# OUT OF THE DEPTHS:
# AN EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF VARIED JEWISH EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO SUFFERING AND CRISIS IN THE REFORM PRAYERBOOK

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## Summary

Food and Foreigners - How Eating and Drinking in Selected Biblical Texts Reflect Identity

Thesis Submitted by Janet Roberts in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

Number of chapters: three, plus an excursus.

This thesis compares the biblical figures of Joseph and Daniel, two Israelites who rose to positions of prominence within the court of a foreign ruler. In the process, each character confronted the potential for assimilation to the non-Jewish way of life. One way to gauge how these two individuals dealt with that challenge is to examine eating and drinking behavior that is part of the biblical narrative.

A comparison of words used and themes contained in both narratives reveals that the writer of the Book of Daniel certainly knew the story of Joseph. Whereas the Joseph stories revolve around the need for food to assure physical survival of the people Israel, the Daniel stories feature food in a different light. Food and drink take on more symbolic meanings, related to an individual's religious identity. The later Rabbis continue the process, re-reading the tales about Joseph and Daniel to serve the goal of maintaining particularistic Jewish behavior.

An introductory chapter explores notions of ethnicity and religious identity, as they developed in the ancient world. Chapter two discusses the biblical Joseph, with particular emphasis on two feasting scenes that form a bracket around the narrative. Chapter three concerns Daniel, for whom food and drink reflect proper religious behavior. This chapter treats the many linguistic and thematic parallels between the two narratives. An excursus deals with a comparison of Joseph to a Greco-Roman deity, Serapis.

# INTRODUCTION

> "Amid the various historical characteristics that may be said to be indigenous to the Jewish people, the adjective *suffering* will nearly always top the list. Simply stated, the Jewish people are known universally as a people who have experienced unspeakable horrors, hardship and misery."[1]

The Jewish people's relationship with God is one that has been challenged through suffering and years of persecution. Many of the great figures in the Bible, including Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Rachel, Moses, Chanah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, and Job experienced great hardship but emerged from the experience with faith in God. biblical narratives provide a picture of our ancestors expressing a wide range of emotions and exhibiting varied behaviors when going through difficult times. They argued, pleaded, wept, and prayed; they became angry or silent.

In rabbinic times, following the destruction of the Temple, there was a debate about the appropriate way to react to suffering. Was it acceptable to struggle against negative experiences and argue with God? Or, did we have to accept all of our life experiences as divinely decreed and suffer silently, while maintaining faith in God? The school of Rabbi Akiva, which advocated an attitude of patience and submission, became the dominant philosophy,[2] influencing later literature such as prayerbooks. Despite the dominance of Rabbi Akiva's viewpoint, some authors continued to express a broader range of emotions and responses through their piyyutim and poetry.

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[1] Shmuel Boteach, *Wrestling with the Divine: A Jewish Response to Suffering* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), 3.

[2] Anson Laytner, *Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1990; First Jason Aronson Softcover Edition, 1998), 107, 115.

Since the majority of Jewish liturgy is full of praise for God and thanks for all that is good in our lives, many Jews feel it leaves little opportunity for expressing negative emotions. This problem is compounded by Reform Judaism's removal of a large amount of the traditional liturgy, including the piyyutim which express a wider variety of emotions. The fact remains that in times of crisis, maintaining faith in God can seem impossible. When God's presence cannot be felt, it is easy to feel abandoned by God. It is easy to give up hope, and simply assume that our ancestors were able to maintain faith in God because they were stronger people or better Jews than we are.

Striving as we do to live with our feet firmly planted in the secular world, congregants and members of the clergy alike often encounter values in a universal context without gaining a Jewish understanding of them. A cantor who recently acquired the role of "senior clergy" in her synagogue wrote this in a letter to the American Conference of Cantors list-serve: "While I feel fairly competent with my 'people' skills and my ability to comfort people as a fellow 'human being', I feel I am lacking a 'Jewish' dimension to my so-called counseling."

This paper will focus on material about suffering and crisis in the Reform movement's prayerbook, *The Gates of Prayer*. What have the editors of this book, as representatives of the Reform movement in the 1970's, chosen to include beyond the statutory prayers? What materials do we, Jews living in contemporary American culture, have to aid us in understanding our painful life experiences in a Jewish context? This liturgical material will be considered in light of four recent works by Laytner, Weintraub, Green, and Olitzky to see how they represent contemporary Jewish reflections on Jewish responses to suffering.

In *Arguing With God*, Anson Laytner traces the development of the law-court prayer from its origins in the Bible to modern times. He cites instances of the use of this type of prayer and explains them in the context of the time in which they were written. He begins his exploration with the example of Abraham, who (according to Laytner) had the right to argue with God because of the contractual nature of his covenant with God. Moses confronted God as well, on occasions when he was having difficulty with his prophetic role.[3] Among the prophets, Jeremiah stands out as one who argued with God and endured great suffering at the hand of his oppressors. Other major sources of law-court, or argument prayers, in the Bible are the psalms of petition[4] and the Book of Lamentations. Both of these also contain individual and national laments.[5] The Book of Job, which portrays the difficult problem of the suffering of the innocent, is recognized as one of the clearest examples of this style of prayer in the Bible.[6]

In the rabbinic period, the rabbis expanded on law-court prayers that already existed in the Bible, adding further explanations by creating *midrashim*[7] (many of which are excerpted in Laytner's book). The destruction of the Temple and subsequent exiles from Jerusalem were fresh in the minds of the rabbis of this period. In order to deal with the ongoing suffering that the Jewish people experienced following the exiles, the rabbis

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[3] Ibid., 6-8.

[4] "Scholars advocating the form-critical method of Bible study have divided the Book of Psalms into a number of different types. One major category is identified as the psalms of petition (or lament)." Laytner, 22.

[5] Ibid., 22-23.

[6] Ibid., 32.

[7] Ibid., 42, 44.

looked beyond their present situations to the World to Come. They were concerned about reconciling the problem of the suffering of the innocent while maintaining the traditional belief that God is just and loving.[8] The World to Come helped facilitate this reconciliation, because it provided the rabbis a vehicle to encourage people to accept their suffering in this world while promising that the next world would be better.

Despite the fact that the majority opinion of the early rabbis was that one should accept one's suffering, protests continued to appear in literature throughout the first millennium, indicating that the early rabbis' solution was not fully satisfactory.[9] As the statutory liturgy took shape, both prayers of praise and argument prayers were incorporated into the prayerbook. Subtle references to argument prayers exist in some daily and Shabbat prayers of thanksgiving and confession.[10] The services for *slichot* and *tachanun* contain more developed argument prayers, which sometimes make use of our ancestors' arguments from the Bible.[11]

When historical events gave people a renewed reason to protest, they added more prayers of protest to the liturgy.[12] Poets during the Crusades wrote many *piyyutim* on the

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[8] Ibid., 69.

[9] Ibid., 71.

[10] These references take the form of specific motifs. The motif of quoting God's own words is used in *Tsur Yisrael*, "arise to the help of Israel and redeem *according to Your word*." Another motif is the repetition of past arguments, as in the use of Numbers 14:19 on the High Holidays: "O forgive the iniquity of this people, according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people from Egypt until now." Laytner, 117-122.

[11] Ibid., 122, 124.

[12] Ibid., 126.

themes of God's silence, sin and punishment, and martyrdom. These *piyyutim* expressed anger, but the authors still maintained their faith in God. As more of this type of poetry was added to the prayerbook, protest came to coexist with faith in the liturgy, and this reflected the reality of the worshipper's experience.[13]

Until the emergence of Chasidism in the 19th century, the argument motif was only used in rabbinic and liturgical settings. The Chassidic revival of argument and law-court patterns brought these forms to the masses through Yiddish, the vernacular. This period also saw an increased use of artistic forms, including storytelling, folk songs, and Yiddish poetry, to express these sentiments.[14]

Further major changes in the use of this form occurred during and after the Holocaust. Before the Holocaust, argument prayers existed within a world where God's power and God's existence were still accepted by many Jews. Post-Holocaust, these prayers became infused with doubt.[15] Elie Wiesel used argument motifs in much of his writing in order to forge a path from his post-Holocaust doubt and despair into a new attitude of defiance. His play, "The Trial of God," pits the Akiban attitude of faithful acceptance against the opposing view of struggle and argument. Wiesel himself chose the latter attitude, believing that suffering should be met with argument and defiance against God.[16]

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[13] Ibid., 130, 138-139.

[14] Ibid., 178.

[15] Ibid., 236.

[16] Ibid., 214, 218, 220.

Despite the rabbis' initial efforts to create a prayerbook reflective of the submissive attitude of Rabbi Akiva, history and life experience led to the introduction of piyyutim depicting the darker emotional struggles of life. The Reform movement's liturgy went through a similar development. Initially, Reform rabbis excluded most of the piyyutim from the prayerbook and replaced them with "less daring prayers of modern origin".[17] However, prayers of protest and argument began to appear in the Reform prayerbooks of the 1970s,[18] including excerpts from piyyutim, poetry from the Eastern European tradition, and Yiddish folk songs. Perhaps this is the beginning of a move back to a more balanced representation of human emotion, so that the modern Jew will no longer need to "leave anger and doubt outside the synagogue".[19]

In contrast to Laytner's scholarly analysis of protest throughout history, *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, edited by Simkha Weintraub, strives to offer comfort through the examination of text. A different spiritual leader wrote a reflection about each of the ten psalms that make up Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav's *Tikkun HaK'lali*. Although Rabbi Nachman originally designated these psalms as a remedy for sexual impurity, a major source of his suffering and distress,[20] this book utilizes them as a collection that can also be used for any type of spiritual crisis. In the tradition of Rabbi Nachman, who felt that merely reciting psalms was not enough, and one had to identify with the psalm, the book

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[17] Ibid., 175.

[18] Ibid., 228.

[19] Ibid., 239.

[20] Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University of Alabama Press, 1978; Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1992). 169.

encourages people to find a phrase that resonates with them personally.[21] This is what the various spiritual leaders do in their pieces about each psalm. They personalize the biblical text, interpreting it to give others easier access to the ancient words. In this way, the wide range of emotional expression found in this collection of psalms may be more accessible to the modern reader.[22]

After reading *Tormented Master* by Arthur Green one can better understand why Rabbi Nachman was looking for a remedy. His life was short but tumultuous, and according to Green, he survived the worst but emerged triumphant. He was plagued by an inordinate fear of death and also a fear of revealing his inner self. He lived through the death of two infant sons, the death of his wife, and a three-year battle with tuberculosis.[23] One coping strategy he came up with early in his life was to look through the Book of Psalms and recite all the passages that cried out to God at once, leaving out the rest.[24] He also began the practice of *hitbod'dut*, holding a daily heart-rending conversation with God in the vernacular, during which he would pour out his most intimate needs, longings, desires, and frustrations to God, and he demanded that all of his followers did the same.[25] He believed that suffering was the natural state of the human

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[21] Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, ed., *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength & Solace in Psalms*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994), 12, 19.

[22] Ibid., 17.

[23] Green, 31-32, 227.

[24] Ibid., 28.

[25] Ibid., 145.

spirit.[26] His life became a model for all of his followers, who engaged in a constant struggle for growth and knowledge of God.

*Jewish Paths Toward Healing and Wholeness: A Personal Guide to Dealing with Suffering* by Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky is a book that attempts to distill some of the broad concepts mentioned above into a guide for the average reader. Like *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, it urges people to engage with Jewish sacred text to work out their relationship with God. Olitzky also states that before we can find the path to healing we must acknowledge illness, and use prayer as a means to initiate a dialogue with the divine.[27] This guide examines illness and healing through the lenses of both Jewish wisdom and the author's own personal family struggles.

The goal of this paper is to find Jewish sources that express a wide variety of human emotional reactions to suffering, in order to provide a Jewish context for those who are responding to pain. When Reform Jews face difficult times in life, they may turn to one of the most visible and accessible rituals: worship services. However, when they attend services, they may not find the resonance they are looking for in the prayers themselves. The Reform movement has pared the worship service down so that any references that are not aligned with its ideology have been taken out, and these include most prayers that reflect negative emotions (including remorse for our sins, as in the *tachanun* service) and any references to mourning the destruction of the Temple. The prayers that are left are mostly positive, expressing praise and thanks to God. As a result,

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[26] Ibid., 164.

[27] Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky, *Jewish Paths toward Healing and Wholeness: A Personal Guide to Dealing with Suffering*, with a foreward by Debbie Friedman (Woodstock, VT: 2000), xxvii.

a congregant who is in pain may only find the space to truly feel their own feelings during the silent prayer, or perhaps when they feel their own strong feelings in opposition to the thankfulness the prayerbook leads them to express.

Many Reform Jews have questions about God's presence in their lives when nothing particularly painful exists in their lives. These questions may be magnified when they are faced with a personal crisis. Today many choose not to attend synagogue because they find it too difficult to reconcile the liturgy with their life experiences. Where in the Reform Jewish tradition can these people find expressions and reactions that can guide them through these experiences? Have the leaders of the movement taken all negative emotional expression out of the liturgy, or have they provided sources for congregants in need somewhere in the prayerbook?

