

The Liturgical Year:
The Creation of a Reform *Luach*

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Preface

Chapter One – The Jewish Calendar and its Historical Origins

Chapter Two – The Traditional *Luchot*

Chapter Three – Modern Innovations to Traditional *Luchot*

Chapter Four – The Reform Approach to Time

Chapter Five – The Reform Liturgical Year: Lesson Plans

- The contribution of this thesis

Today we have a *luach* – a calendar which maps out Jewish life, saving us from the anxiety attendant upon consulting the relevant mathematical formulae that determine these calendrical minutiae. The Torah and Haftarah portions are set in advance and the liturgical year is clearly organized. So why should we concern ourselves with the history of the creation of the Jewish calendar? Jews of every denomination are inextricably bound to the ebb and flow of the calendar. Yet each denomination has a different relationship to certain calendrical aspects. There are certain ways that the Reform movement alone may wish to highlight particular days, for example: a seven-day celebration of Passover, let us say, rather than the standard eight-day version of the diaspora; or by selecting a different reading from the lectionary to highlight the Reform Movement's understanding of that day. Then too, there are days that the Reform Movement consciously reinterprets: *Tisha B'av*, for instance. If the calendar is the tool that helps bring order to our lives, by understanding the calendar's history and its challenges, we are better equipped to make necessary and important changes in that order for today's Jews.

- What the goal of the thesis was

In the beginning the goal of the rabbinic and education thesis was to create a Reform *Luach*. I realized quickly that it would be almost impossible to create a working *luach* and do all of the research that was needed to make this a successful project. Since traditional *luchot* are not terribly helpful in Reform situations, I wanted to lay the groundwork for the creation of a Reform *luach* by researching the differences between traditional and non-traditional approaches to Jewish time. Now I am left with a goal for the future, namely integrating all of this research into producing a Reform *Luach* that will represent the diversity of our movement. The educational component is my first attempt at having different Reform Jewish cohorts deal with the various liturgical and calendrical issues facing the Reform movement.

- What kinds of material were used

I framed my research in a historical, cultural, philosophical, and religious framework as a means to better understand the Jewish calendar. I consulted with clergy, professors, and educators in the field who naturally live the Jewish calendar daily. I also spoke with a number of companies that publish Jewish calendars to better understand how a *luach* is produced.

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I remember the first time I witnessed the “old-timers” at *shul* going up to the *bimah* on Shabbat morning to help *bench Rosh Chodesh*. The melody they sung and the passion in their hearts reflected a true yearning for a life of happiness, blessing, peace, and love for Torah. I realized then, as I do now, that it is my family who instilled within me a life of goodness and blessing that is deeply rooted in the ebb and flow of Jewish life and living. I would like to thank my parents, Varda and Steven, my sister Deena, Grandma Tiny, Grandma Miriam and Grandpa Munio (ז’ל) for never forgetting to teach me the importance of celebrating Jewish life as a family.

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beginning of each new month reflects my prayers and my blessings for all those who guided me to this day.

“May it be thy will, Lord our God and God of our ancestors, to grant us this new month for good and blessing. O grant us long life, a life of peace and well-being, a life of blessing, a life of sustenance, a life of physical health, a life marked by reverence of heaven and dread of sin, a life free from shame or disgrace, a life of wealth and honor, a life marked by our love for Torah and our reverence for Heaven, a life in which the wishes of our hearts shall be fulfilled for good. Amen, Selah.”

- *Birkat HaChodesh* - Blessing of the New Month

Preface

Marking time is of the utmost importance in Judaism. The Psalmist implores us to “count our days...” so that we bring order to our lives.¹ We begin to bring order to the world, our communities, and ourselves when we recognize the significance a calendar plays in helping to shape the Jewish world.

Each year as we move closer to the High Holy Days, Jews begin to retell the old joke about the Jewish holidays and their unreliability: they never come on time; they are either too early or too late. The problem is that Jewish holidays occur according to a lunar-solar calendar, not the internationally accepted Gregorian calendar which is purely solar. Jews constantly wonder why the holidays do not happen on the same dates every year, although, in fact, they do – but not in the Gregorian reckoning. Other, related, questions deal with Jewish leap years, the specific days of the week on which holidays are allowed to fall, and why some *parashiot* are combined in one year but not the next.

Today we have a *luach* – a calendar which maps out all of this, saving us from the anxiety attendant upon consulting the relevant mathematical formulae that determine these calendrical minutiae. With a calendar to rely on, the *Birkat Hachodesh* (Blessing of the New Moon), a prayer recited on *Shabbat M’vorakhim*, (the Sabbath preceding the new moon), has taken the place of eyewitness testimonial to the *Sanhedrin*. The Torah and Haftarah portions are set in advance and the liturgical year is clearly organized.

So why should we concern ourselves with the history of the creation of the Jewish calendar? Jews of every denomination are inextricably bound to the ebb and flow of the

¹ Psalm 90:1

calendar. Yet each denomination has a different relationship to certain calendrical aspects. There are certain ways that the Reform movement alone may wish to highlight particular days, for example: a seven-day celebration of Passover, let us say, rather than the standard eight-day version of the diaspora; or by selecting a different reading from the lectionary to highlight the Reform Movement's understanding of that day. Then too, there are days that the Reform Movement consciously reinterprets: *Tisha B'av*, for instance. If the calendar is the tool that helps bring order to our lives, by understanding the calendar's history and its challenges, we are better equipped to make necessary and important changes in that order for today's Jews.

Chapter 1: The Jewish Calendar and its Historical Origins

The calendar that we have today is grounded first and foremost in the Torah and the biblical tradition that the Rabbis inherited; it is equally determined, however, by the Rabbis who inherited it, because the Bible is a canon that the Rabbis themselves constructed, and because it has traditionally been viewed through the lens of rabbinic writings, first and foremost the Talmud. This calendar is lunisolar – that is, we establish months and years based on the cycles of both the moon and sun. Each new month is determined by the appearance of the new moon, while each new year is determined by the cycle of the earth around the sun.

The Jewish lunisolar calendar is different than the internationally accepted, Gregorian civil calendar, which is purely solar, and where months are disconnected from the moon. Nor is it like the Islamic calendar which is purely lunar and not synchronized with the four seasons (which depend on the earth's rotation around the sun). Being both lunar and solar, festivals, which depend on the day of the lunar month fall differently within each solar year. They move about 11-12 days each year, and take approximately 33 solar years to return to where they began.

More precisely, a $365 \frac{1}{4}$ -day solar year is approximately 11 days longer than the 12 lunar months – hence the 11-12 day shortfall mentioned above. Also complicating matters is the fact that months and their festivals are strictly lunar, but seasons in which they fall are solar. At the very least, Passover (by biblical fiat) must fall in the spring. The Jewish calendar is an attempt to harmonize the lunar and solar cycles, thereby making Jewish holidays and celebrations fall in their appointed season.

The first calendrical system was practical and ad hoc: direct observation of each new moon. After a witness testified to seeing the new crescent moon, and his testimony was properly scrutinized, the Sanhedrin would announce the new month. Neighboring communities were informed of each new month by the lighting of bonfires on the mountaintops, and (at a later date) by messenger. While this method formalized a process of announcing each new month, it did not solve the problem of regulating and ultimately balancing the lunar and solar calendars. And even as a method of naming new moons it was hardly the most desirable – since it was so completely ad hoc. It caused a perennial problem for Rosh Hashanah, for instance, since worship had to begin in the evening before the witnesses could see the moon and be accredited, causing some new years to be cancelled half way through the next morning and begun again later that evening. An additional stage was needed to solve the calendar problem of coordinating lunar and solar systems and guaranteeing a dependable announcement of months from year to year. We can turn first to the issue of harmonization: a system known as *sod ha'ibbur*.

Sod Haibbur

The following text from *Pirkei D'Rav Kahana* provides a midrashic account of a putative council that was formed to determine the *Sod Haibbur*, “the secret of the intercalation.” The goal of this newly formed council was to harmonize both the lunar and solar calendars. As the text makes clear, the assumption was that God was in charge of all of the intercalations until He passed the duty off to *Adam Ha rishon*, the first man in the Garden of Eden. What follows is a long line of transmission, the goal being to

establish the calendrical system as an authentically going back to the beginning of time, which God alone created and understood:

- Adam handed the tradition to Enoch.
- Enoch delivered the principle of intercalation to Noah.
- Noah handed on the tradition to Shem.
- Shem delivered the tradition to Abraham.
- Abraham delivered the tradition to Isaac.
- Isaac gave to Jacob all the blessings and delivered to him the principle of intercalation.
- When Jacob was outside the Land of Israel, Isaac resumed the role of the adding of leap months.
- Jacob delivered to Joseph and his brothers the principle of intercalation. Joseph added the leap months while in Egypt.
- When Joseph and his brothers died, the intercalations of leap months were diminished (*nit'ma'atu ha'iburin miyisrael*) until the time that God gave the mitzvah to sanctify the months to Moses and Aaron.² Control over the calendar was no longer a secret. As a result, the calendrical system was set and authority shifted from the council to the people.

This newly formed calendar council, under the direction of the Sanhedrin, was charged with harmonizing the lunar and solar calendars. According to this traditional account, the initial intercalation is said to have taken place in the presence of three men knowledgeable in the *Sod Ha'ibbur*. Rabbi Eliezer demanded the presence of a *minyan* as well. Then all assembled sat in a circle and waited to hear a *Bat Kol*, a Heavenly Voice utter the following words, “ And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron...saying, This month shall be unto you...”³

Armed with instructions from God, the council calculated the *t'kufot*, the beginning of the seasons based upon astronomical observations as well as meteorological and agricultural considerations. Presumably, this process was to be followed ever after,

² Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981), 52-55.

³ Friedlander, 58-59.

so that a set of halakhic principles emerged as to intercalation on a regular basis. Three criteria emerge: the calendrical count of days; the appearance of spring bloom on trees, and the growth of new spring grass. The Talmud, for example (RH 21a) records a message sent between *Rav Huna bar Avin* and *Rava* on the issue of intercalation between *Tevet* and *Nisan*. “Guard the month of spring (the first-ripened produce) [and] the ripened [spring] season [to ensure] that it begins during the month of *Nisan*.” *Pirke D’Rabbi Eliezer* further emphasizes the importance of *t’kufat Nisan* not occurring too early. “If two of these (signs) be available and not the third, they do not intercalate the year, (that is to say) neither because of the trees nor because of the grass. If one (sign) be available and the other two be absent, they do not intercalate the year on account of the *t’kufot*”⁴ All three things were needed, therefore: trees, grass, and the seasons (*t’kufot*). Without these three things, the new month of *Nisan* could not be declared.

Agricultural concerns ranked high for the Rabbis in their understanding of the official arrival of spring. According to Arthur Spier, “The Talmudic sources report that the Council intercalated a year when the barley in the fields had not yet ripened, when the fruit on the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up, and when the young pigeons had not become fledged.” Rabi Yannai speaking in the name of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel cites a consideration for extending the year by explaining the importance of everything occurring at the proper time. The issue of natural spring growth is obvious enough, but what about the pigeons? Young pigeons (doves) must wait until they are strong enough

⁴ Friedlander, 57.

to fly, an annual event, apparently, connected with the springtime of the year.⁵ Then too, the Rabbis worried about pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. Lacking the requisite agricultural changes and these other signs of proper springtime occurrence, the new month on Nisan could not be proclaimed. An ad hoc system arranging all of this every year according of observers on the ground provides no predictability and is open to argument and question. The council therefore is said to have determined a calendrical mode of determination that met religious and agricultural requirements by keeping the lunar and solar year synchronized.⁶ The addition of extra months provided leap years.

Today the Hebrew calendar works on what is called a metonic cycle, named for the Greek astronomer Meton of Athens (5th century BCE). It provides a period of roughly 19-years, which is approximately a common multiple of the solar year on one hand and the set of lunar months on the other: nineteen solar years, that is, are roughly the same as 235 lunar months, and (rounded to full days) provides 6940 days all in all. The Rabbis simply borrowed this calculation and named it a *Mahzor katan*. They then subdivided it into 12 common years and 7 leap years.

These leap years come about because, as we saw, every lunar year falls short of the solar year by, roughly, eleven days. Every two to three years, this adds up to approximately 30 days, requiring the insertion of an additional month, a leap year. By general agreement nowadays, such leap years occur in years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 of this cycle. The month added is Adar II which is inserted to ensure that Passover following (in the very next month) continues to occur in the spring.

⁵ BT Sanhedrin 11a

⁶ Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar up to the twenty-second century. Jerusalem* (New York: Feldheim Publishers Ltd, 1981), 1.

Calculating the Calendar and Rosh Chodesh

Given the fact that the Jewish calendar continues to honor the moon not just the sun, it is no surprise to see that months have their own independent significance in Judaism. Indeed, until at least the 8th century, they were provided with their own *kiddush*, the prayer for sanctification that we, these days, reserve for festivals and Shabbat. It thus became necessary to determine just when a new month occurs – no easy matter, once ad hoc observation had given way to a calendrical system based on mathematical regularity. A new month occurs naturally whenever a new moon – the *molad* – takes place, but when exactly does that happen mathematically?

Each new day on the Jewish calendar begins and ends in the evening. As Genesis 1:5 teaches, *vay'hi erev, vay'hi voker, yom rishon*, “There was evening, and there was morning, a first day.” At dusk, therefore, with the appearance of three stars in the sky, the new day begins. Simply observing stars in the sky determines nights and days, the changeover from one day to the next, and (as a result) the beginning and ending of Shabbat, festivals, fast days and times of prayer. Observation of stars, however, works only to fix beginnings and ends of days. It is useless for establishing lunar/solar phenomena. We therefore require a different method to determine the calendar calculations of the *molad* (the new moon) and the *t'kufot* (the seasons).

The system of measuring time by the absence of daylight (when stars appear) results in days that are of different duration. Each full day continues to have 24 hours, with daytime and nighttime given half of the 24. But only on the spring and autumn equinox are the 12 hours of daylight equal to the 12 hours of night. On all other days, the relative amount of light and darkness varies, depending on the stage of the earth's

rotation around the sun and the amount of light and darkness that there is at the time. Since the hours are equally allotted to light and dark periods of the day, the hours will differ in actual duration, depending on the amount of daylight or nighttime available.

The measure of hours differs from day to day, therefore. But the time when the *molad* occurs is fixed by the moon itself. There is no way to establish the *molad* simply by using a calendar that knows only variable durations of hours. Fixing the *molad* must therefore follow its own course of logic.

When calculating the *molad* and *tekufot*, the day is arbitrarily said to begin and end at 6:00 pm Jerusalem time. 6:00 pm is commonly noted as 0h or 24h in official calendars. 24 hours constitutes a day, and hour one begins at 7:00 pm. Each hour is counted from 1-24, midnight is 6h, and noon is 18h. Each hour is further divided into 1080 “parts,” known as *chalakim*. One *chelek* is divided into 76 “moments” or *rega'im*. “In conventional time divisions, 1 part corresponds to $3 \frac{1}{3}$ seconds, 1 moment is equal to $\frac{5}{114}$ seconds.”⁷

Each month is calculated based on the appearance of the new moon, the *molad*, known also as a *lunatio*, which occurs on the average of every 29 days, 12 hours, 793 parts. Based in this mathematical formula it is possible to know all past and future *moladot*. There is no longer any need for direct ad hoc observation.

According to tradition, the very first *molad* at the creation of the world took place Tishre 1 of the year 1 of the world on 2d[ays into creation] 5 h[ours] 204 p[arts] or

⁷ Spier, 13.

Sunday evening 204 parts after 11:00 pm. “This hour is considered the theoretical beginning of the *molad* calculation.”⁸

The Hebrew year consists of 12 months in a usual year and 13 in a leap year. The following is a list of the months based on the biblical order as found in Leviticus 23:5.

Month	Number of Days	Number of Days of Rosh Chodesh
1. Nisan	30 days	1
2. Iyyar	29 days	2
3. Sivan	30 days	1
4. Tammuz	29 days	2
5. Av	30 days	1
6. Elul	29 days	2
7. Tishri	30 days	1
8. (Mar) Cheshvan	29 or 30 days	2
9. Kislev	29 or 30 days	1 or 2
10. Tevet	29 days	1 or 2
11. Shevat	30 days	1
12. Adar I (leap year)	30 days	2
13. Adar	29 days	2
14. Adar II (leap year)	29 days	2

We saw above that each astronomical lunar month contains 29 ½ days, but human beings require whole days, not parts of them with which to measure beginnings and endings of months. The result is the unfortunate consequence that months cannot all be the same size – they must be extended to 30 days or shortened to 29. Months with 30 days are called *malei* or full, while months with 29 days are known as *chaser* or defective. “The hours that accumulate by the omission of 793 parts each month are equalized by two deviations derived from what is known as the rule of alternation. *Heshvan*, which regularly has 29 days, sometimes becomes a full month of 30 days, and the month of *Kislev*, consisting, ordinarily of 30 days, is defective (29 days) in certain years.”⁹

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Arthur Spier, 14.

If the months vary in size, so too does the period of each month's *rosh chodesh*, depending on whether the preceding month was *malei* or *chaser*. A *chaser* month of 29 days is always followed by 1-day *Rosh Chodesh*, while a *malei* month of 30 days is followed by a 2-day *Rosh Chodesh*. If a month has a 1-day *Rosh Chodesh*, it always falls on the first day of the month. In a month in which 2 days of *Rosh Chodesh* are observed, the first day is observed on the final day of the last month and the first day of the new month.¹⁰

Rosh Chodesh Tishre is the only exception to this rule. Since the month before *Tishre*, *Elul*, only has 29 days, *Tishre* should have a 1-day *Rosh Chodesh*. But *Rosh Chodesh Tishre* also happens to be *Rosh Hashanah*, which, by tradition, requires two days. In the old system of direct observation, *Rosh Hashanah* could not be declared until after witnesses appeared in court, in the morning following a new moon. The celebration would have begun the night before, however, in anticipation of the witnesses appearing. If observation failed to establish the date as accurate, the night prior would have constituted a mistake and a new start to the holiday would have occurred the night after. In effect, *Rosh Hashanah* sometimes lasted one day (when witnesses duly arrived the next morning) and sometimes two (when they did not). The establishment of a mathematically set calendar changed all that, but by the time of the Bavli, the tradition of two days for *Rosh Hashanah* had caught on and was retained.¹¹

Halakhically speaking, *Rosh Hashanah* was named a *Yom Tov*, not just a *Rosh Chodesh* which has its roots in the Torah. Leviticus 23:23-25 states that *Rosh Hashanah*

¹⁰ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh* 8:4

¹¹ Rabbi Nathan Bushwick, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar* (New York / Jerusalem: Moznaim, 1989), 67-69.

is a *Shabbaton*, and a *Mikra Kodesh*, which means it is a day of complete rest with a sacred assembly. Both of these attributes are features that really transcend the idea of *Rosh Chodesh* and put it at a higher level as an even more important day. There is also a *sugiyah* (a Talmudic discussion) in the *Gemara* that questions if one should mention *Rosh Chodesh* in the Musaf Amidah. It is ultimately decided that mentioning *Rosh Chodesh* is comparable to *Yom Tov*.¹²

By definition, as we saw, each new month must begin on a day roughly corresponding to the *molad*. As a *rosh chodesh* in practice (if not in theory), *Rosh Hashanah* too must follow this rule, but four exceptions allow for *d'chi'ot* (postponements). If the *molad* of *Tishre* occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday then *Rosh Hashanah* occurs the following day. This postponement is known by the mnemonic *Lo adu rosh* or simply *adu*. The Hebrew word *adu* stands for days 1, 4, 6, which correspond to Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, the days in which Rosh Hashanah cannot occur. *D'chiah 2*, known also as *molad zaken*) states, if the *molad* of *Tishre* occurs at noon or later, Rosh Hashanah occurs the next day -- unless the next day is a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, in which case because of the first rule, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to Monday, Thursday, or Shabbat. *D'chi'ah 3* states, when the *molad* of *Tishre* during a common (not a leap) year falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 A.M (3d 9h 204p) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed until Wednesday and because of *Rule 1*, further postponed until Thursday. The final *d'chi'ah* is the least common. When, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the *molad* of *Tishre* occurs on Monday morning at

¹² BT Eruvin 40a

15 hours, 589 parts, corresponding to 9:32 A.M. and 43 1/3 seconds (2d 15h 589p) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day.¹³

If Rosh Hashanah falls on a Sunday, Hoshana Rabbah will fall on a Saturday and won't be able to be celebrated properly. If Rosh Hashanah falls on a Wednesday, Yom Kippur will occur on a Friday, which causes two restricted days in a row (Yom Kippur and Shabbat). If Rosh Hashanah falls on a Friday, Yom Kippur will come out on a Sunday, which once again causes two restricted days in a row (Shabbat and Yom Kippur). Simply put, these *d'chi'ot* make for a richer Jewish life.

