previous years' federal commemoration service and it is upon these that we will focus our analysis.

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[353]For some liturgies from state observances see, Littell and Gutman, Liturgies on the Holocaust, Conneticut, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina.

[354]ibid.

[355]Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of the Holocaust, pg. 44 and Days of Remembrance, US Holocaust Memorial Council, 1989-1993

Although the services are rhetorically secular, they have distinct religious overtones, and much of the material found in the creative liturgies of the Reform Movement and interfaith texts discussed above also forms the basis for these services. They all have the standard structure we expect after perusing the creative liturgies. All contain a candle lighting ceremony, the recitation of *El Maleh Rachamim* and *Kaddish*, the singing of the Partisan song, *Ani Ma'amin, Es Brent* and in some services an additional Yiddish tune. Interspersed amongst these elements are a number of speakers as well as an invocation and benediction within which the service is framed. The speakers range in background and religion but all have in common some experience of the Holocaust. The themes of the speeches are remarkably consistent. All stress the importance of and obligation to remember the events of the Holocaust so that they can never happen again. There is discussion of the world's failure to act to stop the Holocaust and the complicity of all who remained silent or refused to believe the reports. Finally, the role of the United States is in some way addressed, with extra focus upon the bravery of the army officers who liberated the camps and the horrific images they encountered when they entered the concentration camps. Oft- times there is mention of a current world situation in which people are being persecuted and oppressed, and the call to action in these instances being heard from the Holocaust. There is a Presidential address and the presentation of the Eisenhower Liberation medal, in honor of the officer and troops who eventually led the Jews out of the camps. The first few recipients were military figures associated directly with the liberators, but later the scope was broadened and now includes those who rescued Jews and even the Swiss Jew who tried to alert the world to the atrocities. Alongside these elements there is also a military/political touch to the service with the

presentation of division flags, the national anthem, presentation of the guard and recessional.[356]

The US government service is a well balanced blend of the secular and religious, chastisement and praise, memorial and call to action. There is an appropriate amount of Hebrew and Yiddish as well as English passages. The question remains, however, about the appropriateness of a government body reciting the traditional prayers for the dead, or the blending of these very religious elements with such a secular event. The Holocaust is perceived as an event unique in Jewish history for so many reasons, one of which is the fact that it has very relevant and important lessons to teach the world. All of Western civilization was affected by the events of that time. When we mourn the victims we also mourn the loss of innocence of those who believed in progress and the new age. The Holocaust shattered so many assumptions about humanity, ethics, good and evil. As such, it is not just a Jewish event, although it must remain predominantly that. These services recognize the stake held by the world in the Holocaust whilst maintaining that it is pre-eminently a Jewish tragedy. They also do not slip into the trap of being an occasion for self-congratulation on the part of the United States. Rather, they are moving and balanced tributes and memorials to the victims. Since the creation of these services, many states and even the armed forces have followed suit and held their own memorial services. The Department of Defense has its own committee to plan the commemoration which is very similar to the government service.[357]

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[356]US Holocaust Memorial Council, Days of Remembrance, services, 1989-1993
[357]Littell and Gutman, Liturgies on the Holocaust, pg. 98

The Israeli government memorial is also held on the grounds of a museum, *Yad Vashem*. The service there is necessarily more religious but contains many of the same elements as seen in the United States. One major difference is the inclusion of Psalm 79 which has traces of the sin-punishment paradigm, all but absent in most *Yom Hashoah* liturgies. Other than that, the service remains predictable: speeches from survivors, the president and public officials, the Partisan song, *Ani Ma'amin, Kaddish, Eli Eli, Hatikvah* and the lighting of six memorial torches.[358] This seems to be the new paradigm of the civil religious commemorative service for the 27th Nissan on both sides of the ocean, combining all the elements into a short yet powerful and meaningful ceremony. There is surprisingly little emphasis placed upon the military victory, so important in the early days of *Yom Hashoah* in Israel. This is a result of the changing self-definition in Israel. Today, it is possible to see the heroism in those who merely survived, those who clung to their religion and their life, for Israelis know what that is like. Lebanon and the Gulf War have demonstrated to Israelis the other side of military might and power, and now it does not need to be so prominent.