## CHAPTER I

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF JEWISH SUFFERING

Although Shabbat services in the *Gates of Prayer* generally express positive emotions, they do occasionally contain brief examples of negative emotional expression. They acknowledge that there are those "who enter [the] sanctuary in search and in need;"[1] they describe "a world torn by violence and pain, a world far from wholeness and peace, a world waiting still to be redeemed;"[2] they even remember Treblinka and "our millions who were marched into the abyss."[3] But these examples are few and far between, and the emotions represented in them are not explored in enough depth to allow a worshipper to really experience them. There are, however, two sections of the prayerbook that focus more on reactions to suffering: "In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering," and "Service for Tisha BeAv and Yom HaSho-ah." These will be examined in depth in the two major sections of this paper.

"In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering" contains a wide spectrum of ideas and source texts related to the experience of suffering and reactions to it. There is no indication if it should be used on a specific Jewish holiday, nor is there any instruction about whether the service leader can choose from the available readings or if the readings should be read in sequence. After examining the section, it seems that the editors

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[1] Chaim Stern, ed., Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook: Weekdays, Sabbaths. and Festivals: Services and Prayers for Synagogue and Home (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), 143.

[2] Ibid., 149.

[3] Ibid., 173.

intended this collection of texts to be used in sequence, because the texts communicate a progression of ideas.

This section has two introductory paragraphs. The first begins with a universal statement about suffering: "All peoples have suffered cruelty, and our hearts go out to them."[4] A particularistic statement about Jewish suffering follows: "But this day we think especially of the pain suffered by the House of Israel."[5] The opening paragraph sets up an examination of how to deal with suffering that is difficult to endure. It lists different ways that Jews have suffered in the past and notes that these tragedies could lead one to despair.

The second paragraph speaks of our ancestors who always somehow managed to maintain hope. It encourages us to try to maintain some measure of hope and faith as well. The introduction is followed by examples of how our ancestors reacted to their own suffering. These examples do not seem to be designed to comfort or inspire the worshippers, only to illustrate how their personal reactions to suffering are consistent with those of their ancestors. First they see Rachel, who wept over her children and refused to be comforted, and then Jerusalem, painted as a rejected barren woman, who weeps for her children as well. The compilers lead the worshippers to wonder where God is: "How long, O Lord? Will we be forgotten forever?"[6] They even go so far as to suggest that we can understand their suffering as part of the covenant and part of God's

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[4] Ibid., 407.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 408.

plan for existence: "It is for Your sake that we have been slain all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter."[7]

Not only do they assume the worshippers wonder where God is, but they also lead them to wonder where their fellow humans are. Other people did not help the Jews in their hour of need, either. The editors lead the worshippers to identify with those who stood by in their own time of need, realizing that everyone has the potential to do the same. The editors quote Obadiah's harsh words to the Jews' early oppressor, Edom, at length (in comparison to briefer excerpts of other texts quoted in this section) as a warning to everyone neither to stand by when someone is in need of help nor to celebrate others' misfortunes.

It is only after all of this negative material, which might lead the worshippers to wallow in the misery of suffering and being alone, that the tone of the liturgy begins to change. Jews are described as dust that has been blown to the four corners of the earth. Although this metaphor seems negative as well, it is followed by reflections that focus on some of the positive characteristics of dust, such as its power for transformation when combined with water and its ability to endure when other things die away.

From this point on the tone quickly becomes much more positive and hopeful. The editors look to the past to see how the Jews have endured, and they then look to the future with hope. God comforts us and takes away our tears and suffering. The compilers end the section with "*Ani Ma'amin*," a statement that we believe that the Messiah is coming, a radical departure from the sorrow and hopelessness of a mere four pages earlier.

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[7] Ibid.

This surface reading reveals an underlying goal. The compilers of this sequence want the worshippers to descend into the depths of suffering, confusion, and abandonment (experienced by us as individuals and as a people) and to rise out of it with renewed faith and strength, maintaining hope for the future. This alone is a large task for a five-page section. If we examine the biblical texts used in this section, we discover that the complexities of belief and varied God images that exist in the original contexts add depth to our understanding of this sequence.

After the opening paragraph moves from universal suffering to Jewish suffering, and lists some terrible ways in which Jews have suffered, it concedes that in the face of such horrible experiences one may either feel utter despair or be completely overwhelmed. We are to look to our ancestors, who experienced great suffering yet still trusted in God. Job is an example of this paradigm: "Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You."[8] This sentence encapsulates what the editor is urging the worshipper to know: Like our ancestors who suffered, the worshippers, too, should be able to believe.

The verse from the Book of Job used in the prayerbook (13:15) is not complete. In the Bible, it continues: "...but I will argue my ways before God." This completion of the sentence gives the original fragment a different meaning. The beginning of the verse, when it stands alone, could be a representation of Rabbi Akiva's opinion that patience and submission are the proper attitude towards suffering. Akiva thought Job was wrong when he did not blindly trust in God.[9] Akiva's position is consistent with what Job's friends offer in the biblical text. They espouse the position that the righteous are

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[8] Job 13:15.

[9] Laytner, 115.

rewarded and the wicked are punished. Therefore, they argue, Job should accept his suffering as something he brought upon himself, rather than struggle against it. The view that suffering is visited on those who sin is a concept that is also taught in the Book of Deuteronomy. Job, however, challenges this viewpoint because he believes he is not a wicked person and wants to know why God is punishing him.[10]

Job believes in a God with whom he can argue. He is in a bad situation and he is outlining a plan: he will argue his case before God, the judge, and this argument will either change his situation or help him come to a better understanding of it through interacting with God. Indeed, it is true that sometimes when people argue, or plead their case with someone, or even just speak what they think out loud, instead of just accepting what others say or struggling silently, they come to a different understanding of their situation or even a change of opinion or attitude. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, an 18th-century rabbi, became known for challenging God's actions. He said, "What is the meaning of the suffering that I presently endure? What does it require of me? What are You trying to tell me through it? I do not mind that I suffer, Let me only know that it is for Your sake."[11]

Job is not alone in his belief among biblical figures; Jeremiah and the authors of the petitionary psalms and Lamentations also use argument prayers to plead their personal cases before God. Job's use of this model (also known as the law-court model of prayer) is the climax of the development of this form's use in the Bible.[12]

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[10] Olitzky, 19.

[11] Ibid, xxi, xxii.

[12] Ibid., 3.

By leaving the second part of Job 13:15 out of the opening paragraph, the message in the prayerbook remains simple: our ancestors had faith. Curiously, the picture painted in the Book of Job, and omitted in the prayerbook, is of a more complex Job that many liberal Jews probably can identify with more easily. Even though Job does accept God's decrees with faith at the end of the book, he goes through a process to get to that point in his spiritual life.

In the opening paragraph, the editors present Job as an inspiration for the worshipper. If Job was able to maintain faith in God, surely they must be able to do so too. The editors only ask that today's worshippers may have a fraction of the faith that our ancestors had. But even this goal becomes more difficult as the liturgy takes them down into the depths of the despair of the Jewish people. The editors create a picture of abandonment and desolation by stringing together a series of biblical quotes.

The first quotation they use to this end is from the Book of Jeremiah; Jeremiah is also known as the "Prophet of Wrath." Jeremiah paints a picture of doom throughout his book. His prophecy begins 25 years before the first exile from Jerusalem, and continues into exile. Jeremiah did not believe in the inevitability of evil; he believed repentance was an open gateway to a better life and urged the people to repent. But his efforts failed, and he believed that the exile came about because of the failure of the people to repent for their sins. Jeremiah suffered on many levels that are evident in his book. He hated his prophetic mission, and the people resented it as well because of his constant predictions of doom. Because of the resentment the people felt towards him, he was very

sensitive to human suffering. He was also sensitive to the dramatic tension in the inner life of God and strove to portray that in his writing.[13]

Most of the prophets argue in God's defense in a lawsuit against Israel or other nations. Sometimes though, a prophet will challenge God for his own sake or for the people's sake. Jeremiah is one of these prophets; he argues primarily for his own merit. While God deliberates, Jeremiah suffers physical abuse at the hands of his enemies. Despite Jeremiah's own suffering, his words of personal protest helped Israel cope with the Babylonian exile.[14] According to Martin Buber, suffering is a door of approach to God, and it can lead to a "purer and deeper fellowship with YHVH. Between God and suffering a mysterious connection is opened."[15] Jeremiah addresses the issue of how to reconcile belief in the God of justice with the disproportionate suffering of Israel.[16] His words, while they came from his personal suffering, concretized the feelings of many exiled Jews at the time.

In contrast, the next section opens: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping! Rachel is weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for them, for they are no more."[17] This one sentence paints a bleak picture of Rachel. But the fact that she *refuses* to be comforted adds another dimension to the spectrum of responses.

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[13] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962; Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 104-121.

[14] Laytner, 16, 17, 20, 22.

[15] Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1949; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 183.

[16] Laytner, 22.

[17] Jer. 31:15.

The previous sentence in the prayerbook urged the worshipper to have a little of the faith our ancestors had: "We can only pray to be blessed with a measure of the faith that enabled them to remain true to God and His Torah, even when He seemed remote from them and life might have lost all meaning."[18] Yet now they see one of our most famous matriarchs weeping inconsolably. This is certainly not a moment of faith for her, but one of devastation. Rabbi Amy Eilberg finds a similar expression of emotion in Psalm 137, a homesick lament of the exiled Jew in Babylon. She concludes that sometimes, crying is the only possible reaction.[19]

The verses that follow are from the Book of Lamentations, but the compilers' arrangement of this collage of text leads the worshipper to conclude that the next lines are still referring to the weeping Rachel. In fact, when read in their original context, the fallen city of Jerusalem is speaking. There is a sense of confusion in the Book of Lamentations about how events could have happened as they did. Jerusalem is in ruins; it is portrayed as being dirty, as in menstruation, and has been cast out of God's good graces. The people feel abandoned by God and can find no comfort amid the desolation and ruin of their former lives and their city.

The Book of Lamentations, a collection of both individual and national laments, includes basic motifs such as appeals for justice, recollections of God's past mighty deeds, God's steadfast love, covenant, and God's righteousness. Sometimes, laments also include harsh accusations against God and pleas for God to wake up, and often pose questions like "Why?" and "How long?" The crux of the message of the Book of

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[18] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 407.

[19] Rabbi Amy Eilberg, "I Must Keep Singing: Introduction to Psalm 137," in *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, ed. Weintraub, 91.

Lamentations is in chapter 3, which follows an individual's journey from suffering to repentance. It includes a description of his suffering under God's wrath. This suffering leads him to despair of God. After this individual recounts his difficult past and the terrible feelings that accompanied his experiences, hope is born in the depths of his despair, and his repentance brings his suffering to an end. The inclusion of accusations against the severity of the punishment from God and protestations of innocence creates a contrast between this book and the Deuteronomic view of justice, which holds that suffering is punishment for sins committed.[20]

Lamentations 1:12 asks, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass along the road? Look and see: is there any pain like that which has befallen me?" In the context of the Book of Lamentations, as opposed to that of the prayerbook, these are not the words of Rachel, but the words of Jerusalem, lamenting the fall and capture of the city. The next line in the liturgy for the remembrance of suffering is also from Lamentations: "To what shall I liken you, how comfort you, O innocent daughter of Zion? Truly, your ruin is vast as the sea! Who can heal you?"[21]

The female imagery allows the worshipper to continue following the train of thought back to Rachel. Perhaps they can see Rachel as a prototype of each sufferer, of each individual Jew who is struggling with her own insurmountable difficulties. But seen in the original context, Jerusalem is a symbol of a suffering people, a people that can trace its faith and doubt to common tragic events that formed an identity it carries

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[20] Laytner, 28-31.

[21] Lam. 2:13.

forward. The compilers seem to have been aware of this shift of subject; as a result, they changed the pronouns in the next sentence, quoting Psalms 13:2.

The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems that contains a wide range of emotional expression including despair, delight, horror, hope, fatigue, faith, rejection, and renewal.[22] For centuries, people have been turning to the Book of Psalms for spiritual healing, looking for solace and comfort, and seeking catharsis, guidance, meaning, hope, and reassurance.[23] Although many believe that King David wrote the psalms, there are also other theories about their authorship. Rabbi Kerry Olitsky believes that the psalms are based on the experiences of regular people, who were crying out to God in pain and asking for healing and support.[24]

Psalm 13:2 asks, "How long, O Lord? Will I be forgotten forever? How long will Your face be hidden from me?" In Psalm 13 this verse appears in the first-person singular, but in the prayerbook it has been changed to the plural. Within the context of the verses in this section, the change moves the focus from Rachel to the worshippers. They are thinking about Rachel and her grief and they want to know why she was not helped. As they think about her, they may identify with her, and wonder why they, too, have not been helped in their times of need. But the progression behind the words is more significant than that. It moves from Rachel the grieving matriarch, our ancestor, to Jerusalem, the ruined city, our homeland, to the worshippers, the present day people

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[22] Weintraub, 17.

[23] Ibid., 11.

[24] Olitzky, 59, 60.

connected to these sources. By constructing this section using this collection of quotations, the editors show that the sorrow of Jews saturates our history and heritage.

