UN'TANEH TOKEF AND THE LEGEND OF RABBI AMNON OF MAINZ

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Introduction

One of the most well known pieces of High Holy Day liturgy, *Un'taneh Tokef*, has one of the most complicated and varied lists of claims to authorship. Each theory is supported by authors who believe that they have uncovered the history of the *piyyut* and determined the liturgical context in which it was written. Among those theories, is the claim that *Un'taneh Tokef* was indeed composed by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz,[1] or, if not of Mainz, then at least from somewhere in Italy.[2] Another theory attributes it to Kalonymus ben Meshullan ben Kalonymus,[3] one of the founders of Ashkenazi Jewry. Yet another claim locates *Un'taneh Tokef* as a poem that is based on the well-known church poem, *Dies Irae*[4]. Still another theory suggests that since this text appears at the end of a Rosh Hashanah *Musaf k'rova* by Eleazar Kallir, it must be that the *Un'taneh Tokef* too was written by Kallir. A final theory posits that the *payytan*, Yannai, composed this poem, and that it replaced the original ending to Kallir's *k'rova*[5]. These are most of the common attributions. While each theory has its supporters, the difficulty in determining the author

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[1] Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978), 106.

[2] Avraham Frankel, "D'muto haHistoriat shel R Amnon m'Mainz v'gilgulav shel haPiyyut 'Un'taneh Tokef' b'Italia, b'Ashkenaz, ubTzarfat," *Zion* 67 (2002).

[3] Raphael Posner, Uri Kaploun, and Shalom Cohen, eds., *Jewish liturgy: Prayer and Synagogue Service Through the Ages* (Jerusalem: Keter Pub. House Jerusalem, 1975), 171.

[4] Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (New York: Columbia UP, 1963).

[5] Yosef Yahalom, "Un'taneh Tokef Kiddush Hashem," *Haaretz*, September 6, 2002.

of this *piyyut* is certain and is just one of the many significant investigations included in this study.

The discovery of relevant *geniza* fragments has certainly contributed to the mystery surrounding the *Un'taneh Tokef's* origins. But the poem was already sufficiently popular to have evoked more than the usual amount of interest. Perhaps it is the theological message of a God who determines the fate of human beings that has inspired this curiosity. Or perhaps it is the theology of a God whose final judgment can be swayed by devoted, humble and generous Jewish people. Perhaps it is the moving legend of a medieval Jewish martyr who utters this poem as his final words, that has fueled the interest. Whatever the reason, today we have a poem and a myth that are variously loved and hated and that are almost inseparable as far as research on either one is concerned.

We must, then, work backwards. We have a poem that is included in Ashkenazi Rosh Hashanah liturgy as early as the 12th or 13th century, and that remains, in some version, in Ashkenazi *machzorim* of all denominations today. As a piece of liturgy, this *piyyut* is a *siluk*, the last part of a *k'dushta*, a particular form of a *k'rovah*.[6] Most scholars agree that *Un'taneh Tokef* was not written by Eleazar Kallir, even though it appears in our traditional Rosh Hashanah Musaf liturgy as the last section of the *k'dushta* by Kallir. Many *machzorim* accompany it with the legend that attributes it to R. Amnon of Mainz, a tale attributed to Ephraim of Bonn and carried first in Isaac ben Moses of Vienna's

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[6] The *k'rovah* is the name for the *piyyut* that was inserted into the *Amidah*. The kind of *k'rovah* intended for a *Shacharit Amidah* was outfitted with nine parts. These were arrayed only within the opening three benedictions, with most of the parts occurring in the *Kedushat Hashem* – hence the name *k'dushta*. *Un'taneh Tokef* is the end of one of these *k'dushta'ot*,

compilation, *Or Zarua*. This myth describes a beloved and learned rabbi, who sacrifices his fingers and toes instead of converting to Christianity, and who dies just after reciting the words of this *piyyut*. Some time after this event takes place, this man appears in a dream to Kalonymos ben Meshullam ben Kalonymos, teaches him the poem, and instructs him to spread it throughout Israel. As at least the standard legendary account of the poem's origin, the *Or Zarua* tale and the poem are necessarily intertwined. Though some people deal with the myth and others with the *piyyut* and how it found its way into the *machzor*, research on one almost always includes mention of the other.

Research on the *Un'taneh Tokef*, then, really turned into a study of multiple areas. One relevant piece was the history and context of the attributed writers or compilers of the *piyyut* and the myth. With respect to the *piyyut*, research lead to the history of *paytanim* in *Eretz Yisrael*, the structure and content they used in their compositions, and the way their work was disseminated throughout the Jewish communities. The study of the myth lead to an investigation of the historical context of the most common place it was found, *Or Zarua*; the attributed author, Ephraim of Bonn; the aspects of Ashkenazi history that were relevant to common themes within the myth; and the nature of historical recollection in this time and place.

The second chapter of this thesis is focused entirely on the text, composition and history of *Un'taneh Tokef*. Chapter 2 will explain the history of *piyyutim* in general and of the *k'rova* and its climactic verse, the *siluk*, in particular. It will discuss the different kinds of topics that Jews wrote about in the Middle Ages in this particular format and why the two came together. This part of the investigation will involve a discussion of

geniza fragments that will help us locate *Un'taneh Tokef* in the earlier Palestinian era of *piyyutim*, circa 4th-7th centuries. To facilitate reference, Chapter 2 will include a translation of the text and a corresponding list of the biblical texts that are referenced in the body of the *piyyut*. After translating and explaining the meaning of the text, each of the substantiated theories of authorship and contextual influence will be discussed and evaluated.

Especially interesting with the *Un'taneh Tokef* is the story that accompanies it, the myth of Amnon of Mainz. Chapter three addresses this myth in detail – how and why it came into being, whether the story was always connected with *Un'taneh Tokef*, and how it is known to us now. The literature regarding this myth is quite complex. Some writers deal with it as a myth, others treat it as a factual account that explains or gives credibility to the *piyyut* as an act of medieval martyrdom; others approach it from an angle of critical analysis, particularly as it relates to the more general discipline of genre study – in this case, a saint or hero story that is compiled out of folkloristic motifs to become "chronicle as history." This latter school of thought explores other similar stories, to discover what we can learn about this myth as it relates to a bigger picture of others like it.

Chapter 3 will include a translation of the myth from its most common and reliable source, Isaac ben Moses of Vienna's *Or Zarua*. This chapter also addresses a few additional themes that emerge from the study of the Amnon myth -- themes that are notable because of their similarity to other important Jewish myths: the tension between the community and the individual, the relevance of the time "three days" in this story, Amnon's peculiar death, and thematic parallels in Christian myths.

At this point the thesis will shift focus to the liturgical placement of the *piyyut* and the myth. Chapter 4 will explain the placement of *Un'taneh Tokef* in a traditional *machzor* and its variations in *machzorim* from different periods and denominations. This chapter will begin by looking at two traditional *machzorim* and then move on to a survey and discussion of early American Reform liturgy. From there *Un'taneh Tokef* and the myth of Amnon of Mainz (or other surrounding literature) will be examined in *Union Prayer Book II* and in *Gates of Repentance*. After finishing what currently exists of American Reform *machzorim*, the conversation will turn to liberal liturgies outside of the United States -- in Liberal and Reform British *Machzorim* and also the Israeli Reform *machzor*. For each of these *machzorim*, the question "What does this choice say about the beliefs and interests of the editors?" will be considered. Looking at the inclusion, exclusion and placement of *Un'taneh Tokef* and the myth of Amnon of Mainz in each of these liturgies will lead to a discussion about which pieces seem to be problematic or beloved and what that says about the importance of the poem and the story in each of the communities under consideration.

A concluding chapter, Chapter 5, will include a current and personal exploration of the text of the *piyyut* and the associated myth. What do we learn about how rabbis view this piece of the liturgy through the alternative versions of the poem that exist? The theological questions that this poem addresses are often topics of rabbinic High Holy Day sermons or writings so it will be instructive to look at a few of these to better understand the place of *Un'taneh Tokef* in contemporary liberal Jewish communities. As a soon to be Reform rabbi, I will explore my own thoughts on this *piyyut* and the myth. I raise the

question of whether to continue to tell the myth as if it explains the poem or to adapt our explanations so that they are more accurate (even if that makes them a bit less powerful together). I want to know the place the poem and the myth should have in a future Reform *machzor*.

Taking a step back from the content of the research, it may be worth asking, "Why study the *Un'taneh Tokef* at all?" At the very least, *Un'taneh Tokef* brings together past and present, a very old poem and a very old myth that have been wedded over time, despite their distinct origins, and that have inspired a great deal of curiosity and research. This is not true of all of the distinct pieces of the High Holy Day liturgy. So there is something about the text of this poem that is unique because it speaks to people – either because it scares or angers them, or because it recalls a God they do not often encounter, especially in liberal communities – a God who deals both in the world of fate and in the consideration of our appeals for continued life by doing righteous deeds.

The words of *Un'taneh Tokef* speak to people as a work of liturgical art. They are set to moving music that underscores their passionate poetry, even (as in some *machzorim*) with sections excluded, and even when encountered primarily in translated but still poetic form. For many, it is one of the poignant moments of the High Holy Day liturgy. This text challenges us to identify what we believe about God and about our role in determining our own destinies. On top of all of this, since we are able to look at the way different communities have used the text and made sense of or presented its message, it is possible to view a number of different windows into the way different communities relate to the words and their message. These texts, their history, and current

places in Jewish liturgy, are an example of a living tradition and the way history and modernity intersect and coexist.

Chapter One: *Un'taneh Tokef* - the *Piyyut*

History of *Piyyutim* and Two Early *Payytanim*

Un'taneh Tokef is a *piyyut*, a liturgical poem. More specifically, *Un'taneh Tokef* is the last segment of a longer *piyyut*. The word *piyyut* comes from the same Greek word that gives us the word "poetry."[7] The writers of these compositions were called *payytanim*. *Piyyutim* were written to develop creativity in liturgy or in other significant Jewish ceremonies, even when the liturgy of the service and other rituals were becoming relatively fixed. Scholars are divided on the precise role that *piyyutim* first played. They may have been intended solely as insertions into the increasingly standardized prayer service; or they may actually have replaced the obligatory prayers to ensure diversity from day to day or week to week. In either case, they were written for specific parts of the service, to accompany and elaborate upon Torah portions, and to embellish such ceremonies as weddings, circumcisions and services in a house of mourning. The composition of *piyyutim* began in the early centuries of the Common Era and continued through the beginning of the Enlightenment. In the early years, Palestinian communities generally embraced *piyyutim* and their writers because they were not interested in centralization. Babylonian communities were more reticent about supporting *payytanim*, in part because they were much more concerned with preserving the fixed structure of the service, and in part also, because they associated *piyyutim* with the cultural proclivities of the rival Palestinian Jewish community.

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[7] I am grateful to my teachers of Liturgy, Rabbi Hoffman and Rabbi Wenig who have taught me the basic information on these topics.

Piyyutim were Palestinian, originating in *Eretz Yisrael* as the structure of the prayer service began to take a regular shape there. The different eras of *piyyutim* can be differentiated by the poetic authors of any given period and by their linguistic styles. The first period of interest is "the period of the anonymous *piyyut*," so named since the authors of these *piyyutim* are not known to posterity. These most ancient *piyyutim* are known largely through fragments found in the Cairo *Geniza* and are characterized by their lofty style and lack of rhyme.

The second era, the one on which we will focus, is the first period of *payytanim* whose names are known and who composed their works in *Eretz Yisrael* before it was conquered by the Arabs in the mid-seventh century. During this second period, the structural framework for the classical *piyyut* was set. The language of the *piyyut* changed in this second era from simple to flowery. Yose ben Yose is the earliest known *payytan* and he is suspected to have lived in *Eretz Yisrael* in the sixth century or earlier – possibly as early as the 4th century. As a bridge personality, Yose wrote poems that retain the same form as those found by anonymous writers who preceded him. He was followed by the better known Yannai and Eleazar ben Kallir, two of the most prolific and artistic synagogue poets of all time, who moved *piyyutim* to their next level of sophistication. Yannai began to use lesser known words and a more complicated structure for his work. Kallir is known to have initiated the tradition of using *midrashic* and *talmudic* references and vocabulary, thereby making them enigmatically difficult to understand. Both Yannai and Kallir were among the first *payytanim* to focus on writing *piyyutim* with attention to rhyme and rhythm. All of these early and great *payytanim* worked from *Eretz Yisrael*

even after the Arabs conquered the land; eventually, *payytanim* appeared in other parts of the world, as well.

So *payytanim* also emerged outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. Despite our association of *piyyutim* with Palestine but not Babylonia, we do know of some poets from Babylonia – although they never reached the same degree of fame that their Palestinian counterparts did. By the second half of the ninth century there were *payytanim* in Byzantine southern Italy as well, and a century or two later still, North Africa became a prolific poetic center. By then Ashkenazi culture had moved northward over the Alps to the Rhineland, so that Germany too became a center for this sacred poetry. Its best known *payytanim* -- Moses ben Kalonymos and Meshullam ben Kalonymos -- were part of the Kalonymide family who settled in Ashkenaz from Italy. The practice of composing *piyyutim* spread throughout Spain too, where, however, Muslim poetic meter and style predominated. These later hubs of *piyyut* composition saw the creation of many new forms of *piyyutim* which, though beautiful and still used today, are not the subject of this investigation. It is hard to put an absolute end to the creation of new *piyyutim*, but certainly by the beginning of the Enlightenment (seventeenth-century or so) the beginning of the decline of the period of impressive and lasting *piyyutim* had set in.

Some scholars have suggested that *piyyutim* were written by Jews in times of crisis, as a response to not being allowed to practice Judaism openly, or even as a response to more prevalent persecution. Though this theory is widespread, its historical validity is improbable. "It is more likely, however, that the *piyyutim* represent an ongoing, spontaneous, cultural expression by Jews intent throughout the centuries on

adding beauty to their prayers... Though we do have elegies and lamentations prompted by disasters in Jewish history, these *piyyutim* usually reflect eras of peace and prosperity in which poets were free to experiment with the expression of Jewish ideas in novel cultural forms dictated by the dominant aesthetic preferences of one society after another: Christian, Byzantium, Moslem, Spain, and so on."[8]

Piyyutim are divided according to the way they are composed and on their liturgical purpose. The earliest and most important forms of *piyyutim* are liturgical poems known as the *k'rovah* and the *yotzer*. The *yotzer* is a composition that was inserted into the blessings surrounding the *sh'ma* in the *Shacharit* service and, though interesting, is not relevant to this study. The *k'rovah* (our topic here) is the name for the *piyyut* that was inserted into the *Amidah*. Different types of *kerovot* abounded. A *k'rovah* intended for the daily *Amidah*, and composed with parts that are divided among all eighteen benedictions, is called *Shemoneh Esreh* – like the name of the prayer into which it is inserted. A more usual kind of *k'rovah* was intended for a *Shacharit Amidah* and outfitted with nine parts, not eighteen. These were arrayed only within the opening three benedictions, with most of the parts occurring in the *Kedusha*t *Hashem* – hence the name *k'dushta*. *Un'taneh Tokef* is the end of one of these *k'dushta'ot.* In ancient *Eretz Yisrael* the *Kedusha* was said only in the *Shacharit* service on Shabbat and Holy Days.[9] Eventually, the *kedusha* and *k'dushta'ot* found their way into *Musaf* as well. This is how

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[8] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Gates of Understanding 2: Appreciating the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1984), 77.

[9] Fleischer, Ezra, and Abraham David. "Piyyut." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 16. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 192-209. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale.

Un'taneh Tokef, part of a a *k'dushta,* came to have its location in traditional High Holy Day *Musaf* liturgy. The *k'dushta* generally has nine named sections, the last of which is called the *siluk* which means "ascent."[10] *Un'taneh Tokef,* then, is a *siluk,* this last section of a *k'dushta*. A *siluk* is always introduced by the phrase (from the *Amidah*) *uv'chein u'lcha ta'aleh kedusha,* and is followed by the *Kedusha*. Based on what is known about the language and style from different periods of *piyyut* composition, it is almost certain that *Un'taneh Tokef* is of Palestinian, not Ashkenazi, origin, in spite of its appearance in Ashkenazi *machzorim*.

Un'taneh Tokef traditionally appears in the *Musaf* service of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. It is one of the most well-known and recognizable parts of the High Holy Day liturgy because of its theological content. There has been a great deal of inquiry devoted to determining who wrote it and when and where it was written. Its placement in the *machzor* would suggest that it is the last part of a *k'rova* which begins *u'fad me'az,* written by Eleazar ben Kallir. This *k'rova* is one of the most well known *piyyutim* written by Kallir and it still appears in traditional, Ashkenazi *machzorim* as part of the liturgy for the first day of Rosh Hashanah.

Though Kallir was one of the most prolific *payytanim,* little is known with certainty about his life. He wrote *piyyutim* for all of the main festivals, for holidays and also for weekdays, and his language is infused with biblical and *midrashic* allusions. His Hebrew is considered to be an extension of ancient Hebrew even though he created new

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[10] Fleischer, Ezra, and Abraham David. "Piyyut." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 16. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 192-209. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale.

words to use in his complicated, rhyming and sometimes acrostic poetic forms. Kallir was a prolific writer and his works were so well known that commentaries on his *piyyutim* exist from as early as the 11th century. The Cairo *Geniza* revealed even more hitherto unknown collections of his *piyyutim*. Scholars have posited dates for his life that could range from the second through 12th centuries, though it seems most likely that he lived during the sixth or first half of the seventh century in *Eretz Yisrael*. None of Kallir's works mention anything about the Arab conquest in 635CE while they do mention the suffering inflicted by *Edom* (the Christians). This suggests that Kallir was writing before this conquest – not late enough to reflect the conditions of the mid-seventh century. Some also suspect that he may have been a student of the *payytan* Yannai who would then be placed sometime in the sixth century.[11]

Like Kallir, Yannai's dates too are uncertain, and only in the last century or so was it known how prolific Yannai was as a *payytan*. Yannai was known for having written *piyyutim* based on the triennial Torah reading cycle that typified *Eretz Yisrael*. G*eniza* fragments reveal innumerable *piyyutim* for *Shabbat*, holidays, and other significant gatherings composed by him. He seems to have written mostly *k'dushta'ot*, *piyyutim* (as we have seen) inserted into the first three benedictions of the *Amidah* and dealing with the Torah and Haftarah portions for that week. With respect to style and language, there is a close relationship between older Palestinian *midrashim* and Yannai's *piyyutim*. This

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[11] "Kallir, Eleazar." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 11. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 743-745. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale.
Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993).

similarity in language is most likely because of the proximity of the time of composition for both. Yannai's work also has many allusions to classical sources that are presented as if they are his own creations.