During the Holocaust a new definition of heroism and resistance was created. No longer could Jewish communities define themselves and their actions as they had in the past. Now they faced a new and terrible enemy, one possessed of greater evil and hatred than they ever dreamed was possible. The actions of this enemy shattered many of the previously held thoughts and notions of good and evil, of God and covenant. Faced with this challenge, many Jews responded by clinging to their traditions and practices. They tried to retain as much of their ritual observance as they could. In this time, it was that which was defined as

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[358]Joel Sisenwine, The Ritualization of Yom Hashoah, pp. 39-40

heroic, this was resistance and this was how they sanctified the name of God. The texts and rituals emphasize the faith and hope possessed by the victims, that even in the face of the greatest monster, they retained their strength and courage. So was a new definition of sanctification formed, no longer was the taking of one's life the path to God as it was during the Crusades; rather one was called to preserve life and inject that life with as much humanity as possible. Thus was ritual maintained and given new meaning and significance.

After the war it fell to the Israeli government to mandate a date for the commemoration of the horrors of Europe under the Nazi regime. There was much debate before an appropriate occasion was agreed upon, that being the 27th of Nissan. The date remains controversial amongst some groups but it has been, on the whole, roundly adopted by both religious and secular communities, in Israel and overseas. As time passes *Yom Hashoah* becomes more widely observed and there are calls for the creation of an appropriate liturgy. Many have been created but as yet no single text has receive universal endorsement, and it is not likely to occur for many years to come. Different groups have very different concerns arising from the Holocaust. The issues conceived of as important by the Christian communities will necessarily be different from those of the Orthodox Jewish groups. As a result, each one needs their liturgy to give them something tailored to their specific circumstance. These needs are often incompatible and cannot be compromised. Thus it will be impossible, even amongst the Jewish community to create a single liturgical response.

Further, Holocaust liturgies, unlike those in response to the other catastrophes which have befallen the Jewish people, are still in a state of flux. There are some elements which have become standard fare for any service more by way

of accident than careful thought. Certain passages and verses have resonated with the worshipping communities across denominational and religious lines. These songs, poems and readings are likely to be features of any universal service. Candle lighting seems to be the only ritual element which has captured the imagination of the congregations. Perhaps as time passes, and there is less opportunity for eyewitness testimony, more rituals will be adopted in order to retain the power, imagery and depth of emotion currently able to be drawn from the survivors themselves.

There is reluctance on the part of congregations to depart too far from the traditional rubrics and pattern of the prayer service and as a result the more adventurous and creative services have not been widely adopted. This is a result of the fact that the mere confrontation with the Holocaust is jarring enough. Any encounter with this event threatens to shake the foundations of every person's beliefs and values. What seemed certain is no more after a meeting with the Holocaust. Thus the grounding in the traditional structure of the service is fundamental. Too many things cannot be disrupted at once, so the safety and familiarity of at least the structure of the service is important. Knowing what will come next prevents too great an assault on the mind.

There is a notable absence of the sin-punishment paradigm of earlier catastrophes as well as the incorporation of the events into the traditional stories and tales. Rarely do we find mention of Isaac and Abraham or any of the other heroes of tradition. If there is reference made to the tradition, more often than not it is done in order to pervert the text, such as the attack on the very creation of the world found in The Six Days of Destruction. The Holocaust is deemed a unique event and thus it requires a unique and different liturgical response.

As we have seen, many have attempted to create a meaningful liturgical unit for worship and memorial of these events. As yet consensus has not been reached and each community is responding in their own way. Perhaps, as time gives us more distance from the events, this generation of survivors disappears, there will be a more unified and standard text. That is not yet possible, for every day new works are being compiled, more is being discovered and the world is still grappling with the meaning of the Holocaust. Until there is a greater grasp upon the meaning, there cannot be one service to meet the needs of most people and even then different communities will have still have variant needs. Thus there will probably continue to be a multitude of responses and a multitude of liturgical reflections thereof exhorting us to remember and cry out, "Never again."

CONCLUSION

When disaster strikes a community of people its effects can be devastating both in terms of the loss of human life and the challenge to the community's world-view and values. In the Jewish community, tragedy strikes at the very heart of many fast-held notions about God, the Jewish people and their relationship. The Jewish God is involved in every aspect of the workings of the world, He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Thus whenever a catastrophe occurs, at the very least, God has knowledge of it, and, at the very worst, God is the direct cause of the suffering and loss. This scenario becomes even more threatening when the tragedy strikes only the Jewish people, and further, that they are the target precisely because they are Jewish. God and Israel have a covenant, one of the basic tenets of which is that God will protect and assist His chosen people to become a great nation and powerful in the world. So many of the assumptions which accompany this promise are seemingly destroyed when a tragedy strikes the Jewish people. The covenant is called into question, placed in jeopardy, perhaps broken and shattered beyond repair. The Jews become angry with the God who caused such tragedy or allowed it to happen, or worse, was powerless to stop it. They could lose hope, faith and all sense of control and purpose. The world which was once ordered and made sense is thrown into chaos and it seems there are no rules, no meaning and no means by which the people can affect their own destinies.