This quotation from Psalm 13 presents us with a new image of God. It portrays a God who can hide. This question of how long God will hide God's face and withhold justice is also a theme in Lamentations and Deutero-Isaiah.[25] The prevalence of this theme in our tradition shows us that we have a right to ask about this, we have a right to search for answers. But the prayerbook does not offer the worshippers answers at this point. In fact, it moves on to even more grim material from Psalm 44:23. "It is for Your sake that we have been slain all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter." This goes beyond a concept of a hidden God. This intimates that suffering is actually a part of the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

This interpretation of the covenant between God and the Jewish people is quite different from the ideas about covenant presented thus far in this section. Job believed in the possibility that his suffering was a mistake, and his relationship with God allowed him to argue his case in an attempt to change his situation. Jeremiah believed that the people had the responsibility to repent for their sins, and that their suffering came as a result of their failure to do so. Psalm 44, however, leaves the worshipper with no comparable logic to pin the suffering on. It tells of how God won battles for our ancestors yet has rejected and disgraced us. It says that even though we have not violated the covenant God has crushed us. It leaves us with no solution other than to cry out to God for help.

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[25] Laytner, 31.

Although we would hope for answers when we cry out to God, the prayerbook editors still do not provide the worshippers with any comfort at this point. Rather, they give them silence. The silence that follows the outcry of the different generations is not only from God, but also from the people around them, and even themselves. Other people stood aside, mute, during the Jews' hour of need. The editors offer Leviticus 19:16 as a proof text of the folly of their ways: "You shall not stand idle while your neighbor bleeds." This commandment is part of the holiness code. But the holiness code is not intended for those "others" who stood aside in our hour of need, but for us, for the Jewish people. This opens the door to our own feelings of guilt, rather than pointing at others who are to blame for our suffering. Perhaps others have stood aside in our hour of need, but each person has done the same, and as the worshippers read the words, "for the sin of silence, for the sin of indifference," they may feel as though they are reciting the Yom Kippur Vidui. In fact, the editors use this text in the Gates of Repentance,[26] and although the Gates of Prayer was published first, most worshippers today are probably more familiar with the text from the Yom Kippur afternoon service. Although the text is not in itself a confession, the association with Yom Kippur may create a feeling of confession on the part of the worshipper.

When the editors write, "let there be no forgetfulness before the Throne of Glory," it is unclear to what they are referring. At first, it seems as though the worshippers are never to forget that other people stood aside while Jews were suffering. But because they used the proof text from Leviticus, the text creates a sense of reflecting

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[26] Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1984), 439.

back on the Jews as well. The worshippers are the ones who are not to stand idly by; let them never forget that responsibility. This is followed by almost four verses from the Book of Obadiah, which the editors call "the harsh words of the prophet to Edom, early and cruel oppressor of our people."[27] Obadiah reprimands Edom for rejoicing over Judah's ruin, enumerating all of the things they should not have done at that time.

After an all-encompassing silence and Obadiah's rebuke, perhaps the lowest emotional point of the sequence, the editors begin to infuse the image of God with some activity, in contrast with God's earlier mute passivity. Although God does not come to our aid, it seems that God begins to wake up and notice our affliction.

The connecting piece written by Chaim Stern[28] at the bottom of page 409 begins "Lord, You see it." God sees that no one comes to help us in our time of need and this makes God angry. "You see that none comes to help, none to intervene. In the high places there is astonishment and anger."[29] God can still be hidden, but see what we experience and even feel something about it. Stern juxtaposes what is going on in the "high places," where God is, with what is happening "down below," where we are. Down below, the "dust of Jews" is being blown to the four corners of the earth.

The next section, entitled "Meditation," begins on the theme of dust. "And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth."[30] This statement from Genesis 13:16 is a

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[27] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 408.

[28] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Gates of Understanding: A Companion Volume to Shaarei Tefillah: Gates of Prayer* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1977), 229.

[29] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 409.

[30] Ibid., 410.

positive one when read in the Genesis narrative. It is an affirmation of the blessing God offers Abram and his offspring by giving them the land forever, suggesting that they will be too numerous to count. This blessing is repeated at other times in the Torah. This meditation, however, goes in the opposite direction. The dust here is a metaphor for the scattering of the Jewish people "from one end of the earth to the other." This hearkens back to the sobbing of Rachel and the cries of Jerusalem from the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Despite God's anger over the treatment of the Jews, God does nothing to help them. The Jews are exiled and separated from each other.

The section that follows, taken from Genesis Rabbah,[31] talks about some positive aspects of dust. As dust can be transformed by water, it says, so can Israel be transformed only through the Torah. The Torah has the power to quench the thirsty soul. Perhaps the editors wish to tell the worshippers that when they are crying out for God and do not hear an answer, they can always turn to the Torah to hear God's voice, and thus benefit from the transformative power of Torah study. Olitsky teaches that, "divine light is reflected in the study of Torah." It is in the Torah, he states, that people can learn to understand the relationship between the soul and the body.[32] Genesis Rabbah continues with the idea that Israel will be trampled as dust is trampled, but Israel will also endure forever, as dust endures forever. This endurance relates back to God's promise to Abram, a promise for the future. The worshippers can begin to look forward, out of their present pain and suffering, to a future when their enemies will be destroyed, as stated in

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[31] Hoffman, 229.

[32] Olitzky, 26, 34.

the text from Genesis Rabbah: "And as dust wears vessels of metal away, but itself endured forever, so with Israel: all your enemies will be nought, but you shall endure."[33]

The last narrative text in this section is another composite of verses from various books of the Bible. The text from Genesis Rabbah spoke of both the past and the future; the editors set up this section to concentrate on the future and the worshipper's hopes that things will improve. "We look back, knowing that the past cannot be undone; but it can be redeemed, today and tomorrow," Stern writes. "Out of all our losses must come the spirit's triumph: to cling to life...until the day when all will dwell in a happier world." The editors then write, "as it is said," a phrase commonly used in liturgy to indicate that a proof text will follow. In this case, however, the texts that follow are not a continuous text found in the Bible. The editors collected them and pasted them together in an effort to provide the illusion of a clear promise of comfort in the future.

The first biblical verse is from Isaiah 40.[34] Scholars believe the Book of Isaiah was written by at least two different authors who lived at different times. The author of chapters 40 to 65 lived during the period of the exile in Babylon. They attempt to convince the people to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem.[35] These chapters focus on the exiles of the Jewish people, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the re-admittance to Jerusalem. Deutero-Isaiah, as it is known, attempts to encourage the people to feel a certain way and move toward certain actions, depending on political events. According

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[33] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 410.

[34] Hoffman, 229.

[35] Richard J. Clifford, "Isaiah, Book of (Second Isaiah)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. III (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 497.

to Heschel, God selected this prophet to convince the people that God had not abandoned them, and that God planned to gather them from exile and return them to Jerusalem. He focused on God's love and the chosenness of Israel.[36] Isaiah 40:1 reads, "Take comfort, take comfort My people." This verse, beginning with the Hebrew word, "*Nachamu*," begins the Haftarah portion for the first Shabbat following *Tisha B'Av*, known as *Shabbat Nachamu*. It is the first of six Haftarah portions of consolation that follow Tisha B'Av.

The section that begins with "Take comfort" comes close to the end of this liturgical section. This echoes the place of the "*Nacheim*" prayer, a prayer of comfort, in the traditional *Tisha B'Av* service. The text prior to this section in the Gates of Prayer expressed distress and mourning, and it is only after that has been expressed that one may offer comfort, as it is in this verse from Isaiah. This comforting prophecy was directed both to Judeans exiled in Babylon and to the city of Jerusalem itself. These words come from God, who was directing heavenly messengers to bring comfort to Zion; Isaiah overheard God's instructions and brought these words to the people.[37]

The next line in the prayerbook is Lamentations 3:21:[38] "This I call to mind, and therefore have I hope."[39] The order of the verses in the prayerbook makes it seem as though the word "this" in the verse from Lamentations refers to the idea that God said, "Take comfort." However, that is not at all what this chapter of Lamentations

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[36] Heschel, 145, 151, 158.

[37] David L. Lieber, ed., *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2001) 1032.

[38] Hoffman, 229.

[39] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 411.

communicates. The passage preceding this quotation mentions many kinds of affliction and anguish. "I am the man who has known affliction under the rod of His wrath... On none but me He brings down His hand again and again, without cease... He has shattered my bones... He has made me dwell in darkness... And when I cry and plead, He shuts out my prayer... He has filled me with bitterness."[40] He recalls all this hardship and is filled with hope that his suffering has not been in vain. He hopes, like Job, that in the end it will have some meaning or make some sense.

Although these sentiments from Lamentations are certainly applicable to the topic of this section, they conflict with the editors' apparent goals at this point. This is constructed to be a *nechemta* at the end of several statements of hardship, the sentence from Lamentations being followed by verses from Isaiah and Jeremiah containing positive statements about what God will do to solve our problems in the future.

"He will swallow up death forever, the Lord God will wipe the tears from every face. He will remove from the earth the reproach that lies upon His people."[41] The first author of the Book of Isaiah, who lived in the Northern Kingdom in the mid-eighth century BCE (746-701), believed that God was in control of history. He believed that people were sinning by behaving arrogantly and worshipping idols, and that God was going to use foreign powers to punish Israel. He warned of the fall of the Northern Kingdom. He also believed in the power of transformation, and had a vision of a glorious future, when all nations would have some degree of unity.[42]

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[40] Lam. 3:1, 3, 6, 8, 15.

[41] Is. 25:8.

[42] Heschel, 65-66.

This representation of God, who will swallow up death forever, and remove the tears from every face, is quite different from the picture of God this section started out with. Before, God was hiding; now, God is actually involved in the welfare of the people, and even speaks. "Hold back your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears! For your labor shall have its reward."[43] In the Bible, this verse actually follows the verse placed four pages earlier in the prayerbook about Rachel weeping inconsolably. In the Book of Jeremiah, her distress is answered immediately. However, the editors of the prayerbook separated these two adjacent verses to accomplish the goal of creating some form of journey from suffering to comfort. What they created parallels some psalms; they began by expressing great suffering, but moved to expressing feelings of solace and even celebration by the end. Rather than including just one psalm or even several, the editors of the prayerbook drew from sources from all three books of the Bible to create their own narrative. In this way, they demonstrated the widespread presence of expressions of suffering throughout our most sacred text.

Given that it is a Reform prayerbook, the section ends with a bit of a puzzle. The last words from the Book of Jeremiah are, "'There is hope for your future,' says the Lord." In this case, God is speaking to Rachel, and referring to those that come after her. In other words, there is hope for the future that comes after her time, but not for her own future. Then, in case we were not aware that God was speaking of future generations and not our own, the prayerbook editors end with "Ani Ma'amin," a statement that "I believe

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[43] Jer. 31:16.

with perfect faith in the Messiah's coming," a quotation from a summary of Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith.[44]

Since this is a Reform prayerbook, and the Reform movement has stated that it does not believe in a personal Messiah, this could be a confusing concluding message to be left with. Perhaps the editors were trying to make sure that the message of comfort reached as wide an audience as possible. Perhaps they were trying to communicate the Classical Reform idea that a time radically different from the present eventually will arrive. For the person who does not experience any kind of comfort or healing in their lifetime, perhaps they can still cling to the idea that their trials served the purpose of redeeming a generation far in the future. Perhaps because they suffered, future generations will not need to suffer.

The font used for the English text of "*Ani Ma'amin*" is the one designated for texts that are supposed to be sung. Accordingly, a version of the folksong is provided in *Gates of Song*, the songbook designed to be a companion book to *Gates of Prayer*. Since this book was published to aid congregational singing,[45] this version of *Ani Ma'amin* only supplies the melody, with chord symbols printed above the staff.[46] The melody has been set by many composers in diverse ways, including a choral arrangement by Max Helfman, and a version that intersperses Yiddish commentary by Lazar Weiner.

The song begins with the words, "*Ani ma'amin*" repeated four times. The first two repeat one melodic motive, and the second two another. The opening motive is very

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[44] Hoffman, 208.

[45] Charles Davidson, ed., *Gates of Song: Music for Shabbat: Congregational Edition* (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1987), opening.

[46] Ibid., No. 129.

simple, beginning on the dominant below the tonic and then repeating the tonic. The tempo is a slow quadruple meter, reminiscent of a slow march. The accentuation of the text is Ashkenazic, with the emphasis of the words falling on the first and third beat. The second motive is more florid, still beginning on the dominant below the tonic, proceeding to the tonic, and then continuing up and coming to rest on the dominant above the tonic for four beats. This second motive has more rhythmic energy than the first. After repeating the first motive twice, this second motive sounds more hopeful as it proceeds upward, resting on a higher note than the first motive.

The device of repeating motives continues throughout this song. The first motive is only one measure long; the second is two measures long, as is the third. The third motive continues the journey upward in pitch, beginning on the dominant above the tonic, and continuing upward to the upper tonic before descending again to the motive's original pitch, where it rests for four beats. The text on the first statement of this motive is "*b'emunah sh'leimah*," and on the repetition it is "*b'viat hamashiach*." This motive contains a raised sixth scale degree as would the Ukranian Dorian mode.