While there is little dispute about Yannai's place of origin being *Eretz Yisrael*, there is less agreement about when he lived – the sixth-or seventh-century date being extrapolations from what we surmise about Kallir. Many stories exist about the relationship between Yannai and Kallir, the most common of which posits that Kallir was a student of Yannai. Other myths tell of Yannai killing Kallir out of jealousy because of how much more quickly Kallir's popularity spread through the Jewish communities. While these stories are unlikely, it is quite possible that Yannai was a teacher of Kallir and, since Yannai lived some time after Yose ben Yose (but before Kallir), it is probable that he lived during the sixth or early seventh century.[12]

Enough is known about Eleazar ben Kallir and his work to convince scholars that he was probably not the author of *Un'taneh Tokef*, the *siluk* that is placed at the end of his *k'dushta Ufad me'az* – the poetic composition that appears in the *Musaf* service of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. What makes *Un'taneh Tokef* particularly interesting is precisely the dual fact of its popularity and its unknown authorship. As we have seen, the many different theories of authorship and origin that have been posited will be explored in this thesis. Some are tied to the myth of Amnon of Mainz that is discussed in Chapter

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[12] Schirmann, Jefim. "Yannai." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 21. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 280-282. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale.
Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993).

3 while others are related more directly to the content, style, and structure of the poetic text itself. Before turning to the myth, we can profitably look with some detail at that text.

The Text

The text of *Un'taneh Tokef* provides its own clues for determining its authorship. What follows is the authoritative Hebrew version as provided by E. Daniel Goldschmidt's *Machzor l'Yamin Noraim* and the new English translation by Joel M. Hoffman.[13]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

8 ומלאכים יחפזון / וחיל ורעדה יאחזון

9 ויאמרו הנה יום–הדין / לפקוד על–צבא–מרום בדין

10 כי–לא–יזכו בעיניך בדין / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון

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[13] The text of Un'taneh Tokef, Hoffman's translation, and the commentary on his translation also all appear in Appendix A. The translation appears in Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *Who by Fire, Who By Water: Un'taneh Tokef* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, forthcoming 2010).

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

14 בראש השנה יכתבון / וביום צום כפור יחתמון

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי במים ומי באש

17 מי בחרב ומי בחיה / מי ברעב ימו בצמא

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / מי בחניקה ומי בסליקה

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי ירום ומי ישפל / מי יעשיר ומי יעני.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

32 אין קצבה לשנותיך / ואין קץ לארך ימיך

33 ואין שעור למרכבות כבודך / ואין פרוש לעילום שמך.

34 שמך נאה לך / ואתה נאה לשמך

35 ושמנו קראת בשמך / עשה למען שמך

36 וקדש את שמך / על מקדישי שמך

37 בעבור כבוד שמך / הנערץ והנקדש

38 כסוד שיח שרפי קדש / המקדישים שמך בקדש

39 דרי מעלה ים דרי מטה / קוראים ומשלשים בשלוש קדושה בקדש:

1. And let us acknowledge the power of this day's holiness for it is full of awe and dread.

2. And on it your kingdom will be exalted and your throne will be established in love.

3. And you will reign from it in truth. Truly you are judge

4. And prosecutor and litigant and witness and author and sealer, and recorder and recounter.

5. And you will remember everything that has been forgotten, and you will open the book of memories

6. And it will be read from: everyone's signature is in it.

7. And a great shofar will be sounded and a thin whisper of a sound will be heard.

8. And angels will recoil and be gripped by shaking and trembling

9. And they will say, "this is the day of judgment," for reviewing the hosts on high in judgment.

10. For they will not be innocent when you judge them. And all who enter the world will pass before you like sheep

11. As a shepherd searches for his flock and has his sheep pass under his staff

12. So too will you record and recount and review all living beings as you have them pass by.

13. And you will decide the end of all creatures, and write down their sentence.

14. On Rosh Hashanah they will be written down, and on Yom Kippur they will be sealed:

15. How many will pass on and how many will be created, who will live and who will die,

16. Who at their end and who not at their end, who by water and who by fire,

17. Who by warfare and who by wildlife, who by hunger and who by thirst.

18. Who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning,

19. Who will rest and who will wander, who will be tranquil and who will be troubled,

20. Who will be calm, and who will be tormented, who will be exalted, and who humbled, who will be rich and who will be poor?

21. And repentance, prayer, and charity help the hardship of the decree pass.

22. For Your glory is like Your name, slow to anger, quick to forgive.

23. For You do not want the dead to die, but for them to turn from their path and live.

24. You wait until the day they die, accepting them immediately if they return.

25. Truly you are their creator and you know their nature

26. For they are flesh and blood.

27. Their origin is from dust and their end is to dust:

28. At their peril gathering food, they are like shattered pottery,

29. Like withered grass and like a faded blossom, like a passing shadow and like a vanishing cloud,

30. And like blowing wind and like sprouting dust and like a dream that will fly away.

31. But You are King, the Living and Everlasting God.

32. Your years are boundless and the length of your days is endless.

33. Your glorious chariots are priceless and the eternity of your name is limitless.

34. Your name suits you and you suit your name.

35. You named us after you; act for the sake of your name.

36. And sanctify your name through those who declare the sanctity of your name

37. For the glory of your honored and sanctified name,

38. As the utterances of the assembly of holy Seraphim,

39. Inhabitants above with inhabitants below thrice call out the trio of holiness with "holy."

Use of Biblical and Rabbinic Texts

Un'taneh Tokef is filled with references, quotations and adaptations of texts from the Bible and rabbinic works like *midrash, Mishnah* and *Talmud*.[14] Biblical parallels are frequently exact quotations -- *c'vakarat ro-eh edro* (line 11), for example, which is from Ezekiel 34:12 where God is described as a shepherd seeking out his flock. Other exact biblical quotations include *k'tseil over* (line 29), from Psalm 144:4 and *v'kha'chalom ya'uf* (line 30) from Job 20:8. Similarly, *ki kh'shimkha ken t'hilatekha* (Line 22) is almost an exact quote from Psalm 48:11, where however, the original reads *ki c'shimkha Elohim ken t'hilatekha* with *Elohim* included in the phrase. *Piyyutim* quite frequently quote selectively, changing words or even whole phrases, as we see here. We see this trend with the phrase *ki lo tachpotz b'mot hamet* (line 23) which is almost identical to Ezekiel

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[14] Many of these biblical quotes, references and adaptations in the following two paragraphs were compiled by Rabbi Wenig and are taken from notes from her High Holy Day Literature class on 2/22/09.
Others come from footnotes to the *Un'taneh Tokef* from E. Daniel Goldschmidt, *Machzor L'Yamin HaNoraim* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute Inc., 1970).

18:32: *ki lo echpotz b'mot hamet*. In the biblical text God is speaking in the first person. This verb is changed in *Un'taneh Tokef* text because it describes God wants, and must, therefore, be conjugated in the second (or third) person. These are just a few examples of biblical phrases that are found in this *piyyut.*

Many texts were altered to sound more poetic or to fit the poetic patterns of the larger composition. In many cases the original textual meaning is retained even though the wording is altered for poetic purposes. The poet combines Isaiah 24:21, *yifkod Adonai al tsava hamarom b'marom,* and Job 15:15, *v'shamayim lo-zaku v'einav,* for example. His poetic version reads, *lifkod al-tsava-marom ba-din/ki-lo-yizku v'ayneicha ba-din.* (lines 9 and 10).

Though drawing on the Bible for his creativity, the poet has exercised a good deal of latitude in rendering the phrases poetically. The largest change is the addition of *ba-din* to create a mini-litany of two verses. Further scrutiny reveals more subtle contributions to the effect. The poet has cleverly changed all of the conjugations of the verbs to create a poetic verse that sounds original and consistent with the rest of the *piyyut*. Overall, however, the meaning and structure of the verses are retained quite accurately in this part of the *piyyut* which comes to mean, "for reviewing the hosts on high in judgment/For they will not be innocent when you judge them."

The poet employed a similar technique when he combined Isaiah 27:18, *yitaka b'shofar gadol*, Job 4:16, *d'm'mah va'kol eshma*, and I Kings 19:12, *kol d'm'mah dakah.* When combined and adapted slightly, this combination of biblical phrases becomes *u'v'shofar gadol yi'taka/v'kol d'm'mah dakah yi'shama* (line 7). In this example the poet

only had to switch the order of some of the words and change the conjugation of one verb to create a line that came to capture the feelings of grandeur and humility that are experienced on Rosh Hashanah. While there are other examples of biblical phrase or verse inclusions in this *piyyut*, these are sufficient to illustrate the poet's artistic method of maintaining the original biblical citations but creatively adapting them for poetic ends. It is clear that the author of this *piyyut* was extremely well versed in the language of the Jewish bible.

It is not just the Bible that our poet knew well and permitted himself to alter. He was equally familiar with rabbinic writings, including *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, a fifth century work, which adds to our assumption that the poet, whoever he is (possibly Yannai as we shall see) lived after the fifth century, probably in the late sixth or early seventh century.

ר' יודן בשם ר"א אמר שלשה דברים מבטלים גזירות רעות ואלו הם תפלה וצדקה ותשובה ושלשתן נאמרו בפסוק אחד הה"ד)ד"ה =דברי הימים= ב ז(ויכנעו עמי אשר נקרא שמי עליהם ויתפללו זו תפלה ויבקשו פני הרי צדקה, כמד"א)תהלים יז(אני בצדק אחזה פניך, וישובו מדרכם הרעה זו תשובה, ואח"כ)ד"ה =דברי הימים= ב ז(ואסלח לחטאם וארפא את ארצם. (ברשת רבה, פרשה מד)

Rabbi Judan said in R Leazar's name: Three things nullify a decree of evil and they are: prayer, righteousness, and repentance. And the three are contained in one verse: If my people, upon whom My Name is called, shall humble themselves and pray (2 Chronicle 7:14) - here you have prayer; "and seek my face" (2 Chronicle 7:14) alludes to

righteousness, as you read, "I shall behold Your face in righteousness" (Ps 17:15); "And turn from their evil ways (2 Chronicle 7:14) denotes repentance; after that, "Then I will forgive their sin" (2 Chronicle 7:14). (Bereshit Rabbah, 44, 12)

While *Un'taneh Tokef* does not replicate the entire text, it reproduces the beginning in what has become one of the most important phrases for many contemporary, practicing Jews. The *midrash* reads, *shlosha d'varim m'vatlim g'zeirot raot v'eilu hem: tefilah, u'tsedkah u'teshuvah.* The poet has reproduced it, however, in a different word order and without some words that he has selectively expunged, to create, *u'teshuvah, u'tefilah, u'tzedakah ma-avirin et ro'a ha-g'zeirah* (line 21). The missing words are especially interesting, most particularly, *mevatlin*, meaning cancels or nullifies. The *midrash* message, apparently, is that prayer, charity and repentance actually render the evil decree null and void. The poet must have thought twice before changing it, but apparently did so, thereby presenting an entirely different theological view. For him, the three pious acts only *ma'avirin*, "lessen" or "cause to pass," as our translation renders it. The poet also changes the order of these acts from the text of the *midrash* to the *Un'taneh Tokef*. He makes *teshuvah* first, presumably because he was consciously writing for the High Holy Days. It is also interesting to speculate on the word *tsedakah*. In the *midrash* this word is listed as the second act while in our *piyyut* it is listed as the third and final one. The poet must have been intent on making *teshuvah* first and *tefilah* second, reflecting the meaning and experience of Rosh Hashanah. But he also retained *tsedakah* as one of the three acts in which to engage on this sacred day. He may have felt obliged to retain it because it

was already in the midrashic original; alternatively, perhaps giving *tsedakah* on Rosh Hashanah was already established as an early practice in ancient Israel.

Goldschmidt, points out another interesting appearance of these three ideas, though in different language, in the Talmud Bavli.

רבי יצחק: ארבעה דברים מקרעין גזר דינו של אדם, אלו הן: צדקה, צעקה, שינוי השם, ושינוי מעשה. (תלמוד בבלי מסכט ראש השנה דף טז עמוד ב)

Rabbi Yitzchak said: Four things avert the evil decree passed (by God) on man. They are: charity, prayer, change of name, and improvement. (Rosh Hashanah 16b)

This *Bavli* text does not include the three words as they appear in *Un'taneh Tokef*, but it is possible to read three of the four ways listed to "avert the evil decree passed by God on man" as representations of *teshuvah, tefilah,* and *tsedakah*. *Tzsedakah* is clearly the same. *Tza'akah* refers to prayer, *tefilah,* because of its meaning of crying out. *Shinui maaseh,* changing one's ways or self improvement is certainly like *teshuvah,* the third of this word combination.

These two examples demonstrate the extent to which our poets of antiquity had mastered the *midrashic* and *talmudic* literature of the time. The *midrash,* of course, is Palestinian, fifth century -- common cultural terrain of the time. Rabbi Yitzchak's comment is from the Bavli, which was not edited in Eretz Yisrael. But Rabbi Yitzchak must have been a Palestinian sage because he is called "Rabbi" and ordination only happened in *Eretz Yisrael*. This means that the author of *Un'taneh Tokef* might have been

familiar with the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak as part of the Palestinian tradition, separate from his inclusion in the *Bavli* which was edited outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. The words of *Un'taneh Tokef* demonstrate that the poet was familiar with biblical and rabbinic literature and comfortable adapting it to suit his poetic needs.

Theories of Authorship and Origin

The literary composition of *Un'taneh Tokef* is only one aspect underlying our understanding of the history of this *piyyut*. Determining the *history* of that composition is less straightforward than determining the influence of biblical and rabbinic texts upon it.

Yet that very history has become a scholarly enterprise, if only because of the popularity and potency of this *piyyut* which has found its way into *machzorim* all over the world. Though many *machzorim* attribute this poem to the legendary Rabbi Amnon of Mainz (the myth that will be the subject of Chapter 3), most investigators recognize the unlikelihood that any Rabbi Amnon is indeed the true author. The 2007 electronic *Encyclopedia Judaica* still credits the legend somewhat, however, when it explains: "Written by Kalonymos b. Meshullam Kalonymos, the *payytan* of Mayence (11th century), a well-known legend ascribed its composition to a R. Amnon of Mainz."[15] Though this does not state that R. Amnon of Mainz wrote the *piyyut*, it does claim that Kalonymos b. Meshullam, the scholar credited with spreading the *piyyut* in the myth, is the original author. Most scholars debate even that, however, as they develop theories of

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[15] "U-Netanneh Tokef." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 20. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 247-248. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale.

authorship and origin that strive for greater historical accuracy. These theories are based on the style and content of the poem as well as the history of the development of different Jewish communities and the ways that *piyyutim* traveled from place to place. Some of these older theories seem, now, to be unfounded, unlikely, and outdated. Others are more contemporary in origin. What follows is a survey of the various solutions put forward.

Eric Werner was one of the earliest scholars to put forth an explanation for the origin of the *Un'taneh Tokef*.[16] Werner had arrived in America as one of the scholars rescued by HUC during the Holocaust, and then become a founder of the School of Sacred Music. As one of the first Jewish musicologists, trained in the classics as well as Hebrew, he was the first American scholar to research *Un'taneh Tokef* seriously. His work is still cited today and many learned Jewish leaders still assume the veracity of his claims – even though, as we shall see, his theory has largely been set aside in favor of others that later evidence, unavailable to Werner, supports as more probable.

Werner draws attention to the work of Dr. A Kaminka, who was the first scholar to note a connection between the Christian hymn *Dies Irae* and our *Un'taneh Tokef*. Kaminka's work was published no later than 1915. In his essay, "The Hymn *Dies Irae*," Kaminka suggests that the Christian hymn and *Un'taneh Tokef* were both written in Mainz in the 12th or 13th centuries. Thomas of Celano, the author to whom *Dies Irae* is attributed, lived just a few decades after the R. Amnon of Mainz whom Kaminka assumes penned *Un'taneh Tokef*. Both poems are filled with biblical references and there certainly are many shared themes in the two pieces. Kaminka provides examples of a number of

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[16] Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (New York: Columbia UP, 1963), 253-254.

piyyutim that very closely resemble the work of Thomas of Celano, and indicates much overlap in themes and styles of the Jewish and Christian liturgical authors. He traces the similarity in style and content as far back as the Byzantine Christian poet Romanos, who he says lived around the sixth century. In the end, Kaminka concludes that it is "safe to say that Thomas of Celano adopted the form of *Dies Irae* from Hebrew models. These gave him his inspiration and also, in some measure, influenced his train of thought. So much may be regarded as certain."[17]

Werner begins his work where Kaminka left off, by comparing the poetry of Romanus, *Un'taneh Tokef*, and *Dies Irae*. Like many of the early Jewish *payytanim*, Romanus does not have firm or accepted dates but probably lived between the fifth and the eighth centuries. Romanus wrote a kind of poem called a "kontakion" which was a complicated liturgical poem,[18] much as *k'dushtaot* are complicated liturgical poems. For the purpose of this study it is helpful to understand *piyyutim* and *payytanim* like Yannai or Kallir as the Jewish poetic equivalent of Romanus and his work. Werner claims that some of the themes in *Un'taneh Tokef*, such as the trembling angels, are ideas that are taken from Romanus. It is difficult to substantiate this claim since the research used to reach this conclusion is not Werner's and was based on two older German pieces. What we can say, however, through independent investigation designed to supplement Kaminka's older claims, is that Romanus wrote a *kontakion* for the *Parousia*, the second

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[17] Arman Kaminka, *The Relation of the Hymn Dies Irae to the Synagogue Penitentialia* (London: Shapiro, Vallentine & Co.), 10.