The Seasons and Leap Years

As the seasons “go round and round,” four days stand out.

- The summer solstice: The longest day of the year, and the beginning of summer, is *T'kufat Tammuz*, -- the point at which the sun is farthest to the north and spends the greatest amount of time above the horizon.
- The winter solstice: The beginning of the winter is called *T'kufat Tevet*. On this shortest day the sun is farthest to the south.
- The spring and autumn equinox: On *T'kufat Nisan*, the spring equinox, and *T'kufat Tishre*, the autumnal equinox, both the day and night are of equal lengths.¹⁴

¹³ Spier, 15.

¹⁴ Bushwick, 48.

Just as each season must begin and end at the right time so must all the Jewish holidays and festivals fall in their season – Passover, in particular, which must be celebrated in the spring, according to biblical mandate (Deut. 16:1), “Observe the month of spring and offer a Passover sacrifice.” The lunar calendar, as we saw, falls some eleven days short of the solar calendar, making Passover fall eleven days earlier every year. When Passover threatens to fall prior to the spring, a fix is needed – an additional month is added.

Following the criteria established earlier in the Talmud, the Rambam stipulates three cosmological and agricultural issues that determine the setting of a leap year: the vernal equinox, the ripening of the barley crop that takes place about that time, and the blooming of springtime fruit trees.

[An extra month is added,] making the year full, because of three factors: a) the vernal [spring] equinox; the ripening [of the barley crop], and c) the blooming of the fruit trees. *Keitzad* – What is implied? When the court calculates and determines that the vernal equinox will fall on the sixteenth of Nisan or later, *m’abrin otah Hashanah* - the year is made full. The month that would have been *Nisan* is made the second *Adar*, and thus Passover will fall in the spring. This factor [alone] is sufficient for the court to make the year full; all other factors need not be considered.”¹⁵

Similarly, if the court sees that [the barley crop] has not ripened, and that it is late in sprouting, or that the fruit trees that usually bloom at the time of the Passover holiday have not bloomed, these two factors are sufficient and the year is made full, even though the vernal equinox will fall before the sixteenth of *Nisan*. [The reason the year is] made full [because of these factors] is so that there will be [an abundant quantity] of ripened [barley] accessible, so that the wave offering of the *omer* can be brought from it on the sixteenth of *Nisan*, and so that the fruits will bloom, as they always do in the spring.¹⁶

In other words, we guard against Passover being observed in the wrong season, by adding an additional month before *Nisan* known as *Adar Sheni* or *Adar II*. This addition,

¹⁵ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh* 4:2

¹⁶ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh* 4:3

prevents Passover from falling prior to the time stipulated by Torah, prior to the spring. The extra month of Adar postpones Nisan, the month in which Passover falls, from occurring prior to the springtime equinox. This new 13-month year is known as a *shanah m'uberet* or a leap year. But Maimonides does more than depend on the actual calculation of time mathematically. He also demands a leap year in cases where the barley may not yet be out or where fruit trees may not yet have bloomed. Today in the absence of the Sanhedrin, we no longer wait to observe these cosmological and agricultural signs. Now we have a fixed calendar based upon these principles using mathematical rules written by the Rabbis.

Sectarian Calendars

The Jewish calendar as we know it today was not the only Jewish calendar in use in the ancient world. Jewish sources speak also of other calendars, which never became part of mainstream Jewish canon. 1 Kings 12:32 mentions a special festival that was proclaimed by Jeroboam. We learn that “Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah, he established one at Bethel, and he ascended the altar there.” But the most startling evidence of a different 364-day schematic solar calendar can be found in the Pseudepigraphic works of Enoch and Jubilees.

The section of 1 Enoch that we are concerned with is dated to 110 B.C.E and known as the *The Book of Heavenly Luminaries* or *Astronomical Enoch*. This unit describes the movement of the sun (chapter 72), the moon (chapters 73 and 78), and how they relate to each other (chapters 74 and 78). “The *Astronomical Book* uses the 364-day

year exclusively as a scientific concept, with no recourse to Sabbaths, festivals, and priests.”¹⁷

The book of Jubilees, from the Second Century B.C.E, also speaks about a 364-day schematic solar calendar. Its year comprises 4 periods of 13 weeks containing a total of 52 weeks. Unlike the book of *Enoch*, *Jubilees* adheres strictly to a solar calendar. The children of Israel are commanded to:

...observe the years according to this reckoning- three hundred and sixty-four days, and (these) will constitute a complete year, and they will not disturb its time from its days and from its feasts; for everything will fall out in them according to their testimony, and they will not leave out any day nor disturb any feasts. But if they do neglect and do not observe them according to His commandment, then they will disturb all their seasons and the years will be dislodged from this (order), [and they will disturb the seasons and the years will be dislodged] and they will neglect their ordinances.¹⁸

Any deviation from this 364-day solar calendar would disrupt the natural flow of the years, new moons, and seasons.¹⁹ The Book of Jubilees criticizes those who follow the lunar calendar for fear that festivals and celebrations will be observed at the incorrect times.

The Qumran sect is believed to have used a 364-day calendar similar to the one used in the Book of Jubilees. Later scholarship refutes this claim because it is now believed that the Qumran sect was not monolithic. Scholars now believe that the calendars were neither lunar nor solar. Rather what links the calendar of the Dead Sea

¹⁷ “Calendars,” in John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 459.

¹⁸ Jubilees 6:32-34.

¹⁹ Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE – Tenth Century CE*. (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10-11).

Scroll sect to the literary tradition of *Enoch* and *Jubilees* is that they are all schematic.²⁰

As a schematic calendar, it was not based on observations, rather it had a way of predicting the various phases of the moon and/or sun and a way of counting the dates. Thus, it would keep up with the sun and/or moon by following a scheme of dates to do so, without necessarily adjusting based on observation.

In this chapter, we have followed the basic outline of how the calendar came about and what its most important principles are. We saw how an early method of observation *ad hoc* became a mathematically determined system, the purpose being to have some long-term predictability for calendrical occasions. The basic issue was the need to harmonize lunar and solar time, keeping holidays in their proper place by month but making sure Passover fell in the Spring. The primary solution was leap years that were established on a regular basis to postpone the Passover month of *Tishre* whenever it threatened to arrive too early. To arrange a calendar that accomplished that, the Rabbis divided time by seasons and added additional months called leap years when necessary. While there were other calendars used in the ancient Jewish world, the calendar that we use today was fixed by Hillel II in the fourth century, around the year 360 C.E.

Along the way we came across some basic terms that recur regularly and deserve being listed here, for ready future reference:

- *Molad* (Birth of the New Moon): The conjunction of the moon with the sun is the point in time at which the moon is directly between the earth and the sun (but not on the same plane) and is thus invisible.²¹

²⁰ Stern, 10-12).

²¹ Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. “Calendar.”

- *T'kufah* (Season): The beginning of each of the four seasons: *T'kufat Tammuz* (Summer Solstice), *T'kufat Tevet* (Winter Solstice), *T'kufat Nisan* (Spring Equinox), and *T'kufat Tishre* (Autumnal Equinox).
- *Shanah m'uberet* (Leap Year): An additional 13th month that is added to the year in order to ensure that Passover falls during its appointed time in the Spring.
- *Chelek* (Part): A unit of time used in calculating the Hebrew calendar. Each hour is divided into 1080 *chalakim*.
- *Malei* (Full): A month containing 30 days and a year containing 355 days.
- *Chaser* (Defective): A month with 29 days and a year containing 353 days.
- *Machzor Katan* (Small Cycle): The 19-year calendrical cycle.
- *Machzor Gadol* (Larger Cycle): The 28-year calendrical cycle.
- *D'chi'ot* (postponements): Refers to the 4 rules that govern Rosh Hashanah postponements.

Now that we have seen how the calendar was established, we can move on to our next topic: looking at traditional *luchot* (calendars).

Chapter 2: The Traditional *Luchot*

The fixed calendar, which we inherited from Hillel II, serves as the backbone of day-to-day Jewish observance and practice. Now that we understand the historical calendar, we can better understand the daily customs and practices of Jews today. The traditional *luach* serves as map to resolve questions with regard to actual practice.

Maps have always been used to help people define, explain, and navigate their way through the world. As Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman explains, “Maps are properly chosen when they help us accomplish what we want to do. They need not accurately describe the features of the landscapes that exist independently of our needs.”²² The needs of the traditional Jewish world are grounded in the mitzvah of doing things at the correct time, and in the proper way. In order to navigate our way through the Jewish world; we look to the calendar for guidance.

Since calendars help us plan out our lives, we function in a world with multiple calendars. In this chapter we will explore three traditional *luchot* as a means to understand what is important. The *SunGraphix Hebrew Planner* will serve as the most basic traditional calendar, while *The Ezras Torah Luach* and *Luach Colel Chabad* will offer insights into the “mainstream” Orthodox Jewish world.

SunGraphix Hebrew Planner

SunGraphix is the leading manufacturer of promotional diaries, and the publisher of the world-famous *Farmers’ Almanac* since 1878. Their products are sold through

²² Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publications, 1998), 23.

promotional product distributors alone, not directly to individual customers. Each year businesses order personalized SunGraphix's calendars with their business name imprinted on the cover. Contained within the calendar is specific information pertinent to the business and its intended audience.

The *SunGraphix Hebrew Planner* distributed to a Jewish audience contains some basic Jewish information integral to leading a meaningful Jewish life:

- Hebrew Months.
- Candle lighting times.
- Weekly Torah portions.
- Haftarah portions.
- Basic holiday and observance information.

Unique to this pocket calendar is the following:

- Estimated Jewish Population of Principle Cities (and vicinities) in the United States and Canada.
- Estimated Jewish Population in some foreign cities.
- Blank Page of "Dates to Remember."
- Blank Page of "Hebrew Names in Your Family."
- Times Zones for the USA and Canada.
- Books of Jewish Interest.
- Guide to Prayers.

For the purpose of my research, I inquired about the source or sources used to gather the Jewish information contained within the *SunGraphix Hebrew Planner*, namely the lectionary choices, holiday and observance information, and the "Guide to Prayers."

My first email correspondence was with Kimberly Haseltine, a claims and clarification specialist with SunGraphix. "Every year we provide calendar [*sic*] from the previous year to a retired Rabbi in Florida, and he will make corrections on holidays, readings, all that information. Then after we make the corrections, we have another

Rabbi proofread it. Does that answer your question?”²³ Ms. Haseltine was not able to provide me with any more information, including the name and denomination of the “retired rabbi” to whom she referred. Further queries generated a letter from Peter D. Letourneau, the Vice President of SunGraphix. It was equally vague: “We appreciate your inquiry regarding Hebrew calendars that we manufacture annually. The Diary does not follow the Reform practice regarding the holiday calendar and Torah readings. We are unable to provide further specifics for crediting in your thesis, as our contributors have declined such use.”²⁴

In addition to the “retired rabbi” in Florida, we now hear of “our contributors” who “decline” being specified. Why would these contributors (rabbis, presumably) want to remain anonymous? One possible explanation is that they are not Orthodox and fear that if their names were known, the calendars would not be accepted as authentic. I was also curious as to why SunGraphix does not have alternative editions of the Hebrew Planner geared towards particular denomination. To these questions, Mr. Letourneau simply said “I cannot speak to why our contributing editors wish anonymity. On other versions, the sad truth is that we do not have much demand for such. It takes about 20,000 units of each version for us to have a modest profit, so I do not see us pursuing multiple version”²⁵ So aside from the statistical information in the *Hebrew Planner*, the calendrical and lectionary information remains unattributed.

Unlike the other traditional *luchot* that we will look at, the Hebrew Planner begins in the month of *Elul* and not *Tishre*. Each page includes the Hebrew date and its

²³ Kimberly Haseltine, e-mail message, October 25, 2011.

²⁴ Peter D. Letourneau, e-mail message, October 28, 2011.

²⁵ Peter D. Letourneau, e-mail message, December 21, 2011.

corresponding Gregorian date. Each Shabbat and Holiday includes candle-lighting times, the name of the Torah portion, and the verses to be read from that Torah and Haftarah portion. For each holiday and fast day there is a memorandum with important facts about the day. The information included here is less halakhic and more historical and theological in nature. Federal American holidays and Canadian holidays are included -- except for Christmas and Easter.

The two sections that truly stand out among the rest in the Hebrew Planner are the “Books of Jewish Interest” and the “Guide to Prayers.” Each of these sections is unique to *luchot*, both traditional and modern. The authors included in the book section span different Jewish movements, and the genres included are as diverse as the authors. The “Guide to Prayers” is really a misnomer, as it should be called a “Guide to Prayers of Mourning.” The Prayers included in this section are:

- *Kaddish D’Rabanan* (Hebrew/Aramaic and Transliteration)
- Psalm 90 (English)
- Psalm 23 (English)
- Traditional words of comfort to mourner (Hebrew)
- *El Malei Rachamim* (Hebrew and transliteration)
- Mourner’s Kaddish (Hebrew/Aramaic, Transliteration, and English)
- Psalm 49 (Hebrew)
- Burial Kaddish (Hebrew/Aramaic)
- *Tziduk HaDin* (Hebrew)
- Psalm 91 (Hebrew and English)
- *Yizkor* Prayers for a father and mother (Hebrew and English)
- Psalm 121 (English)

The first thing that one will notice in the Hebrew Planner is that all of the transliterations use the Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation. This transliteration choice is interesting because it is not normative in mainstream progressive (Reform, Conservative,

Reconstructionist) Jewish congregations. The English employed uses an “Old English” translation as was common in prayer books before the 1970s.

Unfortunately for the non-Hebrew reader, not all of the prayers or psalms are transliterated or even translated. The only three prayers with transliterations are *Kaddish D’Rabanan*, *Kaddish Yatom*, and *El Malei Rachamim*. One can assume, that both the mourners and those comforting them intend to recite the prayers offered in transliteration. Based on this logic, why is Psalm 49, traditionally recited after *shacharit* morning and *ma’ariv* evening prayers in a *shiva* home printed in Hebrew only? And why are the *Yizkor* Memorial Prayers printed in Hebrew and English without transliteration? Regrettably without access to the compiler of this *luach*, I can only speculate as to the reason. My guess is that these prayers were copied from another unknown source. The *luach* must therefore be assumed to be something that mourners would use along with someone more knowledgeable (possibly a rabbi) who led the service but who allowed the mourner to say the basic prayers at the graveside. Alternatively, given the inclusion of *El Malei* and the *Kaddish D’rabbanan* in transliteration, it was to facilitate the truly basic mourning prayers without too much attention given to consistency.

The probability that it is the latter – a poorly designed guide for mourners but not an authoritative source for rabbinic officiation – increases with the realization that (unlike all the other *luchot* that will follow in this chapter) this *Hebrew Planner luach* does not appear to serve as an authoritative Halakhic guide. Even though it is written from a traditional Orthodox perspective, it offers a mere glimpse into the ebb and flow of traditional Jewish life. It serves quite adequately as a calendar in the limited sense of providing dates of holidays and basic information on Torah portions and candle lighting;

but not much more. The editor has outfitted it with some extra material to increase its sales appeal, but with little regard for consistency and comprehensiveness. Someone wanting to follow the Halakhic flow of Jewish time would require another calendar in addition to this one.

The Ezras Torah Luach

Ezras Torah is such a calendar. Its name, “Ezras Torah” derives from the publisher which was established in 1915 as a charitable Jewish relief organization to supply money to needy people, mainly in Israel. Aside from its charitable roots, Ezras Torah claims also to be known for its “world renowned Halachic Calendar and Guide, providing important information on how to conduct oneself as a Jew or Jewess on a day to day basis.”²⁶ Included in this *luach* are candle-lighting times, and detailed *Halakhic* information for *shabbatot*, festivals, and minor holidays. *Ezras Torah* is, therefore, precisely what the *Hebrew Planner* is not: an authoritative guide to usage, not just a calendar with dates of holidays and such. So the *Ezras Torah* pocket calendar serves as a competent Halakhic guide, but in keeping with the understated modesty of contemporary Halakhic authorities, the translators warn that it is “not a replacement for a thorough familiarity with the *Halachic* sources.”²⁷

The calendar assumes considerable familiarity with these sources, however, to the point where it employs traditional *roshei tevot*, acronyms, to refer to Halakhic matters. Readers unfamiliar with the usual *roshei tevot* will be unable to follow the instructions.

²⁶ “Our Tzedakkos,” accessed on March 8, 2012, <http://www.ezrastorah.org/index.php>

²⁷ Rabbi Hillel Litwack, ed., *The Ezras Torah Luach: The English Version 5772* (New York: Moriah Offset Co, 2011), 1.

But the *luach* comes in two versions: all-Hebrew and Hebrew with translation. The general use of acronyms is prevalent in the all-Hebrew edition only. The translated version carries some acronyms but not all. What follows is an abridged list of what I believe are some of the most common *roshei tevot used*: It provides, as well, a guide to those that it includes:

English Translation	Hebrew	<i>Roshei Teivot</i>
Do not say...	אין אומרים	א"א
In the afternoon	אחר הצהרים	אחה"צ
(Say for) all people in your house	בני ביתו	ב"ב
Mon, Thurs, Mon – (Three fast days instituted by the <i>Ba'alei Tosofot</i> after Passover and Sukkot to atone for sins commuted after <i>Yom Tov</i> .)	שני וחמישי ושני	בה"ב
Outside Israel	בחוץ לארץ	בחו"ל
(Recite this prayer) in all places (not just in Israel)	בכל מקום	בכ"מ
(Recite) three times	ג' פעמים	ג"פ
Yizkor Memorial Prayers	הזכרת נשמות	הזכ"נ
Intermediate days of a festival	חול המועד	חוה"מ
Festival – <i>Yontif - Chag</i>	יום טוב	יו"ט
There are those who have the custom...	יש נוהגין	י"נ
A Sephardic Custom	מנהג ספרד	מ"ס
The Days of Repentance (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)	עשרת ימי תשובה	עשי"ת
Psalms of Praise (before <i>Shacharit</i>)	פסוקי דזמרה	פסוד"ז
Nightfall	צאת הכוכבים	צאה"כ
Recite <i>Kaddish Shalem</i>	קדיש שלם	ק"ש
Recite Mourner's Kaddish	קדיש יתום	ק"י
Rosh Hashanah	ראש השנה	ר"ה
Rosh Chodesh	ראש חודש	ר"ח
Shemoneh Esrei – The Weekday Amidah	שמונה עשרה	שמו"ע
Sunset	שקיעת החמה	שקה"ח
Public Fast Day	תענית ציבור	תע"צ

This list of *roshei tevot* is revealing on several counts. It provides basic times and distinctions in practice – the fallback being Ashkenaz, apparently, since it allows for Sefardi practice as the alternative, and uses Yiddish (*yontiff*) as a “translation.” It is an interesting combination of tradition and scholarship, in that it not only provides Monday, Thursday, Monday fast days but knows that they were established only by the Tosafot, not earlier.²⁸ The writers were familiar with Yiddish, we may imagine, but not entirely with English, since they explain these fast days as times appointed “to atone for sins commuted” on festivals, whereas what they mean is “sins committed on festivals.” They somewhat “fudge” the thinking behind the fast days in that they attribute them to sins generally, whereas the Tosafot source is explicit that the sins intended are sexual in nature, brought about by the close proximity of men and women at times of feasting and drinking together. The more general explanation, however, is in keeping with the summary version provided in the Tur, O. Ch. 502.