The fourth melodic motive is four measures long, and during its two repetitions it descends from the upper tonic back down to the lower tonic. The third measure of the motive contains four beats of eighth notes slurred in groups of two, which is the same figure as the first measure of the third motive. This motive has two different endings, the first ending on a half cadence and the second resolving to the tonic. The first ending contains a raised fourth scale degree, another distinguishing element of the Ukranian Dorian mode. The statement and the repetition of the fourth motive finish the text provided in the *Gates of Prayer*, at which point the first two motives are restated, this

time with the repetition of the second motive resolving down to the tonic to finish the song.

This setting of the text sends mixed messages that are similar to the messages the editors of the prayerbook presented throughout this section. Even though the text is one of faith, the melody tells a different story. The words, "*Ani ma'amin*" are repeated nine times in this song, and the way they are set makes it seem as though the singer is trying to convince him- or herself of their truth. The second motive ends on a whole note, creating a break between what comes before and after it. It makes it seem as though perhaps the singer is weary, and cannot say these words all at once because it would be too tiring. It makes it seem as though these statements are demanding and take a lot of the singer's energy. The same is true of the third motive, which also comes to rest on a whole note, following the slurred eighth-note motive, which could sound like sobbing. The two statements of this motive use different text, but it is text that really should go together. The first text, "with complete faith," links the opening text, "I believe," with the next text, "in the coming of the Messiah." During the first eight measures the listener must wait to hear what it is that the singer believes in. Perhaps during this time, the singer is trying to decide whether or not to profess his or her belief. The tension is heightened by the pauses on the whole notes in the second and third motives, when the listener must wait more to hear what the singer will say next.

By the fourth motive the tune builds some momentum, and this four-measure motive does not have as many breaks as the previous two. Once the singer decides to profess his belief, he states all of it in the two statements of this motive. These eight measures contain the majority of the text of this song. They are followed by four more

repetitions of the words "*Ani ma'amin.*" "I believe... I believe... I believe... I believe." Perhaps if the singer repeats these words enough, he will come to believe them.

This setting of the "*Ani Ma'amin*" text contributes to the message the worshippers are left with at the end of the five-page journey: they may not find answers or comfort; their struggles may not be resolved in their own time, but will be in a time to come. One must have strong faith to accept this message: this is the type of faith the editors portrayed at the beginning of the section, when they chose to present Job as a man of simple faith rather than presenting his struggles in the liturgy.

This section contains quite a wide range of textual representations of reactions to suffering. We see reactions from the biblical characters Rachel and Job; the prophets Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Obadiah; two authors of Psalms (or, according to tradition, David); the city of Jerusalem; the rabbis who wrote and compiled Genesis Rabbah; Maimonides; the poet Chayim Nachman Bialik; and, of course, the editors themselves, represented in the writing of Chaim Stern. This collection of voices expresses a broad spectrum of emotions, including depression, faith, attempts to find understanding, weeping and deep despair, self-pity, blaming others, anger, commitment to God and the covenant, and hope for the future. By culling from so many different sources, the editors provide the worshippers with an opportunity to learn how complex and multi-faceted human responses can be, and Jewish responses have been, and perhaps, if they are able read the text deeply enough, to identify with one or more of these responses. The remaining question is whether this section provides them the opportunity to really dwell on these texts long enough to gain an understanding of them, or if the texts

quoted are so brief and unexplained that they make the real meaning inaccessible for the average congregant.

# CHAPTER II

## SERVICE FOR TISHA BEAV AND YOM HASHO-AH

### Background

The Gates of Prayer contains a full service intended for use on both *Tisha B'Av* and *Yom HaShoah*. Despite the different natures of these days of observance, there are not specific sections for each day; rather, all of the material is intended for use on both or either day. The inclusion of *Tisha B'Av* is striking because Reform Jews have not traditionally observed *Tisha B'Av* because they do not hope for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the return to the sacrificial cult.

The Reformers of the 19th century did not observe *Tisha B'Av*. David Einhorn explained this as follows: "Reform Judaism beholds in the cessation of the sacrificial services, the termination of a special nationality, and the scattering of the Jews among all nations, the fundamental conditions for the fulfillment of their mission among mankind."[1] More recently, however, Reform Jews have begun to observe this day as a time "to remember many Jewish tragedies that occurred throughout history."[2] Perhaps the prayerbook editors included *Tisha B'Av* in the title of this service in an effort to encourage its observance among Reform Jews.

*Tisha B'Av*, the ninth day of the month of *Av*, is a traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. Tradition ascribes the occurrence of several tragic national events to this date. These are, in chronological order, the decree that the

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[1] Meir Ydit, "Tisha B'Av," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: Judaica Multimedia (Israel) Ltd., 1997) [CD-ROM].

[2] Union for Reform Judaism, *Tisha B'Av* (*n.p.*: Union for Reform Judaism, 2004, accessed 11 December, 2004) [website]; available from http://urj.org/holidays/tishabav.

people of Israel would not enter the Promised Land after the Exodus from Egypt; the destruction of the First and Second Temples; the capture of the last stronghold of the leaders of the *Bar Kochba* Revolt in 135; the establishment of a heathen temple on the site of the Temple by the Roman emperor Hadrian in 136; and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The Talmud describes *Tisha B'Av* as a day on which a person is to observe all mourning rites that would apply in the case of the death of a close relative.[3]

The liturgy of *Tisha B'Av* reflects this sense of mourning. Jews read the Book of Lamentations on *Tisha B'Av*, giving voice to the Jewish people's laments and past experiences of suffering. As in the Book of Jeremiah, suffering in the Book of Lamentations comes as a result of sins committed, with repentance remaining the open doorway to the end of suffering.[4]

The traditional liturgy for *Tisha B'Av* consists of the daily liturgy plus two additional prayers. One is "*Aneinu*," "Answer us" (recited on all fast days),[5] requesting that God not pay attention to our wickedness, and not hide from us. "*Aneinu*" contains an image of God as one who "redeems and rescues in every time of distress and woe." The other prayer is "*Nacheim*," a prayer for consolation from God for the mourners of Zion.[6] This prayer paints a picture of God as both the destroyer and the rebuilder of Zion and Jerusalem. Traditionally, this prayer is only said at *mincha* of *Tisha B'Av*, because the

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[3] Ydit.

[4] Laytner, 30.

[5] Nosson Scherman, ed., *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur: Weekday/Sabbath/Festival* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1984), 105.

[6] Ibid., 240.

Jew is a mourner, and comfort is not to be extended to a mourner until after the funeral, or, in this case, the afternoon.

In contrast to the observance of *Tisha B'Av*, which was already in practice in the 2nd century C.E., Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, came into being in 1951. The *Knesset* passed a resolution declaring the 27th of Nissan "The Holocaust and Ghetto Uprising Remembrance Day – a day of perpetual remembrance for the House of Israel." They chose this day because it falls between the dates of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and the Israeli War of Independence, and also because it falls during the traditional mourning period of the counting of the *Omer*. Outside Israel, however, *Yom HaShoah* is usually observed on April 19th, the day of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising on the secular calendar.[7] Due to the recent creation of this day of observance, different congregations and populations have varied ways of marking it.

*Tisha B'Av* and *Yom HaShoah* both mark tragic events in Jewish history. Observing them can help ensure that Jews will not forget these painful times. However, because of the significant difference in the ages of these holy days, it is possible that one service may not resonate equally with both days. Tisha B'Av has a long history of rites and rituals that have been attached to its observance for centuries, while the rites and rituals for Yom HaShoah have not been created fully yet. Thematically it makes sense to create one service. Whether or not it makes sense for each day, given their different historical contexts, is another matter.

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[7] Nathan Eck, "Holocaust Remembrance Day," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, [CD-ROM] (Jerusalem: Judaica Multimedia (Israel) Ltd., 1997).

## Overview

This section begins with an introduction to the statutory liturgy, consisting of five selections of contemporary prose, poetry, and music. The first poem is by Avraham Shlonsky (1900-1973), who was born in the Ukraine to a Chassidic family, and immigrated to Israel in 1922. His poetic style differed from anything previously written in Hebrew, and he had an impact on a large circle of young writers. Although his early work depicted hopeful transitions from old to new, a trip to Paris, where he discovered human isolation in modern city life, and a trip to post-war Europe, where he discovered the horrors of the Holocaust, led him to express alienation, fear, grief, and doubt in his later work.[8]

The second poem in this introduction is by Nelly Sachs (1891-1970), a German poet and dramatist, winner of the 1966 Nobel Prize. In 1940 she escaped to Sweden, where she later became a spokesperson for fellow Jews who experienced the death camps during the Holocaust. The poems she wrote during the post-war years were a "mute outcry" against the Holocaust. Her work reflects her interest in Job's fate, as well as the themes of metamorphosis, victims, and the exile of humans on earth.[9]

"*Zog Nit Keynmol*," the "Song of the Partisans," follows the Sachs poem. The Jewish freedom fighters sang this song during World War II. The words are by Hirsch Glik, a poet who was born in Vilna in 1922. He lived in the Vilna ghetto during World

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[8] The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, *Avraham Shlonsky* [website] (Bnei Brak, Israel: The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 2004, accessed 23 October 2004); available from http://www.ithl.org.il/authors.html; Internet.

[9] Petri Liukkonen, *Nelly Sachs* [website] (Finland: Kuusankosken Kaupunginkirjasto, 2002, accessed 23 October 2004); available from http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/nsachs.htm; Internet.

War II before he was moved to various forced labor camps. During a transfer from one camp to another he escaped, and all trace of him was lost in 1944.[10] A meditation by Chaim Stern, the editor of the prayerbook, follows this song, and the introduction ends with the song "*Ani Ma'amin*," another song that Jews sang during World War II.

The liturgy in the service itself begins at the *Chatsi Kaddish* and continues through *Yih'yu L'ratzon* and *Oseh Shalom*, including the *Sh'ma Uvirchoteha* and *Amidah* sections of the service. Although the service contains all of the elements one would expect to see in a Jewish worship service, it contains variations in many of the English translations of the prayers and sometimes even in the Hebrew texts. Some of the prayers are abbreviated in English or in both Hebrew and English, and the traditional prayers for fast days, "*Aneinu*," and for *Tisha B'Av*, "*Nacheim*," are inserted into the *Amidah*, but there is no indication of the origins of these prayers, nor is there any instruction that they should be read on one day and not another. A few other short texts are also inserted throughout the liturgy. After the *Amidah* ends, there is a note suggesting an optional Torah portion and listing the page number for the Torah service. There are no special instructions at the conclusion of the Torah service.

Introductory readings and prayers

The poem "*Neder*"[11] introduces this section and sets the tone for the selections that follow. The poem's focal point is the oath, (Hebrew: *neder*) which the speaker takes

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[10] Elias Schulman, "Hirsch Glik," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, [CD-ROM] (Jerusalem: Judaica Multimedia (Israel), Ltd., (1997)).

[11] From *Avraham Shlonsky: Yalkut Shirim*, ed. A. B. Yafeh, Yachdav, Tel Aviv, 1967. Translated by Herbert Bronstein. Hoffman, 247.

never to forget the suffering that "crushed human feeling." Shlonsky begins the poem by using descriptions of certain body parts to convey what happened: "eyes which witnessed the slaughter;" "the heart that once taught compassion," until suffering made this impossible. Shlonsky does not open the poem with, "in the presence of people," but rather, "in the presence of eyes."[12] It is really a person who witnesses slaughter, but perhaps his use of the word "eyes" is an indication that these people to whom he is referring are no longer whole.

The first line of the poem also sets up Shlonsky's use of legal terminology. He uses the words, "in the presence;" he casts the eyes and the heart as witnesses; and he reacts to the suffering with an oath, a phrase he repeats three times. Although the poem does not have any specific references to the Holocaust, a worshipper would probably assume it was written as a reaction to it, especially if the poem is read on *Yom HaShoah.* The legal language could be reminiscent for some, hearkening back to the camps, where Jews conducted trials that sometimes ended in the conviction and rejection of God.[13]

Shlonsky's message to Jews living after the Holocaust is that humans have the power to ensure a better future by remembering the negative events of the past. His oath is that he will remember everything that happened, and he will pass this memory down to the "last generation." He is searching for meaning in the suffering that was inflicted on his people and praying that it was not in vain. The act of remembering ensures that the suffering was not in vain: Shlonsky implies that if we remember we ensure that it will not be repeated.

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[12] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 573.

[13] Laytner, 207.

The necessity of remembering experiences of suffering in order to prevent their repetition is an action Jews can take on their own behalf. This idea is reinforced in the next reading, an excerpt from the poem "If the prophets broke in" by Nelly Sachs.[14] This text describes the indifference of mankind to the ghastly experiences of others. Sachs also uses body parts, rather than people as complete beings. Sachs' powerful description of prophets blowing "on flutes made of murdered children's bones and exhaled airs burnt with martyrs' cries," which elicits no response from the "ear of mankind,"[15] creates an immediate association with the Holocaust and the lack of compassion shown to the Jews by the rest of the world at the time. This devastating reality reinforces the importance of remembering the past. Her dramatic imagery of a world that misses both the big picture and small cues is one where we cannot count on our fellow humans to hear our cries. We can conclude that we must fend for ourselves.