However, from the depths of despair, with people feeling fear, hatred, sorrow, grief, anger and a multitude of other emotions, the Jewish community seems to always arise and go on. They don't give up on their faith, they don't give up hope, they wrest meaning from what appears meaningless, they impose order

on the chaos and they pluck hope from the ashes of despair. One of the ways the Jewish people are able to do this is with the deft use of ritual and liturgy. Through these means they are able to find hope and go on.

There are four phases by which disaster is dealt with ritually and liturgically. The first is the attempt to avert the tragedy. Steps may be taken to avoid the impact of an impending disaster or they may be a part of the liturgical cycle which serves to keep the world functioning in the appropriate manner. Judaism has many mechanisms by which the natural world is maintained. Through the performance of the appropriate rituals and the recitation of the correct prayers, at their allotted times, the people assist nature to behave in its normal manner, in the way the people have come to expect. Chapter One showed that the ceremonies for such occasions were heavily imbued with magical ritual elements wherein the people performed on the earth the rites they hoped would be duplicated in the heavens, providing rain in its season. What occurred in the earthly realms was believed to affect the heavens and determine the success or failure of any given year. Of course God was integrally involved in this process and it was His favor which could make the difference between a good year and a bad one.

The other aspect involves averting impending catastrophe. In all the instances of tragedy considered by this thesis, there was a warning of some kind that disaster was looming on the horizon. In some cases, such as the natural disasters, this warning could take a number of months and thus involved a deterrent ritual of great complexity and detail. Others however, like the Crusades and the Holocaust, did not provide such a lengthy period of forewarning, or the vision to perceive how great the disasters would eventually grow. Despite this

difference there was found a surprising uniformity in the means by which these communities, separated by so much time, sought to deter their enemy and deflect the blows.

Fasting and repentance were the two elements which were demonstrated by all four communities. When the disaster was imminent it was important that the people felt that they could take some control of the situation, somehow affect their own fate and avert the approaching tragedy. Both these responses are based on the underlying assumption that the disaster to come was somehow able to be affected by God. Either He was the cause of the trouble and hence able to put a halt to it, or He would be alerted by the people's pleas to their plight and He would intervene to halt the process. The fasting was a means by which they could demonstrate to God their trust and devotion, thereby justifying His intervention. By depriving themselves of food the Jews sent a wordless scream to God that something terrible was looming on the horizon and that they were prepared to place their fate in His hands. They fasted to place themselves one step closer to their impending death so that they might avert that eventuality. It was believed that God could not turn from this plea and He would protect His people.

To further cement the favor of God the people combined their fasting with prayer, focusing especially on repentance. This act accomplished a number of things at the same time. First and most importantly, it provided a reason for the tragedy. If they had sinned against their God, then of course a punishment would be sent in order to provide them with a warning that they were straying too far from the Divine will. Thus they had angered their God by their behavior. Such provocation warranted a tragedy from the heavens. If this is the case, God

remains a just, honorable and kind deity who only threatened disaster when He was confronted with the most horrible of sins and saw no other choice. Further, if the tragedy had its source in God, then He could be persuaded to turn from His decree and save His people. There was historical precedent for such behavior on the part of God and many of the rituals and prayers performed by the people reminded Him of this fact. If the crisis was envisaged in these terms then it also did not threaten the covenantal relationship between the Jews and their God. The disaster and response were, then, all part of the ordinary workings of the universe; they were predictable and more importantly, controllable. Thus the people satisfied the very strong desire when faced with adversity, to act. They were able to do something and by so doing, hopefully affect their destiny for the better. They also invoked the names and merit of their ancestors to intercede on their behalf and so maximize their chances of success with God.

Unfortunately, in all the cases this thesis studied, such drastic measures did not manage to halt the destruction and terror inflicted by the enemies of nature and human beings. This led to the introduction of the second stage of ritual and liturgical reaction and these were the responses elicited in the midst of the crisis itself. In this section we found a number of similar reactions but also many divergent ones, based in no small account upon the nature of the enemy and tragedy and the surrounding cultural norms. In each case the stakes were the same: Judaism, the covenant and the relationship between the people and their God were threatened. The destruction of the two Temples threatened the very foundation of their religious beliefs, and destroyed the sacrificial structure of communication between Israel and God. In the Crusader period, the threat came in the form of the possible triumph of the Christian religious system and the

consequent discovery that the Christian claims that the covenant with the Jews was superseded and God had abandoned them, was in fact true. Then in the Holocaust, the threat again was against the covenant. God did not seem to be helping, the whole people could be wiped off the face of the earth and the covenant, with the people, would be turned to ashes and become nothing more than smoke. But again, ritual and liturgy helped to place a structure and form on the catastrophes such that the threat to the covenant was somewhat diminished.