The *luach* begins with “The Arrangement of the Year” which includes a basic summary of the important characteristics of the particular Hebrew year beginning with Rosh Hashanah. Some of the important features included in the yearly arrangement include: If it is a leap year, the number of *Shabbatot*, if it is a *Shemita* year, days in a month, the beginning of each of the four *Tekufot* (seasons of the year recognized by the Talmudic writers), and which year we are in of the lunar and solar cycles. The next section informs the reader of the Times of the New Moon so the *Gabbai* can announce the *Molad* on *Shabbat M’vorachim*, the Shabbat preceding *Rosh Chodesh*. The reader is

²⁸ Fasting, generally, on Mondays and Thursdays was known in antiquity. See T. Ta’an. 2:4. But the special use of such fasts after Sukkot and Pesach is first referenced by the Tosafot, Kid. 81a, d.h.*sakva d’skata rigla*.

given the proper format (days, minutes, and parts) when announcing the new moon in synagogue. What follows is a lengthy outline of each month from *Tishre* through *Elul*.

The first page of each new Hebrew month includes a chart of that month with Hebrew and English dates, a very short overview of the Hebrew month, and the *daf yomi* (daily Talmud folio) assigned for study that particular day. The following pages include a detailed description of Holidays and Shabbatot. Included in the detailed description are the following:

- Sources from Rabbinic Literature to elucidate a particular Halakhic point.
- Teachings from certain rabbis, particularly Rabbi Yosef Eliahu Henkin.
- *Minhagim* (customs) from different Jewish communities.
- Description of candle-lighting procedure.
- Proper way to fulfill various *mitzvot* (commandments), such as: Shofar, Lulav, Mikvah, Tefilin, etc.
- Liturgical additions or subtractions based on the day.
- Torah/Haftarah readings
- Shacharit, Mincha, Ma'ariv, Havdallah descriptions
- Traditions and customs associated with Fast Days

The inclusion of teachings by Rabbi Henkin is especially noteworthy, because of the fact that Henkin was the founder of Ezras Torah. His death in 1973 was followed by a memorial notice in which Ezras Torah acknowledged the role played by its founder:

Rav Henkin was born on *Rosh Chodesh Adar I*, 5641 (1881) in Byelorussia. His father, Rav Eliezer Klonymus, *z"l*, was a *talmid chacham* who headed a yeshiva in the town. As a young boy Eliyahu Henkin learned *Chumash* with his great-grandfather Rav Yitzchak for a year. The following year he was taught by his grandfather, Rav Avrohom and for the three subsequent years he learned *gemara* and other topics with his father. At the age of 15, Rav Henkin traveled to the city of Slutsk hoping to be accepted into the Yeshiva Gedola of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, *zt"l*. In the year prior to his arrival in Slutsk, Rav Henkin reviewed the entire *Mesechta Eruvin* forty times! Upon meeting him for the first time Rav Isser Zalman asked him why he had come all the way to Slutsk. The youngster replied that he wanted to attend the Yeshiva. To the other *talmidim* standing there, this seemed absurd. They were young men already accomplished in their learning,

talmidei chachomim in their own right, and here was a mere boy of 15 seeking to join their ranks!

Rav Isser Zalman continued, "Tell me, my son, what have you learned lately?" "*Mesechtos Shabbos* and *Eruvin*."

Astonished that a young boy had learned these difficult tractates, he asked, "Are you prepared for an examination?"

"Yes," the youngster replied, whereupon Rav Isser Zalman questioned the boy on the entire breadth of the two *mesechtos*. He answered all the challenges with ease, exhibiting an extraordinary knowledge and understanding of every *Rashi* and *Tosefos*. Rav Isser Zalman was flabbergasted, "This child knows these *mesechtos* better than I do!" Rav Henkin was immediately admitted to the Slutzker Yeshiva. At the age of twenty, Rav Henkin received *semicha* from the Rav Yaakov Dovid Willensky, *zt"l* know as the Ridvaz, who served as the Rav of Slutzk, Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, *zt"l* and from Harav Yechiel Michel Epstein, *zt"l*, Rav of Novorhodok and author of *Aruch Hashulchan*...

...Rav Henkin's dedication to Ezras Torah was legendary. As Rabbi Naftoli Riff *zt"l*, president of Ezras Torah (1958-1976) recalled, "On several occasions I noticed Rav Henkin refer to a mysterious small notebook. He once revealed to me that in this notebook he kept a log of those minutes during the day that he did not utilize for Ezras Torah. He was not involved with his own personal business during those minutes, but when someone came to his office to discuss divrei Torah or if he received a telephone call, as he often would, from anywhere in the world requesting his opinion on a particular problem or sheaila, he immediately looked at the time and noted in his record how many minutes he had borrowed from Ezras Torah. He would then know how many minutes to "make up" on behalf of Ezras Torah related work."

Rav Henkin carried on his shoulders the plight of literally tens of thousands of Torah dedicated families throughout the world - their daily well-being was his daily personal concern - yet he never revealed to a soul who these families were. Rav Henkin never turned anyone away without a suitable sum of money. On rare occasions when a recipient felt that what he had received was insufficient, Rav Henkin did not respond bureaucratically. Rav Henkin was known to cry with these individuals explaining that he understood how great their need was and he only wished that there were additional funds to provide.²⁹

The final section, divided by Torah portion, includes sunrise times, candle lighting, and latest time to say Sh'ma according to Magen Avraham (M.A), and the Vilna Gaon (Gr''a) for major North American cities.

²⁹ "Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, ZT"L The Gaon in Torah, The Gaon in Chessed," accessed March 8, 2012, http://www.ezrastorah.org/rav_henkin_bio.php.

Now that we know what is contained within the *Ezras Torah luach*, it is worth exploring what the editors choose to leave out. It is also worth questioning if the *Ezras Torah luach* represents the mainstream Orthodox (and Zionist) world.

The *Ezras Torah luach* does not mention the establishment of the State of Israel and the reunification of Jerusalem. While *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, *Yom HaZikaron*, and *Yom Yerushalayim* are widely observed in the Jewish world, they are absent here. Rabbi Dov Fischer, of the Young Israel of Orange County in Irvine California, posted an interesting (and somewhat scathing) blog entry on this subject.

It is fascinating that, 41 years after the liberation and reunification of Jerusalem, and 60 years after the creation of the State of Israel, the *Ezras Torah luach* still does not list either day. It lists Yom Kippur Koton. It lists Pesach Sheini. It lists Taanis B'hab. But Jews need to e-mail each other to determine and confirm the days for Yom Ha'Atzma'ut and Yom Yerushalayim. Yes, the days float because of Shabbat concerns and the desire to avoid public celebrations that can threaten her sanctity. Well, the *Ezras Torah* calendar advises when the Fast of Tisha B'Av floats into Motz'ei Shabbat or when Bedikat Chametz and Biur Chametz floats because of Shabbat. But, to get the date of Yom Ha'Atzma'ut or Yom Yerushalayim, there is no point looking in the *Ezras Torah luach*. It ain't [sic] listed. Period.

This meaningfully points to why the Center Ground of Torah-Observant Judaism is a most precious, yet most demanding, theological ground to stand and hold. There is nothing sacrosanct about being tugged excessively to the Right either.

It is understandable that, for one halakhic reason or another, one or another hashkafah-group may choose to daven on Yom Ha'Atzma'ut or Yom Yerushalayim as though it were a regular day in the calendar. Fine. But not to even note the day's existence in the definitive halakhic calendar of the year, used by Shuls and Gabbaim throughout the world? Not to even note that it exists?

No, there is nothing sacrosanct about being tugged excessively to the Right either.³⁰

³⁰ Rav Dov Fischer, June 2, 2008 (10:04 a.m.), <http://ravfischer.blogspot.com/2008/06/ezras-torah-luach-yom-yerushalayim-and.html>.

Rabbi Fischer's blog highlights a real division in the Modern Orthodox world. Discussion there on how to commemorate these three occasions is matched by much debate on the inclusion of Zionist prayers in general -- such as, "Prayer for the State of Israel," or "Prayer for Israel's Defense Forces" Which are included in the Koren Sacks Siddur, for instance, but generally missing in *Artscroll* (except for the Rabbinical Council of American edition of the that Siddur). The *Ezras Torah luach* is used by many clergy and laity in the Orthodox camp, but its omission of Israel-centered holidays marks it off as not being representative of the entirety of Orthodox Judaism. The same is true of Yom *Hashoah* – it too is missing here. This is a calendar that honors only the traditional holy days of Talmudic tradition.

Acknowledgement of Zionism and the Shoah is not the only issue for Orthodox Jews who rely on a Halakhic calendar. A more general division occurs for Hasidic Jews, especially those of the Lubavitch camp. Another *luach* guides those who identify as Chabad-Lubavitch.

Luach Colel Chabad

May study lead to deed. And may the enhancement of observance which this publication promotes fulfill the ultimate purpose of all Torah practice: to prepare the world for the coming of *Moshiach*. May this take place in the immediate future.³¹

Luach Colel Chabad is produced by Colel Chabad, a charitable organization established in 1788 by the founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, also known as the Alter Rebbe. It begins with a note from the publisher followed by introductory letters from the sixth Lubavitch Rebbe, Yosef Yizchak

³¹ *Luach Colel Chabad 5771: A Comprehensive Guide to Chabad-Lubavitch Customs and Practices* (Brooklyn: Colel Chabad, 2010), 5.

Schneerson and the seventh Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. These introductory words serve as letters of appeal for the Colel Chabad Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes Charity.

If the goal of the *Ezras Torah luach* is to serve as a Halakhic guide for Orthodox Jewry, then *Luach Colel Chabad* is a specialized calendar reflecting the customs and practices of Chabad-Lubavitch. The publisher notes in the very beginning of the calendar, “The fuel that drives Chassidus is careful adherence to the *minhagim*; the customs which the Rebbeim and their Chassidim have followed for centuries. Thus we put on *t’fillin* the Lubavitch way, we daven according to our text of the *Siddur*, and we wash for bread in a distinctive manner.”³²

Like the *Ezras Torah* calendar, this *luach* also begins in the month of *Tishre* and concludes with *Elul*. At the beginning of each month, the reader finds the date, time, and portion of the *molad* so that the new moon can be properly sanctified. What follows is a lengthy description of the proceeding month based on Shabbat and various holidays.

All liturgical references come from *Siddur Tehillas Hashem*. This prayer book follows *nusach ha’Ari* and was originally written by the first Lubavitch Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Aside from employing proof texts from rabbinic literature, this *luach* often cites sources from the *Tanya*, the fundamental work on *chassidut* also written by Schneur Zalman of Liadi. It is quite common to see phrases such as “The [previous] Rebbe says, urged, or established...” as a means to help devotees of Chabad to follow Lubavitch customs and traditions.

³² *Luach Colel Chabad 5771: A Comprehensive Guide to Chabad-Lubavitch Customs and Practices* (Brooklyn: Colel Chabad, 2010), 3.

Chabad values the precise forms associated with ritual. This attention to detail can be seen in the great length to which this calendar goes in explaining ritual actions. For example, “When reciting *kaddish*, the *chazzan* should lower his head when reciting the words, *sh’mei rabba, vikareiv m’shichei*, and *v’imru Amen*. After reciting the latter words, the *chazzan* should lift his head and then lower it again, reciting the phrase *Y’hei sh’mei rabbah...yisbareich*. He should then lift his head and then lower it again, reciting the phrase *sh’mei d’Kudsha... v’imru Amen...*”³³ Throughout the *luach* one will notice birthdays of great Chassidic leaders such as the Baal Shem Tov as well as Yahrzeits of Chassidic sages.

The previous two *luchot* spoke to the traditional Jewish world and reflect a strict observance to mitzvot. In the next chapter, we will explore progressive *luchot* as a means to begin to unpack the importance of practice and ritual in the non-traditional Jewish world.

³³ *Luach Colel Chabad 5771*, 10.

Chapter 3: Modern Innovations to Traditional *Luchot*

Travelers in search of a given destination use maps to guide them along the proper paths to get there. Calendars are like maps through time, guiding specific communities and their members through the maze of Jewish traditions and customs that mark each day. Each of the traditional *luchot* in the previous chapter is written for a Torah observant, *halakhic* community. This chapter will explore alternative routes that guide communities other than the strictly Orthodox.

Luah Hashanah

Conservative Judaism considers itself bound by *halakha* but with the understanding that *halachah* is an evolving thing that changes with time. It also provides for widespread interpretation of Jewish law by vesting its local rabbis as the final arbiters within their respective communities. They act as *mara d'atra*, the halakhic “master of the place.”

Whereas the *Ezras Torah luach* (Orthodox) and *Luach Colel Chabad* (Lubavitch) attempt to speak for Orthodox Judaism, the Conservative Movement’s *Luah Hashanah* directs Conservative Jews and does so by granting explicit ultimate authority to each individual Conservative rabbi. “The congregational rabbi, as the *mara d’atra* (the local authority on Jewish practice), has the ultimate responsibility for such decisions in each

community.”³⁴ Appropriately, this *luach* adheres to Conservative practice as found in the movement’s own *Siddur Sim Shalom* and the *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*.

Kenneth Goodrich, a lawyer, created the first *luach* for the Conservative Movement in 1994. He had graduated from the Joint Program of Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, as well as Columbia Law School. Upon his untimely death in 2004, Rabbi Robert Abramson edited and managed the publication of the *luach*. Today, Rabbi Miles Cohen has taken on the editorial tasks of the newly revised official *luach* of the Conservative Movement.

At first glance, *Luah Hashanah*, is dramatically different than its predecessor. It is not just visibly appealing but also less “text-heavy” And supplied with a helpful opening section entitled “Guide to Symbols and Conventions.” The “Guide” explains the symbols that will be used to alert the user either to add (+) or to omit (X) a phrase or prayer at particular services. Another symbol (a hand with a pointing finger) notes instructions that require special attention. These three symbols guide rabbis and or lay leaders through the liturgical year, as they struggle to fulfill the proper halakhic and liturgical requirements as interpreted by Conservative Judaism.

The next subheading alerts users to the locations of certain prayers in various siddurim published by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and The Rabbinical Assembly. Torah readings are listed based by complete *parashah* and triennial-cycle. The final subsection, and perhaps the most unique, includes three color-

³⁴ Rabbi Miles B. Cohen, *Luah Hashanah 5772: A guide to prayers readings, laws, and customs for the synagogue and home*, ed. Leslie Rubin (New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 2011), v.

coded boxes. A yellow box “provides instructions that apply throughout the stated time period [and] appears prior to the first time the information is required.” A green box “Contains information about a holiday or other special occasion [and] provides historical or other explanatory background material.” A blue box “Pertains to observance of the holiday or other special occasion [and] describes the relevant *halakhot* and customs [as well as] step-by-step procedures for *mitsvot* and rituals.”³⁵ Previous editions of the *luach* included short *kavanot* entitled “Doing Tz’dakah and G’milut Hesed,” usually a short paragraph related to such practices as *ushpizin* and *hachnasat orchim*. Even though the Conservative Movement considers itself to be bound by *halakha*, these guides illustrate that simply following a traditional Orthodox *luach* will not always be beneficial.

Included in this calendar is a basic overview of the current liturgical year. This section includes characteristics that define the year such as:

- Number of days in the year
- Numbers of years into the lunar and solar cycles
- Whether it is a leap year or not
- The year it is according to the triennial Torah reading cycle.

The following subsection is divided into three smaller subsections:

- Major Holidays
- Minor Holidays and Observances
- Public Fasts.

Like the other traditional *luchot*, the Conservative *luach* begins with the Hebrew month of *Tishre*. Unlike the other *luchot*, a brief chart outlining the month is not included, although older editions of the Conservative *luach* had such a chart.

³⁵ Cohen, viii.

As we saw, none of the traditional *luchot* that we have seen thus far included observances for *Yom HaShoah* and Israeli related commemorations. The Conservative *luach* is the first calendar to include special observances for *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day), *Yom Hazikaron* (Remembrance Day), *Yom Ha'atsma'ut* (Israel Independence Day), and *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem Day). The writers of the *luach* note, "Although no fixed liturgy for the occasion has emerged yet, many congregations mark the occasion with changes in the liturgy."³⁶ The Conservative *luach* suggests reading *Megillat Hashoah: The Shoah Scroll*, a publication of the Rabbinic Assembly on Holocaust Remembrance Day. Other liturgical suggestions include reciting *El Malei Rachamim* on *Yom HaShoah*, and *Yom Hazikaron*. Since both *Yom Ha'atsma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* occur during the counting of the *Omer*, traditionally a time of mourning, one might imagine that the mourning practices traditional for the time would be followed even on these joyous days. The reader is therefore informed that they are suspended. We are also told to include *Al Hanissim*, an additional prayer traditionally added to the *Amidah* and *Birkat Hamazon* on Chanukah and Purim, on *Yom Ha'atsma'ut*.

Women of Reform Judaism Art Calendar

Since 1913, the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), formerly the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, has been publishing a yearly *Art Calendar*. This calendar is very different from the other *luchot* in that it represents a time when reform Judaism was not focused on halakhic regulations and needed only a very simple calendar with dates and holidays as well as elementary information like the weekly lectionary. In addition, Reform had jettisoned second days of holidays so had to provide a different

³⁶ Cohen, 111.

liturgical cycle and set of Torah readings. To be sure, if we associate the *luach* as a guide to the traditions, customs, laws, and prayers of the synagogue and home, we will see that most of these are lacking here. Nonetheless, it serves as a basic *luach* for Reform Jews who did not worry much about such details in 1913. A sign of the Reform Movement's pride in upward mobility at the time can be seen in the new focus that this calendar provides: not *halachah* but art. It is indeed an *Art Calendar* – both “calendar” and “art.”

The goal of the calendar is to “showcase Jewish artists expressing themselves through their artwork. As a result WRJ has made its members aware of the beauty and significance of Jewish art and has encouraged them to collect it to beautify their homes and congregational settings.”³⁷ The calendar was indeed intended to serve as a basic guide to the Jewish year as Reform Judaism understood it. But the art with which the calendar was infused had yet another goal: back in 1913, Reform Jews were quite acculturated – to the point of risking assimilation. They were, however, upper class, and they valued art. It was hoped that the use of Jewish art would boost Jewish identity and consciousness. The calendar was meant not just to provide the proper dates of holidays but also to further the use of Jewish art in Reform Jewish homes.

Demonstrative of its acculturation to the American calendar, the WRJ Art Calendar begins at the very end of August (the English month just before the Hebrew new year) and not with the Hebrew month of *Tishre* (in which that new year falls). The heading at the top of each page provides the month and year according to the Gregorian

³⁷ William Goldman, “William Goldman's metal sculpture featured in Women for Reform Judaism Art Calendar,” *TribLocal*, June 20, 2011.
<http://triblocal.com/lincolnshire/community/stories/2011/06/william-goldmans-metal-sculpture-featured-in-women-for-reform-judaism-art-calendar>.

calendar first, and only after that, the parallels for the Hebrew year. It is as if the Jewish calendrical information is superimposed on a primary Gregorian understanding of time, whereas the other *luchot* virtually ignore the Gregorian calendar and provide a strictly Jewish calendar alone.