Although Sachs' graphic poem may lead one to despair over the lonely position of Jews in the world, the next selection is an attempt to ensure that we don't despair. The basic message of "*Zog Nit Keynmol*," or "Song of the Partisans," is that we should not give up because things will be better in the future. After the isolation and abandonment we may feel upon learning that the world is deaf to our cries, we sing a song of encouragement, written in the second person, a message from Jew to Jew. The Jewish freedom fighters, who escaped the ghettos and worked to help people by hiding them in the forests during World War II, sang this song. The text contains imagery of "our courage and our faith" rising on the spot where "blood sprayed out and came to touch the

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[14] From *O the Chimneys* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, N. Y., 1967). Hoffman, 247.

[15] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 574.

land,"[16] a message of transformation from pain to faith in the future of humankind. The song was the freedom fighters' reaction in the face of violence and danger: they sang a song of encouragement to others in the same difficult situation. The freedom fighters themselves, although they escaped the ghettos, still lived in this time of crisis. Their own difficult existence made them uniquely able to reach out to others from a place of truly knowing what they needed to hear.[17]

The words of this song are set to the melody of a Soviet song, "These Are Not War Clouds," by Dmitri and Daniel Pakras.[18] The song is in quadruple meter, like a march, and contains the repeated rhythmic figure of dotted-eighth and sixteenth notes. This figure is the only rhythm in the song besides the half notes at the ends of phrases where the melody rests. The march-like quality of the song brings war- time to mind, while the upbeat nature of this rhythmic figure conveys the inspirational nature of the song.

Of all the readings thus far, the inspirational text and upbeat nature of "*Zog Nit Keynmol*" is the one that may leave the worshippers feeling hopeful for the future. The meditation that follows, by Chaim Stern, provides further guidance regarding how one can proceed forward with hope. First, he warns again, as Shlonsky instructed in the first selection, that we must never forget or ignore "the noise of war" and "the rasp of hate,"

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Weintraub, 22.

[18] Jerry Silverman, ed., *The Undying Flame: Ballads and Songs of the Holocaust* (Syracuse University Press, 2002), 108.

even though "we long for harmony."[19] He urges us to move past the terrible moments of the past by making good choices for the future. Although good and evil both exist in the world, and there is no way for us to know which force will triumph, we constantly have the opportunity to choose between them. By choosing "rightly," we contribute to the reparation of the world.

Stern adds that due to the difficult task of maintaining faith and hope in the face of the evils that have befallen the Jewish people, we "need strength and help" to face the future. The reading encourages us to turn to God for the help we need. It acknowledges how easy it would be to give up hope after the Holocaust. After all, wasn't it also the goal of the victims to "choose rightly" in order to create a better future? In the 1970s when this prayerbook was published, thinkers and philosophers were just beginning to speak publicly about the Holocaust, and their words were not encouraging. Stern argued that God was not dead, as Richard Rubenstein suggested,[20] but was still the force that creates, sustains, loves, and inspires. To aid worshippers in turning to God, he offers a prayer: "O God, help us to build Your Kingdom, one human world united in heart and soul!"[21] This prayer looks to the future, and urges us to look beyond the silence and indifference of the world to see that we are all human, and our goal is to create one world just as God is one.

If at this point the worshippers still doubt the possibility of maintaining faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, the placement of the next selection, "*Ani*

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[19] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 575.

[20] Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966).

[21] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 575.

*Ma'amin*," seems to be designed to erase this doubt. This song, dubbed "Song of Faith" in English, was popular among the prisoners in the camps during World War II. Its inclusion implies that if they were able to continue to sing of their faith in the future while enduring great suffering, surely we can be inspired by their example now. In addition to strengthening Stern's point of view, the repetitive nature of this song also may allow the worshipper to take a moment to reflect on the ideas presented thus far, providing a spiritual moment that does not involve the presentation of new cognitive material that would command the worshipper's attention.[22]

## Statutory liturgy

At this point in the prayerbook, following the singing of "*Ani Ma'amin*," the statutory liturgy begins. As a group, the selections in the introduction acknowledged the great suffering of the Jews and the difficulty of maintaining faith, steadily building on the themes of belief and the human power to direct the future. The statutory prayers, beginning with the *Chatsi Kaddish* and the *Bar'chu*, continue on the path set in the introduction. "*Ani Ma'amin*" does admit that the messiah could be delayed, a slightly negative idea; however, the *Chatsi Kaddish* and the *Bar'chu* are doxologies, statements of pure praise for God. While it may seem difficult to speak praise for God in the shadow of such great suffering, we do so anyway. The idea is not a new one. Rabbi Maurice Lamm interprets Psalm 105 as directing us to do just that. He teaches that

[22] For musical analysis of "*Ani Ma'amin*" see chapter I, pp. 19-20.

among the ways to combat victimhood are: singing to God; praising God; seeking God; and remembering God.[23]

This service is written for use in the evening or in the morning. Therefore, the next rubric offers both *Yotser* and *Ma'ariv Aravim*, with the Hebrew texts appearing side by side. The English translation, however, is only of the *Ma'ariv Aravim*, and is adapted from a translation in the old Union Prayer Book.[24] The choice to translate only *Ma'ariv Aravim* could be practical, in that the compilers anticipated that the service would more likely be used in the evening. However, the theme of *Ma'ariv Aravim* also resonates with the theme of the service. The prayer talks of darkness that comes before dawn: "the shadows of evening fall and the gates of morn are opened."[25] This could also be a metaphor for redemption that follows despair and suffering. In addition, this particular translation is the one that would have been read in Reform synagogues during World War II. For people who remember that time, these words may be comforting and may serve to open the doors of memory.

*Ahavah Rabbah* and *Ahavat Olam* are also printed side by side in Hebrew. The English does not correspond to either of the Hebrew prayers, but rather is a segment written on a similar theme as an introduction to the *Sh'ma* in the Union Prayer Book.[26] The context of the English clearly relates to the theme of this service: "In every crisis of

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[23] Rabbi Maurice Lamm, "Breaking the Spiritual Gridlock: An Introdiction to Psalm 105," in *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, ed. Weintraub, 81.

[24] Hoffman, 247.

[25] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 577.

[26] Hoffman, 247.

our life, in the very presence of death, we Jews have affirmed our faith in the One and Only God. This was our armor against the fury and suffering of the centuries, and by this we have risen to a sublime ministry of service."[27] This continues the theme of praising God as a means of maintaining faith in difficult times. It also implies that if we had not experienced the great challenges that required the armor of affirmation, we would not have risen to our current place in world. Thus these experiences of "fury and suffering" are an essential part of our collective history.

The text continues, referring to the Sh'ma as "the ancient witness of our ancestors." The word "witness" hearkens back to the opening poem, but uses the term in a different way. Before, it referred to eyes witnessing slaughter; now, it is used as a positive expression of faith binding the generations to each other and to God. Debbie Friedman writes that the recognition that our ancestors used the same prayers we use and were sustained by them is helpful, because it can lead us to the realization that these prayers can sustain us as well.[28]

Following the *Sh'ma*, the editors use the English version of the *V'ahavta* to bring more of a consciousness of world events to the forefront. Lines from *The Moral Outrage of Vietnam*, by Abraham Joshua Heschel, are interspersed between the lines of the English translation of the *V'ahavta*.[29] Heschel's reflections on the meaning of prayer and how the world has changed color the words of the *V'ahavta*, our instructions about loving God. Heschel teaches that the whole world is united by God's presence; that by prayer,

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[27] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 577.

[28] Debbie Friedman, foreword to *Jewish Paths toward Healing and Wholeness*, by Olitzky, xvi.

[29] Hoffman, 217.

we "stake our very existence" on what we pray for; that the world can change after Auschwitz and Hiroshima based on the decisions we make and the values we teach; and that all people are responsible for the ills for which only some are guilty.

The inclusion of Auschwitz and Hiroshima in the same sentence creates a universalistic framework for this prayer. This contrasts with, but does not negate, the previous Nelly Sachs poem. This makes it clear that other nations are also the victims of great suffering and everyone living in a free society is involved in the actions of that society. Heschel is emphatic about the importance and gravity of prayer; he is even more insistent about our responsibility to turn our beliefs into actions. In a free society, even though we may not come face to face with national suffering, we are still obligated to fight evil. This emphasis on the actions we choose reflecting our values and having an impact on the world is similar to the earlier meditation by Stern about influencing the ultimate triumph of good over evil through the decisions we make.

In the 1970s, the atomic bomb was a pervasive threat. As nations developed bombs, people felt the constant threat of annihilation. With the possibility of death looming, the details of life can take on a heightened importance. Heschel's reaction to this situation was to examine the nature of God and humans, and to attempt to provide people with something they could hold on to: the power to affect the world positively through action and prayer. The prayerbook editors add another thought of Heschel's after this reflection, this time from *The Insecurity of Freedom*: "Holiness, an essential attribute of God, can become a quality of our own. The human can become holy."[30] Stern said we want to be like God in oneness; Heschel says we can be like God in holiness.

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[30] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 579; Hoffman, 217.

After this major philosophical moment, the editors once again provide the worshipper with a musical respite. This one also doubles as a proof text for Heschel's final thought. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy".[31] It is not clear if the editors had a particular setting of this text in mind when they indicated it as a musical selection because the *Gates of Song* does not contain any settings of this text and no single setting stands out as an obvious selection thirty years after the publication of the prayerbook. However, Charles Davidson's setting of this verse, from his larger work, *Dialogue With Destiny*, would have been ideally suited for this point in the service.[32]

The piece begins with a two-measure piano introduction, all on an E minor chord, with sustained notes in the left hand and flowing arpeggiated eighth notes in the right hand. This texture is maintained when the voices enter in the third measure. The soprano sings a flowing melody, using the text, "*k'doshim tih'yu,*" while the bass and alto sustain longer notes repeating the word, "*k'doshim.*" In the first nine measures of the choral part, the soprano sings in two-measure phrases, repeating the text, "*k'doshim tih'yu*" four times, while the alto and bass (and optional tenor part) repeat "*k'doshim*" three times over the first five measures, and then "*tih'yu*" three times over the next four measures. Harmonically, the alto and bass parts are supporting the soprano melody with varied harmonizations; textually, they are presenting a different interpretation of the same text. The repetition of the text in this piece has a similar effect as the repetition of "ani ma'amin" in that song: the singers are repeating God's words, "You shall be holy," over

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[31] Lev. 19:2.

[32] Charles Davidson, *K'doshim Tihyu*, for SAB Choir and Piano, from *Dialogue with Destiny* (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications/New Jewish Music Press. 1967.)

and over, and perhaps as they sing them they are trying to convince themselves, and the congregation, that it is true. In the eighth and ninth measures of the choral parts, the harmonic rhythm of the alto and bass parts speeds up, as they repeat, "*tih'yu, tih'yu*," "you will be, you will be," the rising and falling of the parallel fifths urging the listener to hold on to this belief.

After this point, all three parts begin to sing the text together, lending an air of solidarity to the music that was not present when they were singing different variations of the text. The tonality shifts for a few measures to the area of G major, and the tessitura moves up, which provides the sense that something has happened even though the text remains the same. Indeed, there are many different ways to say the same words. One can say "You shall be holy" with a sense of doubt or with a sense of confidence, and in this setting many different ways of expressing these words are conveyed in a short amount of time through the music. The most striking moment of this middle section occurs after the brief shift to G major, when, after the harmonic structure returns to E minor, Davidson quotes the sighing, descending pairs of eighth notes from "*Ani Ma'amin*."[33]

The end of the piece returns to the opening musical line, but after four measures the text changes. It is only after going on a musical journey using only the first two words of this verse that the text continues on to the rest of the sentence, "*ki kadosh Ani Adonai eloheichem*," "for I, Adonai your God, am holy." The music remains identical to the opening section, which makes the listener feel as though they are hearing something familiar. In this setting, it is only after many repetitions of the first two words, "You shall be holy," that God comes into the picture. It is as though the belief in the power of

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[33] See pp. 29-30.

humans to be holy gives them the impetus to look for God in that holiness. This is Heschel's message represented in a musical format: hold on to the power of humans in the world and God's presence will be known through human action.

After this selection, the message of the prayerbook changes. After presenting the worshipper with the complex concepts of the battle between good and evil, the frightening realities of oppression and atomic warfare, and the mind-bending question of where the human race fits into the picture, the editors provide a text of comfort. While the Hebrew texts of *Al HaRishonim* and *Emet V'Emunah* are unchanged, the English is not a translation of the prayers, but is from Isaiah 43:1-2 and 5-7.[34] In this text, God promises redemption and protection to the people of Israel, whether they pass through water or fire. God also promises to gather the people of Israel together from the east, west, north, and south. The text of this *G'ulah* section continues with both the evening and morning versions of the *Mi Chamocha* with the Hebrew intact, but offers only two sentences in English: "You are the Redeemer of Israel and all the oppressed. Blessed is the Eternal One, the God of Israel, the Source of freedom."[35]

Why have the editors chosen this spot in the service for the first message of assurance? The fact that they chose to put the excerpt from Isaiah here instead of the statutory liturgy shows that this more traditional representation of God as an all-powerful redeemer is what they wanted to stress at this point. Perhaps they chose it in order to appease a different segment of the Reform Jewish population, who still held traditional views and did not want to challenge God's power. Perhaps this choice was meant to

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[34] Hoffman, 247.