[18] Romanus Melodus, Saint, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine melodist.*, trans. Marjorie Carpenter (Columbia: University of Missouri P, 1970).

coming. Like so many *piyyutim*, he quotes a great deal of scripture as part and parcel of his work. But this seems to be the only obvious claim to its relationship to *Un'taneh Tokef*. There is a relationship between Romanus' kontakion and *Un'taneh Tokef* but only to the extent that similar themes emerge from similar original sources. Parallel source material from Scripture is not enough to establish a literary dependence of one piece upon the other.

Werner's claim that *Un'taneh Tokef* is related to *Dies Irae* seems to have even less of a foundation. With regard to content, the only similarities between these two pieces are, again, the overlap that comes from the influence of biblical images of angels, trembling and a day of judgement. As Werner himself recognized, the content differs significantly with respect to the importance and impact of repentance. *Un'taneh Tokef* supports the idea that *teshuvah*, *tefilah*, and *tsedakah* can change the outcome of God's decree each new year. The Christian poem deals only with the second coming, and allows no possibility whatever for altering the divine decree. It only allows for this possibility at the Parusia, the second coming. Werner himself recognized that, and saw the Jewish parallel as a moral "advance" on the Christian "parallel." Putting aside all such "moral" judgments, however, it is still unlikely that the two pieces are necessarily related. As Kaminka himself understood, *Dies Irae* seems to be dated about the 12th century and *Un'taneh Tokef* is much older. He therefore had to assume a carryover from the earlier time to the later. Once scholars were confident that the *piyyut* could be dated to some time between the fifth and eighth centuries it all but eliminated the likelihood of

Dies Irae and *Un'taneh Tokef* being two parallel pieces of Church and Synagogue liturgy, respectively.

Nonetheless, Werner seems to have been right about the timing and place of *Un'taneh Tokef's* origin. Romanus was writing in Byzantine Palestine where *Un'taneh Tokef* was composed -- and at roughly the same time. If Romanus lived between the fifth and eighth centuries it is entirely possible that he and the author of *Un'taneh Tokef* were influenced by similar trends, developing literary styles, and historical events.

All the more does that seem probable, since Werner's work has given way to a consensus among scholars that *Un'taneh Tokef* was written in *Eretz Yisrael* between the fifth and eighth centuries also – exactly the era of Romanus. Research has therefore shifted accordingly to an examination of literary styles of the *payytanim* of Palestine during that time. Michael Shashar compares the literary styles of *payytanim* who came before Kallir and the style and language of *piyyutim* written by Kallir and the *payytanim* who followed. The *payytanim* who preceded Kallir were noted for their "simplicity and rhythm, dispensing with external embellishment. This is also the characteristic of the language of *Un'taneh Tokef*."[19] Shashar contrasts this to the much more complicated linguistic construction of Kallir Kallir's poetry is so complicated, Shashar notes, that listeners could at best appreciate their majesty, but not their actual words *Un'taneh Tokef* is not written this way. It is composed of language that "is so simple as to blur the distinction between poetry and *midrashic* prose."[20] For this reason Shashar concludes

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[19] Michael Shashar, *Sambatyon - Essays on Jewish Holidays* (Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organization, 1987), 38.

[20] Shashar, 39.

that *Un'taneh Tokef* was written by one of the pre-Kallir *payytanim* in *Eretz Yisrael* during the Byzantine period. From there, as will be seen in the discussion of the theory of Avraham Frankel, the *piyyut* traveled to the Balkans and Italy, and then, on to Germany and France

Yosef Yahalom is another current scholar who has offered a theory of the history of *Un'taneh Tokef* and whose work has become a major source for those who study this *piyyut*. Yahalom notes that in current *machzorim Un'taneh Tokef* appears at the end of the Kallir *k'dushta, Ufad me'az*. But the two are not always recorded together in *geniza* fragments. Yahalom concludes, therefore, that the *siluk, Un'taneh Tokef,* was written by Yannai, not Kallir. Indeed, in some *geniza* sources, it appears at the end of what seems to be a longer Yannai *k'rova*. Though we now have *geniza* fragments of Yannai's work, only two pieces remain in current use: *Un'taneh Tokef* and *Az rov Nissim* from the traditional Passover *Haggadah*.

Yahalom arrives at his conclusions about authorship by comparing language and style of Yannai and Kallir. Yannai lived in *Eretz Yisrael* and wrote a new *k'rova* for each *Shabbat* of the triennial cycle. Kallir, however, spent much time traveling to different communities and creating new *piyyutim* for each place he visited. This, Yahalom explains, accounts for the difference in the way their works spread and gained popularity -- Kallir's works were known in many different parts of the world and were retained in *siddurim* and *machzorim* in a great number of these communities. He epitomizes the connection to *Eretz Yisrael* of liturgical communities like the Balkans (*nusach Romania*), Italy (*nusach Roma*), France (*nusach Apam*), and Germany/Ashkenaz (*nusach*

Ashkenaz).[21] In all of these traditions *Un'taneh Tokef* is attached to Kallir's *k'dushta* (and also attributed to Rabbi Amnon of Mainz through the well-known myth that will be discussed in the next chapter). But as stated, it is not by Kallir. It was added later, as we shall see.

It is worth noting that Yahalom is one of the first scholars who confidently assigned the authorship of the *Un'taneh Tokef* to Yannai. According to Yahalom, the original *siluk* by Kallir, *Mi lo yira'akha* has recently been reconstructed from fragments from the Cairo *Geniza* by Binyamin Lefler in the context of the Academy of Hebrew Language's historical dictionary[22]. This reconstruction was composed of *geniza* fragments that contain pieces of the original Kallirian *siluk* and selections from 11th-century French *piyyut* commentaries that seemed to have known it. *Mi lo yira'kha* is about the Jewish people as a whole, and the rulers of the world, as opposed to an individual and the consequences of his or her observance of Jewish law and tradition. In this *piyyut*, the angels express anger at God when they hear that God has found the Jewish people innocent on the Day of Judgement; they charge the Jewish people with deserving punishment, and know of no way that individuals can alter God's judgment on the people as a whole. God defends the name of the people of Israel. God proves to the angels that the Jewish people are important by insisting that they are the ones to determine when the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah, will fall because it is the rabbinical court that makes this determination. Yahalom assumes that Kallir wrote this

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[21] Yosef Yahalom, "Un'taneh Tokef Kiddush Hashem," *Haaretz*, September 6, 2002.

[22] Yosef Yahalom, *Piyyut u'M'tziut b'Shalhei Hazman He'atik* (Tel Aviv: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1999), 237.

piyyut during the time of frequent regime change in the land of Israel. It is for this reason that the poem asserts the righteousness of the Jewish people and their behavior in a time of great upheaval. "Someone who personally experienced frequent banishments and deportations [like Kallir] understandably felt great despair because of these calamities."[23]

This historical context is integrally related, according to Yahalom, to how and why Kallir's *siluk* was replaced by Yannai's *Un'taneh Tokef*. During the Crusades of 1096, the Christian crusaders decimated Jewish communities along the Rhine; forcing them to choose to die as martyrs who sanctified God's name rather than die by the hands of the crusaders. At this time, Kallir's poem and its original *siluk* were still part of the tradition of French Jewry, which was quite influential in the eyes of the weakening German Jewish community. Because of this influential relationship, the Jewish community of Ashkenaz was prepared to give up their tradition of reciting *Un'taneh Tokef* in favor of the French tradition. The leaders of the Ashkenazi Jewish community, however, were not prepared to give up the message of *Un'taneh Tokef.* They "wanted to perpetuate the image of punishment and pain associated with the old version of martyrology."[24] They did not want to replace it with a poem that dealt only with the people of Israel as a whole, rather than individuals who actually suffered martyrdom one by one. In order to prevent *Un'taneh Tokef* from disappearing, Yahalom argues that the leaders of the German Jewish community insisted on retaining *Un'taneh Tokef* instead of replacing it with Kallir's original *Mi lo yira'kha*. Yahalom thus traces *Un'taneh Tokef*, a composition originally by Yannai, to the Jewish communities of Ashkenaz where it had

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[23] Yahalom, "Un'taneh Tokef Kiddush Hashem."

[24] Yahalom, "Un'taneh Tokef Kiddush Hashem."

been used for some time, and where it persisted in the face of a threat from France to replace it with Kallir's original *U'fad me'az.*

The German scholar Richard I. Breslauer has also written about the *Un'taneh Tokef* and its potential authors.[25] In his work, Breslauer discusses three leading theories about the authorship of *Un'taneh Tokef* and then offers his own conclusions. The three possibilities that Breslauer discusses are that *Un'taneh Tokef* was written by Kallir, by Yannai, or by another unknown *payytan* (based on fragments found in the *geniza*.) Breslauer begins by citing Ismar Elbogen, who had suggested Kallir as the author of *Un'taneh Tokef*.[26] Breslauer presents segments of Kallir's *k'dushta U'fad me'az* alongside segments of *Un'taneh Tokef* as a way to demonstrate the similarities between the two compositions. Two examples of the comparisons are: *sefarim niftachim* (from *U'fad me'az)* and *v'tiftach et sefer ha-zichronot (*from *Un'taneh Tokef*; and *tzon l'ha'avir bashevet eidecha* (from *U'fad me'az)* and *k'bakarat roeh edro maavir tzono* (from *Un'taneh Tokef).*[27] Breslauer notes the similarities in style, words and phrases, and also the common theme of dealing with the day of judgment. He notes that if Kallir were the

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[25] Richard I. Breslauer, *Weltgericht und Martyrium in der juedischen Neujahrsliturgie* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001).
Unfortunately Brelauer's work is available only in German. My research from this source, then, is a combination of notes taken from conversation with Dr. Hoffman and my own ability to look at the comparisons of Hebrew texts that Breslauer has printed to illustrate his work.

[26] After learning that Breslauer cites Elbogen as the scholar who believes that Kallir was the author of *Un'taneh Tokef*, I returned to Elbogen's work to try to find this citation for my research. I was not able to find any place where Elbogen makes this statement in the current English translated version that was available to me though it is possible that the Hebrew version contained something different.

[27] Breslauer, 58.

original author, it would date *Un'taneh Tokef* to about the seventh century. While there are other examples listed in this short section that compare Kallir's *k'dushta* and *Un'taneh Tokef*, it does not seem that there is enough that is unique about the selections that Breslauer lists to warrant a strong connection between the two. At the end of his chapter, Breslauer notes this same point and concludes that it is not likely that Kallir is the original author.

The next theory that Breslauer discusses is the case that Yahalom makes for Yannai as the original author -- thus dating *Un'taneh Tokef* farther back, to the sixth century. He determines authorship by comparing and finding similarities between *Un'taneh Tokef* and other poems by Yannai. Breslauer points to Yahalom's comparison of a phrase like *v'chol ma'aminim* that appears in *Un'taneh Tokef* and in other Yannai works. He also cites examples in Yahalom's own work of similar phrases between the two such as *[dayyan yoshei] v b'al kisei tzedek melech ya'avir b'mishpat b'oni*" in a *piyyut* by Yannai and *v'yikon b'chesed kisecha v'teisheiv alav* in *Un'taneh Tokef*; and "*ki chol ba'ei ha'olam l'hilech ya'avir k'b'n'maron lifnei melech* in a *piyyut* by Yannai and *v'chol ba'ei olam ya'avrun l'fanecha kivnei-maron*" in *Un'taneh Tokef*.[28] Here Breslauer gives examples of Yahalom's work in finding similarities between the motifs and word selections between Yannai and *Un'taneh Tokef*. At the end of his work, however, Breslauer does not find this argument sufficiently compelling to conclude that Yahalom is correct in citing Yannai as the author.

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[28] Breslauer, 59.

Breslauer next compares the version of *Un'taneh Tokef* that is currently found in traditional *machzorim* with *geniza* fragments taken from *Machzor Eretz Yisrael: A Geniza Codex*.[29] Here, Breslauer focuses on two different *geniza* documents. Both contain versions of fragments of *Un'taneh Tokef* with some noted differences. Breslauer attempts to determine whether or not these comparisons constitute proof that *Un'taneh Tokef* is in fact as old as these documents or whether they are simply similar with respect to common theme and phrase choice.

In the end Breslauer concludes that none of the arguments really hold up. He does not believe that *Un'taneh Tokef* was written by Kallir, by Yannai, or by any other *payytan* who composed pieces that are found in the *geniza*. Instead, Breslauer suggests that *Un'taneh Tokef* may have been composed in the Middle Ages. He suggests that it is at least worth considering that the author was actually writing in Mainz, as the myth suggests, even though the author of *Un'taneh Tokef* did have as his models many old texts. When he wanted to write a martyrology text in Mainz, then, he had models on which to base it. This theory suggests that the myth of Amnon of Mainz pre-dates the *Un'taneh Tokef* as it is known today because it was written to fit that story. Breslauer thus concludes that the *Un'taneh Tokef* in *machzorim* today is not as old as Yannai. Rather, the *Un'taneh Tokef* was composed, edited, and put together by a medieval composer who used older *piyyutim* to create a *piyyut* to serve as the companion piece for the martyr myth of Rabbi Amnon.

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[29] Though I had hoped to be able to study the document that Breslauer uses here and do my own comparison, I was not able to acquire this collection because it seems to be available only in England.

Avraham Frankel has taken a different approach to determining the origin of *Un'taneh Tokef*. Rather than focusing only on which *payytan* composed the *siluk*, Frankel is in search of the historical core of the *piyyut*. He traces what he believes to be the path by which it traveled to the Jewish communities in Europe. He looks at when it became established and well known by examining *machzorim* of the 11th and 12th centuries. Finally he compares *silukim* from different times and places to see how the poets influenced each other.[30]

Frankel begins by noting that *Un'taneh Tokef* is found in *machzorim* in all varieties of the Ashkenazi rite, including *machzor Roma*. Further, in all of these *machzorim*, *Un'taneh Tokef* is combined with Kallir's *k'rova*, *U'fad me'az*. Almost all of the *piyyutim* that were written in *Eretz Yisrael*, like *Un'taneh Tokef*, came to Ashkenaz by way of the Italian Jewish communities (that originally came from Palestine) when they made their eventual move from Italy to Ashkenaz. Most, if not all, of these *piyyutim* were brought to Italy by the 10th or 11th century. Frankel believes that *Un'taneh Tokef* was already joined with Kallir's *U'fad me'az* in Italy, and only then brought to Ashkenaz, since the two appear as if they were one in all of the *nusachim* of Ashkenaz.

Frankel discusses the original *siluk* by Kallir, *Mi lo yira'akha* in detail .[31] He cites Yahalom's work which states that this *siluk* must have been known in France (based on existing French commentaries on it). The original *siluk* had to have been known in

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[30] Avraham Frankel, "D'muto haHistoriat shel R Amnon m'Mainz v'gilgulav shel haPiyyut 'Un'taneh Tokef' b'Italia, b'Ashkenaz, ubTzarfat," *Zion* 67 (2002).

[31] I was not able to obtain a copy of this *siluk* as it has been reconstructed despite efforts to locate it.

France by the 11th century when these commentaries were written. Frankel suggests, then, that in the 12th century, it is likely that both *silukim* were known and that both were accepted. The 11th century was a time when there was still flexibility with respect to what was added or removed in liturgy. As religious leaders discovered ancient *piyyutim* or as *payytanim* visited new communities with their new work, *piyyutim* were added or removed, based on the wishes of the community. Even after this flexibility ceased and *piyyutim* were not added to existing liturgy, manuscripts from Ashkenaz and a few communities in France show that *Un'taneh Tokef* was said on the first and second days of Rosh Hashanah (even though there is no *k'rova* added in the *musaf* service on the second day). The ritual of reciting *Un'taneh Tokef* moved to Poland where it started to be recited on Yom Kippur as well, at the end of a different *k'rova*. But by the 13th century, Kallir's original *siluk* is completely non-existent in Ashkenaz. This suggests that this process of replacement happened in the 11th or 12th centuries. The 13th century in Italy also saw the removal of *piyyutim* from the liturgy in general (during *Shacharit* and *Musaf*) but *Un'taneh Tokef* remained as part of the accepted practice.

Frankel next compares *Un'taneh Tokef* to other *silukim* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in Italy, Ashkenaz and France. He is interested in determining if any conclusions can be drawn about *Un'taneh Tokef*'s arrival in different parts of the world based on the influence it may have had on the *piyyutim* of local *payytanim*. Frankel notes that though there are different themes that are appropriate for *kerovot* written for Rosh Hashanah (describing a Day of Judgement) and Yom Kippur (describing a Day of Atonement), the *silukim* for both holidays were similar, sharing the theme of a person

standing before his Creator in judgment. Frankel shows, based on a comparison of *Un'taneh Tokef* and a work of Kallir, that Kallir probably knew of *Un'taneh Tokef* , but (as we saw) Kallir's work focuses on the judgment of the Jewish people whereas *Un'taneh Tokef* describes a universal trial of individuals, without hinting at all at the special status of the people of Israel.