The ritual responses during the tragedies varied greatly and this was especially evident in the diametrically opposite reactions of the Jews in the Crusader and the Nazi years. This difference was a direct result of the nature of the threat and the environment of their times. When the Crusaders attacked the Jews they were fighting a battle for religious hegemony; a victory for the enemy would have been the conversion of all the Jews to Christianity. The environment was already charged with an eschatological fervor which had produced a number of innovative Christian practices and behaviors. As such, the events occurred against a background of mystical and magical teachings. In this atmosphere, faced with that enemy and choice, the Jews took a different path from before. They took the traditional ritual and liturgical traditions and twisted them for a new purpose: that of *Kiddush Hashem* the sanctification of God's name through the offering of human sacrifices upon an altar they constructed in Europe. The traditional views of the cyclical nature of history enabled them to so construe the texts and the tradition that they were able to slaughter themselves and their children in the Divine name.

This response could not be offered by the victims of the Holocaust for they faced a very different enemy in a very different environment. Their human enemy

sought the complete annihilation of the Jewish people. They would not be satisfied so long as one Jew remained alive. Against this enemy, the earlier notion of *Kiddush Hashem* could not be tolerated for it would hand the enemy exactly what it wanted: the death of all the Jews. Thus an opposite response was elicited; Jews fought to live but not just as human beings, to live as Jews. To this end they used the rituals and liturgies of the tradition. To pervert or change any of them in the manner demonstrated in the Crusader period, would be to further assist the enemy's attempts to twist and so destroy Jewish tradition. Whenever liturgical innovation was found, it was created in order to maintain Judaism rather than to change it, to instill more holiness into the profane. For example, the prayer recited before having to eat *chametz* at Passover brought holiness to an act of perversion which was forced upon the people. Thus did the Jews resist and so did they maintain their connection with God and the covenant. They brought the act into the realm of the holy in the hope that they could still maintain their relationship with their God.

Similarly, the recitation of the *Shema*, and in the case of the Holocaust, *Ani Ma'amin* before death was another means by which the people sanctified their deaths and took back some of the power lost when they were made victims of the oppressors. Further, it was a demonstration of the people's piety and faith in God that even at the moment of their deaths they recited the central tenet of their religion, they were God's chosen people to the end, and so they asserted their spiritual dominance over the enemies. Also the creation of the prayer to be recited when dying for the sake of God's name converted the act of dying into a holy deed, in some cases, a *mitzvah*. Such was the perceived power of the words that they were able to affect a change in status of an act. This alteration

also served as a cry to God to take notice of his faithful servants and act to stop the catastrophic events which were befalling them.

Often, however, the events did not stop until many hundreds, thousands, even millions had been killed for the sake of their God, religion and faith. The aftermath is the next stage during which there was a liturgical and ritual response from the survivors. One of the first and often the most important matter to be addressed liturgically was the remembrance to be afforded the victims. In each tragedy it was important for the survivors to see that homage was being paid to their dead, that they would not be forgotten and hence had not been killed in vain. That was probably the pattern after the Temple destruction but the sources for this are scant. We are however, in possession of such documentation from the aftermath of the Crusades and the Holocaust which evidence this phenomenon. In the wake of the destruction wreaked by an enemy, the survivors finally find the time to grieve. Often, during the disaster there is so much concern with survival that appropriate mourning for the dead is impossible. In the calm following the storm, those who were not killed begin to realize that they have survived and that there were others who did not. This is often accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame for having survived and much of this emotion is fed into the desire to at least do best homage to the dead by memorializing them in an appropriate manner. It was shown that after the Crusades various local observances were instituted through which people could come together as a community and as an extended family and mourn their dead. During this phase, we noted how important it was that specific names, details and stories were remembered. Anything which gave the numbers of dead some humanity and life was incorporated into the liturgy, such that their deaths were elevated, honored and sanctified through the act of remembrance

conducted in a holy space. After the Holocaust too, there has been great emphasis placed on the importance of remembrance. So have the victims of that tragedy too been venerated and blessed. In that disaster there has been less concern overall with names being recited, for there are too many, but the establishment of a general kaddish day on which the names could be recited was a vital early step at a liturgical memorial.