[35] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 580.

mirror the emotional development of many psalms, which begin with cries for help or expressions of pain and shift to declarations of praise and faith at the end.[36] Or perhaps the editors were concerned about doubts and fears that may still linger in the worshipper's mind from contemplation of the previous material, and wanted to provide a positive image of God's presence to enable the worshipper to pray the Amidah with fewer doubts in mind.

The *Amidah* contains short versions of several prayers, including the *Avot*, *G'vurot*, and the *Havineinu*, a condensation of all of the middle blessings of the Amidah. The short version of the *Avot* comes from Palestinian ritual, and exists in the traditional liturgy only in the *M'ein Sheva* of Shabbat.[37] The English version is not an exact translation of the Hebrew but conveys a similar idea. Perhaps the editors chose this version of the *Avot* to highlight the different nature of this service. It makes the usual ritual unfamiliar and perhaps less comfortable for people. It causes the literate worshipper to take note of the differences in the liturgy and concentrate in a different way. For those unfamiliar with the liturgy, this version still conveys the essence of the prayer but moves the service forward to the heart of the *Amidah*.

The English translation of the abbreviated *G'vurot* is accurate but contains some additional words. Instead of the usual meaning, that God is the helper of the fallen, the healer of the sick, etc., Stern creates a different meaning by writing, "through us send

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[36] Rabbi Charles Sheer, "The Remarkable Faith of a Downcast Soul: Introduction to Psalm 42," in *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, ed. Weintraub, 55.

[37] Hoffman, 200.

help to the falling, healing to the sick," etc.[38] This version first appears in the Gates of Prayer in Shabbat service IV, a service designed around the theme of social justice. The goal of that service is to emphasize "personal righteousness as our response to the Divine imperative.[39] This translation, emphasizing the human role in the demonstration of God's power, is reminiscent of the earlier selections by both Stern and Heschel on the importance of making good choices and the possibility of becoming holy through our actions. In this context, the *K'dushat HaShem* and *K'dushah*, which follow, both of which are printed in Hebrew and English in their entirety, take on a different dimension.

The heading for the *K'dushat HaShem*, which is usually translated in the Gates of Prayer as "God's Holiness," appears here as "Be Holy,"[40] continuing the emphasis on the human embodiment of God's holiness. The English translation of both of these prayers is accurate. The use of the complete versions of these prayers serves to highlight the theme of holiness, as opposed to the first two blessings of the *Amidah*, which were shortened, and therefore not emphasized. The final part of the *K'dushah* begins, "To all generations we will make known your greatness,"[41] which must be understood in this context as making good choices and turning our prayers into actions, as Stern and Heschel urged us to do. The emphasis here is on the human responsibility involved in making God's holiness manifest in the world.

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[38] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 582.

[39] Hoffman, 173.

[40] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 582.

[41] Ibid., 583.

The central prayers in the *Amidah* for this service are all prayers specifically for these days of observance. The first, the *Havineinu*, is a prayer that contains phrases from each of the thirteen intermediary blessings of the *Amidah*. Traditionally, this condensed version can be used when one cannot properly recite the full version.[42] During the Holocaust and other times of crisis in Jewish history, there were certainly many occasions when Jews would have used this version of the middle blessings. For example, they may not have had time to recite the full *Amidah*, or they also may not have had prayerbooks, and this version would have been easier to remember. The purpose of the *Havineinu* in this service may be to recall those times of danger when Jews did not always have the luxury of taking time to pray a complete service. On the other hand, the editors could be using this prayer to get through the *Amidah* more quickly in order to get to the blessings that specifically pertain to *Tisha B'Av* and *Yom HaShoah*.

**Special additions to the Amidah**

In the traditional liturgy, the chazzan recites the "*Aneinu*" prayer on all fast days, after the prayer for redemption, in the middle section of the *Amidah*.[43] Here, the prayer comes after the *Havineinu*, fairly close to its traditional spot in the service. The prayer begins, "Answer us... on this day of our fast, for we are in great distress."[44] Due to the fact that Reform Jews did not traditionally fast on *Tisha B'Av*, the editors changed this

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[42] Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service* (*n.p.*: BasicBooks, 1980), 107.

[43] Scherman, 104.

[44] Ibid., 105.

first line to read, "Answer us, O Lord, answer us as we remember our affliction, the grievous trouble that so often overtook us."[45] The prayer asks God not to remember our faults or turn away from us, but to hear our prayer. It cites a verse from the Book of Isaiah where God promises to answer before we even ask: "I shall answer before they have spoken; I shall heed their call before it is uttered".[46] Interestingly, the English translation of the *Havineinu* left out, "Before we call comes your reply." Here, we see the same idea expressed, but it comes straight from the biblical source. Perhaps the editors left that line out of the *Havineinu* so that it could become the focus of the next prayer.

*Aneinu* brings a big change to the message of this service. Until now, there was a heavy emphasis on human power in the world. This prayer offers a picture of the other side of the relationship, portraying what God is supposed to do when our actions are not enough. We have to pray to God to help God remember God's promise. God promised to answer us in the Book of Isaiah, yet clearly God has not answered. We must ask God again in this prayer, reminding God of God's promise, quoting God's own words, and naming God as the one "who answers the afflicted."[47]

The imagery surrounding the quotation from the Book of Isaiah is quite compelling when held up to the situations that surrounded both the destruction of the Temple and the Holocaust. This part of chapter 65 describes rebuilding and starting over. God is creating a new heaven and earth, and what came before it will be forgotten.

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[45] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 584.

[46] Is. 65:24.

[47] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 584.

Bringing up an image like this on a day that commemorates such terrible times in history may offer the hope that the world can still be recreated in the future. Perhaps the editors are urging us to combine this vision of the future with our own potential for holiness, in the hope that through our partnership with God we can help make this new world a reality.

*Nacheim*, which follows *Aneinu* in this service, focuses more on the present and past than the future. Traditionally, the chazzan recites this prayer during the afternoon service on *Tisha B'Av*.[48] On *Tisha B'Av*, Jews are mourning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. As one who is mourning a relative should not be comforted until after the funeral, so a Jew should not be comforted until the afternoon of *Tisha B'Av*, as the day of mourning draws to a close. However, since the editors did not expect Reform Jews to hold more than one service (if they held any at all) on *Tisha B'Av*, this prayer is simply included, no matter when they conduct the service. Traditionally the chazzan recites this prayer as part of the prayer for Jerusalem, another of the intermediary blessings in the *Amidah*.[49] Once again, because of the use of the *Havineinu*, the editors placed the prayer as close as possible to that spot, after the *Havineinu* and after *Aneinu*. The effect, however, is completely different from the effect in the traditional service. In the traditional service, *Aneinu* is read at the evening and morning services. *Nacheim* is then read in the afternoon. The community has asked for God to answer them several

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[48] Eliyahu Kitov, *The Book of our Heritage*, excerpted on *The Three Weeks Calendar* [website] (Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center, 2003, accessed 13 June 2004); available from http://www.thethreeweeks.com/calendar/9av.htm; Internet.

[49] Scherman, 241.

times before comfort is actually extended through this prayer. In this Reform service, however, comfort comes on the heels of the request.

Due to the fact that Reform Jews do not mourn the destruction of the Temple, because they are not praying for its restoration, many of the verb tenses in this prayer have been altered.[50] These changes alter the overall message of the prayer by making it more of an affirmation of reality than a petition as in the original prayer, which is a request for God's comfort. The traditional version reads, "Comfort Zion's mourners," but the Reform one reads, "You are the comforter of Zion's mourners." This version gives more of a sense that Zion's mourners exist in the world and God comforts them, but we do not necessarily pray for comfort as mourners ourselves. The traditional "She is without her children" reads "How long were her children exiled" in the Reform version, reflecting the Reform belief that the Jews are no longer in exile, but have found their homes in their new countries. Similarly, the traditional "There she [Jerusalem] sits with head bowed like a woman bereft" was changed to "there she sat." "You consumed her with fire, as with fire You will rebuild her" is changed to "You saw her consumed with fire, as with fire You see her rebuilt." This change highlights the human role in history by taking the action away from God, and changing the image of God to an observer of the event rather than a perpetrator, and also changes the tense of the second clause to indicate that rebuilding of Jerusalem has already begun with the creation of the state of Israel. When looked at quickly, these changes seem slight, and seem to maintain the integrity of the prayer. When looked at closely, however, one can see that the major beliefs behind the original version have been completely changed by changing only a few words.

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[50] Hoffman, 247-248.

The penultimate sentence in *Nacheim* is a proof text from Zechariah for the concept of destruction and rebuilding with fire. "As for me, says the Lord, I will be fiery all about her, and a glory in her midst."[51] Zechariah was a priest, and his book emphasizes priestly and Temple matters. He encouraged the people who returned from exile to repent for their evil ways, return to God, and rebuild the Temple. At the time, the people felt their efforts were insignificant and the future was uncertain. Zechariah's message focuses on the future, when the gentile empires will be destroyed, Israel will be saved, and God will send the messiah.[52] His message is similar to some of the themes in this service that focus on the future and encourage people to take action.

## Conclusion of Amidah

After *Nacheim*, the service returns to the prayers of the daily Amidah with *R'tsei*. The editors omit the middle sentence of the prayer and provide an alternative ending, "Blessed is Adonai, whom alone we serve in reverence,"[53] taken from the reader's repetition of the Festival *Musaf Amidah* of the Hamburg Temple.[54] The English translation is fairly literal. It is interesting to note that *R'tsei* is one of the benedictions included in the *Havineinu*, and by including a version of the prayer here it appears twice

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[51] Zech. 2:9.

[52] J. Hampton Keathley IV, *Zechariah* [website] (Biblical Studies Press, 2003, accessed 9 July 2004); available from http://www.bible.org/docs/ot/books/minorp/zach.htm; Internet.

[53] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 586.

[54] Hoffman, 207.

in the service. The *Havineinu* ends, "Blessed is the Lord, who hearkens to prayer,"[55] a representation of *R'tsei*, which asks God to accept our prayers.

The emphasis on *R'tsei* does not even end with this shortened version. The next English paragraph in the service dwells on the theme of the middle sentence that the editors omitted, which reads in part, "Let our eyes behold Your presence in our midst and in the midst of our people in Zion." This paragraph begins, "Eternal God, may Your love rest on Zion. Grant that the promise of her beginning may grow into a redemption for all Israel and all the world." and ends, "Blessed is the Lord, whose presence gives life to His people Israel."[56] This short paragraph functions in several ways. It continues on the theme of the missing section of *R'tsei*, but changes the traditional hope for the future to encouragement in the present, implying that the creation of the state of Israel is the beginning of a redemptive process. By including this line about Zion, the editors create an emphasis on Zion within the *Amidah*. The prayer for Jerusalem was first represented in the *Havineinu*, with the line, "Let the righteous rejoice in the building of Your city."[57] It continued in *Nacheim*, which is traditionally inserted in the prayer for Jerusalem and ends with its *chatimah*, "Blessed is the Lord, Comforter of Zion and Rebuilder of Jerusalem."[58] This additional sentence about God's love resting on Zion is the third time this theme is highlighted within the *Amidah*. A similar emphasis is given to the theme of God's acceptance of our prayers, seen in the *Havineinu* first, then in the shortened *R'tsei*,

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[55] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 584.

[56] Ibid., 586.

[57] Ibid., 584.

[58] Ibid., 585.

and then in the conclusion of the English paragraph, which is the traditional *chatimah* for *R'tsei.*

The next prayer, *Modim*, also does not appear in its traditional form. Here, the editors chose the *Modim D'Rabbanan*, a shorter version of the prayer, and they substitute "Give us strength," in the Hebrew, for "gather our exiles to Your holy courts."[59] This version of *Modim* originally appears in the Gates of Prayer in Shabbat Evening Service II, which is constructed around the theme of religious naturalism and contains an emphasis on the role of humans.[60] This resonates with the introductory material in this service about the power of humans to direct history. The English paired with this Hebrew selection is a free translation from a different service in the Gates of Prayer, Shabbat Evening Service VII, which centers around the themes of covenant and commandment, emphasizing humanity and the human relation to God.[61] It highlights God's presence throughout history and time; it also emphasizes life and the choices we make, and asks for God's help to "walk in Your way with a whole heart."[62]

Characteristically, the editors do not leave this embrace of life and prayer to God alone. The next meditation by Chaim Stern provides the subtext for what he assumes some worshippers are thinking as they read the words of *Modim*. "How can we give thanks when we remember Treblinka?" After urging worshippers to thank God, Stern admits that perhaps they cannot, adding, "Only silence speaks loudly enough for our

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[59] Hoffman, 207.

[60] Ibid., 172; for the Hebrew prayer text, see *Gates of Prayer*, 155.

[61] Ibid., 174; for the English prayer text, see *Gates of Prayer*, 232.