What follows is a description of the current calendar, not the original 1913 version. It includes basic calendrical information such as:

- Beginning of each new Hebrew month
- Holidays (major and minor)
- American and Canadian legal holidays
- Torah and Haftarah portions read on major Jewish holidays but not for Chanukah or Purim. It is interesting to note that these additional readings can be found in the “Table of Scriptural Readings” in *Gates of Understanding* on page 271-284.
- Four of the five *megilot* (scrolls) are assigned– but not Lamentations for Tisha B’Av, because Reform Jews did not (and still do not, generally) observe this fast day. “Table of Scriptural Readings” in *Gates of Understanding* on page 271-284.
- Jewish wisdom and information from the WRJ such as “The Uniongram was created in 1921 by Blanche Stolz...”
- Days for counting of the Omer, an interesting inclusion since the laws of mourning for the omer are not followed in Reform circles, even though, apparently, counting the omer is.
- “Secular” Israeli Commemorations: Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaAtzma-ut, but not Yom Yerushalayim, The absence of Yom yerushalayim may be indicative of political concerns regarding Jewish “occupation” of the west bank. By and large Reform Jews accept unification of Jerusalem, but do not celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, according to this calendar.³⁸
- Four of the five traditional public fast days associated with the destruction of the Temple are not mentioned; Tisha B’Av, however, is included – a bow to its importance, especially at summer camps, one imagines, but with no mention of a fast.

³⁸ In an e-mail from Rabbi Naamah Kelman on March 11, 2012 she says, “There is no official position [on *Yom Yerushalayim*], no reference in our Reform siddur. The day has been taken over by the right win of Israel....sadly...This is a dynamic tension, from the onset of Zionism.”

At the very back of the calendar, after a space provided for telephone numbers and email addresses, are the dates of holidays for the next three years beginning with January 1st, the secular New Year. What follows is a list of the Torah portions according to Reform tradition and where they can be found in both *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* and *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. The list of Torah portions was approved by Dr. Richard Sarason, a Professor of Rabbinic Literature and Thought at HUC-HIR in Cincinnati.

Noticeably absent from the *WRJ Art Calendar* is any connection to liturgy or personal observance. While this may be surprising at first glance, it should not come as a complete shock. Personal autonomy and individualism has been a tenet of Reform Judaism in all of the platforms. All attempts to legislate Reform personal observance have failed. Still the *Art Calendar* might easily have referred back to *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*, for matters of Jewish practice in the home. One suspects that the failure to do so is not ideologically based but simply a function of not taking the time to add to what the calendar traditionally contained from the 1913 days of its beginning. The result, however, is that aside from information about the lectionary, the *WRJ Art Calendar* has little to say about how a Reform Jew is supposed to live.

The following calendars that I will look at are not issued by particular movements but are deeply influenced by the importance of rabbinic authority. Unlike the previous *luchot*, they never claim to speak for anyone their editorial choices recommend them to some communities rather than others.

Sacred Days: A Weekly Planner for the Jewish Year

The Sacred Days weekly planner has been published by CLAL: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership since 1992. CLAL, an organization devoted to Jewish pluralism, describes itself as a “leadership training institute, think tank and resource center.” As part of its mission, CLAL promotes the following objectives:

- Brings Jewish wisdom to the American spiritual landscape and makes it a resource for all.
- Builds bridges across communities to encourage pluralism and openness.
- Promotes dynamic, inclusive Jewish communities in which all voices are heard.
- Nurtures volunteer, professional and rabbinic leaders and helps people to re-imagine Jewish life.
- Enhances Jewish participation in American civic and spiritual life.³⁹

Sacred Days was born out of Rabbi Irving Yitz Greenberg’s notion of “holy secularity,” which is a strategy for expanding the definition of what constitutes a sacred experience. “CLAL, for thirty years, has taught that it is not only in religious ritual or in our ancient spiritual and philosophical texts that we find the sacred, but also in the context of our daily lives and the contemporary world in which we live.”⁴⁰ The goal of the weekly planner is to infuse each day with a sense of sacredness so that Shabbat is not seen as the only holy day of the week. In fact, even the name “Sacred Days” was a conscious choice. This calendar was not meant to be a traditional *luach*, but rather a daily planner to mark sacred time each and every day of the week.

The *Sacred Days* planner is very similar in look and style to the *WRJ Art Calendar* of the Reform Movement. Both infuse art and text as a means to make daily

³⁹ “About Clal,” <http://www.clal.org/cms/about-clal>

⁴⁰ Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, ed., *Sacred Days: A Weekly Planner for the Jewish Year 2004-2005/5765-5766: A Weekly Planner for the Jewish Year* (New York: CLAL, 2004), Introduction.

life a sacred experience, but *Sacred Days* employs a traditional diasporic Jewish calendar with a twist. The pluralistic mission of CLAL is evident in all its publications. As a result the planner is written for a wide variety of Jews with different customs. To accommodate Reform practice, the planner includes the note “Yizkor for those who observe only one festival day,” and “Most Reform Jews no longer observe the second day of Festivals.”⁴¹ Still, the planner is still not entirely pluralistic, as Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are on separate days, and the lectionary and “additional readings” chart in the back reflects a more traditional approach to liturgy. The calendar itself includes both secular American observances based on the Gregorian calendar on the left-hand side of the page, and Jewish holidays and Torah readings on the right.

Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, president of CLAL, spoke with me about the history of the *Sacred Days* planner. While Rabbi Hirschfield is not certain who ultimately came up with the idea for a calendar, he knows it was born out of a yearly tribute book that CLAL used to publish to honor various people and that book included various Jewish teachings. Over time this tribute book developed into a daily planner that incorporated images and commentary based on the week or season. In keeping with the general profile of the people for whom CLAL programs, the planner was published for those who were “highly affiliated but didn’t like the establishment.”⁴² Production of the CLAL *Sacred Days* planner ceased because production cost increased and CLAL realized that it “taught Torah in other formats, [so] *this* calendar became less relevant.”⁴³ Even though the

⁴¹ Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, ed., *Sacred Days: A Weekly Planner for the Jewish Year 2004-2005/5765-5766: A Weekly Planner for the Jewish Year* (New York: CLAL, 2004), Torah, Haftarah and Special Liturgical Readings for Holidays.

⁴² Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, telephone conversation, 1/20/12.

⁴³ *ibid.*

calendar is no longer in production, it stands as unique in its effort to unify the Jewish world through a single map of Jewish time.

Free Jewish Calendars

We turn now to calendars that are typically found in supermarkets, funeral homes, and kosher butchers. As opposed to those that are prepared by Jewish organizations and intended for their own-niched market of followers, these mass-produced calendars are available through (for example) supermarket chains that want to advertise the availability of kosher food and thereby increase sales from traditionally minded Jews. While these free calendars are readily available, they are usually not written for a progressive or Reform Jewish population. They seem to appear out of nowhere and have no sponsoring organization other than the stores and businesses that give them away. How do these “anonymous” calendars come about?

One answer comes from a rabbi who wishes to remain anonymous himself, because he is a Reform Jew who has had to keep his identity under wraps lest more traditional businesses decide to stop using his calendars. Since 1972, this particular Reform rabbi, has been the “secret” author of commercial calendars used in the Orthodox world. His calendars have been circulated in kosher butcher shops and Judaica shops all around the United States. He prepares not only the calendars but the pictures that are used in them as well. It is, he says, a labor of love. Given the need to retain the rabbi’s anonymity, I cannot use the actual names of the products here, so will have to resort to pseudonyms.

His calendars are published by a leading supplier of imprinted promotional products. For 2011-2012 the promotional company released two versions of the rabbi's calendars with pictures featuring typical scenes from Israel taken by the anonymous rabbi. This rabbi explained to me that he uses all his own calculations based upon those found in Arthur Spier's book *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*.

What are we to make of the rabbi's fear that if his true identity were to be revealed, Orthodox Jews would no longer buy his products? Once again, we see the importance of calendar as a declaration of identity, and importance the Orthodox world places on its own trusted rabbinic authority. The information's source is as important as its accuracy. Even if the information is correct, the scholar proffering it must be a "Torah observant" Jew.

The final calendar I looked at was published by SKM Marketing for Supermarket chains such as A&P, Pathmark, Waldbaums, and ShopRite. Each year a different theme is chosen and this year the two calendars are entitled "Celebrate Jewish American History Makers" and "Simply Kosher." To find out more information about these calendars, I contacted Renee S. Voit-Porath, VP/Creative Director of SKM Marketing. Ms. Voit-Porath explained that the information for the history calendar came from "quite a few different sources, including family of some of the people featured. Quite a bit of it came from the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center / Jewish American Heritage Month. We also referred to American Jewish Archives, among others."⁴⁴ For the recipes featured in the "Simply Kosher" calendar, SKM Marketing was granted use by Jamie Geller, author of *Quick and Kosher Cookbook* and

⁴⁴ Renee S. Voit-Porath, e-mail message, October 24, 2011.

the website joyofkosher.com. Voit-Porath says, “Otherwise we sometimes utilize area dietitians, or from our own library, or we develop them ourselves.”⁴⁵

The calendrical information is once again based on the traditional Jewish calendar. I was told, “We often cross-reference between several sources for the readings, holidays, candle times. One is a local Judaic retailer here in Michigan where we reference some of their materials. Sometimes we do reference Chabad.org, a very useful website, but we cross-reference and we have a local consultant and proofreader that helps us on that.”⁴⁶

The *luchot* in this chapter speak to a more liberal approach to tradition while embracing modernity. While some of the *luchot* still recognize the importance of rabbinic authority, all have found creative and innovative ways to reach a wider audience. The next chapter will begin to explore how the Reform movement approaches issues of calendar and time and in particular what a Reform *luach* could look like.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

Chapter 4: The Reform Approach to Time

Arthur Waskow describes the calendar as “the circle of the seasons, the round of the year, the festivals of joy with which the Jewish people dance our praise of God.”⁴⁷ Now that we have a fixed calendar, how can we see the sacredness in each day, and in each act that we do? And what makes them inherently Reform?

The main subject of this chapter is the importance of marking time as Reform Jews. At the present time there are no *luhot* that can help guide daily Reform practice. While we do have the *Woman of Reform Judaism Art Calendar*, which does include certain Torah portions, it does not mention many liturgical and theological issues facing the Reform Movement today. For example, even though the Reform Movement does not observe *Yom Tov Sheini*, it must address what happens to the Torah cycle when the second day of a festival falls on Shabbat. A Reform *luach* may also have to deal with calendrical and liturgical issues such as a triennial reading cycle and saying *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'atsma'ut*. What follows will present a synthesis of material that will eventually serve as the backbone of a Reform *luach*.

A Second Festival Day and Reform Judaism

One of the first decisions the early Reformers confronted was the necessity and importance of *yom tov sheini* – the observance of a second day of a festival in the diaspora. Rabbi Richard Sarason says the question of second day of a festival was “perceived to be artificial and outdated” even though “[t]he earliest German Reform congregational prayer books (from the Hamburg Tempelverein, 1819; rev. 1841) retained

⁴⁷ Arthur Waskow, *Seasons of our Joy: A Handbook of Jewish Festivals* (New York: Summit Books. 1982), x.

the second-day festival observance.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, by 1846, the issue of *yom tov sheini* was once again discussed at the Third Conference of German Rabbis in Breslau Germany.

The resolution states:

The second holidays, i.e, the second and eighth day of Passover...have lost their meaning for our time...Congregations are therefore fully justified in abolishing the second-day holidays if they are inclined to do so...In congregations, however, where the abolition of the second holiday meets with the opposition of ever so small a part of its membership, the festive character of the day has to be preserved in the divine service, but the prohibition to work on that day is set aside...Hence it is not prohibited to eat leavened bread on the 22nd day of Nissan, or on the so-called last day of Passover. The blowing of the Shofar on the first day of the New Year, and the use of the festival-bunch on Succoth, is permitted, even though these holidays happen to occur on the Sabbath day.⁴⁹

It is clear that a one-day *yom tov* has been the standard practice of the Reform Movement since the 19th century. Therefore most Reform responsa no longer focus on the one or two day debate. Rather these learned “halakhic” responses focus on the ramifications of Reform Jews living in a world where many Jews still do observe a two-day *yom tov*.

The latest Reform responsum from 1999, on the issue of observing the Second Festival Day in Reform Judaism, comes from a question submitted by Rabbi Lance J. Sussman.

Our Reform congregation normally schedules confirmation services on Shavuot, which this year (1999/5759) falls on Thursday night and Friday. Our Confirmation class prefers to have their service on Friday night so more of their friends, family and other Religious School kids can attend. Although Friday night is no longer Shavuot according to our Reform calendar, it is the second day of the festival which is traditionally observed in the Diaspora (*yom tov sheni shel galuyot*). Is it acceptable for us to “stretch” the festival to accommodate their request, observing Shavuot for a second day so as to observe confirmation along

⁴⁸ Rabbi Richard Sarason. “The Jewish Calendar—And Reform Options-Part Two.” *Union for Reform Judaism: 10 Minutes of Torah – The Rhythm of Jewish Time*. December 21, 2010. <http://tmt.urj.net/archives/2socialaction/122110.html>.

⁴⁹ *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis 5651-1890-91* (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing and Printing Company, 1891), 96.

with the holiday?⁵⁰

What is striking about this question is that there is a clear recognition that the Reform movement only observes a one-day festival but this congregation wants to make a one-time exception.

The anonymous writer of this responsum is quite shrewd in his crafting of the answer to Sussman. He seeks dismantle each argument piece by piece in order to arrive at the conclusion. Ultimately the writer concludes:

For these reasons: 1) since the observance of the second festival day is no longer necessary as a response to calendrical doubt; 2) since we are not bound to maintain ancestral customs once the justification for their creation has disappeared; and 3) since the interests of Jewish religious life would be better served by eliminating *yom tov sheni* than by maintaining it, we have therefore returned to the standard, as prescribed by the Torah, that each *yom tov* be observed for one day. This means that, for us, the "second days" of Rosh Hashanah, Shemini Atzeret, and Shavuot and the "eighth" day of Pesach are ordinary days (*yom chol*), while the "second" days of Sukkot and Pesach are the intermediate days of those festivals (*chol hamo`ed*). None of these days is a festival, and we do not treat them as such...For when we declare a second day of *yom tov*, we are not simply making a statement of identity, planning a creative worship experience, or arranging an experiment in spirituality. We are declaring a festival. When we say that a day is a *yom tov*, we mark it as holy; we transform it from ordinary time into sacred time; we make *kodesh* out of *chol*. We arrogate to ourselves the power of the ancient Sanhedrin to announce to the Jewish world—indeed, even to God—that such-and-such a date shall be a festival. And when we declare a *yom tov sheni*, that is, a festival day on a date that according to the Torah is not a festival at all, we create an actual festival day with all its relevant duties and restrictions. On *yom tov sheni*, as on the first festival day, we recite the festival liturgy. We say kiddush over wine, praising the God "who sanctifies Israel and the festivals." The mitzvot which pertain to that particular *yom tov* are just as appropriate, and obligatory under tradition, on *yom tov sheni*. And just as we abstain from work on a festival, we are to refrain from those labors on the second festival day. In short, *yom tov sheni* is the ritual equivalent in virtually all respects of the first day of the festival. We are entitled to restore the observance of *yom tov sheni* and/or the second day of Rosh Hashanah, just as we are entitled to restore any number of ritual practices discarded by our predecessors. But if and

⁵⁰ Mark Washofsky, ed., "The Second Festival Day and Reform Judaism." *Reform Responsa for the Twenty-First Century: Sh'eilot Ut'shuvot, Volume 1, 1996-1999*. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2010), 49.

when we do so, let us not forget that it is a festival that we are creating. If we do not treat the second day of *yom tov* as the ritual equivalent of the first, then we do not in fact perceive it as a true festival day. And if that is the case, it is dishonest for us to call it a festival.⁵¹

In the end the anonymous responsum writer believes that we should not be observing *yom tov sheini* merely out of convenience, unless we intend to treat it as a full festival day.

While the most recent Reform responsum from 1999 dealt with the issue of *yom tov sheini* on a macro level, an earlier responsum dealt with *yom tov sheini* on a micro level. In 1969, Rabbi Solomon Freehof published a responsum concerned with Torah reading when the second festival day coincides with Shabbat. The question was: “Since the Reform practice as to the length of the festivals is the same as the biblical and the Israeli, which Torah reading shall be used on the Sabbath of what would be the eighth day of Passover? What is the practice of Reform congregations in America?”⁵²

Rabbi Freehof answered this question by recognizing the role of *klal yisrael*. He did not want Reform Temples to be out of sync with its Conservative and Orthodox sister congregations in the diaspora.

But the problem remains in the relationship between Reform and non-Reform congregations in America, England, etc. Here we are in the *same* country, and it is not convenient that for a number of weeks we should be in dislocation as to Torah reading with the rest of American Jewry. We have therefore arrived at the following practical solution: We simply reread on that Sabbath the special reading of the holiday that we read before, and take a Psalm as the supplementary reading, but the service that day is a regular Sabbath service. In this way, on the very next Sabbath we are in accord with all the Jews of our environment.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² Solomon B. Freehof, “When Eighth Day of Passover is on Sabbath.” *Current Reform Responsa*. (New York: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1969), 42-43.

If *klal yisrael* was so important to Rabbi Freehof, why not work to have the traditional congregations adapt their Torah reading tradition to the Reform practice? Alternately, perhaps Reform congregations should just observe the second festival day. In all seriousness, it does not seem right for Reform Temples alone adjust their Torah reading schedule. His proposed solution appears to treat Conservative and Orthodox practices with more deference than Reform practices.

Ultimately Rabbi Freehof suggested that, "...when the final day of a Festival (i.e., the eighth day of Pesach or the second day of Shavuot) falls on a Shabbat, our Reform congregations may 'simply reread on that Sabbath the special reading of the holiday that we read the day before.'"⁵³ As we shall see in a moment, current Reform practice does not follow Rabbi Freehof's suggestion. Nonetheless, Freehof's responsum offers an interesting alternative.

What then is current Reform practice? Today, many Reform Temples split the first portion after the festival (usually *Parashat Sh'mini* after Passover and *Parashat Naso* after Shavuot) into two portions and read it over two weeks. This practice of splitting *parashiot* has been canonized in the Women of Reform Judaism Art Calendar. By following this practice, Reform congregations are only out of sync for one week and do not read the diasporan festival reading since it is no longer a festival day for Reform Jews. As we can see the weekly lectionary is deeply connected to the festival and holiday Torah reading cycle.

⁵³ Washofsky, 58.

The Lectionary in Reform Judaism

The Torah is divided into 54 portions for weekly reading in the synagogue. During a leap year (*malei*) each portion is read without the needing to combine portions. But during non-leap years (*chaser*) when there are 50 weeks some of the shorter portions are combined to ensure that the entire Torah is completed within a year. The portions that are so combined are: *Vayakhel-Pekudei*, *Tazria-Metzora*, *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim*, *Behar-Bechukotai*, *Chukkat-Balak*, *Mattot-Massei*, and *Nitzavim-Vayelech*. Each week a *Haftarah* or concluding portion is also read which is often connected to the Torah portion or special *maftir aliyah* for the holiday. While this breakdown is standard in traditional Jewish circles, it has not always been the norm in the Reform movement.

In an email correspondence, Rabbi Richard Sarason said: “There were numerous attempts in the 19th century to reform the weekly Torah selections---mostly attempts to shorten the readings by promulgating a quasi-triennial cycle (somewhat similar to what is done in many Conservative synagogues today, except that the Reform examples rarely had the ENTIRE *parashah* read over three years, just various selections from it.”⁵⁴ Early examples of the quasi-triennial cycle can be seen in prayer books written by Rabbi Abraham Geiger and Rabbi David Einhorn.⁵⁵ The triennial cycles of today divide the standard annual set of *parashiyot* into thirds and assign one set per year. These lectionaries, by contrast, follow the norm of ancient Palestine by tripling the number of readings and reading them all *seriatim* -- so as to reach the end of Deuteronomy only

⁵⁴ Rabbi Richard Sarason, e-mail message, December 28, 2011.