The act of remembering the details of events and individuals in the aftermath was important for another reason, and it is based upon this that this form of memorialization is often found long after the names are no longer recited. In the fast, Crusades, Holocaust and to a lesser extent the destruction of the Temple, individual tales of the heroism, bravery, faith and fortitude of ordinary members of the community are recounted as part of the worship service. Beyond memorializing the individual about whom the story is told, this serves to humanize the tragedy. It is unlikely that congregants will be moved by the recitation of names of people about whom they know nothing or by the recounting of the numbers and statistics about the dead. It is difficult, if not impossible, to empathize with a number. It is much easier however, to grieve for someone about whom the worshipper knows personal details. Once a story is told, a personal detail of a life cut short is shared, a hope or a dream unfulfilled, then related, it is possible to feel emotions towards the person, to begin to grasp the tragedy of their death and thereby realize that the catastrophe stole tens, hundreds and thousands just like them. It becomes most powerful when the individual for whom the community grieves is someone whom they know their mother, cousin, brother or even themselves. Once there is identification then there can be proper memory, memorialization, dignity afforded the dead and an experience undergone by the worshipper. It is then that the liturgy is entrenched

in the cycle of the seasons; it speaks to the congregation across time. As yet, the Holocaust liturgies have not reached the stage where anything is entrenched, but based on the past reflections of tragedy in the liturgy, it is certain to be an element of the service for a considerable time, especially since this particular catastrophe occurred in proportions so elusive and difficult to conceive.

In the immediate aftermath of tragedy the survivors not only feel a multitude of differing emotions and feelings about themselves, they feel the same conflict and confusion about their God and tradition. It is the presence and strain of these emotions which threatens to break the relationship between the parties such that the survivors turn away from God and their religion. The liturgical acknowledgment of these emotions, thoughts and beliefs provides one of the means by which that eventuality does not come about. Through the recitation of prayers which mirror the conflicts felt by the congregants, their feelings and emotions, however heretical or antithetical to religious traditions, can be legitimized and hence their threat diffused. If the sufferings, reactions and deaths of the members of the community can be contained within the covenantal framework, then the system does not break apart and shatter. Further, some control is placed in a world which appears to the survivors to be chaos and madness. All that had been secure, especially firmly held beliefs, can be destroyed when the balance of the system is rattled. The liturgy can place the events within a familiar structure, using familiar language and images, to recontextualize the frightening unfamiliar, into the safe haven of the ordinary.

One of the first questions which is asked in the wake of tragedy is "why?" People in the aftermath and for generations afterwards, want to have a reason

for the disaster. That is human nature. If there is an explanation for the onset of tragedy, there is a way it can be prevented from happening again. Control is thus returned to the victims and their descendants and the feelings of vulnerability are lessened. These emotions can be felt by people generations after the initial tragedy strikes, so distance in time from the event does little to lessen the need for this element in any liturgy which attempts to captivate worshippers and offer the words they need to hear. Any explanation provided by the liturgy needs to be effective in keeping the covenant and its assumptions intact whilst also appealing to the audience. This second element shapes the content of the explanations and accounts for the distinctiveness in the responses of different time periods and different disasters.

In the pre-modern period, what we have called the sin-punishment paradigm was an effective, although by no means the only, means by which the liturgy could incorporate disastrous events into the normalcy of the world order. According to this response, the covenant is not broken but the Jews did not adhere to all the terms. As a result of their sin, God brought the disaster, to punish them for their insolence and was thus acting within the contractual terms. This response was evident after the destruction of the Temples and also in the wake of the natural and other disasters related in the Talmudic passages in Chapter One. The expression of this sentiment liturgically was very comforting to the worshippers for a number of reasons. First, it maintained the covenantal relationship: God had not abandoned His people, He was not acting irrationally, bringing tragedy for no purpose other than anger or an intrinsic evil, rather He was acting in the interest of justice and according to the divine plan. Therefore, there was not chaos, the disaster was not evidence of the immanent collapse of the world upon its foundations, it was rather, the predictable, controllable

response of God. This brings us to the second reason for comfort: the explanation that God was responsible for the catastrophe. It was not that God was impotent, powerless or unconcerned, rather He was the author of the calamity and therefore as able to stop it as He was to start it. God was still in control of the universe and the order of the world. If that is so then the third comfort is that through the fact of the covenant, God and His actions can be affected, reversed, changed by the people themselves. They know the terms of the contract, they then have power and control over their lives and destinies. In the aftermath of any disaster when control is wrested away by the enemy, it is crucial to the ability of the survivors to return to life that they feel they have regained some of the lost control. Finally, it also gave the worshippers and the survivors hope for the future. God had made the Jews numerous promises of prosperity, peace and a future of joy and happiness. If the covenant was intact, that future still awaited them and there was then reason for hope. Thus the sin-punishment paradigm which loomed large in the liturgical expressions of earlier texts and has some presence in the later ones, served to perform numerous important functions for worshippers through time.