[62] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 587.

millions who were marched into the abyss." Once again he calls on the faith of those who believed in the face of such great challenges, those who sang: "I believe in redemption. *Ani ma'amin*," and who sang the Song of the Partisans. Interestingly, after Stern quotes those people who lived through such hardship, his message changes. It moves from one questioning our ability to thank God to one celebrating the Jewish people's ability to renew itself, saying that no other people has the faith or the will to live of the Jews. He returns to the message introduced earlier through the words of Zechariah. Stern asserts that the future should be the focus when he writes, "In the sky, a rainbow signals hope and new life. Again, and yet again, there is a song to sing."[63] This text first appears in *Gates of Prayer* in Shabbat Evening Service III, which centers around the mystical search, attempting to affirm faith "in the face of full recognition of all that challenges our trust."[64]

In this meditation, Stern states that it is because we remember the hardship of our people that we cannot give thanks. This repeats the theme of remembrance expressed in the opening poem. Shlonsky used remembrance as a power to direct human actions for the future. Here, however, it is a source of paralysis, rendering people unable to thank God. The silence that exists in the absence of prayers of thanks leads Stern to question God's silence in the face of the need of the Jewish people. Silence was an important theme in the second reading, where Sachs pointed out the silence of other people when the Jews needed their help. Even though God may have been hiding, the Jewish people made a commitment to renew themselves by maintaining their belief and by expressing it

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Hoffman, 172.

in song. It is one thing to believe something, but another to proclaim it aloud. As in the Psalms, after Stern points out that the Jewish people proclaimed themselves aloud in song, the message of his narration changes. He recounts what the Jews were singing about and realizes that even in their darkest hour they were hoping for the future. Stern's expression of hope is defiant, arguing that the Jews have the most faith and the greatest will to live of all peoples. His reference to the rainbow at the end of the meditation seems to hearken back to the story of Noah, when, after the whole world was destroyed except a tiny remnant of people and animals, a rainbow appeared in the sky. This is not only an echo of post-Holocaust reality, when only a small displaced remnant of European Jewry existed, but also of the earlier selections by Shlonsky, Heschel, Deutero-Isaiah, and Zechariah.

As with many of the statutory prayers in this service, the editors provide both the evening and the morning versions of *Birkat Shalom*, *Shalom Rav* and *Sim Shalom*, side by side in Hebrew, but only provide one English text. The English is not a translation of any of the Hebrew texts, but is Chaim Stern's adaptation of a poem by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, "*Adon HaShalom*," "Lord of Peace."[65] This English text focuses on the inner peace of the individual. By using the text, "Let the day come when we turn to the Lord of peace," the editors continue to acknowledge that this may not be a possibility for people right now but it conveys the hope that they will be able to do so in the future. It taps into Heschel's universalism by praying for a time when "all are a single family doing

[65] Ibid., 210.

His will with a perfect heart." It asks God to "lead us to a healing, to mastery of all that drives us to war within ourselves and with others."[66]

Although Rabbi Nachman was a great leader of the Bratslav Chasidim, his life was filled with conflict. In addition to living in a state of constant inner struggle,[67] he also engaged in outer struggles with other religious leaders as a means of uniting his own inner struggling factions against someone else. Even though he tried to build a theology based on conflict,[68] this prayer is evidence that he prayed for his life of conflict to have some kind of resolution. This prayer adds yet another dimension to the suffering of the Jewish people. Until this point in the service, we have seen depictions of national and individual suffering at the hands of other nations, and the complicity of God in that suffering. We have also seen suffering as it related to the complex nature of a Jew's relationship with God after this suffering occurred, and the Jew's inability to praise God, or even believe in God, at that time. But this is the first time that personal, internal suffering is acknowledged. Nachman's claim that the core of religion lies in the inner life of the individual was unique and unprecedented,[69] but this is an idea that probably resonates with Reform Jews today. If the inner self is divided, it is much more difficult to do God's will "with a perfect heart."

Next, the editors bring the worshipper from Rabbi Nachman's inner world to the larger world of the life of the Jewish people in relation to other peoples. They

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[66] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 588.

[67] Green, 40.

[68] Ibid., 115.

[69] Ibid., 146.

accomplish this by offering a final meditation by Elie Wiesel,[70] which begins, "Our mission involves other peoples."[71] The word "mission" is one often used in connection with the Reform movement as a part of the rationalization of the belief that Reform Jews are no longer in exile, but have settled in their new lands to fulfill their mission of being "light to the nations." The word also resonates with the meditation before the *Sh'ma*, which referred to the Jews' "ministry of service."

Wiesel's words also reflect his well-known defiant attitude, saying that "[the world] must admit that we [the Jews] do have in our possession the key to survival. We have not survived centuries of atrocities for nothing."[72] It is important to Wiesel to find meaning in the suffering of the Jewish people.[73] He writes that "we are trying to prove to ourselves... [that] in a world of absurdity, we must invent reason; we must create beauty out of nothingness." Although he begins by trying to believe that the world must notice the Jews' remarkable ability to survive against the odds, by the second paragraph he admits that Jews must create their own meaning in a world that has none. And although his words contain a rallying cry to "fight murder and absurdity," he ends on a note tinged with doubt: "This is not a lesson; this is not an answer. It is only a question."[74]

The *Amidah* ends with a musical selection, *Yih'yu L'ratzon* or *Oseh Shalom.*

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[70] Hoffman, 248.

[71] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 588.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Laytner, 214.

[74] Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, 588.

## Optional Torah reading

The instructions at the bottom of page 589 indicate that Deuteronomy 4:30-40 may be read for these occasions. These eleven verses from the Torah portion *Va'etchanan,* are normally read during the week of *Tisha B'Av. Parashat Va'etchanan* is a relatively long and rich Torah portion, containing both the Sh'ma and the second version of the Ten Commandments. Yet the editors selected only these eleven verses of the portion for this service. Their selection, when read out of context, may be vague enough for people to glean hope from them no matter what day they are observing.

These verses begin by claiming that God is compassionate and "will not fail you nor will He let you perish,"[75] because "God will not forget the covenant which God made on oath with your fathers."[76] The narrative refers to the revelation at Sinai, saying that nothing so grand has ever happened to another people. It proclaims that Adonai alone is God, and that God has proven this by letting the Jews hear God's voice from heaven, appearing amidst fire, and leading the Jews out of Egypt. It speaks of God's ability to keep the Jews alive against the odds: "God, with God's presence, in God's great might, led you out of Egypt, to drive from your path nations greater and more populous than you."[77] It then indicates that if those listening to the words Moses speaks observe God's laws and commandments, "it may go well with you and your children after you, and that

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[75] Deut. 4:31.

[76] Deut. 4:31.

[77] Deut. 4:37-38.

you may long remain in the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you for all time."[78]

However, after the service that the editors crafted, seeing only these messages of hope in this short reading would be a challenge for the worshipper who comes to mourn the great tragedies of Jewish history. It would be difficult, when listening to these verses, not to see the immediate presence of God at Sinai and during the Exodus as standing in contrast to the distance from God many have felt in modern life and the silence on God's part discussed in the service. We also know that God's promise that the Jewish people would "long remain in the land" was short-lived. And for the modern Reform Jew, observance of mitzvot is not a daily reality, so the promise that such an observance would ensure one's future is not even relevant. Perhaps this is why the instruction in the prayerbook is that these verses "may" be read, for there is no guarantee that the worshipper would find them comforting. It also leaves open the possibility that other verses could be chosen. After the prayerbook directs us to the Torah service, there are no further instructions that relate specifically to this service.

## Conclusion

This service contains elements of both *Tisha B'Av* and *Yom HaShoah*: For *Tisha B'Av*, it contains the traditional prayers "*Aneinu*" and "*Nacheim*," and for *Yom HaShoah* it contains poetry by poets Shlonsky and Sachs and selections by Heschel and Wiesel. These are interspersed with creative translations of the statutory liturgy and meditations by the prayerbook editors. All of these texts are combined to produce a service that

[78] Deut. 4:40.

emphasizes human power in the face of evil that culminates with Wiesel's defiant stand against the absurdity of the world. Throughout the service the editors urge the worshippers to take their fates and the fate of the Jewish people into their own hands, and emphasize the potential for people to become holy. This is a fairly positive angle considering the historical events these services commemorate. In the face of so much destruction, the editors ask the worshippers to learn from experience so that the past suffering will not have been in vain and will not be repeated.

Traditional observance of Tisha B'Av is as a day of mourning, a day of deepest sadness over the great national losses of the Jews. People fast and mourn as if a member of their immediate family has just died. On that day, it would not be at all encouraging to hear about how one might learn lessons from this death for the future. In that sense, the message of the Reform prayerbook is at odds with the traditions of Tisha B'Av. This service does not allow for mourning at all. However, the position of the Reform movement is that Reform Jews do not mourn for these events because they were the precursor for modern Jewish life as we know it. With the reinterpretation of Tisha B'Av as a day of mourning for multiple tragedies in Jewish history, Reform Jews might find observing this day of mourning more emotionally relevant than it was as a day of mourning for the destruction of the Ancient Temple.

For the observance of Yom HaShoah as well, the message of the selected texts seems to be that we should learn from the terrible experience of the Holocaust and vow to protect our people from such an onslaught in the future. Here, too, the editors avoid dwelling on negative images. Their focus is more philosophical, with the goal of trying to make sense of this event. This could be due to the context in which they were

compiling this book. After the silence of Jewish thinkers on the subject of the Holocaust, thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s were trying to reconcile belief in God and commitment to Judaism and Jewish life with the atrocities of the Holocaust. Some were failing. The Death of God theory, represented in Jewish thinking by Richard Rubenstein, was present in the minds of Jewish thinkers of the time and the editors seem to have been trying to refute his negative ideas.[79] This service promotes an image of a God that certainly exists, but not as a separate, willful power: God can be seen only through humans who, like God, can achieve holiness and who can represent God in the world through their choices and actions.

Today, worshippers may be looking for a different sort of emotional content for their Yom HaShoah services. Many congregations create their own commemorations, rather than using the service in the *Gates of Prayer*. These may contain prayers, musical selections, poetry, or the reading of the names of people who perished in the Holocaust. Overall, these presentations contain more depth of emotion and less searching for understanding than is represented in this service. Perhaps it is chronological distance from the event that makes it easier for people to face the emotional depths today. Fewer survivors are still alive, and as a people we are striving to remember and honor those who lived and died in the Holocaust.

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[79] Rubenstein believed that after the Holocaust, the Jews were living without any superhuman power, and although they may still attend synagogue for other reasons, the God language that once resonated with them no longer did. The human connection with God was severed. Rachel Sabath-Beit Halachmi, *Radical Theology: Confronting the Crises of Modernity* [website] (MyJewishLearning, Inc., 2004, accessed 23 October 2004); available from http://www.myjewishlearning.com/ideas_belief/god/God_TO_Modern_2/God_Radical Sabath_Final.htm; Internet.

# CONCLUSION

The *Gates of Prayer* sections entitled "In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering" and "Service for Tisha Be-Av and Yom Ha-Shoah" provide a framework through which to examine Jewish emotional responses to suffering and crisis. They present material drawn from Jewish sources, from biblical times through the 20th century. The emotions represented in these examples are emotions that people still feel today, although they may not realize that our ancestors had similar reactions to difficult times.

The picture of Rachel weeping over her children provides an image of a woman grieving over the loss of her children. She not only weeps, but she refuses to be comforted. This is a natural reaction, one that most people have had at some point in their lives. It is a reaction that children often have, sending their parents scrambling to try to find a solution that will calm them down. In the Bible, Rachel is presented as a strong and caring woman who Jacob is determined to marry; after being tricked into marrying her older sister Leah, Jacob ends up working for her father for an additional seven years before he can marry Rachel. Yet even this greatly desirable woman meets difficult times in her life. She longed for children yet had trouble conceiving and giving birth, and here, according to the Prophets, she ultimately loses her children. Even she, one of our four matriarchs, is depicted as breaking down and weeping inconsolably. Today, we have many occasions when we are devastated by loss, as Rachel was; it is natural for us to feel this kind of deep sadness, especially in a world where God can seem so distant.

The introductory reading of "In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering" contains a quotation from the poet Chayim Nachman Bialik, "To me the whole world is one

gallows." This sentence conveys a sense of hopelessness. It seems as though he cannot see anything but the negative everywhere he looks. If the whole world is a gallows, that means that he feels the potential of death in every experience. This would lead to the death of the spirit and the death of feeling: in modern parlance this could be termed severe, clinical depression. This type of reaction to difficult times can come at any point: after weeping as Rachel did, in direct reaction to suffering itself, after struggling to overcome adversity and feeling as though the effort has failed, or even for no apparent reason. Sometimes it is important to feel this sense of helplessness in order to then feel that helplessness is not the answer to the problem. In the prayerbook, the editors urge the worshippers not to remain in this emotional area for long. Yet Bialik was not alone in this intense despair. For some people it is an important step on the road to overcoming adversity.

The excerpt from "If the prophets broke in," by Nelly Sachs, in "Service for Tisha Be-Av and Yom Ha-Shoah" describes feelings of anger directed at other people who do not help those who are suffering. Even though the excerpt is short, it describes a complex emotional state. Although Sachs accuses others of standing by while people suffer, she also suggests that those who are standing by are not capable of seeing the suffering. She accuses humankind of being occupied with unimportant minutia rather than being aware of the suffering of humanity.