⁵⁵ Abraham Geiger, *Israelitisches Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre: mit Einschluss der Shabbathe und sämtlicher Feier - und Festtage / geordnet und mit einer neuen deutschen Bearbeitung versehen von Abraham Geiger* (Breslau: J. Hainauer, 1854), tipped in between 114-115.

after the entire three year period; only then does the synagogue return to Genesis to start all over again. (It takes 43 weeks for a synagogue to read the entirety of the book of Genesis, for example) and only after that book is complete will the synagogue move on to Exodus. In addition to weekly Torah readings, Rabbi Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* lectionary includes a new selection of *haftarot* (including selections from psalms) to be read weekly.⁵⁶

By the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, American Reform prayer books introduce a brand new lectionary that is both distinct from the traditional lectionary and the quasi-triennial lectionaries of German Reform prayer books. The 1918 edition of *The Union Prayer Book* (UPB), under the direction of CCAR Liturgy committee chair David Phillipson, gives a table of "Scriptural Readings for the Sabbath." This table offers three or four Torah reading suggestions per *parashah*. The suggested *haftarot* are quite different from the traditional ones and are sometimes even taken from the psalms. The revised 1942 edition of the *UPB* includes an updated chart that includes only three suggested Torah reading per *parashah* as well as a section on special Torah and *haftarah* readings for special *Shabbatot*, festivals, and holidays.

By the time *Gates of Prayer* (GOP) is published in 1975, Rabbi A. Stanley Dreyfus produced a new lectionary that was published in *Gates of the House* and *Gates of Understanding*, since the manuscript of *GOP* was too long. A note on this list says. "We follow UPB and others in providing a suggested Scriptural lectionary of Torah and Haftarah Readings, for the entire year. Our lectionary is new, compiled by ASD [A.

⁵⁶ David Einhorn, *Gebetbuch für Israelitische Reform-Gemeinden* (New York: Thalmessinger & Cahn, 1858), 486-492

Stanley Dreyfus], based on the trad. one, UPB, and other sources.”⁵⁷ In addition to the traditional Shabbat readings, the Dreyfus lectionary offers Torah readings for relevant weekdays too, as well as a few *haftarah* options aside from the traditional Ashkenazic or Sephardic rite. These additional *haftarot* are usually taken from the *Ketuvim* (Writings) not the *N’vi’im* (Prophets) again following Reforms customs from Europe where, as we saw, it was commonplace to choose selections from Psalms.

Chaim Stern in his book *On the Doorposts of Your House* includes a slightly more detailed lectionary with some minor changes. This lectionary includes two to four alternative Shabbat Torah readings, sometimes from outside the regularly assigned *sedra*.⁵⁸ The readings from outside the weekly Torah portion are as follows:

1. Bo - Exo 10:1-13:16
Alt: Deut 6:20-25
2. Trumah - Exo 25:1-27:19
Alt: Deut 8:11-18
3. T’tzaveh - Exo 27:20-30:10
Alt: Deut 4:9-13, Exo 32:1-14
4. P’kudei - Exo 40:1-8, 33-38
Alt: Deut 4:10-20
5. Vayikra - Levit 1:1-5:26
Alt: Deut 4:1-9
6. Tzav - Lev 6:1-8:36
Alt: Deut 10:12-20
7. Tazria - Lev 12:1-13:59
Alt: Lev 19:23-37, Deut 12:28-13:5

⁵⁷ Chaim Stern, *Gates of the House: The New Union Home Prayerbook* (New York: CCAR, 1976, CCAR), 280.

⁵⁸ Chaim Stern, *On the Doorposts of Your house: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home* (New York: CCAR, 1994), 366-380.

8. Metzora - Lev 14:1-15:33
Alt: Deut 26:12-19

9. Bamidbar - Num 1:1-4:20
Alt: Deut 5:29-6:9

10. Matot - Num 30:2-32:42
Alt: Deut 17:14-20

11. Masei - Num 33:1-36:13
Alt: Deut 20:1-9

Rabbi Sarason points out that

It is interesting that the tables of recommended, shorter readings in UPB revised (1918; list compiled by Kaufmann Kohler) and UPB newly revised (1940; list compiled by Solomon Freehof) NEVER do this---all of the suggestions remain within the bounds of the weekly *parashah*. BUT the GOP chart by Stanley Dreyfus (published in both *Gates of the House* and *Gates of Understanding*) does make a start in this direction. Dreyfus proposes a Deut. reading as an alternative for *Tazria* (the same one proposed by Stern) and for *Metzora* (same one as Stern)--but that's all. The logic is pretty clear-----everyone's favorite Reform Torah portions, right? Stern simply expands on that notion for nine others that are also less "edifying," dealing with animal sacrifices, architectural plans, census counts, and tribal wanderings. I'm actually surprised about Bo, because that's straightforward narrative----moral problems with the plagues perhaps, or the laws of the firstborn? Anyhow, that's clearly what's going on here in terms of providing less problematic alternatives.⁵⁹

Once again there are also additional *haftarot* taken from *k'tuvim* section.

Even though the *Haftarot* assigned for reading in an American Reform synagogue reflects the traditional lectionary, the Reform movement still offers many options. Rabbi Sarason explains:

The treatment of *Haftarot* over time has been even freer than that of Torah portions. Some Reform congregations in the 19th century did not read *Haftarot* at all (except on the High Holy Days). Because the traditional *Haftarot* are generally related to the theme of messianic redemption and restoration----or are loosely related to some element of the Torah portion, often through rabbinic midrashic association, these often were rejected as too "medieval," (that is, pre-modern).

⁵⁹ Rabbi Richard Sarason, e-mail message, March 11, 2012

Plaut's Humash is more traditional than most in his choice of Haftarat---with some obvious exceptions (like Shabbat Zachor---although he restores the traditional reading in his Haftarah Commentary volume). He often abbreviates those traditional Haftarat which are on the long side.⁶⁰

It is also important to note that since native Reform practice in Germany and then in America was Ashkenazic, the *Haftarat* chosen reflect that tradition. Because Rabbi Plaut's background is German Reform, once his commentary is adopted, his Ashkenazic *Haftarah* choices become accepted in the greater American Reform movement.

In general the American Reform movement does not have a *maftir aliyah*, the final *aliyah* traditionally given to the person chanting the *Haftarah*. To begin with, it cut down on the number of *aliyot* altogether, in an attempt to shorten the service. In addition, however, the added *aliyah* for festivals and holidays generally reflects the sacrifice that was brought to the Temple on that particular occasion. Since the Reform movement removed references to the sacrificial system from the liturgy, it also had a second reason to eliminate the *maftir* reading altogether. But it is interesting to note that the Reform movement in Israel reads a special *maftir* on Rosh Hashanah (Leviticus 23:23-25) and Yom Kippur (Leviticus 23:26-32) which do not speak about the sacrifice but rather speak about the holiday itself.

Liturgical Change in the Reform Movement

While Reform Judaism has its roots in an emancipated Europe, the Reform project is uniquely American with its own set of issues and concerns. The *Union Prayer Book* was originally an outgrowth of the Pittsburgh Platform. Its newly revised version took cognizance also of the Columbus Platform. The *Union Prayer Book* was not just about the aesthetics of worship but also the theology surrounding worship. Where the

⁶⁰ Rabbi Richard Sarason, e-mail message, December 28, 2011.

traditional prayer book was concerned with a messianic theology: ingathering of the exiles, the reestablishment of the Davidic dynasty, reinstitution of sacrifice, and the rebuilding the Temple, the *Union Prayer Book* expresses "...the Pittsburgh Platform's definition of Judaism as concept, precept and moral ideal."⁶¹ This resulted in a shorter worship service, a lack of ritual, the elimination of *mussaf* on Shabbat and festivals, and the removal of the Jewish class system of Kohein, Levi and Yisrael. The *Union Prayer Book* "expresses for the most part only rhetorically the heart's hunger for God and lacks much of the creative character of the historical *Tefilah*."⁶²

Shaarei Tefillah/Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book preceded any other platform, even the 1976 Centenary Perspective Platform. It therefore broke new ground ideologically. At almost twice the size of the *Union Prayer Book*, it is what Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman calls a "liturgical rebirth."⁶³ If the *Union Prayer Book* is about decorum and conformity then *Gates of Prayer* is about choosing your own adventure and elevating the principle of individual choice.

Gates of Prayer is an anthology of ten different Friday evening Shabbat services, and six different Shabbat morning services. "This is a prayerbook which not only allows, but actually demands a choice of what and how to pray."⁶⁴ *Gates of Prayer* was not without its own problems. Some critics called it "a theological hodge-podge" while

⁶¹ Dana Evan Kaplan, *Platforms and Prayer Books: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 31.

⁶² Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 61.

⁶³ Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, ed., *Gates of Understanding: A Companion Volume to Shaarei Tefilah* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977), 3.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

others like “Jakob J. Petuchowski sardonically noted that only a bookbinder could put so many conflicting ideas within a single volume.”⁶⁵ Some congregations, slow to change and objecting to the return to tradition, as they saw it, continued to use the *Union Prayer Book* for a while, although most adopted it within a decade. Others used it for some time and then opted to compile their own alternatives for one reason or another.

The liturgical changes in *Gates of Prayer* were dramatic, not just in form but also in liturgical message. Jewish peoplehood was no longer a dirty word. As Rabbi Hoffman says, “*Gates of Prayer*...ushered in an era where we resurrected whatever peoplehood the *Union Prayer Book* had lost, but at the expense of universalistic purpose.”⁶⁶ This particularism can be attributed to the “reawakened threat” to Israel as well as the rise of ethnic pride movements and the general turn inward in the 1960-1970’s.

Since the publication of *Gates of Prayer* and the acceptance of the Centenary Perspective, the Reform movement has grown and changed. New realities such as interfaith families, patrilineal descent, women’s and GLBTQ issues have begun to emerge. As a result the CCAR in 1997 began a two-year process to create the 1999 Pittsburgh Principles. “The 1999 Pittsburgh Principles describes Reform Judaism as an ongoing dialogue with tradition and innovation, with affirmation and doubt, with faith and critical scholarship...Among other differences from past proclamations, this

⁶⁵ Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 87.

⁶⁶ Lawrence Hoffman, “Post Colonial Liturgy in the Land of the Sick,” *CCAR Journal*, Summer 2009 [Keynote on Worship delivered at the CCAR convention, Houston, 2005], 29.

document affirms the importance of mitzvah for Reform Jews and encourages us to let Judaism transform our lives into a state of *k'dushah*, holiness.”⁶⁷

In 1999, Rabbis Elyse Frishman and Judith Z. Abrams were selected as joint editors. Rabbi Abrams eventually dropped out of the editorship, leaving Rabbi Frishman as the sole editor. The book would eventually be named *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*. Michael Lando of the Jerusalem Post says, “Now, almost a decade since the principles were adopted, the return to ritual has been further codified in the pages of a new siddur. If Jews are a people of the book, then a siddur may be the best barometer we have to test the waters.”⁶⁸ *Mishkan T'filah*, like the new principles, surely tested the waters. For the first time the Reform movement had a prayer book that was called a *siddur* and only opened from right to left.

Mishkan T'filah is a dramatic departure from both the style and theology of the *Union Prayer Book* and *Gates of Prayer*. Unlike the previous prayer books, now each prayer is set as a two-page spread; the “traditional” prayer with a fully transliterated and faithful English translation on the right, and thematically related prayers, readings, and meditations on the left.

Today *Mishkan T'filah* reflects the reality of Israel in the liturgy and in our calendrical year. The siddur includes services for *Yom Hashoah*, *Yom Hazikaron*, and *Yom Ha'atsma'ut* as well as special *Yom Hashoah* and *Yom Ha'atsma'ut Hoda'ah* inserts.

⁶⁷ Richard N. Levy, *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism* (New York: URJ Press, 2005), 5-6.

⁶⁸ Michael Lando. *The Jerusalem Post*. “Reforming Reform.” September 20, 2007.

There are also special prayers for the State of Israel and we are encouraged to recite *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'atsma'ut*.

In another significant departure from the previous prayer books, *Mishkan T'filah* “revives” the traditional concept of *t'chiyat hameitim* in the *Amidah*. Rabbi Frishman says, “...in our generation, there is a strong metaphorical response to traditional prayers, and a number of clergy and laypeople saw mehaye hametim like a flower withering that you pour water over.”⁶⁹ It was ultimately decided that this phrase would be put in parentheses. Finally, in 2007 after years of work, *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* was published. Included in the *Gevurot* section of the *Amidah* is *mechayei metim* alongside *mechayei hakol*.

In the article *Entering Mishkan T'filah*, Rabbi Elyse Frishman speaks about an integrated theology which separates *Mishkan T'filah* from other prayer books. If *Gates of Prayer* contained different theologies in the various different Shabbat services, then *Mishkan T'filah* brings those theologies together on a single page. Frishman says, “The integrated theology in *Mishkan T'filah* suggests that it is a blending of different voices that most accurately reflects God.”⁷⁰ The inclusion of prayers for Israel, *t'chiyat hametim*, and the middle paragraphs of the *Shema* all represent an integrated theology that is theologically inconsistent and also as diverse as God.

A difference between the *Union Prayer Book* and *Mishkan T'filah* is the extent to which the latter was the result of compromise, while the former was ideologically bold

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Rabbi Elyse Frishman, “Entering *Mishkan T'filah*,” *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly*, (Fall 2004). 62-63

and pure, and were meant to draw boundaries. The movement has become much more diverse, a much larger umbrella, but at the cost of ideological coherence. It is much more difficult today to speak about what Reform Judaism stands for beyond vague concepts like “diversity” and “choice” than it was during the heyday of Classical Reform.

Conclusion: The Creation of a Reform Luach

In the beginning the goal of my rabbinic and education thesis was to create a Reform Luach. I realized quickly that it would be almost impossible to create a working *luach* and do all of the research that was needed to make this a successful project. Since traditional *luchot* are not terribly helpful in Reform situations, I wanted to lay the groundwork for the creation of a Reform *luach* by researching the differences between traditional and non-traditional approaches to Jewish time. Now I am left with a goal for the future, namely integrating all of this research into producing a Reform *Luach* that will represent the diversity of our movement. The educational component that follows is my first attempt at having different Reform Jewish cohorts deal with the various liturgical and calendrical issues facing the Reform movement.

The lessons that follow, are concerned with three case studies in which Reform practice differs from traditions that are commonplace in Conservative or Orthodox communities in the diaspora. Through the use of Torah and rabbinic texts, the arts, and Reform responsa, students will try to decide how to approach each topic. Ultimately each group will make a decision that will affect the community in which they are apart of.

Each lesson plan is designed with a particular Jewish cohort in mind though each can easily adapted to a different audience if needed. The first lesson is meant for an adult

education class and deals with the recitation of Avinu Malkeinu when Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat. The second lesson is designed for Reform college students who are part of a pluralistic Jewish environment. This unique college cohort will be contemplating the implications of blowing the Shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Finally, the last lesson is designed for a synagogue ritual committee. Their task is to decide what their Reform synagogue should read when the Traditional eighth day of Passover falls on Shabbat.

Even though many Reform Jews celebrate the holidays and festivals, they have a very basic understanding of the importance of the Jewish calendar. By engaging in some of these important conversations, Reform Jews will be better equipped in their own Jewish decision making process. The decision that each of these groups make will likely have a lasting impact on the communities in which they work, study, and live.

Chapter 5: The Reform Jewish Liturgical Year: Lesson Plans

One possible approach to introduce the lesson plans that follow:

I. Set Induction: (15 minutes)

1. “Tradition” from *Fiddler on the Roof* (5 minutes)
 - a. After listening/watching this short selection (2 minutes), hand out a sheet of paper with the word TRADITION in the center of the page.
 - b. Have everyone write down what they think tradition means (as it relates to the calendar/liturgy, lectionary).
 - c. Have group share responses and thoughts.
2. *Calendar Activity (10 minutes)

Important to note that the default calendar is the traditional calendar

- a. Compare and Contrast Tishre – September/October and Nisan – March/April
 - I. What does this calendar say about the tradition?
 - II. What group is the particular calendar geared to?
 - III. What movement is the calendar associated with?
 - IV. Who sponsored the calendar?
 - V. Can you judge a book by its cover?

* Calendars suggested:

- SunGraphix “Hebrew Planner”
- Supermarket “Celebrate Jewish American History Makers”
- Sinai Chapels “Jewish Calendar”
- Torah Gifts “Jewish Life”
- Chabad “Jewish Art Calendar”
- “WRJ Art Calendar”
- Chabad Luach
- Ezras Torah Luach

*Any calendars can be used

Reciting Avinu Malkeinu when Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur Fall on Shabbat

Lesson Overview

This lesson is designed for an adult education class in preparation for Rosh Hashanah. The class will study the history of Avinu Malkeinu and how it found its way into our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy. Through the use of Biblical, Talmudic, modern, musical sources, students will have a greater understanding of this petitionary prayer that is most closely associated with the *Yamim Noraim* – High Holy Days. No other prayer reaches so deeply into the hearts and souls of congregants during this season.

Enduring Understandings

- Reciting and singing Avinu Malkeinu is an integral part of our High Holy Day experience.
- Reform Jews have an emotional and spiritual attachment to the recitation of Avinu Malkeinu.
- To teach about the historical and contextual evolution of *Avinu Malkeinu*.

Essential Questions

- How can Reform Judaism inform ritual practice?
- What feelings are evoked during the chanting of Avinu Malkeinu?
- How can the history of Avinu Malkeinu inform our understanding today?
- How has the meaning of Avinu Malkeinu evolved over time?
- How would the High Holy Days be different if Avinu Malkeinu was not recited?

Assessment (Evidence of Understanding)

- Students will be able to speak about the importance of the Avinu Malkeinu petition.
- By understanding the historical significance of Avinu Malkeinu, students High Holy Day experience will be enriched.

Core Framing Concept

Reform Halakha

Lesson Plan

A. Set Induction (10 minutes)

1. (Listening Exercise)

Students listen to two versions of Avinu Malkeinu:

a. Barbara Streisand/Max Janowski

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YONAP39jVE>

b. Folk Version:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6Zt-6_eK_E

After listening, students write down their thoughts on the music keeping in mind the words sung and the music.

2. Each student shares his/her reflections.

3. Questions to consider:

- Which has more meaning, the words or the music of Avinu Malkeinu?
- What would the High Holy Days be like without the recitation of Avinu Malkeinu?

B. Learning Activity

* The questions in the next few sections are meant to serve as a guide for the facilitator.

1. (Reform approach to Halakha) – (15 minutes)

Clergy team/educator brings article from Rabbi Mark Washofsky that explains the Reform approach to Halakha.

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish_Practices/Halakhah_Jewish_Law_/Contemporary_Attitudes/Reform.shtml

Read the article and then pose the following questions to the adult education class to consider:

- Being part of a pluralistic environment, how can we use a Reform approach to Halakha to help guide our decision making process?
- Should our community even consider Halakha when reciting Avinu Malkeinu is so much apart of Rosh Hashanah?

2. (Talmud Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

Clergy team/educator leads a text study of the original source for the recitation of Avinu Malkeinu. Questions to consider:

- What insights can we learn about Avinu Malkeinu by studying its origins?
- How do we get from this Talmudic story to the version of Avinu Malkeinu found in our *Machzor*?
- How can this Talmudic story enhance your understanding and appreciation of Avinu Malkeinu?

What is the source of Avinu Malkeinu?

תנו רבנן מעשה ברבי אליעזר שגזר שלש עשרה תעניות על הצבור ולא ירדו גשמים. באחרונה התחילו הצבור לצאת. אמר להם: תקנתם קברים לעצמכם? געו כל העם בבכיה, וירדו גשמים. שוב מעשה ברבי אליעזר שירד לפני התיבה ואמר עשרים וארבע ברכות ולא נענה. ירד רבי עקיבא אחריו, ואמר: אבינו מלכנו אין לנו מלך אלא אתה. אבינו מלכנו למענך רחם עלינו, וירדו גשמים. הווי מרנני רבנן. יצתה בת קול ואמרה: לא מפני שזה גדול מזה, אלא שזה מעביר על מידותיו, וזה אינו מעביר על מדותיו

It once happened that R. Eliezer [ben Horkenos] proclaimed thirteen fast days on the community, but no rains fell.... Rabbi Akiva went down [before the Ark] after him and prayed, "Our Father, our King, we have no king but You! Our Father, our King, for Your sake have compassion on us!" And rains then fell. (Taanit 25b).