Frankel also compares *Un'taneh Tokef* with Italian *piyyutim* and observes some similarities in language. One example is of the *piyyutim* of Rabbi Meshullam. Meshullam was active in Italy and in Ashkenaz, although scholars are not sure in which of these two places he spent most of the last quarter of the 10th century. Frankel believes, based on another literary comparison, that Meshullam's Italian *piyyutim* were probably influenced by *Un'taneh Tokef*. As a contrast to this, Frankel explains that the *piyyutim* of the Rabbi Shimon bar Yitzchak, who actually lived in Mainz in the early 11th century, seems not to have been influenced by *Un'taneh Tokef*. Instead, these *piyyutim* seem to have been influenced by the original *siluk* of Kallir. For these reasons Frankel believes that *Un'taneh Tokef* was well known in ancient Italy while Kallir's *siluk U'fad me'az* circulated in Ashkenaz through the beginning of the 11th century. *Un'taneh Tokef* was not absorbed in Ashkenaz until the 11th and 12th centuries and in France it was not until the 12th century that *Un'taneh Tokef* replaced Kallir's original work.

But how did *Un'taneh Tokef* actually reach France, Frankel asks again. It is possible that it came from Italy or from Ashkenaz. As previously noted, until the 11th century the French community still recited Kallir's original *siluk* which had already disappeared from Ashkenaz. If *Un'taneh Tokef* reached France only by the end of the

11th century, it is certainly possible that it came by way of Ashkenaz. In the 11th century, before the Crusades of 1096, French students studied in the *yeshivot* of Ashkenaz. These French students brought *piyyutim* back from Ashkenaz to their home communities in France. This movement continued until the Crusades of 1096. Until this time, French *machzorim* still absorbed *piyyutim* from Ashkenaz. By the 12th century, however, there were no new *piyyutim* brought to France in this manner. In the 12th century the trend reversed and students from Ashkenaz began to travel to France to study with the great teachers there. This impact of historical events on the sharing of liturgy leads Frankel to conclude that *Un'taneh Tokef* traveled from Italy to Ashkenaz, and then to France, before the Crusades of 1096.

Summary and Synthesis

Despite these many compelling theories, there is insufficient information to make a firm determination as to the origin of *Un'taneh Tokef*. It resembles works of Yannai and Kallir, depending on the lines under examination. Yahalom's argument for Yannai is compelling, but Frankel, though not actually supporting a specific author, makes a very persuasive claim also when he suggests that *Un'taneh Tokef* traveled from Italy northward. As *geniza* fragments are uncovered it is looking more and more like there was more than one version of this *piyyut*, or something quite similar. It seems less likely that it was composed to read as it does now in Medieval Ashkenaz as some scholars suggested, but it is certainly possible that it was recorded in its present form at some point much later than when at least one original version of it was composed. *Piyyutim*

and other liturgical texts were frequently transmitted orally, of course. So conclusions regarding authorship and origin need to remain tentative.

Tentatively, then, we can say that *Un'taneh Tokef* was most likely composed in the Land of Israel by a *payytan* sometime between the fifth (probably sixth) and seventh centuries, after which it was passed along orally. This oral transmission would account for the variations in *geniza* fragments. It was certainly written down at least by the time it reached Italy (or Ashkenaz at the latest) because today there is an identical version of the text in *machzorim* all over the world. Frankel's work on the manner in which the *siluk* traveled and the importance of the Italian Jewish community in determining its arrival in Ashkenaz and France is the most compelling theory on the movement of the *piyyut* from *Eretz Yisrael* to the *machzorim* of Ashkenaz and France. Yahalom's explanation of how the *Un'taneh Tokef* came, finally, to replace Kallir's original *siluk* as part of an attempt to frame martyrology is a helpful addition to Frankel's historical path. And regardless of the specific author or path it traveled, it is clear that this *piyyut* made, and continues to make, a significant impact on those who have recited and continue to recite its words all over the world.

Chapter Two: The Legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz

The Story

The story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, the martyr who is said to have first recited the words of *Un'taneh Tokef*, is found in the *halakhic* compilation, *Or Zarua*. *Or Zarua* was written by Isaac ben Moses of Vienna – often called, simply, Isaac Or Zarua – who lived from the late 12th through the middle of the 13th century and was a *halakhic* authority of Germany and France.[32] *Or Zarua* was written in the middle of the 13th century toward the end of Isaac's life. His work follows the order of the Talmud, was considered monumental in its time, and remains an invaluable collection of *halakhic* rulings from medieval France and Germany.

Isaac Or Zarua credits Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn as having delivered the story of Amnon to him. He may have included it because of its responsa-like nature – it explains the reasoning behind the *Un'taneh Tokef*. Alternatively, its inclusion reflects the community's interest in maintaining and celebrating stories of great Jewish martyrs, following the trauma of the great destruction by Crusaders in 1096. In any event, this chapter will present the story as it appears in *Or Zarua* (in the original Hebrew and in translation) along with an exploration of recent scholarship on its history, transmission, and genre classification .

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[32] Havlin, Shlomoh. "Isaac ben Moses of Vienna." Encyclopaedia Judaica. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 10. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 45-46. 22 vols. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale.

מצאתי מכתב ידו של ה"ר אפרים מבונא בר יעקב. שר' אמנון ממגנצא יסד ונתנה תוקף על מקרה הרמצאתי מכתב ידו של ה"ר אפרים מבונא בר יעקב. שר' אמנון ממגנצא יסד ונתנה תוקף על מקרה הרע שאירע לו וז"ל

מעשה בר' אמנון ממגנצא שהיה גדול הדור ועשיר ומיוחס ויפה תואר ויפה מראה. והחלו השרים וההגמון לבקש ממנו שיהפך לדתם וימאן לשמוע להם. ויהי כדברם אליו יום יום ולא שמע להם ויפצר בו ההגמון. ויהי כהיום בהחזיקם עליו ויאמר חפץ אני להועץ ולחשוב על הדבר עד שלשה ימים וכדי לדחותם מעליו.

אמר כן ויהי אך יצוא יצא מאת פני ההגמון שם הדבר ללבו על אשר ככה יצא מפיו לשון ספק שהיה צריך שום עצה ומחשבה לכפור באלהים חיים.

ויבוא אל ביתו ולא אבה לאכול ולשתות ונחלה. ויבואו כל קרוביו ואוהביו לנחמו, וימאן להתנחם. כי אמר ארד אל ניבי אבל שאולה. ויבך ויתעצב אל לבו.

ויהי ביום השלישי בהיותו כואב ודואג וישלח ההגמון אחריו ויאמר לא אלך. ויוסף עוד הצר שלוח שרים רבים ונכבדים מאלה. וימאן ללכת אליו.

ויאמר ההגמון מהרו את אמנון להביאו בעל כרחו. וימהרו ויביאו אותו. ויאמר לו מה זאת אמנון. למה לא באת אלי למועד אשר יעדת לי להועץ ולהשיב לי דבר ולעשות את בקשתי ויען. ויאמר אמנון אני את משפטי. אחרוץ כי הלשון אשר דבר ותכזב לך דינה לחתכה. כי חפץ היה ר' אמנון לקדש את ה' על אשר דבר ככה.

ויען ההגמון ויאמר לא כי הלשון לא אחתוך כי היטב דברה. אלא הרגלים אשר לא באו למועד אשר דברת אלי אקצץ ואת יתר הגוף איסר. ויצו הצורר ויקצצו את פרקי אצבעות ידיו ורגליו ועל כל פרק ופרק היו שואלין לו התחפוץ עוד אמנון להפך לאמונתנו. ויאמר לא.

ויהי ככלותם לקצץ צוה הרשע להשכיב את ר' אמנון במגן אחד וכל פרקי אצבעותיו בצידו. וישלחהו לביתו. הכי נקרא שמו ר' אמנון כי האמין באל חי וסבל על אמונתו יסורין קשין מאהבה רק על הדבר שיצא מפיו.

אחר הדברים האלו קרב מועד והגיע ר"ה. בקש מקרוביו לשאת אותו לבית הכנסת עם כל פרקי אצבעותיו המלוחים ולהשכיבו אצל ש"צ. ויעשו כן. ויהי כאשר הגיע ש"צ לומר הקדושה וחיות אשר הנה א"ל ר' אמנון אמתן מעט ואקדש את השם הגדול. ויען בקול רם ובכן לך תעלה קדושה כלומר שקדשתי את שמך על מלכותך ויחודך. ואח"כ אמר ונתנה תוקף קדושת היום. ואמר אמת כי אתה דיין ומוכיח כדי להצדיק עליו את הדין שיעלו לפניו אותן פרקי ידיו ורגליו. וכן כל הענין והזכיר וחותם יד כל אדם בו ותפקוד נפש כל חי שכך נגזר עליו בר"ה. וכשגמר כל הסילוק נסתלק ונעלם מן העולם לעין כל ואיננו כי לקח אותו אלהים. ועליו נאמר מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך וגו'.

אחר הדברים והאמת אשר הועלה ר' אמנון ונתבקש בישיבה של מעלה ביום השלישי לטהרתו נראה במראות הלילה לרבנא קלונימוס בן רבנא משולם בן רבנא קלונימוס בן רבנא משה בן רבנא קלונימוס ולימד לו את הפיוט ההוא ונתנה תוקף קדושת היום. ויצו עליו לשלוח אותו בכל התפוצות הגולה להיות לו עד וזכרון ויעש הגאון כן:

Sefer Or Zarua, Hilchot Rosh Hashanah, Section 276

I found a manuscript by Rabbi Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn, that Rabbi Amnon of Mainz composed "*Un'taneh Tokef*" after the evil event which happened to him. And these are his words.

A story about Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, who was one of the great men of his generation, and rich, and of good family, and handsome, and well formed. The lords and the archbishop demanded that he convert to their religion, and he refused to listen to them. And it came to pass that they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, yet the archbishop himself was urging him. One day, as they intensified their words, he said to them, "I wish to take counsel and to think about the matter for another three days." He said this to put them off.

And it came to pass that the moment he had left the presence of the archbishop he took it to heart that he had allowed a word of doubt to leave his lips, as though he needed to take counsel and thought to deny the living God.

So he went home, and would neither eat nor drink, and he became sick. And all his near ones and loved ones came to console him, but he refused to be consoled. For he said, "I will go down to Sheol mourning." And he wept, and was sad at heart.

And it came to pass on the third day, while he was in pain and was worried, that the archbishop sent for him. And he said, "I will not go." And his oppressor continued to send many additional ministers of superior status. But Rabbi Amnon still refused to go to the archbishop.

Then the archbishop said, “Hurry and bring Amnon against his will.” So they hurried and brought him. And he said to him, “What is this, Amnon? Why have you not come to me at the appointed time you set for yourself in which to take counsel and to give me an answer?” And Amnon answered and said, “I shall pronounce my own sentence. Let the tongue that spoke and lied to you be cut out.” For Rabbi Amnon wanted to sanctify the name of God for having spoken this way.

Then the archbishop replied and said, “No, the tongue I shall not cut out, for it spoke well. But the feet that did not come to me at the time you set I shall lop off, and the rest of the body I shall punish.” The oppressor gave the order and they cut off the fingers of Rabbi Amnon’s hands and his feet. And at every joint they asked him, “Will you be converted, Amnon, to our faith?” And he said, “No.”

And it came to pass when they had finished cutting off [his limbs], that the wicked man ordered that Rabbi Amnon be laid on a shield with all his fingers at his side. And he sent him home. Thus he was rightly called Rabbi Amnon, for he had faith in the living God and lovingly suffered severe afflictions for his faith, simply because of one word he had spoken.

After these events, the Days of Awe approached, and Rosh HaShanah arrived. He asked his relatives to carry him to the House of Prayer with all of the pieces of his limbs, and to place him near the *Shaliach Tzibur*. They did so. And it came to pass, when the *Shaliach Tzibur* came to recite the *Kedushah*, that Rabbi Amnon said to him, “Wait, and I shall sanctify the great Name of God.” And he recited in a loud voice, *Uv’chein l’cha ta’aleh kedushah,* “And therefore let the Sanctification ascend to you,” that is to say, I

have sanctified your Name for the sake of your Kingdom and your Unity. And afterword he said, *Un'taneh tokef kedushat hayom,* "And let us acknowledge the power of this day's holiness." And he said, *Emet ki Atah dayan u'mokhiach,* "Truly You are Judge and Prosecutor," in order to justify the verdict, that those same fingers of his hands and his feet might rise before God. And he said, *V'chotam yad kol adam bo, "*And every man's seal is on it..." *v'tifkod nefesh kol chai* "and You remember the soul of every living thing," for this had been decreed for him on Rosh Hashanah. When he ended the *siluk* his own end came, and he vanished from the world before the eyes of all, for God had taken him. Of him it is said (Ps. 31:20): "How abundant is Your goodness, that you have in store for those who fear You."

After Rabbi Amnon's true words and his ascent to the Academy on High, on the third day after his death, he appeared in a dream [night vision] to Rabbi Kalonymos ben Rabbi Meshullam ben Rabbi Kolonymos ben Rabbi Moshe ben Rabbi Kalonymos and taught him the *piyyut* beginning, "*Un'taneh tokef kedushat hayom*." And he commanded him to send it to all the Diaspora, to be a memorial to him. And the great rabbi did so.

Discussion of the Story through the Use of Biblical and Rabbinic Texts

This legend claims to be a foundation story for *Un'taneh Tokef* told to Isaac Or Zarua by Ephraim of Bonn. This chapter will explore the validity of this claim of authorship and the history and origin of this story. But it is important, first, to look at the actual composition of the text of the story. As with *Un'taneh Tokef*, the story of Rabbi

Amnon too contains phrases that are either direct quotations or clear references to biblical and *midrashic* passages.[33]

At the very beginning, Amnon is described as *Y'feh to'ar v'yafeh mareh.* -- the Bible's description of Joseph, just before Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce him (Genesis 39:6). Additionally, the verb , *va'y'ma'ein,* which describes Amnon's refusal to convert, comes from Joseph's refusal to lie with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:8).[34] For the reader who is familiar with this biblical verse, this quotation not only portrays Rabbi Amnon as a very good looking man, but it also indirectly implies his faith in God and the commitment to the Jewish people that Joseph represented in the Torah. Amnon, like Joseph, is a *tsaddik,* who, however, falls short of Joseph's stature: Joseph remained firm from the outset; Amnon implied to his interlocutor that he might convert to Christianity at the end of three days. When describing the daily visits by the archbishop to convert Amnon, this text reads *vayehi k'd'varam eilav yom yom v'lo shama lahem.* In Esther 3:4 a similar phrase is used to describe Mordechai's refusal to bow down to Haman. There the text reads *vayehi k'amram eilav yom yom v'lo shama aleihem*. Though the words are not exactly the same, they are close enough to suggest that the author of the story of Rabbi Amnon recalls the heroic acts of Mordecai and his refusal to prostrate himself before the wicked Haman as a parallel to Rabbi Amnon's initial refusal to consider

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[33] Some of these references come from: Michael Shashar, *Sambatyon - Essays on Jewish Holidays* (Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organization, 1987), 32.

[34] Ivan G. Marcus, "A Pious Community and Doubt: Qiddush Hashem in Ashkenaz and the Story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz," in *Studien zur Judischen Geschichte und Soziologie: Festschrift Julius Carlebach* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverlag, 1992), 107.

converting to the evil archbishop's faith, Christianity. But again, Amnon falls short of Mordecai too; and he will have to be punished for it.

The next biblical reference comes in the form of Amnon's statement that he believed he would descend to Sheol mourning for the sin he committed of suggesting that he might think about converting. Here the story reads, *ki amar ereid al nivi avel Sheol'ah.* The patriarch Jacob says something similar. When he hears from his sons that Joseph has been killed (Genesis 37:35). Jacob says, *Ki ereid el b'ni avel Sheol'ah.* Amnon's almost identical statement alludes to the deep pain that Jacob felt when he believed that he had lost his favorite son – as if Amnon is both Joseph and Jacob, simultaneously. As Joseph, he is the tortured *tzaddik*; as Jacob, he mourns his own passing. Shortly after this, the story reads, *vayehi v'yom hashlishi bihyoto ko'ev*. Here, the third day has come and Amnon is described as being in pain because of what he had said to the Archbishop. A very similar phrase is used to describe the men of Shechem after they were circumcised by Jacob's sons because of Dinah's relations with Shechem (Genesis 34:25). Here the Genesis text reads, *vayehi v'ayom hashlishi bihyotam koavim.* This verse recalls the weakened state of the Shechem and the other men who were circumcised just before Jacob's sons came to plunder the town, kill all of the men, and take as booty their wealth, women and children. Perhaps this biblical verse was referenced to indicate Amnon's severely weakened state as a result of what he believed to have been his sin, and to compare actions of Jacob's sons with the archbishop's command to have Amnon's limbs cut off when he was defenseless. One final biblical reference is found in the manner in which Amnon disappeared before the eyes of those in the

synagogue. To describe Amnon's ascent it is written, *v'ainenu ki lakach oto elohim.*" This is the exact same phrase used in Genesis 5:24 to describe Chanoch. In a list of family lineage and ages of death, of Chanoch it simply says that he walked with God and that he was no more for God took him, *v'ainenu ki lakach oto elohim.* This reference underscores the certainty that despite Amnon's fear of having sinned terribly, he was a faithful man and was one who walked with God and whom God chose to take.