Sachs's poem is a 20th-century example of Judaism's long tradition of expressing anger at those who did not help when they could have. The selection from the Book of Obadiah is an early example of this tradition. In Obadiah, in contrast to Sachs's poem, there is no indication that anything prevented the Edomites from helping the Jews during

their time of need; rather, it seems as though they chose not to. This simpler expression of anger enumerates each of the Edomites' transgressions.

The Book of Lamentations raises the same issue. The city of Jerusalem asks, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass along the road?" After this outburst, however, the tone changes to one of self-pity. This, too, is a natural reaction to being in need and not receiving help. If someone is suffering, yet is not receiving the necessary help, a natural reaction may be to look at the situation and feel a sense of self-pity. "Truly, your ruin is as vast as the sea! Who can heal you?" In the Bible, Jerusalem, the holy city, is portrayed as feeling a sense of abandonment and hopelessness.

The self-pity in the Book of Lamentations, however, is tinged with a sense of acceptance of blame for the situation Jerusalem is in. Jerusalem suffers because of her transgressions. Psalm 13 expresses a different side of this sense of abandonment. "How long, O Lord? Will we be forgotten for ever? How long will Your face be hidden from us?" This psalm indicates that bad fortune has befallen us even though we have not forgotten our covenant with God. In this case, we are calling out to God even though we do not know where God is because God is hiding. This action is guided by an emotional need. We call out in the hope that God will hear us, and also perhaps to satisfy our own need to cry out, providing ourselves with an emotional release.

Job also believes that his suffering is unjust because he has not done anything wrong to bring it on himself. In the Book of Job, however, God is present in his life, and Job questions God closely about his fate. Job struggles mightily to try to understand why he is suffering. This is a natural reaction of a human being: humans are endowed with reason, and this is why so many of us struggle with the idea of faith. Job, who is often

held up as an example of blind faith, does not leap into acceptance of his suffering without a fight. He does not believe he deserves his suffering. Because of his struggle, we must believe that his acceptance of his fate at the end of the book has developed as a result of his search for understanding.

This quest to reconcile suffering with the image of a compassionate God has continued throughout Jewish history. In the 20th century, Abraham Joshua Heschel was engaged in the same process as Job. He was searching for a way to affirm God's presence in modern times alongside the global atrocities of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Like the city of Jerusalem in the Book of Lamentations, Heschel accepts some responsibility for the suffering of the world when he says, "In a free society, all are involved in what some are doing. Some are guilty, all are responsible." At the same time, he blames others who did not help the Jews in their time of need, as Obadiah did. Heschel's writing expresses many feelings at once, without necessarily reconciling them. He searches for understanding while trying to maintain optimism for the future. Perhaps he uses this optimism to balance the current suffering of the world and prevent himself from feeling the helplessness Bialik speaks of.

Elie Wiesel's writing contains a similarly complex set of emotions. Like Heschel, he attempts to use reason to understand the state of humanity. He has a certain amount of faith in the Jewish people's ability to survive against the odds. He spent years trying, like Heschel, to understand the Jews' relationship with God after the Holocaust. Yet, there is uncertainty in his thinking as well, indicating that reason cannot fully solve the problem of reconciling the reality of suffering with the image of a compassionate God. At the end

of the Wiesel selection in "Service for Tisha BeAv and Yom Ha-Sho-ah," he writes, "This is not a lesson; this is not an answer. It is only a question."

Wiesel believes that Jewish identity and power after the Holocaust can be realized through action: The Jews must fight the absurdity of the world, which they have experienced firsthand. Avraham Shlonsky also reacts to the suffering of the Holocaust by reclaiming Jewish power. For Shlonsky, this power comes from memory. He believes that through the human power of memory, we can ensure that history will not be repeated. Like Wiesel and Heschel, Shlonsky focuses on the human power to change history more than he focuses on God's role in history. After the Holocaust, it was natural for the Jews to doubt God's power in their lives. Although some people today have become comfortable with the idea of embracing God in their lives again, there are still those who doubt this possibility. Contained in these services are examples of the greatest Jewish thinkers, stretching all the way back to the authors of the Psalms and forward to the modern era.

The "Service for Tisha Be-Av and Yom HaSho-ah also contains examples of praying to God in times of need. The instinct to pray to God for help is ancient, and there are examples of this type of prayer in the Bible. In the Book of Numbers, Moses prays to God to heal Miriam from her mysterious illness; in First Samuel, Chanah prays to God to grant her a child. The prayers inserted into the Amidah in the "Service for Tisha BeAv and Yom HaSho-ah" continue this tradition of prayer. *"Aneinu"* asks God to help us in our time of distress; *"Nacheim"* asks God to comfort the mourners of Zion. *"Aneinu"* picks up on some themes used in other sources. It asks God to ignore our wickedness, which is similar to the admission of guilt found in the Book of Lamentations; it also asks

God not to hide God's face from us, echoing the plea in Psalm 13. The version of "*Nacheim*" in the *Gates of Prayer* names God as the Comforter of Zion; however, the traditional version of the prayer asks God for comfort for the "city that is mournful, ruined, scorned, and desolate," language that also brings to mind the Book of Lamentations. "*Nacheim*" contains an outburst of emotion in the line, "My heart, my heart – [it aches] for the slain!" It is as though the mourner, who has just buried the dead, cannot contain himself any longer from pouring out his emotions to God.

The editors of the prayerbook do not dwell in the realm of negative emotion for long. They, represented in the writings of Chaim Stern, are more interested in looking toward the future and trying to remain positive in the face of the great suffering of the Jewish people. In perhaps one of Stern's best-known meditations, he asks, "How can we give thanks when we remember Treblinka?" But he does not stay with this thought for long. He moves quickly to the strength of the Jewish spirit, describing how even in the darkest times, our people continued singing. In these two sections of the prayerbook, it seems as though whenever the text leads the worshippers to feel a negative emotion, Stern provides a link to lead them back to a more positive one. His writing, however, is not completely positive; it still contains doubt as seen in the difficult questions he poses.

One of the proof texts Stern uses in his meditation on Treblinka is the first line of "Zog Nit Keynmol," a song of the Partisans from World War II. This song is a completely positive song, filled with optimism and hope for the future. It draws strength from the martyrs who died to ensure a future for the Jewish people. The people who sang this song during the Holocaust were in a bad situation themselves, yet they sang this song as encouragement to others. Suffering rarely takes away all of a person's power, and this

song is an example of how Jews were able to maintain control of their own spirits and maintain hope even while the Nazis were taking everything else away from them.

The most-used text in these two sections of liturgy combined is that of the song "*Ani Maamin.*" It is printed in full in both sections, and Stern also quotes it in his meditation on Treblinka. This may be because it seems to encapsulate what the editors are urging the worshippers to feel. The overall message of both of these sections is positive. In texts by Stern, Heschel, and Wiesel, the message of optimism, with a slight sense of confusion or doubt, is repeated. Each of these thinkers wants to believe in a future for the Jewish people, and each is also plagued by doubts concerning the past that seep into their thinking. "*Ani Maamin*" contains a similar message, one of optimism tinged with a sense of realism. The message is that the speaker believes that the messiah is coming but is also fully aware that he is not here, and he may not come soon. It is not a message of blind faith, but rather one of realistic and well-considered faith. Even though the speaker is conscious of the bleak reality, he still makes the choice to believe.

In examining the sources used in these two sections of the *Gates of Prayer*, it becomes clear that the range of emotional responses represented is vast. In each case, the emotional response to a crisis depends on the situation, the history, and the person. This was true in the Bible and it is still true today. However, in Reform Judaism today, emotions that could be perceived as negative are not always brought to the forefront of the religious consciousness. The *piyyutim* and the services of *tachanun* and *Musaf* have been excised from the liturgy, which denies the worshippers their emotional range. As a result, when faced with a crisis, many Reform Jews feel ill-equipped to deal with their suffering within a religious framework. For that matter, many Reform clergy

(represented by the cantor who wrote the letter to the list serve) do not know where to turn when confronted with a suffering congregant. This is perhaps because the sources cited in this paper are in fact buried in the prayerbook in sections often not used by congregations. They do not appear in Shabbat or Festival services but rather in their own separate sections.

A review of these two sections of the prayerbook clearly demonstrated that the *Gates of Prayer* contains a wide variety of examples of emotional reactions to suffering. There are emotions represented in these sections that are not represented elsewhere in the Reform liturgy, emotions that contradict the upbeat and positive nature of Reform Judaism that congregants might assume from popular culture. The sources used in these two sections display diverse reactions that could be of use to different types of people dealing with difficult times.

However, the placement of these examples in the prayerbook may result in few congregants or clergy ever using them. "In Remembrance of Jewish Suffering" has no instructions for the use of the section, and "Service for *Tisha B'Av and Yom HaShoah*" blurs the actual purpose of the service by combining two distinct days of observance into one and incorporating references from both days without explanation. The service is not even finished: there are no instructions for what to do after the "optional" Torah reading. In the case of both sections, each reference is glossed over so quickly that it is doubtful if a congregant would have a chance to really understand the texts if the sections were used as they were written. It is only after examining the source texts in detail that one can appreciate the depth and breadth of emotion they contain; in the context of the prayerbook, however, the necessary background information is lacking.

Many aspects of these sections display a sense of ambivalence on the part of the editors. Although they did include these expressions of emotion in the prayerbook, they often gloss over them. By jumping from text to text, they do not allow the worshipper to dwell on one emotion, because they continue to move the congregation through a spectrum. The destination is usually a more positive emotion, even if it is tinged with doubt. The inclusion of the pieces by Stern, Heschel and Wiesel urges the worshippers to triumph over their negative emotions by trying to see a more positive side of the situation or by taking action.

The inclusion of these references in the prayerbook, even though some of them may be at odds with Reform ideology, confirms them as part of the Reform Jewish tradition. Despite the fact that they are buried, they exist, and are important references for those in need. Even if the sections do not work as continuous narratives, as they are published, they can serve as a bank of resources to aid those in need of solace. By learning about our Jewish ancestors who reacted in these varied ways to suffering, we can see that our emotions today are a part of Jewish tradition.

Many Reform Jews think of Orthodox Jews as those with simple faith, while they think of themselves as the ones striving for knowledge and honest understanding of the place of religion and faith in their lives. Yet it is simple faith that is reflected most strongly in these sections of the Reform prayerbook, while the traditional prayerbook contains a fuller spectrum of human emotion, including prayers of argument, protest, and lamentation. While cutting out many traditional prayers accurately reflects Reform ideology, it also leaves Reform Jews with a prayerbook that does not reflect the entirety of their emotional capacity. Laytner describes this conflict eloquently:

> "Many modern Jews pray with half a heart. Torn between a desire for faith on the one hand and the existence of unsuppressible doubts on the other, modern Jews are at a loss when it comes to building a relationship with God through prayer. Prayer as praise, thanksgiving, and petition represents only half their thoughts and feelings. The other half is overflowing with anger, doubts, and questions... Is it possible to pray today without the incursion of troubling thoughts? Yet this is exactly what our *piyyut*-less prayerbook asks us to do."[1]

The inclusion of these sections in the prayerbook, even with mixed messages attached, signifies that the expression of difficult emotions has not entirely disappeared from Reform Jewish tradition. If Reform Jews are to truly integrate Judaism with secular life, however, these connections between difficult life experiences and the legacy of our ancestors must be cultivated. If Reform Jews find that the liturgy resonates with "only half their thoughts and feelings," the other half will be left to be negotiated outside of Judaism, even though the tradition has so much to offer.

When the CCAR published the *Gates of Prayer* in 1975, Jews everywhere were still struggling to come to terms with the Holocaust. Jewish thinkers had been silent for years following World War II and were just beginning to formulate responses to the Holocaust in the 1970s. The "death of God" idea put forward by the radical theologians was one of the first responses, and the liturgy in these sections of the Reform prayerbook reads like a polemic against this idea. The image of God the editors provide is one of a living God who endows humans with the power to direct their own destiny, and the editors continually urge the worshippers to embrace this power.

The *Gates of Prayer* also inherited the legacy of the Reform movement it grew from. Classical Reform valued an environment of decorum, where a worshipper would not be emotional in a prayer setting. The Reform movement was not concerned with

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[1] Laytner, 176.

reaching worshippers through emotion earlier in the 20th century, but with creating an environment that would seem attractive to them in the context of their secular lives. It also emphasized rationalism, which is still seen in these sections in the writing of Heschel and Wiesel.

Today, almost thirty years after the publication of the *Gates of Prayer*, the Reform movement is preparing new liturgy for publication. In 2004, the issues affecting the shape of this liturgy are quite different from those that influenced the *Gates of Prayer* in 1975. The movement is no longer engaged in a polemic against the "God is dead" movement, and the trend in today's synagogue is an emphasis on spirituality. People are not as concerned with rationalism as they once were. The Reform movement is also experiencing a return to ritual observance, with decorum no longer being as important an element in worship services. Perhaps these trends will be reflected in the new liturgy of the Reform movement in the form of material that speaks more to a wide spectrum of emotion than the material in the 1975 book. Jewish tradition teaches that reactions to difficult times can be as diverse as people are. By reflecting sadness and anger in our liturgies along with prayers of faith and praise, we can create a prayer environment that welcomes people at difficult times in their lives by providing a place where their feelings can resonate within the Jewish tradition.

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