Points to consider:

Avinu Malkeinu is one of the oldest prayers seeking forgiveness in our liturgy. Its origin can be traced back to an act of Rabbi Akiva which is described in Taanit 25b. According to that talmudic passage, God forgave the people for their sins which had caused the drought because Rabbi Akiva was a forgiving person.

Avinu Malkeinu, appears in *Siddur Rav Amram Gaon*, (9th Century). According to tradition Rabbi Akiva composed all the verses of Avinu Malkeinu. The prayer began with 5 lines which, according to the Sephardic ritual, was later increased to 29 lines, then to 38 lines according to the Ashkenazic ritual and finally to 44 lines according to the Polish ritual.⁷¹

3. (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Text Study) – (15 minutes)

Clergy team/educator continues a text study by exploring why Avinu Malkeinu is not traditionally recited on Shabbat. Questions to consider:

⁷¹ A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 43.

- Why is Avinu Malkeinu not traditionally recited on Shabbat?
- Do you understand Avinu Malkeinu to be a prayer of petition?
- As a Reform Jew, do you believe it is okay to recite Avinu Malkeinu on Shabbat even if it is a prayer of petition? Why or why not? How can a Reform approach to Halakha guide you?

Why do we not recite Avinu Malkeinu on Shabbat?

יא סעיף קכט סימן

בראש-השנה כשאומר אבינו מלכנו חטאנו לפניך, אין להכות באגרוף על החזה כמו בחל וביום-הכפורים, כי אין אומרים ודוי בראש-השנה שהוא יום טוב. אלא יכון הפרוש, אבינו מלכנו חטאנו לפניך, כלומר, אבותינו חטאו לפניך שעבדו עבודה-זרה, אבל אנחנו אין לנו מלך אלא אתה. לכן אבינו מלכנו, עשה עמנו למען שמך

Code of Jewish Law: *Kitzur Shulhan Aruh*, p. 76 Volume 3:11

On *Rosh Hashanah*, when saying, *Avinu Malkenu hatanu lefanaha* (our Father, our King, we have sinned before Thee), we must not beat our breasts as on weekdays and Yom Kippur, because no confessions are to be recited on *Rosh Hashanah*, which is a festival. Hence, we interpret “Our Father, our King, we have sinned before Thee.” Thus: “Our fathers sinned before Thee because they worshipped idols, but as for us, we have no other king but Thee,” therefore, “Our Father, our King, deal with us for the sake of Thy name.”

Points to consider:

“This prayer is omitted on Rosh Hashanah which falls in Shabbat, although there have been contrary opinions concerning this ever since Geonic times. A variety of opinions are given: 1) it contains requests for personal needs and desires, whereas the day of rest is to be devoted exclusively to spiritual wants; 2) the original *Avinu Malkeinu* was a prayer for fast days, whereas fasting is forbidden on Shabbat; 3) the *Avinu Malkeinu* is an echo of the *Tahanun* prayer which is omitted on Shabbat; it contains reminiscences of the weekday *Amidah* and therefore may not be used on Shabbat.”⁷²

4. (Group Study) – 25 minutes

Divide the students into two groups. While there are no Reform Responsa from the CCAR Responsa committee, there are two responses from Reform rabbis who try and make sense of this debate. Have each group read a different Reform response and try and answer these questions:

⁷² Hayyim Herman Kieval, *The Holy Days: A Commentary on the Prayerbook of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (Jerusalem: The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2004), 83.

- As Reform Jews, should we recite Avinu Malkeinu on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur if it falls on Shabbat?
- Is there an alternative prayer that we could recite in place of Avinu Malkeinu?

Possible Alternative Prayers:

- *Shechina Mkor Chayenu* (Revised GOR, 549-550)
- *Eloheinu Shebashamayim* (*Gates of Forgiveness*, 46-47)
- Do these alternative choices still use petitionary language?
- Please have each group take into account “email conversations” and a Reform approach to Halakha.

שכינה מקור חיינו

SHECHINA, M'KOR CHAYENU

שכינה, מקור חיינו—שמעי קולנו, חוסי נרחמי עלינו.

Shechina, Source of our lives, hear our plea—spare us, have compassion upon us.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—זכרי כי בניה ובנותיה אנחנו.

Motherly Presence, Source of our lives, keep us in your care, for we are your sons and your daughters.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—חנכי אותנו להכיר במגבלותינו.

Holy Presence, Source of our lives, teach us to know our limits.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—הדריכי אותנו בדרך נעים.

Gentle Presence, Source of our lives, guide us in pleasant ways.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—למדנו אותנו רחמים וצדקה.

Guiding Presence, Source of our lives, teach us mercy and justice.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—עשי למען הנאבקים לשלום ולצדק.

Nurturing Presence, Source of our lives, support those who struggle for peace and justice.

שכינה, מקור חיינו—הפכי אבלנו לששון ויגוננו לשמחה.

Compassionate Presence, Source of our lives, turn our lamentation to exultation and our sorrow to joy.

שְׁכִינָה, מְקוֹר חַיֵּינוּ—בְּרַכֵּי אֶרְצֵנוּ וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ.

Caring Presence, Source of our lives, bless our land and all the work of our hands.

שְׁכִינָה, מְקוֹר חַיֵּינוּ—קַבְּצִי בְּנוֹךְ מֵאַרְבַּע בְּנוֹת הָאָרֶץ
לְגִבּוֹלָם.

Loving Presence, Source of our lives, assemble your people from the four corners of the world in their land.

שְׁכִינָה, מְקוֹר חַיֵּינוּ—הַשְׁלִימִי בְּנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קֹדְשֵׁנוּ.

Shechina, Source of our lives, build peace in Jerusalem, our Holy City.

IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Before the open Ark

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, דְּרַשְׁנוּךְ: הִמָּצֵא-לָנוּ.

Our God above, we seek You; grant that we may find You.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, גְּלֹה כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ עָלֵינוּ.

Our God above, reveal to us the glory of Your kingdom.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, קְרַבְנוּ לַעֲבֹדְךָ.

Our God above, draw us near to Your service.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, צִוֵּה אֶתָּנוּ בְּרִכּוֹתֶיךָ.

Our God above, grant us Your blessings.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, צִוֵּה אֶתָּנוּ יְשׁוּעוֹתֶיךָ.

Our God above, help us with Your saving acts.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, שִׁית שְׁלוֹם בֵּינֵינוּ.

Our God above, let peace reign among us.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, תֵּן שְׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ.

Our God above, grant peace to the earth.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, תֵּן שָׂבַע בְּעוֹלָמְךָ.

Our God above, grant abundance to Your world.

5. (Conclusion) – 15 minutes

Each group presents its findings and its proposed solution.

Reform Responses

a. Gates of Understanding 2, p. 24.

Jewish codes of law rule against the recitation of “*Avinu Malkenu*” on Shabbat. Its verses seem to approximate petitions too closely, and we have seen how ordinary petitioning is prohibited on Shabbat...But Orthodox congregations keep two days of Rosh Hashanah; so if they omit “*Avinu Malkenu*” because one of those days is Shabbat, they can still say it on the other day. Reform Jews, however keep only one day...,so they would not have another opportunity to say the prayer. What should be the Reform position on saying “*Avinu Malkenu*” on Shabbat?

Reform rabbis have answered that it is better to disregard the letter of the law in this case, allowing the people to say a favorite prayer which they otherwise would miss. A similar problem arises with regard to blowing the *shofar* on Shabbat. Tradition bans it, not because there is anything inadvertently wrong with the blowing of the *shofar* then, but because one might inadvertently carry it to and from the synagogue on Shabbat, and carrying on the day is prohibited by Jewish law. Reform Jews blow the *shofar* on Shabbat, just as much as they say “*Avinu Malkenu*” then.

b. Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice (Revised), p. 390.

Traditional congregations tend to omit *Avinu Malkeinu* on Shabbat, on the grounds that it is a prayer of petition for our material needs and therefore inappropriate on that day (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 584:1 and *Mishnah B'rurah* as loc., no. 4). Many congregations, nonetheless, were accustomed to recite *Avinu Malkeinu* on Shabbat (Resp. Rivash, no 512), and our Reform practice follows that pattern. [Rabbi Washofsky adds: “In other words, while the majority position in the halakhah forbids the recitation of *Avinu Malkenu*” on Shabbat, “the letter of the law” permits it. (Rivash himself preferred the practice of omitting *Avinu Malkenu*, but he counsels that each community should follow its established minhag, which is what we do.)”⁷³

Email Conversations

1. Dr. Michael Chernick

March 15, 2010

Topic: *Avinu Malkeinu* and Shabbat

Avinu Malkenu is not recited on Shabbat because it contains many *bakashot* [petitionary prayer], which are not recited on Shabbat so as not to remind people of what they lack on a day that should be joyous. Since under normal circumstances Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom

⁷³ Email conversation on February 21, 2012.

Kippur are *yemei ha-din v'harahamim* when praying for forgiveness and our spiritual and physical needs is sensible (Ravi'ah). Avinu Malkenu is recited at Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbat because being the last recited prayer it is usually being said when Shabbat is actually over. But there is also the religious pathos of the moment: If we do not beg now when the gates of God's mercy are open, when will we beg? Furthermore authorities like the Sibbolei ha-Leket and the Sephardic posekim agree almost unanimously that Avinu Malkenu should be recited on Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur if either of them falls on Shabbat...

2. Dr. Alyssa Gray

March 14, 2010

Topic: Avinu Malkeinu and Shabbat

...I've never looked into this systematically, but in the Ashkenazic and Provençal sources, it's clear that there were different practices about whether or not to recite on Shabbat. Meiri in Provence says they do it there, but some complain that they shouldn't, because AM is essentially petitionary prayer, and Shabbat is not a time for petitionary prayer (just like we don't recite the actual Shmoney Esreh on Shabbat). Ra'avyah claims that some say that Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah recited AM on Shabbat, but we don't know for sure. The other reason not to do it that comes out of medieval sources is that since R. Akiva "instituted" AM in the context of a public fast day, we don't recite it on Shabbat since public fasts do not take place on Shabbat...

3. Cantor Eli Schleifer

September 13, 2009 and September 14, 2009

Topic: Avinu Malkeinu and the notion of Petitionary prayer.

The reason why Jews refrained from saying Avinu Malkeinu on Shabbat was that they associated it like many other litanies with mournful processions. AM and other litanies such as Aneinu were originally said while people dressed in sackcloth and wearing ashes on their head processed mournfully in town during fast days and times of distress. Such litanies were forbidden on Shabbat since public crying and mourning was forbidden during the day of Rest. This however is a long forgotten memory and one does not see such scenes anymore (except in some demonstrations by the most extreme Ultra Orthodox circles in Mea Shearim and Bnei Brak), therefore there is no reason why we should avoid saying Avinu Malkeinu on Shabbat especially with beautiful music such as the famous composition by Max Janowski...

...As to the Mi-Shebeirach, I should emphasize that it is so worded that there is no petition in the prayer at all. The Hebrew text does not contain the verb "may". The translation of the Hebrew text should read:

"Whoever blessed our forefathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob, Moses Aaron, David and Solomon will (surely) bless the sick man/woman (Name and father's name), because we pray for him/ because we give Tsedaka on his/her behalf.." etc. "Shabbat/Holy Day it is now and no outcry is done and the recovery is sure to come soon..."

Therefore the prayer must be chanted in the major mode with self assurance, as a declaration and not as a petition. This is the way it was always chanted until some ignorant Conservative and Reform rabbis started chanting it in minor as a dirge. I must admit that Debby [sic] Friedman's melody, although infantile, is in the major mode, whereas some newer melodies of the Mi-Shebeirach are in minor, they are soft and beautiful and may bring tears to our eyes, but they are liturgically wrong. I also object to the addition of "El na refa na lah" after the prayer, because that verse is nothing but a petition.

Blowing the Shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat

Lesson Overview

This lesson will help guide Reform Jewish college students in their decision-making process surrounding the *mitzvah* (sacred obligation) of sounding the shofar. The students will learn about the history of the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah and they will also learn about why the shofar is not sounded when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat in a traditional synagogue. The leadership team of the Reform student group will be charged with deciding what to do in their particular community recognizing that they are also part of pluralistic environment.

Enduring Understandings

- The sounding of the shofar is an integral part of the Rosh Hashanah prayer service.
- A Reform approach to Halakha can aid Reform college students in the decision making process.
- Hearing the Shofar is an emotional and spiritual experience.
- It is a *mitzvah* (sacred obligation) to hear the sounding of the Shofar.

Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be a Reform Jewish college student in a pluralistic setting?
- What lesson can the traditional sources teach the Reform student group about celebrating 1 or 2 days of Rosh Hashanah?
- How can "mitzvah" be understood in a Reform context?
- What reasons do the traditional sources give for not blowing the shofar in Shabbat?

Assessment (Evidence of Understanding)

- Reform leadership team will present their findings and articulate their views and understanding of both traditional and contemporary sources to the larger Reform and Jewish community on campus.
- Students will be able to describe what makes the sounding of the Shofar meaningful for the during the High Holy Days.
- Clergy and students will implement the vision and recommendation of the Reform college student board at Rosh Hashanah services.

Core Framing Concept

- The Reform Understanding of *Mitzvah* (Sacred Obligation)

Lesson Plan

A. Set Induction (10 minutes)

4. (Sharing)

Group begins with a framing exercise:

Have the Senior Jewish Educator or Campus Rabbi sound the shofar or listen to a recording of the sounding of the Shofar:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jR20-0sy1Y>

Then immediately ask one student to serve as the scribe and write down questions based on the following statements taken from *Gates of Repentance*:

- a. *Uv'shofar Gadol Yitakah* – The great Shofar is sounded
- b. Hear now the Shofar; acclaim the world's creation!
- c. Hear now the Shofar, you who stand at Sinai!
- d. Hear now the call, and turn in true repentance!

- Write down as many questions as you can in response to and/or inspired by statements a - d.
- Don't stop to judge, discuss, or answer the questions.
- Write down the questions exactly as stated by members of the group.

5. Choose 4 of the best questions and try and answer them as a group. The goal of this activity is to have college students speak about their connection (emotional, spiritual, etc.) to the sounding of the Shofar.

B. Learning Activity

* The questions in the next few sections are meant to serve as a guide for the facilitator.

5. (Mitzvah)

The Campus Rabbi or Senior Jewish Educator introduces the Reform understanding of *mitzvot* based on the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform. Have a volunteer read this passage from the platform in order to frame the rest of the lesson. Questions for the Reform student leadership team to consider:

- How can the Reform nature of a mitzvah help to inform our decision making process?
- What does it mean for a mitzvah to serve as “the means by which we make our lives holy?”
- Would you define a mitzvah as a commandment, obligation, or a sacred obligation and is there a difference?

...We are called by Torah to lifelong study in the home, in the synagogue and in every place where Jews gather to learn and teach. Through Torah study we are called to מצוות (mitzvot), the means by which we make our lives holy.

We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of מצוות (mitzvot) and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community.

Some of these מצוות (mitzvot), sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times...⁷⁴

6. (Torah Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

Campus Rabbi or Senior Jewish Educator leads a text study of the two verses from the Torah (Numbers 29:1, Leviticus 23:24) that speak about sounding the Shofar associated with Rosh Hashanah. Alternative translations are included to highlight that all translations are just interpretations. Questions for the Reform student leadership team to consider:

- What do we learn about the sounding of the *shofar* from these two verses?
- Are these verses speaking about Rosh Hashanah?
- How are we commanded to observe the first day of the seventh month?
- Describe what the first day of the seventh month would look, feel, and sound like without the Shofar.
- How do these verses help you understand the importance of sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah?

When do we sound the Shofar according to the Torah?

Num. 29:1 וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַתֶּר לַחֹדֶשׁ מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם:

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering: you shall do no labor; it is a day when the horn is sounded.

Alternative Translation #1: Everett Fox Translation

And in the seventh New-Moon, on (day) one of the New-Moon, a proclamation of holiness there is to be for you, any-kind of servile work you are not to do. A day of (horn-)blasts it is to be for you.

Alternative Translation #2: JPS 1917 Edition

And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no manner of servile work; it is a day of blowing the horn unto you.

⁷⁴ "A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism," *CCAR Platforms*, May 1999, <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/statement-principles-reform-judaism> (accessed 11 March. 2012).

Lev. 23:24 דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד
לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן וְכִרְוֹן תִּרְוַעָה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ :

Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.

Alternative Translation #1: Everett Fox Translation

Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: On the seventh New-Moon, on (day) one of the New-Moon, you are to have Sabbath-ceasing, a reminder by (horn-)blasting, a proclamation of holiness.

Alternative Translation #2: JPS 1917 Edition

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns, a holy convocation.

Points to consider:

- The Torah does not mention the word *shofar* in connection with Rosh Hashanah, but neither does it mention the name *Rosh Hashanah*.⁷⁵

7. (Mishnah Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

The Campus Rabbi or Senior Jewish Educator now brings in Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:1-2 to highlight how the sounding of the shofar evolved after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Some possible questions for the Reform student leadership team to consider:

- What do we learn about the sounding of the Shofar from the Mishnah?
- Why did the practice of blowing the Shofar on Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah change after the destruction of the Temple?
- Why did Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai decree that the Shofar could only be sounded on Shabbat in the presence of a *beit din*? What role does the *beit din* play in this situation?
- Why would Rabbi Eliezar follow a more strict interpretation of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's rabbinic decree?
- How should the Mishnah inform our Reform practice today?
- How could our modern day synagogues function as a Beit Din?

⁷⁵ Hayyim Herman Kieval, *The Holy Days: A Commentary on the Prayerbook of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (Jerusalem: The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2004), 106.

**Can the Shofar be sounded on Shabbat?
According to Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:1-2...**

א יום טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת, במקדש היו תוקעים, אבל לא במדינה. משחרב בית המקדש, התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, שיהיו תוקעין בכל מקום שיש בו בית דין. אמר רבי אלעזר. לא התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אלא ביבנה בלבד. אמרו לו, אחד יבנה ואחד כל מקום שיש בו בית דין:

1. When the festival day of Rosh Hashanah would occur on Shabbat, they would sound the Shofar in the Temple, but not in the other provinces. When the Temple was destroyed, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai made the rule that they should sound the shofar in every place in which there was a rabbinic court (*beit din*). Rabbi Eliezer said that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai ruled that this only applied to Yavneh [the place in which he established his rabbinic court]. The others said to him: Yavneh is the same as any other place in which there is a rabbinic court.

ב ועוד זאת היתה ירושלים יתרה על יבנה, שכל עיר שהיא רואה ושומעת וקרובה ויכולה לבוא, תוקעין. ובִּיבְנָה לא היו תוקעין אלא בבית דין בלבד:

2. [Rabbi Eliezer responded] However, Jerusalem was more significant than Yavneh; in every city that is within sight and sound, and is close enough to go there, they should sound the Shofar [even without a rabbinic court]. [They responded] nevertheless, in Yavneh and in every local in which there is a rabbinic court [they should sound the shofar]

Points to consider:

- Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:1-2 makes clear that, prior to the destruction of the Temple, the Shofar was sounded on Rosh Hashanah in the Temple.
- After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai established that they would blow in every place in which there is a Rabbinic court. (Rosh Hashanah 4:1).

8. (Talmud Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

The Campus Rabbi or Senior Jewish Educator now uses a *sugiyah* from Talmud Bavli Tosefta Hashanah 29b that speaks to the problem of sounding the Shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat.

Can the Shofar be sounded on Shabbat? According to T. Bavli Rosh Hashanah 29b...

*Translation adapted from Talmud Bavli Schotenstein Edition.