It is also important to note that Amnon's torture is reminiscent of the story of the ten martyrs who, similarly, were summoned by the Roman Emperor, told to convert, and who also asked for three days to consider the demand. In both stories, the consequence for refusing to convert was dismemberment. Additionally, though there is a general significance to the repeated use of the number three in this story and in rabbinic literature, Amnon's appearance to Rabbi Kalonymos in a dream on the third day after his death does recall the language of *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah* 100:7. This *midrash* teaches that "until three days [after death] the soul keeps returning to the grave, thinking that it will go back [into the body.]" The *midrash* also notes that the third day after a death is the height of the mourning period for those who are in mourning. It is possible that this *midrash* is alluded to as a way to indicate Rabbi Kalonymos' state of mourning. This may be a reason he was open to the soul of Rabbi Amnon visiting him in a dream with instructions about how to sustain his legacy.

Our story is clearly steeped in the language of Jewish text. Although ostensibly about a particular rabbi from Mainz, it has been described by many scholars as a pastiche of many folkloristic accounts about idealized saints, all referred back to biblical language

of the past. Scholars have also investigated the connection between this story line and *Un'taneh Tokef,* to understand whether the two were always connected or whether this was a later addition intended to validate and provide a foundation myth for a *piyyut* that did not follow the original Kallirian set of *k'rovah* verses and seemed, therefore, somewhat out of place. In order to understand the significance of this story in its current form, it is worthwhile to investigate its potential origin and the way it came to be known in this very well known version.

Related Historical Chroniclers: Ephraim of Bonn and Ahimaaz ben Paltiel of Oria

In order to understand the relevant scholarship about the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz it is first necessary to be familiar with the major historical figures involved and with their related literary works. The Rabbi Amnon of Mainz who appears in this story does not seem to be such a figure himself. Though some scholars have speculated about the possibility that he was, no Rabbi Amnon of Mainz actually appears in our historical record

Isaac Or Zarua says he got the story from Ephraim of Bonn, however, and both Isaac and Ephraim are indeed well known historical personalities.. Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn was a 12th century *paytan* and commentator, who spent time in Mainz and in Speyer. He appears to have died at the very end of the 12th century, after writing *Sefer Zekhirah*, "The Book of Remembrance." He also wrote dirges on Jewish suffering during the Second Crusade, various *piyyutim* for the festivals, and a commentary on early liturgical poetry which provides traditional details about their authors -- the famous

legend about the *paytan* Yannai killing his student, Kallir by putting a scorpion in his shoe, for example (see Chapter 2).[35]

Robert Chazan has written extensively about Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn and the way he organizes his work.[36] Chazan is interested in what such organization might suggest about the reliability of Ephraim's commentary for the period of the Crusades..

Ephraim organizes his chronicle not by chronology alone but also by type of Jewish suffering, and intersperses his accounts with biblical quotations and contextualizing references from the Bible. [37] He may have been the first chronicler to create a "collection of disparate materials reflecting incidents from diverse times and places, with the unifying theme being the persecution inflicted upon a set of Jewish communities."[38] For this reason Chazan argues that Ephraim was ahead of his time as a 12th-century chronicler who anticipated the 16th century interest in collecting persecution histories. But his work is not necessarily reliable for obtaining data about medieval Jewish life.

This aspect of Chazan's conclusion is relevant to the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz because it suggests that Ephraim of Bonn, the source for the legend, chronicled

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[35] Habermann, Abraham. "Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 6. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 460. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale. HEBREW UNION COLLEGE. 9 Oct. 2009.

[36] Robert Chazan, "Ephraim ben Jacob's Compilation of Twelfth-Century Persecutions," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 84, no. 4 (April 1994)
Robert Chazan, "Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn's Sefer Zechirah," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 132 (1974).

[37] Chazan, "Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn's Sefer Zechirah," 405-406.

[38] Chazan, "Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn's Sefer Zechirah," 415.

what he believed to be important but not always in a way that was historically accurate. This supports most of the findings about the historical inaccuracy of the story as it appears in *Or Zarua*.

Another medieval composition that is relevant to this study is *Megilat Ahimaaz,* "The Chronicle of Ahimaaz,"an eleventh-century Italian work that has kernels of the legend of Amnon of Mainz. It was written by Ahimaaz ben Paltiel of Oria as a blend of genealogy, historical accounting, and magical tales. Ahimaaz makes little attempt to distinguish between legend and history. Like the work of Ephraim of Bonn, this chronicle is important not because it is historically perfect (or even remotely accurate) but because it exemplifies work produced in the Byzantine Empire from the middle of the 9th through the 11th centuries. Until this chronicle was found, little was known about or recovered from this time and place. Further, this chronicle is a beautiful and coherent piece of literature.[39] It is interspersed with sections that rhyme poetically -- not surprising, since Ahimaaz is a *paytan* and since the work also adopts some of the influences of Arabic literature.

Megillat Ahimaaz is important for this study because of one of the short stories that is narrated within it. Ahimaaz writes about a man by the name of Theophilus (which means "friend of God," or "beloved of God," in Greek).[40] Theophilus is introduced as someone who committed adultery and idolatry, and was subsequently condemned to

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[39] Marcus Salzman, trans., *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* (New York: Columbia UP, 1924), 2, 6.

[40] Theophilus is also the honorary title given to the person to whom The Gospel of Luke and Acts is addressed.

severe punishments. After shifting to tales of others and their adventures, the Chronicle returns to Theophilus, saying he was actually condemned to death. When Theophilus is brought out to be executed, the governor tells him that he can live if he agrees to convert to Christianity. Theophilus agrees but, upon questioning him, the governor realizes that Theopoilus has lied and that he is still loyal to Judaism. As punishment, the governor strikes Theophilus and cuts off his hands and his feet and throws him into prison. While in prison, Theophilus is fed by another lowly Jew and on Yom Kippur tells this man he would like to offer his daughter to him for marriage. Once married this man returns to prison to see Theophilus who is described as having vanished from the prison. He could not be found there alive or dead, because "God had taken him."[41] The obvious similarities to the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz will be addressed shortly.

Theories on History/Origin and Transmission of the Story

Some scholars believe that the source for the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz is originally Christian. Many of the biblical quotations and references come from shared Jewish and Christian biblical sources in this story -- just as they did with *Un'taneh Tokef* itself. Michael Shashar suggests that the legend is taken, at least partially, from the story about the Christian Saint Emmeran of Regensburg. He was accused of seducing a Duke's wife and, as punishment, was tied to a ladder and his limbs were cut off. Later he was brought to Escheim Palace where he died as he prayed and blessed those who amputated his limbs and killed him (inspired by Matthew 5:44). On the third day after the saint's

[41] Salzman, 80-81.

death he appeared in a dream to his students and ordered them to take his body and place it under another body.[42]

Shashar suggests that the link between these stories is the name. The name Emmeran was changed to Amram and then again into Amnon (a name derived from *ne'eman,* "faithful"). Shashar supports his theory by noting the shared historical backdrop of the period of the Crusades in the 10th and 11th centuries. The basic story line was adapted to a Jewish context in order to strengthen faith in terrible times and also to glorify the Jewish martyrs who were dying at the hands of the Crusaders rather than converting to Christianity. Shashar suggests that *Un'taneh Tokef* was later attached to this myth because its content was also meaningful for those resisting conversion. "The poem *Un'taneh Tokef,* which ends with the appeal directed to God to 'sanctify Your name through those sanctifying Your name,' was particularly applicable to those Jews who refused forced conversion, choosing to die a martyr's death and sanctify the name of God."[43]

Shashar also points out important similarities between the way that Amnon is tortured (by having his limbs cut off) and the way the Ten Martyrs of the Talmud are described as having been tortured by having individual body parts removed until each person was dead.[44] Shashar concludes by raising the question that many scholars address regarding the manner in which the legend and the *piyyut* came to be tied together and how the myth actually reached Ephraim of Bonn. Ephraim found a legend that was

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[42] Shashar, 33-33.

[43] Shashar, 33

[44] Shashar, 35.

prevalent in his time, then connected it with *Un'taneh Tokef*, and changed the name of the protagonist to Rabbi Amnon out of an "urgent need to extol the Jewish martyrs of his time and to provide a balm for the members of his community suffering from the persecutions of Christianity."[45]

Yosef Yahalom shares some of Shashar's speculations that the legend of Rabbi Amnon was adapted from an original Christian source. Yahalom suggests that the Jewish community leaders in Ashkenaz made a choice to retain *Un'taneh Tokef* and to enshrine the story of Rabbi Amnon in order to sanctify its importance. The details of severing fingers and toes were, Yahalom suggests, adapted from descriptions of the Day of Judgment in early *piyyutim*, even though these tales can also be found in relation to Christian martyrs as well. Both Shashar and Yahalom agree that the legend that Isaac Or Zarua claims to have received from Ephraim of Bonn has much older, possibly Christian sources, and that these were adapted to speak meaningfully to the medieval Jewish community in its own time of persecution and destruction.

Lucia Raspe is a German scholar who has written extensively about this legend and about the folk heroes of the stories of medieval Jewish communities of Ashkenaz in general.[46] Raspe represents the school of thought that disputes the originality of the legend as found in *Or Zarua*. She writes about the similarities between the story of Amnon of Mainz and the stories of Theophilos contained in *Megillat Ahimaaz*. Even

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[45] Shashar, 40.

[46] Raspe, Lucia. "Ein legendärer Sänger: Amnon von Mainz." *Kalonymos* 6, no. 4 (2003): 1-5.
Available only in German. I am grateful to my cousin, Gesa Niggemann, for her translation of this article so that I was able to use it in my thesis research.

though *Megillat Ahimaaz*, which was recorded in the 11th century in Italy, was not known to Jews further north in Germany, the parallels between these two stories make apparent that oral narration made its way from Italy to Ahskenaz.

Raspe notes important content and style similarities between the legend of Amnon of Mainz and the stories of Theophilos in *Megilat Ahimaaz*. In both stories, there is a local ruler who wants a Jewish person to convert. This leader is deceived by the Jew who is then subjected to horrible torture. Both stories end with the mysterious disappearance of the subject as a symbol of God's forgiveness.

Another important similarity, Raspe notes, is the way in which the stories are stitched together. Both seem to have rather unconnected pieces. In *Megillat Ahimaaz*, Theophilos' initial appearance revolves around his crime and his sentence. Later in the narrative he reappears, is tortured and jailed, refuses conversion, and rectifies his life by betrothing his daughter to a fellow prisoner and new friend. Eventually he is described as being taken away by God. Raspe notes that this second section seems almost independent of the first, only loosely connected to the original narrative through a shared name and reference to conversion.

This sense of disconnection is not unlike the story of Amnon of Mainz in the section following his torture when it transitions to "After these events, the Days of Awe approached, and Rosh Hashanah arrived." This part of the story, when Amnon is brought to synagogue with all of his body parts, seems disconnected from the first part of the narrative in which Amnon refuses conversion and is tortured. To explain this occurrence in both stories, Raspe suggests that "an oral narration over generations [that] describes

the revoking of the agreement to convert, the cruel sentence imposed by the Christian ruler, as well as the forgiveness by God, was inserted into each story line independently when the respective legends were put in writing."[47]

Raspe has described the similarities in the two stories as examples of the manner in which oral narratives were passed from place to place and eventually recorded. It is not coincidental, for example, that the Archbishop cuts off Amnon's hands and feet and that Amnon requests that his limbs be taken with him to synagogue. Amnon knew that God would read the Book of Life on the Day of Judgement. According to tradition, individuals are identified to God by their hands, as it says in *Un'taneh Tokef* itself, *v'choteim yad v'chol adam bo* "and the seal of the hand of man is within." And so Amnon brought his dismembered limbs by which he was to be recognized. This is just one example of an oral legend written such that it explains the origin or creation of liturgy. The sophisticated linguistic nature of a *piyyut* has always made it necessary to have an accompanying literary commentary, Raspe suggests. "There are many reasons to believe that the genre of *piyyut* commentary offered the first opportunity to indigenize oral history and as such assured the survival of such history."[48]

Kenneth Stowe's discussion of medieval chronicles adds another dimension to the connections between the story of Amnon, the High Holy Days, and *Megillat Ahimaaz*.[49]

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[47] Raspe, Lucia. "Ein legendärer Sänger: Amnon von Mainz." *Kalonymos* 6, no. 4 (2003): 1-5.(Translated by Gesa Niggemann)

[48] Raspe, Lucia. "Ein legendärer Sänger: Amnon von Mainz." *Kalonymos* 6, no. 4 (2003): 1-5.(Translated by Gesa Niggemann)

[49] Kenneth R. Stowe, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), 88.

Stowe looks at the story of Theophilos and suggests that Theophilos' actions are the connection between the story and the use of *teshuvah, tefilah,* and *tsedakah* in *Un'taneh Tokef*. According to this reading, Theophilos, who repents after he forgoes conversion, suffers physical pain and life in prison, before offering his daughter to a devoted Jewish servant on the eve of Yom Kippur. Stowe suggests that this might be an initial model of repentance, prayer and charity brought from the Italian Jewish community to the Jewish communities of Ashkenaz

What about the historical elements of the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz? Though these stories do have references to actual historical events, these references only provide the context of the myth, Raspe says. It does not diminish the power of these legends to accept that they may not have happened in the actual historical context described. Raspe concludes, as have most other scholars, that the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz did not come originally from Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn. Ephraim, however, is credited for providing this text to Isaac Or Zarua since at least the 13th century. It certainly may have been an effort by the Kalonymos family (of which Ephraim of Bonn is a member) to connect five generations of community leaders and a famous family name with the glory that has come to be associated with the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz.

Avraham Frankel, like Lucia Raspe, is also interested in determining what historical testimonies can be gleaned from the story and which of these can be declared historical or true.[50] At the outset of his discussion, Frankel sees no reason to doubt Isaac

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[50] Frankel, Avraham. "D'muto Hahistoriah shel R Amnon Mimainz V'gilgulav shel Hapiyyut 'Un'taneh Tokef' B'italia, B'ashkenaz, Uv'tzorfat." *Zion* 67 (2002): 126-38.

Or Zarua's testimony that he actually saw this story written down by Ephraim of Bonn. It is likely also that Ephraim of Bonn probably was the first person to write the story down the way it was preserved in *Or Zaru*a,[51] but the legend and the *piyyut* were already connected when Ephraim of Bonn received or heard the story. Four particular statements in the legend merit discussion as evidence of the tale's historical veracity.

The first is the statement that there was once actually a sage by the name of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. Amnon was a well-known Italian Jewish name -- there was, in fact, more than one important Rabbi Amnon in Italian Jewish history. Though at least one of these Rabbi Amnons was connected with *paytanim*, all of them lived far too early to have been the one recorded in the tale in *Or Zarua*. The name Amnon was part of a group of Hebrew names that Italian Jews liked to give to their sons. The name was not as well known in Ashkenaz at this time, and Ahkenazi Jews did not like giving their children names that could have any negative connotations. In the Bible Amnon is King David's oldest son. Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar, and was later killed by his half brother, Absalom, who was avenging his sister's rape. (2 Samuel 13) This explains why Ephraim went out of his way, in his description of Amnon to explain this name saying, "for he had faith in the living God and lovingly suffered severe afflictions for his faith." There probably was a sage whose name was Rabbi Amnon in Mainz but he was most likely from Italy, or at least of direct Italian origin. This Rabbi Amnon might have been among those who moved to Ashkenaz from Italy in the 10th century, alongside the Kalonymides.

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[51] Frankel, 132.

The second historical testimony that Frankel addresses is that Rabbi Amnon composed the *piyyut, Un'taneh Tokef,* and recited it in synagogue during a Rosh Hashanah *Musaf* service. Frankel wishes to know whether it was Isaac Or Zarua or Ephraim who attributed *Un'taneh Tokef* to Amnon. By way of introducing what he is copying from Ephraim, *Or Zarua* uses the phrase *v'zeh l'shono* "and these are his words" (the equivalent of what we mean, when we say, "Quote...") indicating that Ephraim himself attributed the composition to Amnon, and Isaac wanted to draw the reader's attention to this attribution lest readers think he was making it up. Other clues in the tale indicate that Ephraim believed Amnon wrote the *piyyut* as a comment on the evil event that had happened to him; Ephraim had "heard" through the oral tradition that this was so. But it has already been established that this *piyyut*, at least in some form, is ancient, so it is not possible that Amnon composed it. Further, in one of his *piyyut* commentaries, Ephraim himself acknowledges that this *siluk* is not the correct conclusion to the Kallir *k'rova* because it is not the one that Kallir composed. This evidence supports Frankel's previous claim (see Chapter 2) that *Un'taneh Tokef* was not accepted

in its current place in the service in Ashkenaz until at least the 11th century.[52] If *Un'taneh Tokef* was not known in Ashkenaz at the time, the Amnon in question must have been from Italy where this *piyyut* was already accepted. Further, if *Un'taneh Tokef* was brought to Mainz by people like Rabbi Amnon but was still unknown to most at the time he recited it, it is understandable that those hearing it for the first time would have mistakenly attributed it to him.

The third testimony Frankel examines is that, while reciting the *piyyut*, Rabbi Amnon explained its meaning and title in a way that connected them with his own personal experience of desiring to sanctify God's name. Frankel suggests that Amnon's personal story and its connection with the *piyyut* and the Jewish imperative to sanctify God's name had an important impact on Ashkenazi Jews of the 12th century. This importance actually emerged after the fact, -- just one of the many instances in which the meaning of *piyyutim* changed with the times. It is even possible, Frankel writes, that the explicit connections established in the story were not in the original versions of the story but were added by those who used the *piyyut* and the story to help make sense of their

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[52] Frankel also provides an explanation for those who wondered about the placement of the *siluk* in the service in the story. Some scholars have wondered if the *Sh'liach Tzibbur* would already have recited another *siluk*, since he was just about to begin the *K'dushah*, and therefore if Rabbi Amnon would have been adding an unnecessary piece of liturgy. But Frankel notes that other manuscripts support a reading that Amnon actually interrupted the *Sh'liach Tzibbur* just before he recited the *siluk*, so that *Un'taneh Tokef* was not the second one recited that morning. Even more interestingly, Frankel claims that other manuscripts indicate that the *Sh'liach Tzibbur* was about to recite the original Kallir *siluk*, *Mi lo yira'cha* and that by the time the text of *Or Zarua* was copied, this *siluk* was unknown, so the copier omitted this information from the reproduction. This all comes together to support Frankel's theories from Chapter 2 that *Un'taneh Tokef* slowly replaced the original Kallir *siluk* until it had completely taken its place. (Frankel, 134-135)

own life experiences. To support this, Frankel cites other *piyyut* commentary written by Ephraim that offers a different explanation of *Un'taneh Tokef*. Does the existence of this other commentary mean that Ephraim was the one to add the personal commentary or that Ephraim received the story with this commentary already in place? Looking again to other *piyyut* commentary written by Ephraim, Frankel notes that this commentator generally rejected personalized commentary if it did not come from a clear, strong tradition. For this reason it must have been that the personal connections were already in place in the story when Ephraim received it because this is the only way he would have seen it as sufficiently authentic to repeat.