Unfortunately there was a negative aspect to this paradigm and that was the fact that it necessitated the victims accepting blame for the tragedy and the portrayal of the dead as wicked sinners deserving of punishment. This was antithetical to the earlier expressed desire of the survivors and future generations to venerate the dead and perceive them in only the most glowing of terms. As has been expressed often in this thesis, it is possible in the realm of prayer to express ideas which are fundamentally at odds with one another in the same service or even in the same prayer. Once people enter the sacred space and time of the synagogue ritual and liturgy there is a temporary suspension of many of the

logical and rational needs of the everyday world in favor of the emotional. Of course both elements of the person must be appealed to and addressed in the liturgical offerings but often the rational takes second place to the desire to have one's emotional needs satiated. This means that it is possible to place alongside the prayers that chastise the victims for their sins, prayers which extol their virtues and goodness. The juxtaposition of these two elements was most evident in the discussion of the Tisha be Av liturgy, but is also found elsewhere. Despite this, however, in the liturgies responding to the Crusades and more especially in the ones after the Holocaust, the notion that the victims sinned is viewed as almost obscene. Thus there is little evidence of this expression in the prayers and instead is the idealization of the victims.

In these liturgies, the victims of disaster have their virtues extolled. Tales of their lives are recounted in glowing terms and they are viewed as the paragons of faith, upright, noble, learned exemplars of the Jewish people. This practice satisfies the need of the survivors to have their relatives remembered and honored, but it presents a problem, for it removes the major explanation for the disaster, and hence the tragedies still threaten to shatter the beliefs, hopes and faith of Jews who come afterwards. Thus the liturgies still need to address the difficult problem of "Why?" After the Crusades, as has been shown, the notion of suffering of the righteous as part of a divine test was given prominence. According to those who espouse this view, God tests the righteous with tragedy and suffering to discover whether or not they will be faithful to Him in adversity as well as prosperity. Thus catastrophe befell the generation not because of their sins but rather the opposite, because of their extreme righteousness, innocence and purity. There were a number of biblical and other examples wherein the righteous had been tested, and the liturgy drew heavily upon these

figures for comparison and in order to lend weight to the suggestion that these tests are part of God's plan and His justice. Thus again, the disaster was brought into the parameters of normative Jewish tradition as a predictable, controllable part of the ordinary workings of the universe.

This served to partially answer the question "why" but it also set up what would seem to be an incredibly unjust and unfair situation wherein there was no benefit to being righteous, for the reward awaiting you was death, probably in a horrible way. The prospect of reward in the world to come was the factor which enabled the divine test response to find a place in the liturgy. It satisfied those who were concerned about the apparent injustice and cruelty of a God who would punish His most faithful and it satisfied the survivors and removed a part of their guilt. If their relatives were now lounging in the Garden of Eden, there was less need to despair the fact that they were no longer alive. This explanation and theory found a place in the liturgy of the Crusader period and was thus subsumed into the liturgy for Tisha be Av. It has not found much acceptance in the aftermath of the Holocaust. As was to be expected , the more traditional services still contain these sentiments, especially the congregations which subsume the Holocaust commemoration into their services for Tisha be Av. However, the Reform and Conservative services on the whole have not favored this sentiment. To be sure, the victims are extolled as virtuous but the idea of a divine test goes beyond what they are willing to accept. This is probably a result of the fact that these movements, especially the Reform movement, no longer accept the principle of the world to come. As such there is no reward for the suffering and the victims would appear to have died in vain as part of a cruel plan by God. This is untenable and threatens the very foundations the liturgy is trying to uphold and as such it finds little representation in these services.

For some, the explanations matter less in the liturgy than the expression of emotions. It is crucial to the upholding of Jewish tradition and the covenant that there be a place in the prayers wherein all the feelings of an individual worshipper may be expressed. If that can occur then the congregants will find meaning in the service and more importantly, their feelings legitimized within the tradition. Once these emotions are confronted and expressed they often lose their power to destroy. For example, following any tragedy there is often anger towards God. Since the Jewish God is one who is actively involved in the workings of the world He is somehow involved in the infliction of the catastrophe. His role is conceived of in many ways in the liturgy ranging from being the one who inflicts the disaster to the God who had His face turned away and hidden from the people. All these different views are expressed such that they all become adopted into the legitimate Jewish view of disaster. The embracing of all these alternatives by the liturgy serves to bring the responses within the paradigm, hence keeping those who adhere to these opinions within the fold. Thus once again the covenant is saved and the relationship between God and His people left intact. In the liturgical responses to all the disasters, God's presence or absence and role comprise a large part of the liturgy. People need to have their particular view validated and as such the services contain portions which condemn God for His silence as He is pictured hanging on a gallows, as well as ones which praise God for His restraint in not bringing a worse disaster upon His people. All of them perform the crucial function of expression and placing God and the people together within the framework.