גמרא. מנא הני מילי? אמר רבי לוי בר לחמא אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא: כתוב אחד אומר +ויקרא כג+ שבתון זכרון תרועה, וכתוב אחד אומר +במדבר כט+ יום תרועה יהיה לכם. לא קשיא; כאן - ביום טוב שחל להיות בשבת, כאן - ביום טוב שחל להיות בחול

Gemara: From where in the Torah does this law come? R. Levi bar Lachma said in the name of R. Chama bar Chaninah: One verse says “a day of complete rest commemorated with the blowing of the Shofar” (Leviticus 23:24), and one verse says “it will be for you a day of blowing the Shofar” (Numbers 29:1). There is no problem. The [first] one is when the festival occurs on Shabbat. The [second] one is when the festival occurs on a weekday.

אמר רבא: אי מדאורייתא היא - במקדש היכי תקעינן? ועוד: הא לאו מלאכה היא דאצטריך קרא למעוטי, דתנא דבי שמואל: +במדבר כט+ כל מלאכת עבדה לא תעשו - יצתה תקיעת שופר ורדיית הפת, שהיא חכמה ואינה מלאכה. אלא אמר רבא: מדאורייתא מישרא שרי, ורבנן הוא דגזור ביה, כדרבה. דאמר רבה: הכל חייבין בתקיעת שופר, ואין הכל בקיאים בתקיעת שופר, גזירה שמא יטלנו בידו וילך אצל הבקי ללמוד, ויעבירונו ארבע אמות ברשות הרבים. והיינו טעמא דלולב, והיינו טעמא דמגילה

Rava said: If it is under Biblical law that the shofar blowing is excluded on the Sabbath, how could they have blown it in the Temple? And furthermore, this act of blowing the shofar is not a forbidden labor, that a verse should be required to exclude doing it on the Sabbath. For a Baraita was taught in the academy of Shmuel: You shall not to laborious work. Excluded from this prohibition are the blowing of the shofar and the removal of bread from an oven, since each is just a skill and is not creative labor. Rather said Rava: Under Biblical law, it is surely permitted to blow the shofar on the Sabbath, but it is the Rabbis who decreed against it, in accordance with a dictum of Rabbah. For Rabbah said: Everyone is obligated in the blowing, but not everyone is proficient in shofar blowing. Therefore, the Rabbis issued a decree against blowing the shofar on the Sabbath, lest one take [a shofar] in his hand and go to an expert to learn how to blow it, and inadvertently transport it four *amot* through a public domain, which is a violation of Biblical law. And this is also the reason for the decree against taking the lulav on the day of Sukkot that falls on the Sabbath; and this is also the reason for the decree against reading the Megillah on a Purim that falls on the Sabbath.

Some possible questions and Points to consider:

- What is the biblical basis for the law that one does not blow the Shofar on Shabbat outside of the Temple? R. Chama bar Chaninah provides an important reading of our biblical proof texts for the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The verse from Leviticus 23:24 which says, “...you shall observe

complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts” (*shabbaton zikhron teru’ah*) should be understood as on Shabbat we will remember the blowing of the Shofar.

- R. Chama bar Chaninah’s approach distinguishes between blowing Shofar which is permitted on weekdays, but forbidden on the Sabbath.
- Next the Gemara asks: “Said Rava: If it is under Biblical law [that the shofar blowing is excluded on Shabbat] how could they have blown the Shofar in the Temple?”
- R. Chama bar Chanina’s reading does not explain the Mishnah. So why did the Gemara even include his explanation if it was so plainly and obviously incorrect?
- In the end it is Rava, with the help of his teacher Rabbah, who helps make sense of the Mishnah. Rabbah argues that the prohibition against blowing Shofar outside of the Temple was a rabbinic prohibition and not a biblical prohibition, as Chama bar Chaninah argued.
- Rabbah’s Decree includes three classic cases where Rabbah rules that a particular mitzvah must be postponed or cancelled due to the concern that the mitzvah implement might be inadvertently carried on Shabbat.
 - Taking up lulav on the first day of Sukkot,
 - Reading of Megillat Esther (Megilla 4b).
 - Blowing the Shofar on the first day of Rosh Hashana (Rosh Hashana 29a)

In each case, the Gemara mentions that Rabbah made his ruling not only in the case being discussed, but in the other two cases, as well.

- In the Babylonian Talmud blowing a Shofar is interpreted as only a rabbinic prohibition and outside of the Temple it was prohibited lest one carry it more than four *amot* in the public domain (Rosh HaShannah 29b).
- How should the Talmud inform our Reform practice today?

9. (Mishnah Torah Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

The Campus Rabbi or Senior Jewish Educator now brings in Hilchot Shofar 2:6, 8-10 to further explain why we don’t sound the Shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Some possible questions for the Reform student leadership team to consider:

- How are we as Reform Jews to understand public and private domains? Should that inform our thinking of the shofar especially if the shofar is in the synagogue before the start of Shabbat?
- What should we do if we don’t celebrate two days of Rosh Hashanah?

- What would our Rosh Hashanah services be like if we decided not to sound the Shofar on Shabbat?
- Is there anyway for Reform Jews to still observe the mitzvah of the Shofar if they didn't hear it?

**Rambam's Mishneh Torah
Hilchot Shofar 2:6, 8-10**

*Translation taken from Moznaim edition of the Mishneh Torah by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

הלכה ו

יום טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת אין תוקעין בשופר בכל מקום, אף על פי שהתקיעה משום שבות ומן הדין היה שתוקעין יבא עשה של תורה וידחה שבות של דבריהם, ולמה אין תוקעין גזירה שמא יטלנו בידו ויוליכנו למי שיתקע לו ויעבירונו ארבע אמות ברשות הרבים, או מוציאו מרשות לרשות ויבא לידי איסור סקילה, שהכל חייבים בתקיעה ואין הכל בקיאים לתקוע

6. If the festival of Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath, the shofar is not sounded in every place. [This law was enacted] even though blowing [the shofar] was forbidden only as *sh'vut*. It would be appropriate for [the shofar] to be sounded, for a positive commandment of the Torah should supersede *sh'vut* instituted by the Sages. If so, why is the shofar not sounded? Because of a decree [of the Sages] lest a person take it in his hands and carry it to a colleague so that the latter can blow for him, and [in the process,] carry it four cubits in the public domain or transfer it from one domain to another, and thus violate a prohibition punishable by being stoned to death. [This is necessary because] all are obligated in the mitzvah of blowing the shofar, but not all are skilled in it.

הלכה ח

כשגזרו שלא לתקוע בשבת לא גזרו אלא במקום שאין בו בית דין, אבל בזמן שהיה המקדש קיים והיה בית דין הגדול בירושלם היו הכל תוקעין בירושלם בשבת כל זמן שבית דין יושבין, ולא אנשי ירושלם בלבד אלא כל עיר שהיתה בתוך תחום ירושלם, והיתה רואה ירושלם לא שתהיה בתוך הנחל, והיתה שומעת קול תקיעת ירושלם לא שתהיה בראש ההר, והיתה יכולה לבוא בירושלם לא שיהיה נהר מפסיק ביניהם, אנשי אותה העיר היו תוקעים בשבת כירושלם, אבל בשאר ערי ישראל לא היו תוקעין

8. When [the Sages] decreed not to sound [the shofar] on the Sabbath, they applied that decree only to places which lacked a court. However, while the Temple was standing and the Supreme Court was seated in Jerusalem, everyone would sound the shofar in Jerusalem throughout the entire period the court held its sessions there. [This did not apply] to the people of Jerusalem alone. Rather, every city that was within the outer limits of Jerusalem and [whose inhabitants] could: see Jerusalem - i.e., excluding those within a wadi; hear the shofar blown in Jerusalem - i.e., excluding those on the mountaintops; and travel to Jerusalem - i.e., excluding those separated by a wadi from the city the people of these cities would blow the shofar on the Sabbath as in Jerusalem. However, in the other cities of Israel, they would not sound [the shofar on the Sabbath].

הלכה ט

ובזמן הזה שחרב המקדש כל מקום שיש בו בית דין קבוע והוא שיהיה סמוך בארץ ישראל תוקעין בו בשבת, ואין תוקעין בשבת אלא בבית דין שקידשו את החדש אבל שאר בתי דינים אין תוקעין בהן אף על פי שהן סמוכין, ואין תוקעין אלא בפני בית דין (גדול) בלבד כל זמן שהן יושבין ואפילו ננערו לעמוד ולא עמדו תוקעין בפניהם, אבל חוץ לבית דין אין תוקעין, ולמה תוקעין בפני בית דין מפני שבית דין זריזין הן ולא יבאו התוקעין להעביר השופר בפניהם ברשות הרבים שבית דין מזהירין את העם ומודיעין אותן

9. At present, while the Temple is destroyed, wherever a court whose judges received *semichah* in *Eretz Yisrael* permanently holds sessions, the shofar is sounded on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the shofar is sounded on the Sabbath only in a court that has sanctified the new moon. However, the shofar will not be sounded in other courts, even though their judges have received *semichah*. Also, the shofar is sounded only in the presence of a high court. It may be sounded during the entire time they are in session. Even after they have begun preparing to rise - as long as they have not risen - the shofar may be sounded before them. However, outside the court, the shofar may not be sounded. Why is the shofar allowed to be sounded in the court? Because the court is scrupulous [in the observance of the mitzvot] and, in its presence, those who blow the shofar will not carry the shofar in the public domain, for the court will warn the people and inform them.

הלכה י

בזמן הזה שאנו עושין שני ימים בגלות כדרך שתוקעין בראשון תוקעין בשני, ואם חל יום ראשון להיות בשבת ולא היה במקום בית דין הראויין לתקוע תוקעין בשני בלבד

10. In the present age, when we celebrate Rosh Hashanah in the exile for two days, the shofar is sounded on the second day just as it is sounded on the first. If the first day falls on the Sabbath, those who were not in the presence of a court fit to blow the shofar on the Sabbath may blow the shofar on the second day alone.

Points to consider:

- In Halakha 2:6, Rambam gives the accepted rationale from b. RH 29b as to why we don't sound shofar on Shabbat.
- The Rambam defines *Sh'vut* in *Hilchot Shabbat* 2:1 as a prohibition instituted by the Sages because a particular activity resembles one forbidden as *melacha* by Torah law, or because performing it may cause one to perform a *melachah*
- According to Halakhot 2:8-9, when the Sanhedrin was resident in the Temple, everyone in Jerusalem would sound the Shofar on Shabbat, not just in the Temple. Following the Talmud, Rambam does allow that every city that was within the *t'chum* of Jerusalem (about 2,000 amot), or met other geographical criteria he sets out could sound the Shofar on Shabbat (provided there was a Temple in which the Sanhedrin was resident).

- In 2:9, the Rambam says that any place in which there is a court with judges who received ordination in the land of Israel (meaning something other than our modern-day ordination) can sound the shofar on Shabbat, with some qualifications.
- Halakha 2:10 summarizes our situation today.

10. (Group Study and Activity) – **(20 minutes)**

a. Divide the Reform student leadership team into 2 groups. Have each group read a different Reform Responsum: “Blowing of the Shofar on the Sabbath,” and “Shofar on New Year Sabbath.” Each group will consider the following questions:

- According to the 1913 Responsum on “Blowing of the *Shofar* on the Sabbath,” our temples should be assigned “...the same divine character of holiness as the ancient Temple...” Are we, like Yochanan Ben Zakkai, able to declare our temples to be as holy as the Temple in Jerusalem or Yavneh?
- Should Reform communities, which observe two days of Rosh Hashanah, only blow shofar on the second day if the first day is also Shabbat?
- If the Shofar has been placed in the synagogue before the beginning of Shabbat, should the synagogue be allowed to blow it? *For more information please see the email conversation from Cantor Eli Schleifer below.
- According to the Rambam in Hilchot Shofar 3:10, “If the first day falls on the Sabbath, those who were not in the presence of a court fit to blow the shofar on the Sabbath may blow the shofar on the second day alone.” Should our modern day temples and Jewish communities be considered rabbinic courts?

* Please have each group take into account the email conversation from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion professors.

b. Have each group come up with their own position and rationale grounded in the Reform Responsa and based on their knowledge of the Reform understanding of mitzvah.

7. (Conclusion) – **(15-20 minutes)**

Each group presents its findings and its proposed solution. A vote is taken and the decision is brought to the Reform Student Group.

CCAR RESPONSA

American Reform Responsa

45. Blowing of the *Shofar* on the Sabbath

(Vol. XXIII, 1913, pp. 182-183)

QUESTION: I wish to broach a question to which my attention has been called during the last few years. I have been asked whether it is right that in some Reform congregations the blowing of the *Shofar* is omitted on *Rosh Hashana*, if the same happens to fall on a Sabbath Day. This is most certainly an *error*. The *Mishna* (R.H. IV.1) tells us that as long as the Temple existed in Jerusalem the *Shofar* was blown only there on a Sabbath Day, but not in other places. After the destruction of the Temple, R. Yochanan ben Zakkai declared that in Yavneh, it being the seat of the Sanhedrin, the *Shofar* should be blown on Sabbath as well, the seat of the *Torah* being tantamount to the Holy of Holies. This decision of R. Yochanan ben Zakkai was afterward applied to every place where a court of justice sat or the spiritual head of the Jewish people resided (see Asheri, R.H. IV).

ANSWER: The reason for not having the *Shofar* blown on Sabbath outside of the Temple, stated by the older Amoraim in the Jerusalem and Babylonian *Talmud* is rather strange. The term "*Yom Teru-a*," "Day of Blowing," is said to refer to *Jerusalem* only as the place where the day of the new month was fixed; whereas for *other* places "*Zichron Teru-a*," "Remembrance of the Blowing" (by the recital of the Scriptural verses) is sufficient. Afterward, another--and more whimsical--reason was given: A man who does not know how to use the *Shofar* might be induced to carry it through public places on a Sabbath to an expert in order to learn how to blow it, and so violate the Sabbath, and for this reason the Rabbis forbade the blowing of the *Shofar* on Sabbath altogether. Of course, since Rosh Hashana has two days all through the Diaspora, the second day was considered as good as the first for the blowing of the *Shofar*. Now we ask, can this Rabbinical prohibition apply to us, who no longer have a second day of Rosh Hashana? Furthermore, we ask, have we not our organ playing in our temples on Sabbath in spite of the Rabbinical prohibition of using a musical instrument, based upon fear lest one might *repair* it, should it suffer any damage? (The making of music itself was not regarded as labor by Rabbinic law--"*Chochma ve-einah melacha*," "It is art, not labor".) Nay, more: the very spirit of Reform that empowers R. Yochanan ben Zakkai to declare the sanctuary of learning of Yavneh to be as holy as the Temple at Jerusalem ought by all means to empower us to assign our temples the same divine character of holiness as the ancient Temple, with its sacrificial cult, possessed. The very name "Temple" given to the Reform synagogue was no doubt meant to accentuate this very principle voiced by R. Yochanan ben Zakkai.

To sum up all we have said: We must in all matters of reform and progress agree upon the leading principles and not allow them to become arbitrary and individualistic. Let each member of the Conference who has practical questions to submit, bring his cases to the knowledge of this or any other similar committee, so that we may reach at least a mutual understanding.

K. Kohler and D. Neumark

course, specifically to wedding dances, because the wedding celebrations lasted a week and included the Sabbath. This statement of the Raviah is quoted with approval by the Mordecai, at the end of chapter 4 of (Alfasi) Beza, where he says that Alfasi himself decided thus at the end of the tractate "Eruvin." Thus, there is no objection to hiring Gentile musicians who, of course, are not prohibited by the law from repairing an instrument on the Sabbath if that is necessary. Of course, while the hiring of Jewish musicians would thus be objectionable to the law, it is certain that our people would feel no sense of wrongdoing if they themselves used a phonograph to provide the music.

Thus it is clear that while there was a law in the Mishnah objecting to dancing and clapping the hands on the Sabbath, and while some few puritan-minded rabbis objected to mixed dancing, which led them to object to any dancing at all on Sabbath, festival, or weekday, nevertheless, from the very beginning the rabbis yielded to the people's desires in this matter, and the Tosfos, and Isserles later, virtually abolished the prohibition.

Taken From: Recent Reform Response
Solomon B. Freehoff
HUC Press - 1963
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Shofar on New Year Sabbath

Whenever the first day of Rosh Hashonoh falls on the Sabbath, Orthodox congregations do not sound the

shofar on the first day, but sound it on the second day, which is Sunday. This year the first day of Rosh Hashonoh falls on Saturday, but since Reform congregations follow the Biblical rule and observe only one day of the New Year, should they sound the shofar on the first day, or omit it altogether? (From Rabbi Judah B. Miller, Wichita, Kansas)

This question has been discussed in previous years in our Conference sessions. (Cf. *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 182-83; Vol. XXXIII, pp. 60-61). It is useful to discuss the question once more, and perhaps more fully. On the face of it, it is forbidden to blow the shofar on the first day of Rosh Hashonoh when it falls on the Sabbath (the second day of Rosh Hashonoh can never fall on the Sabbath). Thus the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Hayyim 588: 5) simply says that if Rosh Hashonoh falls on the Sabbath, we do not blow the shofar. However, it is necessary to go below the surface and to consider the actual legal status of the practice of omitting the sounding of the shofar if the New Year falls on the Sabbath. Is this omission based upon law or on custom?

The duty of blowing the shofar is a Biblical mandate. "It is a day of sounding the shofar for you" (Numbers 29: 1). The Mishnah (m. Rosh Hashonoh IV: 1) says that they sounded the shofar in the Temple on New Year if it came on Sabbath. After the Temple was destroyed, Johanan ben Zaccai ordained that the shofar be sounded on New Year if on Sabbath, wherever there is a *Beth Din*.

The Talmud raises the question that if the shofar should not be sounded on New Year Sabbath, why then did they always sound it on New Year Sabbath in the Temple? To this question the answer is given that actually the blowing of the shofar is not really work, which is prohibited on the Sabbath, but is simply a *chochmah*, a skill, the practice of

which is permitted on the Sabbath. If so, then why should it be prohibited anywhere (i.e., even outside of the Temple) on the Sabbath? The answer given is that since it is a skill, a man might be tempted to carry the shofar on Sabbath in the public domain (*Birshuss Ho-Rabbim*) to an expert, in order to be taught on the Sabbath.

So it is not the sounding of the shofar which is prohibited per se, but merely the carrying of the shofar on the Sabbath. To prevent the carrying of the shofar on Sabbath, the rabbis prohibited the sounding of it on the Sabbath, but merely as a cautionary decree. This is further evident from the fact that it is permitted to teach young people on the Sabbath to sound the shofar (b. Rosh Hashonoh 33a). If, then, it is not really prohibited to sound the shofar on the Sabbath, but there is only the rabbinical caution based on the danger of carrying it in public on that day, how could Johanan ben Zaccai permit it in the presence of a *Beth Din*? The answer given is that the *Beth Din* is alert (*Z'rizin*) and will watch against the violation (i.e., by people carrying it) on the Sabbath.

However, there is a disagreement as to just what is meant by the *Beth Din* in whose presence Johanan ben Zaccai gave permission for the shofar to be blown on the Sabbath. What sort of court was it? Did he mean the Great Sanhedrin of Seventy-one, or any other special type of court? On this there is disagreement. Some of the latest scholars believe that he meant the Sanhedrin itself. Others (Maimonides, for example) believe that he meant any court of regularly ordained men (i.e., with the original *Semicha*). Isaac Alfasi believed it meant any court, even of three competent scholars who would be alert enough to guard against the Sabbath violation of carrying the shofar. (Cf. *Rabbenu Nissim*, *ad loc.*)

Isaac Alfasi, the great scholar and authority, believing that "the court" meant any three worthy scholars, therefore

actually had the shofar blown in the presence of his court on the Sabbath. There is no doubt of this fact; it is widely attested to. Asher ben Yehiel mentions it in his compendium to the Talmud (*ad loc.*); his son, Jacob ben Asher, mentions the fact in the Tur (Orach Hayyim 588); and Abudraham, the Spanish liturgist, mentions it (in new edition of Abudraham, Jerusalem, 1959, p. 268). Of course, those who speak of Alfasi having the shofar blown on *Shabbas* add that his disciples did not follow him in this custom. There is further evidence of the shofar blown on the New Year Sabbath, not of a great individual authority like Alfasi, but of an historic congregation. Zunz, in his work *Die Ritus* (p. 57), quotes an authority who says that in the thirteenth century they blew the shofar on *Shabbas* in Damascus. The source which Zunz quotes has been reprinted in modern times in the large edition of the Yad. It is "Sefer Ha-Manoach," by Manoach ben Jacob of Narbonne (see the end of chapter 2 of his commentary). Incidentally, a great modern authority, Akiba Eger, of Posen (1761-1837), was rather concessive on this matter. He stated that if one did blow the shofar on New Year Sabbath, while indeed he did violate thereby the rabbinical cautionary decree as to Sabbath rest (*Shevus*), nevertheless he would have fulfilled the Biblical command of blowing the shofar on the New Year. This admission is quoted with great surprise by Joab Joshua in his work "Chelkas Joab" 99 (p. 123). Joab Joshua then tries to refute Akiba Eger's opinion.