The fourth and final historical event that Frankel sets out to explain is the dream of Rabbi Kalonymos. In this dream, Rabbi Kalonymos was instructed by Amnon to spread the *piyyut* throughout the Diaspora. Perhaps, then, Amnon was Rabbi Kalonymos' teacher. This provides a third connection to the history of the Jewish communities from Italy. Rabbi Kalonymos was a member of the Kalonymide family that moved from Lucca to Mainz in the 10th century. His father, Meshullam, was an important community leader in both of these centers of Jewish life. Because of his Italian background, Kalonymos, the son, probably already knew *Un'taneh Tokef*. The Kalonymos family was known generally to have been involved in the movement of *piyyutim* from place to place. There were important *paytanim* in their family and among the *piyyutim* they brought with them from Italy were many that originated in *Eretz Yisrael*. When the story states that the *piyyut* was spread to all of the Diaspora, it

probably means that it was known in all of these places (from Italy to Ashkenaz and then to France) by the 12th century.

Frankel concludes that the story gives *Un'taneh Tokef* a *hailoh shel kedushah*, "a holy halo,"[53] which helped to establish it in place of the original Kallir *siluk*. The role of the Italian Jewish community is clearly central to Frankel's understanding. There are three essential facts that connect back to Italy here. The first is that the *piyyut* came to Ashkenaz from Italy. The second is that the name Amnon indicates an Italian sage. The third is that Kalonymos bar Meshullam played an important role in the dispersion of the *piyyut*. Because of the importance of Italy as the foundational location for the *piyyut*, it is likely that the story and the *piyyut* were connected there -- already linked when they came up from Italy in the 11th century, well before the Crusades of 1096, and certainly before Ephraim of Bonn who lived in the middle and end of the 12th.

Frankel offers another possibility for the way the two pieces were transmitted. He suggests that the first part of the story might have existed in Italy but that the second part, which begins with Amnon's recitation of the *piyyut* and ends with Kalonymos' spread of it, was added when it arrived in Ashkenaz as a way to accelerate the acceptance of the less well-known *Un'taneh Tokef*. Frankel determines that the details of the story, including the spread of the *piyyut*, are more ancient than Ephraim and were probably told together by the beginning of the 11th century in Italy. Either way it is important to acknowledge that the story of Rabbi Amnon did contribute to the spread of *Un'taneh Tokef* and the process by which it replaced the Kallirian *siluk*. The actual enduring

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[53] Frankel, 136.

significance of this story was not attributed to it until after it was recorded -- as a result of the Crusades of 1096 and the persecutions that continued into the 12th century, when the Jews of Ashkenaz were searching for meaning and heroes in their tradition and in their liturgy.

Determining the Literary Context of the Story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz

In addition to the scholarly work done to determine the transmission and history of this legend, scholars such as Ivan Marcus and Lucia Raspe have attempted to determine its literary context as part of a greater effort to understand the impact of this story on the larger cannon of the Jewish folklore tradition. Marcus, like Raspe, suggests that the story of Amnon of Mainz combines several historical memories but Marcus' compilation consists of different pieces. The first and earliest layer is the existence of the *Un'taneh Tokef*. The second layer is from the southern Italian tradition from Shabbetai Donnolo's introduction to his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* that refers to ten hasidim who were martyred in Oria (southern Italy), among whom one is named Rabbi Amnon. These two pieces were later combined with the *midrash* of the Ten Martyrs in which Rabbi Ishmael asks the Emperor for three days to see if it is God's will that they be killed. The final piece is the German Jewish collective memory from 1096, in which Rabbi Kalonymos of Mainz is recalled as asking for time to think about a bishop's ultimatum that he either convert or die.[54] Though Marcus does outline these different

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[54] Ivan G. Marcus, "A Pious Community and Doubt: Qiddush Hashem in Ashkenaz and the Story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz," in *Studien zur Juedischen Geschichte und Soziologie: Festschrift Julius Carlebach* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverlag, 1992), 111.

layers of the story, he is more interested in the role of the Amnon legend in the larger tradition of martyr stories, and how it represents a distinct change in the message and content of these narratives.

Marcus begins by explaining that the Jewish community of Ashkenaz saw itself as pious, that it valued old traditions, and that it had a deep regard for stories about how Jewish communities and families acted in the face of crisis. The theme of martyrdom binds all of these themes together.[55] Marcus contends, as Frankel so thoroughly illustrated, that the roots of many of these important themes do not originate in Ashkenaz but that they arrive as the Jewish community moves from southern Italy and brings with them these Italian traditions along with the ancient Palestinian traditions of piety.

Marcus' interest in the Amnon narrative lies in what he sees as this legend's departure from most of the martyr narratives that precede it. This is the first story in which a Jewish person is depicted as hesitating to sanctify God's name by death or suicide. Amnon feels guilty for having hesitated.[56] This focus on Amnon's doubt is a turning point in the story and offers a new window into the collective mentality of the Jewish community of Ashkenaz in the late 12th century. This depiction offers a more complex social and cultural picture and it is for this reason that the narrative of Amnon

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[55] Though this is not the focus of this part of the chapter, it is worthwhile to point out that Marcus also notes that the martyr myths that help to tie these three themes together are also often linked to liturgical innovation. "As a result, when we trace at the themes of Ashkenazic cultural self assertion as pious we are at the same time illustrating selected types of customs that became part of the liturgy and sometimes also part of the legal literature when these custom collided with well established *halakhic* norms." (Marcus, 98) This is an interesting note as the connection between the legend of Amnon of Mainz and the *Un'taneh Tokef* is explored.

[56] Marcus, 106.

should not simply be dismissed as merely a legend. In this story there is a deep truth about what many individuals were most likely experiencing.

Marcus sees another departure from previous martyr narratives in the way in which the story is placed "in the literary framework of the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife."[57] The biblical references discussed in the beginning of this chapter indicate that there are many allusions to the Joseph narrative in the story of Rabbi Amnon. This is a story that focuses on a rabbinic leader who is confronted by a non-Jewish authority. Here, one man comes to represent an entire generation (as can be understood from the fact that Amnon is referred to as a *gadol hador* / a great man of his generation). Amnon asks for three days to consider the Archbishop's demand. Marcus suggests that this should be read as a hesitation and can be contrasted directly with Joseph's immediate refusal (since the same word is used) of Potiphar's wife's seductive offer. Amnon's name means "faithful" but he believes that he has been faithless with respect to his behavior with the Archbishop. Amnon's flirtation with Christianity is likened to Joseph's resistance to Potiphar's wife's adulterous flirtation with Joseph. Conversion to Christianity is tantamount to adultery.

Marcus sees no inherent relationship between the legend and the *Un'taneh Tokef*. The poem, is much older, from *Eretz Yisrael*. This means that Amnon is simply reciting something he already knew. But Marcus does suggest that there is an innovative connection made here between Amnon and the *piyyut* in the form of a *piyyut* commentary which Amnon enacts with his words and his actions. "There is more than a play on

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[57] Marcus, 107.

words here. The *kedusha* refers to the congregation's sanctifying God's Name in the synagogue by reciting the prayers. Amnon is described as sanctifying God's Name by reciting *Un'taneh Tokef* in the synagogue just before the *Kedushah,* 'the sanctification of God's Name.' The act of martyrdom and his gloss on the words are a double commentary on the *siluk*."[58]

Marcus also looks to the repeated use of the time period of three days as an important point of departure between this story and other narratives (both those that are martyr myths and those that are not). Returning again to the biblical framework, Marcus reiterates the theme from Esther where Mordechai tells the Jews not to eat or drink for three days (Esther 4:16) after the king's decree to kill them. This sounds like Amnon's three days spent without food or drink. But in this story, Amnon is both cause of, and redeemer from, Jewish destruction. Amnon himself understands what he has done as sinful; his penitence is self imposed.

Another reason for the importance of three days derives from the Christian legal tradition of medieval Germany, which held that "If certain [people] wish freely to be baptized, they shall be held three days, so that it be clearly known if indeed they repudiate their law because of Christian faith or by virtue of some injury they have suffered."[59] Christian law itself gave Jews three days grace before converting. This time period of three days was, then, both historically accurate and also significant in Jewish tradition. But in the story, the the three-day time period appears twice: first when Amnon asks the Archbishop for three days to think about his demand and second when he

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[58] Marcus, 108.

[59] Marcus, 109.

appears to Rabbi Kalonymos in a dream three days after his death. Raspe also finds a three-day wait in the context of posthumous appearances common in folklore, whether Jewish or not.[60]

Marcus draws our attention to the fact that this is the story in which an individual Jew shows ambivalence about his loyalty to Judaism during a time when Jews were pressured to convert to Christianity. If some Jews were actually converting in the face of this pressure,[61] it marks an important shift toward stories that reflect such choices made in the face of horrible and life-threatening events. Previous stories had been about communities, not individuals. The appearance of the story of Amnon of Mainz, Marcus insists, shows that this was a time of growing individual, inner spirituality.[62]

The story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, according to Marcus, represents an important shift in the collective mentality of the medieval Ashkenazic Jewish community on the subject of martyrdom and piety. "It moves the source of the sin from the past (Joseph's kidnapping) to the present (thinking about conversion). It shifts the agent of sin form the Gentile (Crusader) to the hesitating will of the Jew himself. And it makes the subject of the confrontation not great scholars or holy communities but on the individual Jew whose acts of piety count as much as those of the sages or elders..."[63] Marcus paints Amnon as a man who is at once a symbol of a "collective projection of an Ashkenazic

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[60] Raspe, Lucia. "Ein legendärer Sänger: Amnon von Mainz." *Kalonymos* 6, no. 4 (2003): 1-5.(Translated by Gesa Niggemann)

[61] Marcus, 111.

[62] Marcus, 112.

[63] Marcus, 112.

'Every Jew'" and also "a symbol of the entire Jewish culture - Ashkenaz - confronting the attractiveness of another mature religious culture, Medieval Latin Christendom." These themes have remained integral pieces of the meaning of the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Marcus adds. Each time Jews read it on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur and engage in their own self-examination, they are reminded that the High Holy Days are not only days of individual atonement but are also associated with the Jewish collective memories of those who engaged in holy struggles of faith and acceptance.

Lucia Raspe too has directed some of her research to exploring the literary genre of medieval Jewish Ashkenazi legends, including the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. Raspe is interested in whether or not these stories are saint stories or hero stories. Her starting place is the hagiographic genre, stories about people who are perceived as saints. She notes that though some would put stories such as Amnon of Mainz into that category, it is not necessarily a good fit because Jews do not believe in saints or in veneration. Hagiography originates in the Christian tradition, Raspe notes. She focuses on a number of important narratives, including the Jewish Pope, Amnon of Mainz, and Amram of Regensberg in order to determine if these are truly saint stories or if they are stories of heroes that have to do with praise. She asks, "Are we dealing with holy men here, or with the posthumous construct called saints?"[64] Instead of using the lens of hagiographic literature, she approaches these stories through the lens of praise, as suggested by Joseph Dan's folkloristic category of *sifrut hashevachim*, "the literature of praise tales."[65] She is

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[64] Lucia Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?" *Frankfurt Jewish Studies Bulletin* 31 (December 2004): 79.

[65] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 77.

interested in determining if this category of praise tales is a better fit for these stories than the genre of hagiography.

Raspe seeks to determine the original context and the roots of these three narratives to try to find sufficient significant similarities to draw conclusions about a genre for stories of the medieval Jewish communities of Ashkenaz. She looks to two essential collections as sources - to Ibn Yahya's *Shalshelet Hakabbalah* and also to the *Mayse Buch*. Both of these collections contain versions of the three stories she examines: the Jewish Pope, Amnon of Mainz, and Amram of Regensberg. Noting that all of these stories necessarily originated in an oral tradition, and comparing the versions of the stories in each collection to each other, she concludes, "The narratives that we have do not seem to bear any necessary connection to their respective heroes. We are dealing here with folk narrative materials whose attachment to any specific historical person appears entirely secondary."[66] In other words, the stories existed long before they were connected with specific events or people. The stories that many generations of Jews have by now come to know were once well known frames, and only later, as specifics were added and adapted and as printing became more affordable, did they come to occupy their current level of prominence.

One major prototype that Raspe discusses is the story of a Christian ruler with a Jewish counselor. Another prototype is that of a subversive Jewish convert who joins Christianity but actually retains a commitment to Judaism. These stereotypic structures are found in many stories, including the legend of the Jewish Pope and Rabbi Shimon ben

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[66] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 81.

Yizchak haGadol of Mainz, a great Ashkenazic *paytan*. Raspe suggests that this story was first written down in the *Mayse Buch*, a collection of 257 Yiddish tales that was first printed in 1602 and that contains many stories of great heroes and leaders in the medieval Jewish community of Ashkenaz.

The story begins with Rabbi Simeon the Great of Mainz. One *Shabbat* his son, Elkhanan, was stolen from their home by a Christian woman who thought she was making an offering to God by bringing a child to be raised as a Christian by the monks. Because this was the son of Rabbi Simeon, his heart was open to learning and he excelled in his studies, eventually becoming the Pope in Rome. Though he does not want to disappoint his gentile followers, he knows he is really Jewish and wants to meet his father directly. To make this happen he issues a severe decree for the Jews of Mainz which he accurately anticipates will force them to send their leader, his father, to him in protest. The Pope engages his father in a series of serious and thoughtful arguments in which Rabbi Simeon is impressed with the Pope's knowledge. Rabbi Simeon is known as being an unbeatable chess player but when he plays with this Pope he is defeated and shocked. Subsequently, the Pope weeps, reveals his identity, and tells his father that he desires to return to his original faith but that he is worried that God will not forgive him. Rabbi Simeon assures him that God will certainly forgive him and that he is welcome to return home. After this, Rabbi Simeon returns home with the decree lifted. When his son

returns, Rabbi Simeon composes a *Yotzer piyyut* for the second day of Rosh Hashanah with Elkhanan's name within it.[67]

Scholars examining this story have tried to identify a common structure that focuses on the hero (identified here as the Jewish Pope) that can also be located in other stories. Some scholars have also used this model of a Jewish Pope to search for a kernel of historical veracity in the tale. Raspe, however, argues that the hero of this story is not the Pope but the father. This distinction is important because of the legacy of stories that center on the hero as a poet, which is fashioned from a rabbinic model of the hero as a scholar. With this approach, the focus is not on historical accuracy but on the role of this particular kind of folk hero.

Attention can now be directed to the many medieval legends about *paytanim*. Many of these stories, Raspe notes, are connected to *piyyutim* with name acrostics and are found in commentaries on these *piyyutim*. The creation of *piyyut* commentary "opened up a venue by means of which oral narratives about specific persons of the Ashkenazic past could legitimately be set down in writing..."[68] Raspe refocuses the discussion away from a search for determining meaning based on the existence of historical truth and toward determining meaning based on the context in which the stories were written down and the role they played in the communities where they were valued.

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[67] This summary comes from a full version of the story that Raspe discusses that is included in Micha Joseph Bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael: Classical Jewish Folktales*, ed. Emanuel Bin Gorion, trans. I. M. Lask (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), 238-242.

[68] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 84.

Raspe applies this model to the story of Amnon of Mainz, as well. Here, she notes, is another story whose historicity is doubtful but whose impact is significant. She notes that to some extent this is a martyrological tale, a foundation myth for the introduction of *Kiddush Hashem* in Ashkenaz. But, she points out, Amnon never actually dies in this story. He disappears and then re-appears in a dream to Rabbi Kalonymos. This twist, Raspe argues, transforms the narrative from something that could have been an historical account into what might instead be called a "hagiographic legend."[69] The heroes of tales like this and those that include what she calls the "saints" of medieval Ashkenaz are not martyrs in the traditional sense but, rather, confessors. These are individuals who testified to the ultimate truth of their Jewish faith in the face of choosing between death and conversion. This, Raspe explains, is the important theme to pull out of the story (and not the determination of historical veracity).

Raspe also looks at the story of a Rabbi Amram of Regensberg. Here it is helpful to recall Michael Shashar's discussion earlier in this chapter about the Christian legend of Emmeran of Regensberg. Shashar suggested that this Christian tale might have been a seed for Amnon of Mainz as the name was changed from Emmeran to Amram to Amnon. Raspe also finds this story significant but not because she thinks that Emmeran and Amnon were originally the same man. Her interest is Amram the rabbi with a yeshiva in another locale who wants to be brought back to Regensberg when he died so he could be buried with his ancestors. He instructs his students to place his casket on a boat and let it float upstream until it reached his home town. Following his instructions, his students do

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[69] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 85.

just this but when the body reaches Regensberg, Christians find it and claim it as theirs. However, because they are not Jews, they are unable to move the casket. This leads the Christians to view this as a sign of the casket's importance, and they build a church on the bank of the river where the casket is stuck and Amram is venerated as a Christian saint. But Amram does not want to be left in this Christian location. He visits students in his hometown in a dream and convinces them to exchange the body of a hanged man from the gallows outside of the city with his so that he can be buried with his family in the Jewish cemetery. Raspe notes that this is not the seed of the legend of Amnon, or even an origin of his name, but rather an example of the familiarity of legends between Jews and Christians. To Raspe, this is another example of a story whose hero is a Jewish scholar who is praised by those retell this story.