Anger is one of the most overwhelming emotions felt by the survivors of these catastrophes. Often it takes until after the shock wears off for the force of this

feeling to reach its full power but when it does it has the potential to become all-consuming, eating away at the victims and their families and loved ones. Once again the liturgy is employed to minimize the devastating effects of the anger. This emotion, in most cases, is directed against two sources: God and the enemy. In both instances the feelings are justified and expected. Both parties were responsible for the loss suffered by the communities that needs to be acknowledged and accepted. By speaking the words aloud in the context of prayer, the congregants are provided the opportunity to voice their deep-seated resentments and even hatred of the two parties. Once this is accomplished they have the understanding that they are not alone in their feelings of anger and hostility, others in the community feel the same way. Their emotions are then justified and they are provided with reinforcement and support. Further, the fact that these expressions occur within the context of the synagogue service gives them a certain power and efficacy. The worshippers can then be assured that their sentiments will reach God and He will be affected by them, perhaps even moved to act on behalf of the mourners. It is only once these feelings are voiced that a reconciliation may begin and God and His people begin to rebuild their broken relationship. When the anger has been expressed, its power to destroy is thus reduced. The congregants can feel good once they have chastised their all-powerful God for His role in the destruction and the loss of their loved ones. After the situation has been addressed in the liturgy the relationship of trust and love between God and His chosen people may resume again. These sentiments are expressed most fully within the more traditional liturgies and do not feature prominently in the Reform selections. Instead, in those texts the burden of responsibility is placed upon humanity and not God. The Reform concept of God is generally less interventionist. The evil witnessed

within these tragedies is not a function of God but rather of man's perversion and thus there is less anger towards the divine being and correspondingly less need to express such emotions.

Another common and related theme is that of revenge against the enemies. As was commented upon in the thesis, the directing of anger against the enemy and the liturgical reflection of these sentiments was a means by which survivors could deflect some of the anger away from God. There is a need after tragedy to bring honor to one's dead and to give their deaths meaning. Revenge, along with the act of memory, is one means by which they are given that respect. Liturgy provided a forum whereby these expressions of anger and desire for revenge could be expressed in a safe environment. Just as chastisements of God are not to be taken lightly, similarly, anger directed towards human enemies could prove to be equally dangerous. But in the security provided by the forum the worst insults could be hurled at the human enemy without fear. This feature is found in abundance in the literature of the Crusader period and it has found its place in the texts of the Tisha be Av liturgies. Many of the Holocaust writers, especially those who were victims of Nazi terror, the ghettos and death camps, call for remembrance and revenge. However very few of these expressions have found a place in the liturgy for Yom Hashoah, other than Orthodox services. Instead there is an acknowledgment of the burden of human responsibility and the need to remember the deeds of which humanity is capable without the subsequent call for revenge. In part, this may be seen as a reflection of the Reform concern for universalism and the desire not to appear vengeful before the nations. Many of the expressions, although justified, could conceivable cause great offense and hurt to the non-Jewish populace. This position is

untenable to Reform Jews and for this reason it is likely that overt calls for revenge and insult towards the enemy find no place in the liturgy.

None of the liturgies considered in this thesis shy away from recounting the horrific details of the tragic events which struck relatives, friends and communities. It is seen as crucial to the act of remembrance that nothing be forgotten, and that includes the awful, sometimes gruesome details of torture and death. In this way, the horror and suffering can be conveyed to the worshipping community and the true breadth of the disaster experienced by the congregation. This is especially important as the survivors die and the generation reciting the liturgies has no direct experience of the tragedy. The recounting of these tales of slaughter paints a picture with words which draws the worshipper into the tragedy. Then the congregation can feel the emotions evoked by the disaster and they are drawn into the horror and on some level make it their own. The stories about other people distanced from them in time and experience then have the potential to become stories about them and their experiences. The congregation come to identify with the child, parent, grandparent or other person described in the graphic scenes and so do they have an encounter with an historical experience. The further away in time the events are to the worshippers, the greater the need for identification with the victims. Thus are the texts able to imbue the listeners with a sense of the tragedy, violence, horror and a sense of the suffering. No longer are the figures of those dead merely numbers, they become human beings who suffered, felt pain, revulsion, hatred, anger and love, and the congregation is able to feel it with them. We have seen evidence of this treatment in most of the liturgies discussed in this thesis.