It is clear that while there was a general custom not to blow the shofar on the New Year Sabbath, this custom was merely cautionary. The blowing is not prohibited as work on the Sabbath; the prohibition was decreed by the rabbis as a caution against carrying the shofar on Sabbath to an expert for instruction. Johanan ben Zaccai permitted it to be blown on the Sabbath in the presence of the court,

which would guard against violations; and on the basis of his permission, there are at least two significant instances of the blowing of the shofar on the New Year Sabbath: Isaac Alfasi and the pious community in Damascus.

* What, then, shall be our own procedure in this regard in those years when the New Year comes on the Sabbath? In such matters we should use our judgment, weighing the status of the law, our spiritual needs, and the mood of our congregation. It is to be noted that Alfasi and the Damascus community had the shofar sounded on the New Year Sabbath even though they observed two days of Rosh Hashonoh, and, following the general Orthodox custom, would have sounded the shofar also on the second day. Nevertheless, they sounded it on the first day too. Therefore, we who, following the Biblical calendar rule, do not observe the second day on which we might sound the shofar, should certainly sound it on the New Year Sabbath which is our only New Year day. Alfasi and the Damascus community would not have been depriving their people of hearing the shofar if they did not sound it on the New Year Sabbath, since the people would be hearing it the next day, but if we did not sound it, it would be depriving them completely.

We should also consider the mood of our people, since these matters count a great deal with us. It is, of course, illogical that some of our people should object to the sounding of the shofar on New Year Sabbath. They certainly do not object to the playing of the organ, which is at least as violative of Sabbath laws. Still, some people might think that since it is both Sabbath and New Year they would rather not have the shofar blown. If the rabbi senses there is that much feeling against it, he should not permit the blowing of the shofar on the New Year Sabbath. But if there is no strong objection, as there is not likely to be, then, since the sounding of the shofar on the Sabbath is

not really prohibited in itself, since the sounding of the shofar on the New Year is a Biblical mandate, and since some authorities at least permitted the shofar to be sounded on the New Year Sabbath even though the people would have heard it on the second day anyway, we, who observe only one day, should not, in my judgment, deprive our people of the spiritual benefit of hearing the sound of the shofar when the New Year comes on the Sabbath.

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Synagogue Near a Cemetery

The congregation has bought a lot upon which to build its new synagogue. A main highway runs in front of the lot, and on the other side of the highway, directly opposite, there is a cemetery. The larger part of the cemetery is for non-Jewish burial. There is, however, a small section for Jewish burial, and this is set aside for this congregation. The Gentile part of the cemetery directly faces the street across from the temple lot. The Jewish part is toward the back of the cemetery. The question is whether it is contrary to Jewish law, or tradition, or sentiment, for the congregation to build its synagogue so close to the cemetery. (Question from Rabbi Henry Tavel, Temple Beth el, Riverside, California)

Email Conversations

1. Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman

August 12, 2009

Topic: Validity of Reform Jewish choice based on tradition and traditional sources.

One other issue is the nature of tradition and what counts as halakhah altogether...By now, tradition isn't just the larger Jewish narrative; it is also reform Jsm; and also local tradition, Minhag m'vatel halakhah at times. Etc. It is nice to have the Ref responsa, but they are "only ref" people will say. The point is, however, just that. They R Reform -- they count for this community that we represent, even though they do not count for all Jews everywhere.

Then too, there is the Ref attitude toward responsa -- in part, we credit minority opinions with options that might be right for us, even if over time, they were ruled wrong for others. Liturgically, e.g., we use genizah alternatives or eretz yisrael alternatives in general that halakhah turned down with Amram and that the codes rule against ever after. No Orth cong will touch these, but we see them as preferable to the usual prayers -- because (maybe) the theology is better (eg rofei hacholim instead of rofei cholei amo yisrael); or because it gives us continuity with our ppl in EI centuries past.

2. Dr. Alyssa Gray

August 14, 2009

Q: Can the Shofar service of the Temple be replicated?

The blowing of the shofar in the Temple--as it's presented to us in the sources, which is a historical reconstruction--can't now be replicated. If you look at the mishnah on b. RH 27b, you see that the Temple shofar had a mouthpiece that was covered in gold, and the blowing of the shofar was accompanied by two trumpets. The Rambam codifies some aspect of this at Hilkhhot Shofar 1:2. Moreover, once one is going into the Temple to that extent, there are other differences between the Temple and synagogue services that are noteworthy; one famous one being that "Amen" was not used in the Temple, and they would say "Barukh ata Hashem min ha-olam v'ad ha-olam." With these differences taken into account, the shofar blowing in the Temple on Shabbat was otherwise the same. Yet replacing "Amen" with "barukh shem k'vod" as they did in the Temple really isn't appropriate; the rabbis were very particular about not wanting us to replicate the Temple service. (One other example is how we're really discouraged from eating roasted lamb for the Seder meal, because it's too much like the korban Pesach!)...

So the long and short of it is: 1. To the extent we know how the rabbis reconstructed the Temple service (including the shofar service), the berakhot are essentially the same, subject to the differences I noted. Yet it really isn't appropriate to utilize those liturgical forms; 2. It's not possible to get the gold mouthpiece and two trumpets called for in imitation of the Temple service; 3. While Rava on b. RH 29b does provide support for the Reform practice of blowing on Shabbat, he's what there is, and he doesn't represent the codified halakhah. Yet he's not "chopped liver." The Reform change does make a lot of sense, and Rava is good support...

3. Cantor Eli Schleifer

September 13, 2009

Topic: Sounding the shofar and the liturgy.

Indeed, there is some evidence that in some synagogues in Europe, they chained the Shofar to the wall of the synagogue [so as to not carry on Shabbat]. I can not go now into all the pros and cons. But we decided long ago at HUC Jerusalem that we do blow Shofar and use the Four Species on Shabbat. The same was decided later by Har-El Congregation in Jerusalem. Yet many Israeli Reform synagogues refrain from doing so even to this day.

We also sing Areshet Sefateinu when we blow Shofar on Shabbat.

What should the Reform Movement read when the Traditional eighth day of Passover falls on Shabbat?

Lesson Overview

This lesson will help the congregational ritual committee, headed by the clergy team and synagogue educators articulate their ritual goals for the synagogue. The ritual committee will be charged with reconciling what it means to be a Reform Jew in the diaspora as it relates to the traditional 8th day of Passover Torah reading. The committee will be challenged to take responsibility for their actions and how it affects the liturgical life of the congregation and the community in which they live.

Enduring Understandings

- To be a Reform Jew is to respect the wisdom of tradition while recognizing the need for change over time in order to respond to new realities and evolving ways of looking at the world.
- To be a Reform Jew is to recognize the importance of *Klal Yisrael* (an appreciation of the larger Jewish community) as a means to help inform and guide the decision making process.

Essential Questions

- What should the Reform Jewish observance of Passover look like in a synagogue in the diaspora?
- How should we decide what Torah portion should be read on the traditional 8th day of Passover in a Reform synagogue?
- How can the value of *klal yisrael* help inform our decision-making process?

Assessment (Evidence of Understanding)

- Ritual committee members will present their findings and articulate their views and understanding of both traditional and contemporary sources to the congregation.
- Clergy team will implement the vision of the ritual committee at Shabbat services on the traditional 8th day of Passover.

Core Framing Concept

- Klal Yisrael

Lesson Plan

A. Set Induction

11. Klal Yisrael: The Importance of Community – (15 minutes)

Using the texts below discuss the following:

- What does it mean to be part of the larger Jewish community?
- What is it like to have different traditions and customs from our Orthodox and Conservative neighbors?

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֵבִים זֶה בְּזֶה.

All of Israel is bound up together

-Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5

הִלֵּל אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוֹר

Don't separate yourself from the community

- Pirke Avot 2:5

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָי

Hillel taught that "If I am not for myself, who will be for me. But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now when?"

- Pirke Avot 1:14

B. Learning Activity

As a member of the synagogue ritual committee, you have been charged with the task of collaborating with the clergy and education team to decide what to read on the eighth day of Passover. Even though most of the congregants celebrate with a second *seder* (as has become the custom amongst North American Jews), you realize that the Reform Movement does not celebrate the second Festival day.

Study the various biblical and rabbinic texts as well as the responsum. Think about what it means to be part of *k'lal yisrael* and come to a decision about what Torah and Haftarah portions to read in synagogue when the 8th day of Passover falls on Shabbat.

* The questions in the next few sections are meant to serve as a guide for the facilitator.

1. (Torah Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

Clergy team leads a text study of Leviticus 23:5-8 to frame the issue surrounding the number of days Passover is celebrated. Some possible questions for the ritual committee members to consider:

- What do we learn about the observance of Passover from the Torah?
- How many days should Passover be celebrated?
- Why do you think some Jews celebrate Passover for 8 days?
- How many days should we celebrate Passover for in our Reform synagogue?
- How many days do members of this synagogue observe Passover?

We must observe Passover for...

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים פֶּסַח
לַיהוָה: וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה תֵּג המִצּוֹת לַיהוָה
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת תֹּאכְלוּ: בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ
יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מִלְאכָת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֹשֶׁה
לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מִלְאכָת
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: פ

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, (6) and on the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread. **You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days.** (7) On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. (8) **Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to the LORD. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.**

- Leviticus 23:5-8

12. (Mishnah Torah Text Study) – (15-20 minutes)

The clergy team now brings in *Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh* 5:5 to highlight why Orthodox and Conservative Jews observe *Yom Tov Sheini* (an extra day of the holiday in the diaspora). Some possible questions for the ritual committee members to consider:

- What do we learn from about the observance of Passover from the Mishneh Torah?
- Why is it important to retain the customs of our ancestors?
- Do you retain any customs from your family that are no longer relevant?
- Do you believe that we as a Reform Synagogue should adhere to this custom?

- How would our Passover observance differ by not retaining the custom of our ancestors? How would other synagogues in the area view us?

הלכה ה

בזמן הזה שאין שם סנהדרין ובית דין של ארץ ישראל קובעין על חשבון זה, היה מן הדין שיהיו בכל המקומות עושין יום טוב אחד בלבד אפילו המקומות הרחוקות שבחוצה לארץ כמו בני ארץ ישראל, שהכל על חשבון אחד סומכין וקובעין, אבל תקנת חכמים היא שיזהרו במנהג אבותיהם שבידיהם

In the present era when the *Sanhedrin* no longer exists and the court of *Eretz Yisrael* establishes [the months] according to the [fixed] calendar according to law it would be appropriate for [Jews] throughout the world to celebrate the holidays for one day alone. For [the inhabitants of] the distant regions of the diaspora and the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* rely on the same [fixed] calendar and establish [the festivals] accordingly. **Nevertheless the Sages ordained [that the inhabitants of the diaspora] retain the custom of their ancestors.**

- *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh 5:5*

Points to consider:

- With a fixed calendar, there is no reason to still observe a 2-day *yom tov*.
- Regardless, the Orthodox and Conservative movements continue to observe a 2-day *yom tov* because of *minhag avoteinu*, the custom of our ancestors.

13. (A Reform responsum on *Yom Tov Sheini*) – (15-20 minutes)

The clergy team now asks the ritual committee to study a section of a CCAR Responsum which tries to settle the debate of *Yom Tov Sheini*. Some possible questions for the ritual committee members to consider:

- What do we learn about the Reform Movement's stance on *Yom Tov Sheini* – the Second Festival Day from the CCAR Responsum?
- Do you agree with all of its points?
- If you agree, is it still appropriate to have 2 *sedarim*?

Still the Reform Movement follows biblical law...

...For these reasons: 1) since the observance of the second festival day is no longer necessary as a response to calendrical doubt; 2) since we are not bound to maintain ancestral customs once the justification for their creation has disappeared; and 3) since the interests of Jewish religious life would be better served by eliminating *yom tov sheni* than by maintaining it, we have therefore returned to the standard, as prescribed by the Torah, that each *yom tov* be observed for one day. This means that, for us, the "second days" of Rosh Hashanah, Shemini Atzeret, and Shavuot and the "eighth" day of Pesach are ordinary days (*yom chol*), while the "second" days of Sukkot and Pesach are the intermediate days of those festivals (*chol hamo'ed*). None of these days is a festival, and we do not treat them as such...

- See Mark Washofsky, "The Second Festival Day and Reform Judaism." Pages 49-64 in *Reform Responsa for the Twenty-First Century: Sh'eilot Ut'shuvot, Volume 1, 1996-1999*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2010.

Points to consider:

- We have a fixed calendar
- *Minhag avoteinu* is no longer binding
- It would be better for Jewish life to eliminate a 2-day *yom tov*.
- For those who follow a 1-day *Yom Tov* calendar, there is no such option for a true second day *yom tov* observance.

14. (Group Study) – (20 Minutes)

a. Divide the ritual committee into 2 groups. Have each group read the Reform Responsum on the Torah reading for what would be the 8th and final day of Passover in the diaspora. Each group will be charged with trying to answer one of the following questions based on their knowledge of the importance of *klal yisrael*:

- What Torah portion should be read on 22 of Nisan (8th day of Passover) and why?
- Should the traditional 8th day of Passover be treated as *Yom Tov* (liturgy, Torah reading, personal observance etc)?

* Please have each group take into account what they know about *klal yisrael*, "Points of Interest," and Suggested Torah Readings for Nissan 22 (8th Day of Passover)

b. Have each group come up with their own position and rationale grounded in the Reform Responsa and based on their knowledge of *Klal Yisrael*.

5. (Conclusion) – (15-20 minutes)

Each group presents its findings and its proposed solution. A vote is taken and the decision is brought to the congregation.

Reform Responsum

WHEN EIGHTH DAY OF PASSOVER IS ON SABBATH

Since the Reform practice as to the length of the festivals is the same as the biblical and the Israeli, which Torah reading shall be used on the Sabbath of what would be the eighth day of Passover? What is the practice of Reform congregations in America?

This question has been asked a number of times, and answered by the writer as Chairman of the C.C.A.R. Committee on Responsa, so the answer may be deemed official, or as nearly official as any Conference responsum is. That is to say, it is meant for guidance

and not for strict governance. Yet in general, it represents a fairly universal practice among our congregations.

The actual problem is this: On the holidays, the regular sequence of weekly readings (the *Sedras*) is suspended and a special holiday Torah reading is provided. When the holiday is over, the regular sequence of Torah *Sedras* resumes on the first Saturday after the holiday.

But if, as happens fairly often, the eighth day of Passover is on a Saturday, then in Israel, which considers the eighth day a regular non-festival Sabbath, the regular cycle of Torah reading resumes. Therefore Israel is one week ahead of the rest of the Jewish world in the Torah cycle. But not for long! Israel continues ahead until they come to the first double portion. On Pesach, which usually takes place on the *Sedra Tzav*, the dislocation continues for only two weeks, when the double portion *Sazria-Mezoro* comes. That week Israel just reads *Sazria* separately, and the next week *Mezoro* separately, and thus the rest of world Jewry catches up with them.

This problem does not arise with regard to the ninth day of Succos because that cannot be on Sabbath.

Now this solution (of Israel being ahead one week until the next double portion comes) works well because of the fact that the different schedule of readings occurs in different countries (although even in Israel it is still a problem for visitors who do not come there as permanent settlers, since they must follow their home schedule).

But the problem remains in the relationship between Reform and non-Reform congregations in America, England, etc. Here we are in the *same* country, and it is not convenient that for a number of weeks we should be in dislocation as to Torah reading with the rest of American Jewry. **We have therefore arrived at the following practical solution: We simply reread on that Sabbath the special reading of the holiday that we read before, and take a Psalm as the supplementary reading, but the service that day is a regular Sabbath service. In this way, on the very next Sabbath we are in accord with all the Jews of our environment.** The list of Torah readings at the back of the *Union Prayer Book Newly Revised* follows this solution of the problem.⁷⁶

Points of Interest

1. “When, in the Diaspora, the eighth day of Pesach or the second day of Shavuot falls on Shabbat, Reform congregations read the sidra assigned to the following week in the standard religious calendars. However, in order to preserve uniformity in the reading of the Torah throughout the entire community, it is suggested that on these occasions, the sidra be spread over two weeks, one portion

⁷⁶ Solomon B. Freehof, “When Eighth Day of Passover is on Sabbath.” Pages 42-43 in *Current Reform Responsa*. New York: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1969.

to be read while traditional congregations are observing the festival, and another portion to be read the following Shabbat."

- The "Table of Scriptural Readings" at the back of *Gates of the House* (1977, the companion volume to *Gates of Prayer*).
2. "The second holidays, i.e., the second and eighth day of Passover...have lost their meaning for our time...Congregations are therefore fully justified in abolishing the second-day holidays if they are inclined to do so...In congregations, however, where the abolition of the second holiday meets with the opposition of ever so small a part of its membership, the festive character of the day has to be preserved in the divine service, but the prohibition to work on that day is set aside...Hence it is not prohibited to eat leavened bread on the 22nd day of Nissan, or on the so-called last day of Passover..."
 - Cited in *CCAR Yearbook* 1 [1890], p. 96.
 3. "In those years when the eighth day of Pesach or the second day of Shavuot falls on a Shabbat, they are treated in Reform congregations as ordinary Shabbatot, and the Torah readings are those for the next regular Shabbat (Parashat Shemini after Pesach and Parashat Naso after Shavuot). In the land of Israel, the additional days of the Festivals are not (and never were) observed, by either traditional or Reform Jews. There, too, the Shabbat that happens to fall on the day after the seventh day of Pesach or the day of Shavuot is simply a regular Shabbat, and the Torah reading is the next one in the annual cycle (again, Shemini or Naso)."
 - <http://urj.org/learning/torah/ten/eilu/archives/v6w1/>
 4. "This solution [the one in *Gates of the House*] has the advantage of not separating us from the remainder of the Diaspora Jewish community. The Israeli solution [following the Israeli Torah reading cycle] is fine, but there the entire community, Orthodox and Liberal, follows the same pattern. We would recommend a division of the Torah portion for most congregations, and therefore, maintain the same cycle as the rest of the Diaspora community. For congregations which read the entire portion, the other solution is equally appropriate." (August, 1986)
 - Walter Jacob, *Contemporary American Reform Responsa* (1987), 276.

Suggested Torah Readings for Nissan 22 (8th Day of Passover)
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1. Taken from the WRJ Art Calendar:
Sh'mini 1 – Leviticus 9:1-10:11
Haftarah – 2 Samuel 6:1-23
2. Traditional 8th Day of Passover reading:
Parashat R'ei – Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17
Maftir, Parashat Pinchas – numbers 28:19-25
Haftarah – Isaiah 10:32-12:6
3. Traditional 7th Day of Passover reading:

Parashat Beshalach – Exodus 13:17-15:26
Maftir, Parashat Pinchas – numbers 28:19-25
Haftarah – 2 Samuel 22:1-51

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- *Eruvin* 40
- *Rosh Hashanah* 29b
- *Sanhedrin* 11a
- *Taanit* 25b

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