Raspe is not content to completely dismiss the idea that Jewish stories can be hagiographic, as was Joseph Dan's suggestion when he created the alternate genre, *sifrut hashevachim,* "the literature of praise tales" (above, page 27). Some of the figures in these stories took on such important roles for the communities that retold them that Raspe contends that they go beyond tales of praise to stories of the hagiographic genre. For Raspe, stories reflect the way that Jews made sense of their surroundings and their existence in each of their particular communities. The stories were probably shared orally rather than being written down until the end of the community's tenure in each location. Some are now told regularly because of their connection with major liturgical pieces (like the Jewish Pope and Amnon of Mainz); others address larger issues linking past to present. Each story was once a more general tale that existed in different forms

and only later was assigned specific places and heroes, at which time it took on new meaning.[70] Amnon of Mainz was likely a fictitious character, but he had such significance as a hero to local Jews that from the 18th century on they continue to point out his home and the place where he spoke with the bishop. He was a hero, mind you, not a saint -- Ashkenazi Jews were not known to venerate saints as were their Christian neighbors. But "once a certain person had been established as a hero of hagiographic narratives...these narratives seem to have taken on a life of their own." Raspe concludes that these medieval stories were not completely hagiographic but that they did sometimes turn into "a veneration of saints through the back door."[71]

Summary and Synthesis

Stories serve functions; and functions change with the way the stories are told. Some versions of the story of Amram of Regensberg have his casket traveling up the river with a Torah scroll that was rescued even after the Christians stole the casket; here the story provides an etiology for a local Torah scroll. If part of the survival of stories is attributed to the function when first told and the function with continued retelling, it is essential to consider what might be the lasting importance of any given legend -- in our case, the narrative of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. To Raspe, it was once an unspecific frame of a story that was known in many places. Only once it was attached to Amnon and the city of Mainz was it written down and its legacy assured.

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[70] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 88.

[71] Raspe, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Ashkenaz – A Contradiction in Terms?," 90.

Unlike Raspe, Frankel focuses on determining historical veracity, and he finds many of his answers in the history of the Jews of Italy and their migration to Ashkenaz. He unveils the rich history of the Italian Jewish community, reminding us of the heavy Italian influence upon Jews of Ashkenaz . But Raspe's caution against historical truth as the only determinant of a story's meaning is worth recalling. Does being able to declare something objectively true or false necessarily add or detract from the meaning of the story? What matters most is not Rabbi Amnon of Mainz as an historical personality but the role he plays as a Jewish hero of medieval folklore, and the values connected with telling and retelling his story.

Frankel believed that Ephraim received the story with a connection to *Un'taneh Tokef* already in place. Raspe does not say, either way, but she does write that the connection between the frame of the story and the *Un'taneh Tokef* was not part of the original structure. Based on the similarities between the story of Amnon of Mainz and other medieval legends it is likely that the story, in its original form, did not contain any reference to *Un'taneh Tokef*, just as it may not have contained a specific reference to the sage, Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. Or, maybe Raspe and Frankel are both right. The story had a general framework that was known for many years in many places (Raspe) but once it reached Italy, it was assigned some specifics and then in Ashkenaz it was given the final specifics of place and relation to *Un'taneh Tokef* (Frankel). If it did exist in oral versions in other forms that were similar to Amnon and also to *Megillat Ahimaaz*, most are not still retold. This must be because stories are only retold if individuals or communities find them interesting, meaningful, and validating. The narrative of Rabbi

Amnon of Mainz served so many of these functions: it helped ease the transition for *Un'taneh Tokef* to replace or-- according to Yahalom – to remain in place of Kallir's *siluk*; it spoke to medieval communities about the acceptability and normality of experiencing doubt in the face of persecution (Marcus) but ultimately about maintaining faith in Judaism; and it highlighted the heroic quality of Jewish *paytanim* and scholars as true heroes of Jewish history.

The meaning of stories and of liturgy changes as people and as communities change. This story and *piyyut* have, at this point, earned their places in the liturgical and folkloristic canon. If they will continue to live, however, they will need to continue to speak to contemporary Jewish communities and the individuals who constitute them. Our next step is to think about what meaning these pieces have had for liberal Jews, and then to consider how they may address Jewish communities in the future.

Chapter Three: Liturgical Placement and Preservation

In a traditional *machzor, Un'taneh Tokef* is in the *Musaf* service for Rosh Hashanah. More specifically, as a *siluk* of a *k'dushta, Un'taneh Tokef* is placed in the middle of the *Amidah,* just before the determinative line of the *Kedushah, kadosh kadosh kadosh.* Many liberal communities, most specifically those influenced by the philosophy of early reform, have eliminated the *Musaf* service and most of what was originally placed there. Because of the power of, and attachment to, *Un'taneh Tokef*, however, most of these have decided not to remove the *Un'taneh Tokef* from their liturgy for the High Holy Days and and therefore have had to find a new liturgical home for it. They also have had to decide what version of UT to use, and how much of that version to include.

The text used as basic, in this thesis, (see Chapter 2), is from E. Daniel Goldschmidt's *Machzor l'Yamin Noraim*, the generally accepted critical edition of the *machzor*. It is not the same version that is printed in all *machzorim*, traditional or otherwise. For our purposes here, however, it remains a reliable text to use as a point of comparison to understand the significance of the different ways that *Un'taneh Tokef* and the accompanying story about Rabbi Amnon of Mainz appear in a variety of contemporary *machzorim*. The text is re-printed in this chapter with the numbered lines that occur in Goldschmidt

This chapter will explore these variations in order to understand the significance of decisions to print the entire text, omit sections, provide "interpretive" translations, or even print completely new versions. It will be instructive to compare not only

machzorim from different denominations, but also the *machzorim* from different times within a select group of liberal denominations to learn about a particular group's changing relationship to liturgy and theology. The chapter will begin by looking at two American Orthodox *machzorim* to compare what is published in Goldschmidt with what is actually used in Orthodox communities in the United States. A more in-depth comparison between what is included in *machzorim* from liberal liturgies of the 19th and 20th centuries in America, England and Israel will follow. This discussion will reveal the challenge that can permeate liturgical decisions of finding a balance between tradition and a modern, theological honesty.

For this assessment it is necessary to consider a few important questions. What did the community in question (as defined by whoever edited the *machzor* under consideration) decide to include in its *machzor*? Was this different than their community's previous *machzor*? What sections are omitted from the complete *piyyut* in this *machzor*? What is the content or significance of the section that was omitted and why was it not included? What sections were adapted so that some of their content was retained but specific words or phrases were removed? In general, what is the message of the section of interest that is included, excluded, or adapted and what statement does that decision make about the community's relationship to tradition, liturgy and theology?

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

8 ומלאכים יחפזון / וחיל ורעדה יאחזון

9 ויאמרו הנה יום–הדין / לפקוד על–צבא–מרום בדין

10 כי–לא–יזכו בעיניך בדין / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

14 בראש השנה יכתבון / וביום צום כפור יחתמון

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי במים ומי באש

17 מי בחרב ומי בחיה / מי ברעב ימו בצמא

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / מי בחניקה ומי בסליקה

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי ירום ומי ישפל / מי יעשיר ומי יעני.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

32 אין קצבה לשנותיך / ואין קץ לארך ימיך

33 ואין שעור למרכבות כבודך / ואין פרוש לעילום שמך.

34 שמך נאה לך / ואתה נאה לשמך

35 ושמנו קראת בשמך / עשה למען שמך

36 וקדש את שמך / על מקדישי שמך

37 בעבור כבוד שמך / הנערץ והנקדש

38 כסוד שיח שרפי קדש / המקדישים שמך בקדש

39 דרי מעלה ים דרי מטה / קוראים ומשלשים בשלוש קדושה בקדש:

Two American Orthodox *Machzorim*

The 2005 *High Holyday Prayer Book*, edited by Philip Birnbaum (1904-1988), is a standard edition, widely considered a complete, traditional, and quintessentially American Orthodox *machzor*. Birnbaum was born in Poland and immigrated to the United States in 1923. His major contribution was in "popularizing Jewish law and

custom and in translating synagogue liturgy."[72] He was a regular contributor to *Hadoar*, a Hebrew language weekly and also directed Jewish schools all over the United States for much of his life. When he died, the company that published his *siddurim* and *machzorim*, The Hebrew Publishing Company, described him as the "the most obscure best selling author."

Birnbaum prints the Hebrew and English translation on facing pages with very select commentary as footnotes on the bottom of selected pages. Because this is a traditional *machzor*, *Un'taneh Tokef* is found in what have come to be the accepted liturgical locations for the *piyyut*: the *Musaf* services for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.[73] It is no surprise to find the text of *Un'taneh Tokef* in Birnbaum with no sections omitted. There are some small variations between Birnbaum and Goldschmidt, but Goldschmidt accounts for most of them with bracketed notes that say *nusach acher.* Other differences are simple switches of words or short phrases. These variations do not seem to be significant and can probably be attributed to slight variations in transmission. Most communities grow attached to and retain the versions with which they are familiar. Birnbaum's footnote at the beginning of the *Un'taneh Tokef* explains that the *piyyut* "is said to have been published by Rabbi Kalonymus ben Meshullam of Mayence... This stirring poem has been the subject of a popular story, the oldest mention of which is

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[72] Sherman, Moshe. "Birnbaum, Philip." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 3. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 716. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale. HEBREW UNION COLLEGE. 26 Dec. 2009

[73] Philip Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Company, 2005), 361-364; 789-794.

found in the thirteenth century work *Or Zaru'a*..."[74] Birnbaum then provides a brief summary of the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. It is not surprising that the text of the *piyyut* is almost unchanged, but Birnbaum's inclusion of the Amnon story deserves comment: he could easily have omitted it. Since his *machzor* generally includes only the standard liturgy, not a set of copious commentaries, Birnbaum had to have made a conscious decision to include the tale. Perhaps, in his day, learned Jews found the story and its relation to the *piyyut* inseparable. Perhaps too, Birnbaum was still wrestling with the Holocaust. His *machzor* first appeared in 1979. Amnon's torture may have seemed a prescient anticipation of the era and the post-Holocaust Jews for whom Birnbaum was writing.

Currently, the *Art Scroll* liturgies are probably the most widely used Orthodox prayer books in America. Not surprisingly the *Artscroll* printed text of *Un'taneh Tokef* is complete in the *Musaf* services for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur without any significant changes or omissions from the text that Goldschmidt cites. In addition to the Ashkenazic transliteration, the commentary on this section of the *Musaf* service is particularly interesting. The footnote to the beginning of the *piyyut* begins by explaining its authorship. "Written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany, about one thousand years ago, it has become one of the highlights of the *chazzan's* repetition of the *Musaf Amidah*... This is the story of its origin (as related in *Or Zarua*)."[75] It is fascinating that the editors of this Orthodox *Machzor* have chosen to credit Rabbi Amnon of Mainz as the

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[74] Birnbaum, 359.

[75] Nosson Scherman, ed., *ArtScroll Transliterated Linear Machzor: Rosh Hashanah* (New York: Mesorah Publications in conjunction with the Orthodox Union, 2000), 687.

author if *Un'taneh Tokef*! It is also interesting to note that, at the end of this first footnote, there is tag at the conclusion of the story that explains that "some time later it was included in the Yom Kippur service in most communities."[76] The commentary blurs the line between legend and history, since for the *Artscroll* editors, there is no distinction. The very concept of legend does not exist, since Rabbinic texts are sacred, and whatever they say is history, simply because they say it.

Many editors of *machzorim* have added explanations or meditations to help worshippers make sense of the complicated, and sometimes challenging, theological message of *Un'taneh Tokef.* The editors of the *Art Scroll Machzor* are no exception. However premodern they may be in their understanding of history as opposed to legend, they are quite contemporary in their appreciation of the human condition and the troubles moderns have in relating to difficult texts. Their comments are not found in liturgical additions to the traditional text of the *machzor* since they do not consider that appropriate, but a careful reading of the footnotes uncovers the *ArtScroll* attempt to contextualize the *piyyut*. They emphasize God's judgment and the unlimited nature of God's power, but then add: "On Rosh Hashanah God decides and on Yom Kippur He seals the general fate of entire populations... Whatever happens to a person is the result of the evaluation of the sum total of the quantity and quality of deeds." The first statement seems to establish a distinction between God's power and the individual's power. God's power to decree applies to general populations but individuals, it seems, do

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[76] Scherman, 687.

have control over their fate through their actions. Here we find a subtle nod not only to the power of God but also to the power of people to influence their own lives.

Reform *Machzorim* in America

Unlike most editors and writers of Orthodox *machzorim*, editors and writers of Reform *machzorim* did not (and still do not) feel bound to retain the traditional service structures and liturgies in their entirety. Early on some Reform prayerbook editors decided not to retain the *Musaf* service on *Shabbat* or on the High Holy Days. Those that retained *Musaf* included *Un'taneh Tokef* there. For those that omitted *Musaf,* desirable pieces of the liturgy such as *Un'taneh Tokef* that are traditionally found there had to be repositioned elsewhere in the service. Abraham Geiger's 1854 German Reform prayerbook included a *Musaf* service with an almost complete *Un'taneh Tokef*. This version of the *piyyut* is complete except for a slightly abridged section from lines 15-19 -- the familiar litany of the way people die (water, fire, famine, strangling, and so forth)[77] For further reference, we can label this unit, "Modes of Death." The decision to edit the Modes of Death section recurs regularly.

Interestingly, Geiger also chose to omit lines 32 through the middle of 36, the section we can now label "God's Great Name." This section of the *piyyut* provides a connection between God's great name and our own. What could Geiger have objected to here? The ostensive message is simply that God and God's name are great, that we are named after God name, and that our actions reflect the sanctity both of humans and of

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[77] Abraham Geiger, *Israelitisches Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre* (Breslau: Julius Hainauer, 1854), 487-488.

God. Perhaps the praise for God and God's name was just so inconsistent with Geiger's theology that he removed what he found to be the most dissonant verses, but if so, it becomes hard to fathom just what his objection was. Perhaps he simply wished to shorten the *piyyut* and having come to the climactic promise inherent in penitence, prayer, and charity, he sought to end the poem as quickly as he could. Though not all future *machzor* editors would make the same decisions about what message they wanted to put forth in a modified *Un'taneh Tokef,* later editors of Reform and Liberal *machzorim* would follow Geiger's lead in freely making their own decisions about what to omit and what to include.

With the establishment of Reform Jewish communities in America in the mid-nineteenth century, two new *siddurim* stood out as probative, each one written by a rival leader of what would become American Reform Judaism. *Minhag America* was the work of Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900). Several liturgical versions and volumes emerged from the pen of this assiduous writer of almost everything (a diary, a newspaper, dozens of tracts and articles, and liturgy as well). In 1857, his *machzor* appeared. Wise spent most of his life in America trying to unite the entire Jewish community. His liturgies reflect this intention.

A second prayer book, *Olat Tamid,* was written by David Einhorn (1809-1879), published first in 1856 and then translated in 1896 from the original German into English by his son in law, Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago, after Einhorn's death. Einhorn immigrated to America because he was denied the opportunity to work as a rabbi in

Europe as a result of some of his beliefs.[78] Partly because of Hirsch, but also because of Kaufman Kohler, Einhorn's second son in law, and the most definitive thinker of nascent Reform Judaism in the late nineteenth century, it was Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*, not Wise's *Minhag America*, that served as the basis for the *Union Prayer Book*, the first *siddur* and *machzor* published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Wise wrote a *siddur* and also a two volume *machzor* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Like Geiger's prayerbook, Wise (who sought, like Geiger, to include as many people as possible under his liturgical banner) retained the *Musaf* service (Reform prayerbooks after *Minhag America* would not again include this additional service). It is no surprise, then, that the selection of *Un'taneh Tokef* included in this *machzor* is found in *Musaf* for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The section included in Wise's *Minhag America* is a surprising segment of the *piyyut*.[79]

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

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[78] Temkin, Sefton. "Einhorn, David." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 6. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 258. 22 vols. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale. HEBREW UNION COLLEGE. 26 Dec. 2009

[79] Isaac M. Wise, *Minhag America: The Divine Service of American Israelites For the New Year* (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., And Printers, 1866), 172-178.
Isaac M. Wise, *Minhag America: The Divine Service of American Israelites For the Day of Atonement* (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., And Printers, 1866), 202-208.

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

32 אין קצבה לשנותיך / ואין קץ לארך ימיך

33 ואין שעור למרכבות כבודך / ואינ פרוש לעילום שמך.

34 שמך נאה לך / ואתה נאה לשמך

35 ושמנו קראת בשמך / עשה למען שמך

36 וקדש את שמך / על מקדישי שמ

... 37

38 כסוד שיח שרפי קדש / המקדישים שמך בקדש

39 דרי מעלה ים דרי מטה / קוראים ומשלשים בשלוש קדושה בקדש:

Wise leaves out, in their entirety, the first 21 lines of *Un'taneh Tokef*, the references to the shofar (line 7), the signing and sealing of the book (line 14), the Modes of Death section (lines 15-19), and the triplet of *teshuvah, tefilah* and *tsedakah* that "help the hardship of the decree pass" (line 21). Yet, Wise does include most of the God's Great Name section (lines 32-39) that we saw above with regard to Geiger. *Minhag America* would be the last Reform *machzor* to include any part of this last section that links God's name to our own (line 35). *Union Prayer Book II* began with Einhorn's *Olat Tamid,* after all, not with

Wise's *Minhag America*. It will be interesting to see if any future Reform *machzor* will reintroduce this last section of the *piyyut* or if all future Reform *machzorim* will end *Un'taneh Tokef* with "But You are King, the Living and Everlasting God" (line 31).