Unfortunately however, time and distance can dull even the most sensitive of readers to the pain of loss. The more distant in time and experience the event being memorialized, the more difficult it is to elicit the appropriate responses from the community such that the worship experience has meaning and impact. With this we are ushered into the final time period and that is the time when the event is a memory of the past, the survivors have died and nobody in the congregation has any direct experience of the tragedy. This period is the crucial test for the liturgy and ritual. If it is powerful and evocative enough to provide the worshippers with a sense of urgency and presence then it will stand the test of time and endure in Jewish tradition. If it cannot accomplish this feat, the liturgy and ritual will inevitably fall into disuse. Thus for the continuity of the memory and the people's connection with their history, the liturgy, again, plays a crucial and determinative role. During this period, ritual is vital to the longevity of a commemoration. It is through the ritual acts that the people are fully drawn into the drama of the event, they are pulled into their roles and they are forced to play their part. This was most evident in the Tisha be Av liturgies which were heavy with ritual import. Beginning weeks before the commemoration the communities are prepared for their day in synagogue. Like actors preparing for a role they are slowly brought into the characters they will play until they become one with them on the eve of the festival. By the time Tisha be Av arrives they are in mourning. A veil of sadness has fallen over their lives and the appearance of the synagogue and accompanying words of the prayers serve to heighten the experience. So are the tragedies of history made to be the tragedies of today. Of course one cannot and should not re-create the disaster in its entirety but performative ritual can be a very powerful, compelling and meaningful substitute. It is in this manner that the destruction of the Temple, the Crusades and the other catastrophes become a part of the lives of Jews here and now. It is

predicted that the continuity of Holocaust observance beyond the next few generations will depend upon the creation of services containing such performative power. Already certain symbols and rituals, such as the candle lighting, have become irreplaceable elements of the Yom Hashoah commemorations, but it will take more than candles and powerful readings to maintain the observance over time. The shape that will take is yet to be seen.

The other means by which the continuity of observance over time has been assured is the traditional view of time being cyclical in nature. The perspective of the Jews who adhere to this position is, as has been demonstrated in the thesis, that the destruction of the Temple provides the paradigm for all Jewish disaster. From that period forward all significant tragic events to befall Jewish communities were perceived as being no more than revisitations of the destruction. The details of local events were washed away, for the most part, in favor of the overall vision of history. This way the events of earlier disasters remained forever relevant and pertinent to the later congregations, for what were they really other than anticipations of the events of their own time. Thus the demolition of the First Temple is inextricably intertwined with the destruction of the Second, the Crusades became another example of the same disastrous events and so on through time. This constant flux within the paradigm kept all the tragedies relevant and created a connection between the victims of the past and the worshippers of the future. Further, they could each understand the other, for the world was being refracted through the same lens.

The Holocaust however, has already proved to be problematic, for the victims and communities are unwilling and unable to mold its facts to fit the paradigm. At this time the Holocaust is envisioned as a unique event and therefore impossible

to subsume into the traditional modes of historical memory. Thus the liturgies and rituals have been imbued with the rhetoric of being a new and unique response appropriate for an unprecedented experience. However, as we have seen, the elements and sentiments expressed in the services are not so new and not so radical. Many of the texts retain the traditional worship structures and merely add readings specifically referring to the events of the Holocaust. The creativity has come in the fact that there has been a newly established day upon which to memorialize the victims of this particular tragedy. As was seen, this was the case in the immediate aftermath of the Crusades also and eventually the force of the paradigm was greater that the various communities' ability to sustain separate memorials. So it could be that the Holocaust will, in time, be subsumed into the paradigm as have so many previous Jewish tragedies. However, the post-Holocaust world is very different from the one which existed after the earlier disasters. The commemorative occasion is observed by many communities around the world and as such it has an independent power never evident in any of the post-Crusade observances. Thus it is unlikely that this commemoration will go the way of those before. It will find its place in the liturgical calendar independent of Tisha be Av, but its liturgy and ritual are unlikely to be so different from those recited on that day.

So it can be seen that liturgy and ritual are powerful tools in the war against any enemy. They can be the vehicle through which Jewish communities are provided faith, hope and courage to fight against the enemy. They help to place some power into the hands of the people who are facing danger and annihilation. Then, in the aftermath, liturgy and ritual assist in placing the pieces of the oft- times shattered faith and belief back together. The people need an outlet to express emotion and to acquire strength and fortitude to turn back to

life and to go on living it,in a Jewish way. Liturgy and ritual enable the congregations to face God again, to confront Him, to berate Him, to repent before Him and to beseech Him to restore the world to balance and harmony once more. Finally, liturgy and ritual serve to enable communities, centuries after the tragic events, to empathize, memorialize and remember the trial, faith and courage of those who came before them and died for the sake of their God.

Through liturgy and ritual Jews have always been able to call to God out of the depths.

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