Olat Tamid included services for weekdays, Shabbat, festivals and also the High Holy Days, but without *Musaf* anywhere. Einhorn therefore included part of *Un'taneh Tokef* in the Yom Kippur Afternoon service -- both in Hebrew and in English translation. He thereby began the trend for American Reform *machzorim* of including *Un'taneh Tokef* and finding an appropriate alternative service in which to place it. Einhorn's *Un'taneh Tokef* is as follows.[80]

3 אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ... / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

10... / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי במים ומי באש

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[80] David Einhorn, *Olat Tamid: Book of Prayers for Jewish Congregations*, trans. E. G. Hirsch (Chicago: S. Ettlinger PTG Co, 1896), 175-177.

17 מי בחרב ומי ברעב / ...

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / ...

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי יעני ומי יעשר / מי ישפל ומי ירום.

Here Einhorn adds Psalm 8:5-6.

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול...

29 כחציר יבש... / כצל עיבר...

30 ... / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

Many aspects of this text deserve comment. Einhorn skips the first two and a half lines which obviously include the opening two words that give this *piyyut* its name. (It was, in fact, quite difficult to find *Un'taneh Tokef* in this *machzor* because it was not identifiable by these two opening words and because there was no *Musaf* to look for it in.) Einhorn also chose other sections to omit -- including some of the more well known phrases in the *piyyut*. In skipping lines seven through nine, Einhorn omits "And a great

shofar will be sounded and a thin whisper of a sound will be heard." This comparison of the sounds of the shofar and the thin, whisper of a sound is one of the more recognizable lines in this poem. The next line that Einhorn omits is line 14, "On Rosh Hashanah they will be written down, and on Yom Kippur they will be sealed." After including excerpts of the Modes of Death section (lines 15-20), Einhorn even skips line 21, "And repentance, prayer, and charity help the hardship of the decree pass." Here our writer has omitted many of the most well-known lines in this *piyyut* (in addition to omitting the last eight lines of the poem), probably because his thoroughgoing rationalism rejects the overarching metaphors of the poem. It is also worth noting that there is no mention of the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in *Olat Tamid*. Einhorn knew legend from history, and had no room for the former.

Einhorn's *Un'taneh Tokef* has a different tone than does the full *piyyut*. He has removed the lines about the angels that tremble and also many of the verses that describe the God who sits in a heavenly abode. There is no mention of the shofar or of the "still, small voice" (as it is commonly known). Nothing is written down on Rosh Hashanah or sealed on Yom Kippur. The triplet of *teshuvah, tefilah* and *tsedakah* are no longer part of the way to "help the hardship of the decree pass." Yet Einhorn does include almost the complete sequence that begins "who will live and who will die" – the Modes of Death unit. Perhaps even the "rationalist" Einhorn felt he could not remove this colorful portrayal of human destiny without destroying the meaning and impact of *Un'taneh Tokef;* and after all, people do, in fact, die in these most horrific ways. Lawrence Hoffman has argued that the objection to the Modes of Death passage is not rationalistic

but pastoral, and Einhorn was a thinker more than he was a pastor. Alternatively, Eric Friedland believes, "The popularity of the prayer, particularly of its *mi yihyeh u-mi yamut* sequence, doubtless account for its longevity even in a uniformly 'rationalist' Reform liturgy."[81] Though people are naturally prone to make mistakes and sin, Einhorn seems to suggest that people are capable of overcoming these failings to "attain a worthy spiritual state." [82] *Olat Tamid's Un'taneh Tokef*, read only on the afternoon of Yom Kippur and not at all on Rosh Hashanah, invokes much of the emotion of the original *piyyut* while it removes some of what may have been problematic for Einhorn's own theology or for those in the growing American Reform Jewish community.

The *Union Prayer Book II* (UPB II), the UPB *machzor,* was modeled on Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* so it is no surprise that there is great similarity between the version and placement of *Un'taneh Tokef* in *Olat Tamid* and *UPB II*. Like *Olat Tamid, Un'taneh Tokef* is not included anywhere in the liturgy for Rosh Hashanah but it is included, outside of an *Amidah*, in the Afternoon Service for Yom Kippur with an edited Hebrew text and a slightly interpretive English Translation. The Hebrew version *Un'taneh Tokef* in *UPB II* reads as follows.[83]

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[81] Eric L. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled With Song – Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy*(Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College P, 1997), 38.

[82] Friedland, 38.

[83] *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship, Part II,* (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1960), 256-259.

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ...

10 ... / וכל–באי–עולם תעויר לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי בָאש ומי במים

17 מי בחרב .. / ומי ברעב ...

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / ...

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי ירום ומי ישפל / מי יעשיר ומי יעני.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ואתה יודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול...

29 כחציר יבש... / כצל עיבר...

30 ... / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

UPB II and *Olat Tamid* do not omit exactly the same material. One important verse that Einhorn did not include but that *UPB II* did print is, "And repentance, prayer, and charity help the hardship of the decree pass." (Line 21) The English translation of the *piyyut* in *UPB II* is close to accurate for what is printed up until line 13. The English that is printed from lines 13-20, however, seems to replace translation with interpretation. For this whole section (the Modes of Death) the English reads: "On these days of awe, our hearts awaken to the truth that in Thy providence Thou givest life and ordainest death. Thine omniscient judgment decides fortunes and disasters of nations and of men, their joys and their griefs, and their length of days."[84] This "translation" removes the graphic descriptions of the Hebrew. Why did the editors of UPB II chose to include the Hebrew text but not a faithful English translation? It is likely that worshippers had become attached to this original Hebrew text, which may have been accompanied with cantorial solo passages in any event; but the editors were uncomfortable with the explicit English parallels. *UPB II* also continues the Reform tradition begun by Einhorn of omitting references to God opening "The Book," to angels, to the writing on Rosh Hashanah and the sealing on Yom Kippur, and to the references to God's Great name.

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[84] *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship, Part II,* (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1960), 256.

The story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz is still nowhere to be found in American Reform *machzorim*. *UPB II* includes no mention of the story in a footnote, and unlike later Reform liturgy (*Gates of Repentance*) it includes no explanatory meditation either. It does, however, introduce *Un'taneh Tokef* with a *piyyut* written by Rabbi Meshullam ben Kalonymos, the father of the Rabbi Kalonymos ben Meshullam. This is the sage whom Rabbi Amnon was said to have visited in a dream with instructions to spread *Un'taneh Tokef*. The *piyyutim* of Rabbi Meshullam do comprise an important part of the body of *piyyutim* from the Middle Ages but it is likely no coincidence that this is the author whose *piyyutim* the editors of *UPB II* chose to include right before *Un'taneh Tokef.* Perhaps this was a first attempt by the rabbinic editors of Reform *machzorim* to acknowledge the importance of some part of the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in connection with *Un'taneh Tokef.* Though Rabbi Kalonymos' *piyyut* does not appear in later Reform *machzorim*, it is likely that the decision to include this *piyyut* just before *Un'taneh Tokef* was the first step to incorporating the legend of Rabbi Amnon in the Reform High Holy Day liturgy.

The 1978 and 1996 publications of *Gates of Repentance* (GOR), the Central Conference of American Rabbis' next *machzor*, includes an *Un'taneh Tokef* that looks very different from the versions that preceded it. This *Un'taneh Tokef* is a more complete version of Goldschmidt's original. It contains lines 1-31 (including the Modes of Death section) with just a few minor word switches but without any major omissions or additions. Another important innovation of *GOR* is the placement of *Un'taneh Tokef* in the service. In *UPB II* it appeared only once, in the afternoon service for Yom Kippur.

Even without a *Muasf* service, *GOR* has tried to place *Un'taneh Tokef* in a more traditional liturgical location, in the middle of the *Amidah.* The *piyyut* is included, then, in three services: Rosh Hashanah Morning Service I, Rosh Hashanah Morning Service II, and Yom Kippur Morning Service. Within each service *Un'taneh Tokef* appears just after the *Gevurot* and leads into the *Kedusha.* The text in GOR is as follows.[85]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

8 ומלאכים יחפזון / וחיל ורעדה יאחזון

9 ויאמרו הנה יום–הדין / לפקוד על–צבא–מרום בדין

10 כי–לא–יזכו בעיניך בדין / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

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[85] Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978), 106-110; 175-179, 311-15.

14 בראש השנה יכתבון / וביום צום כפור יחתמון

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי באיש ומי במים

17 מי בחרב ומי בחיה / מי ברעב ימו בצמא

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / מי בחניקה ומי בסליקה

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי יעשיר ומי יעני / מי ירום ומי ישפל.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עובר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

Un'taneh Tokef in *GOR* is different from the version in *UPB II* because it includes many of the previously omitted lines about God's role in recording names in "The Book,"

the sound of the shofar, and the entire Modes of Death section that begins “On Rosh Hashanah they will be written down, and on Yom Kippur they will be sealed” (line 14). Lawrence Hoffman recalls the debate that occurred over the expanded inclusion of the prayer. Overall, the editors of *GOR* were more comfortable with the theological messages of *Un’taneh Tokef*, because they were not averse to seeing even the most “objectionable” portions as metaphoric in intent. The age of rampant rationalism was over. Then too, they were intent on including as much of tradition as was possible. They also wanted to restore the *chazzan’s* role which depended on a more or less complete citation of the Hebrew, and they felt an obligation to render most of the Hebrew into a faithful translation – since worshipers had objected to English passages in *Gates of Prayer* that “fudged” what was being said. They also took seriously the thought that the High Holy Days are intended to cause those of us who take them seriously to feel sufficiently uncomfortable and to make changes in the way we live our lives.

Yet since Wise’s *Minhag America*, none of the Reform *machzorim* -- including *GOR* -- have included any part of God’s Great Name (lines 32-38), even though some of these verses have the potential to bring worshippers closer to God: “You named us after you; act for the sake of your name,” for example, and “Sanctify your name through those who declare the sanctity of your name” (Lines 35, 36). Hoffman recalls no conversation over these lines, although they may have taken place. Perhaps the editors felt this section focused too much on God and on God’s name and that this was not consistent with what Reform Jews were looking for when they came to pray on Rosh Hashanah or on Yom

Kippur. Regardless of the reason for the omission of these last seven lines, no "official" Reform *machzor* has yet chosen to include this section.

One significant change from *UPB II* to *GOR* is the inclusion of the story of Amnon of Mainz. The introduction to *Un'taneh Tokef* in the Yom Kippur morning services is a creative, responsive reading based on the themes of the *piyyut*. In both of the morning services for Rosh Hashanah, however, an opening meditation for *Un'taneh Tokef* is included. "It is said that the words we are about to utter were born of the martyrdom of Rabbi Amnon of Mayence. He chose to die that his faith might live. He said: '*Un'taneh tokef kedushat hayom*, Let us proclaim the sacred power of this day; it is awesome and full of dread.' Now the divine Judge looks upon our deed, and determines our destiny. A legend...and yet surely our deeds do not pass away unrecorded..."[86]

Again, Hoffman recalls the relevant discussion. By the 1970s, many Jews had grown up with the legend being told to them by rabbis influenced by the Holocaust. People knew this story, and the question, simply, was what to do with it: to acknowledge it or to ignore it. The committee decided upon the former, but determined to do so by labeling it as legend. Still, even legends have lessons. The metaphoric interpretation of liturgy applies to history as well.

Many Reform Jews have become as familiar with this opening reference to the legend of Rabbi Amnon as they have with the *piyyut* itself. The legend of a martyr who

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[86] Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978), 106.

uttered these words so that he would not abandon his faith contributes to the overall impact of *piyyut* for many Reform service attendees.[87]

Liberal *Machzorim* in Great Britain

The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues is the British equivalent to the Reform movement in America. The Movement for Reform Judaism is more akin to what American Jews think of as Conservative. Both movements have published new *machzorim* in the last couple of decades and both have seen significant changes in the inclusion and printing of *Un'taneh Tokef* from their earliest to their most current *machzorim*. The British Reform *machzor, Forms of Prayer,* is now in its eighth edition. Up until this most recent edition, *Un'taneh Tokef* had not been included at all. As the editors of the *machzor* began to work on the newest volume of *Forms of Prayer,* they decided that, despite the questions about the fatalistic tone of the *piyyut, Un'taneh Tokef* would be included in its complete form in the new 1985 *machzor.*[88] The *machzor's* editor, Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, reflected that "at this deepest point in the [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur] service we were focusing on ultimate questions of life and death, and indeed on the significance and worth of our own personal existence. In such a

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[87] The impact of the musical arrangements of *Un'taneh Tokef* also should not be completely overlooked. I do not know enough about music or about the way the settings for this text have changed throughout the history of Reform liturgy. There is no doubt that the music has contributed significantly to the impact of this part of the High Holy Day liturgy for American Reform Jews but I am not expert enough to be able to say any more than that in this part of the study.

[88] *Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship II: Prayers for the High Holydays* (London: The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1985), 224-227.

context, *Un'taneh Tokef* lent emotional and imaginative support to addressing such challenging issues."[89] Rabbi Magonet noted that what helped the editorial committee finalize their decision was a translation that they found by Lionel Blue that "softened the sense of predestination...without removing the impact that belongs to contemplating with a degree of detachment our own mortality."[90] This is just one of many examples in which a difficult decision about whether to include the text of *Un'taneh Tokef* was resolved with an interpretive translation or meditation. Unlike the slow changes and adaptations that happened in the *machzorim* of the American Reform and British Liberal movements, the British Reform movement went from nothing to everything with respect to the Hebrew and English versions of *Untaneh Tokef* in one updated prayerbook.

The Liberal movement in England has had three major *machzorim* in the past century and all three have dealt with *Un'taneh Tokef* differently in Hebrew and in English. The first, *Liberal Jewish Prayer Book,* was published in 1937. The second, *Gate of Repentance,* was published in 1973. The third and most recent, *Ruach Chadashah,* was published in 2003. Both of the editors of *Ruach Chadashah,* Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh and Rabbi Dr. Andrew Goldstein, wrote reflections on *Un'taneh Tokef* and their movement's relationship with the *piyyut* for a *siyum* in the summer of 2009. Both Middleburgh and Goldstein commented that the earlier Liberal *machzor, Liberal Jewish Prayer Book,* appeared to have excluded *Un'taneh Tokef* entirely. But both Middleburgh and Goldstein note that their teacher, Eric Friedland, points out that the

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[89] Magonet, Jonathan. "Un'taneh Tokef - A Text in Context." (*Personal Correspondence with Author,* October 9, 2009.)

[90] Magonet, "Un'taneh Tokef - A Text in Context".

editors of this *machzor* provided a "shortened and transformed version at the beginning of the Yom Kippur Additional Service." It was so transformed, Goldstein writes, that he had not noticed its place in the service before Friedland identified it![91]

Gate of Repentance, the British Liberal *machzor* that was published in 1973, contains a very different *Un'taneh Tokef* than did the *machzor* that preceded it. What is particularly interesting about this *machzor* is that the *piyyut* appears differently in the two places it is printed. It first appears in the expanded Rosh Hashanah morning service, in what seems to be the middle of the shofar service. This service contains an abbreviated *Un'taneh Tokef.*[92]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

10 ... / וכל–באי–עולם תעביר לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

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[91] Goldstein, Andrew. "Un'taneh Tokef." (August 2009.)

[92] *Gate of Repentance: Services for the High Holydays* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1973-6733), 92-94.

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

This shortened *Un'taneh Tokef* omits many of the potentially problematic verses for liberally minded Jews. This is noteworthy since, as Goldstein notes, this version occurs "when the largest congregation of the year is present." The editors of *Gate of Repentance* chose to terminate it "halfway through, with the first punch-line of the *piyyut*,"[93] "And repentance, prayer, and charity help the hardship of the decree pass." (Line 21) This is the last and only line of the section we have called Modes of Death that is included in this version of *Un'taneh Tokef*.

Un'taneh Tokef next appears in *Gate of Repentance* at the beginning of the Yom Kippur Afternoon service. Here, the text is expanded from the first version.[94]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

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[93] Goldstein, Andrew. "Un'taneh Tokef."

[94] *Gate of Repentance: Services for the High Holydays* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1973-6733), 254-257.

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשוגר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

10 ... / וכל–באי–עולם תעביר לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

23 יי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

This version still omits the Modes of Death paragraph but it does include the section, omitted in the version in the Rosh Hashanah service, about God's eternal wait for our repentance and about the fragility of human life (lines 23-31). Apparently, the editors of this *machzor* chose to include two versions of the *piyyut.* We saw above how the Rosh

Hashanah version was included in the service with a rather large attendance. This expanded *Un'taneh Tokef*, Goldstein notes, by contrast, is included in a service when "the smallest congregation of the Yom Kippur services is present."[95] Perhaps this reflected the the editorial sense that the prayer could be expanded – a fuller version for the smaller number of worshippers that (presumably) reflected the "diehard" loyalists who are able to handle more of the prayer. Here we seem to have a compromise -- reintroduction of a traditional text in two different versions. The first, during Rosh Hashanah, is a highly edited *Un'taneh Tokef* at a time when a large number of congregants are likely to encounter it. The second, during Yom Kippur, is a more complete *Un'taneh Tokef,* at a time when a large number of congregants are not likely to encounter it.

This assumed discomfort with the text is supported by the English meditation that precedes both versions of *Un'taneh Tokef* in *Gate of Repentance*. Here John Raynor, one of the *machzor's* editors, seems to try to explain away the potential theological problems with the text. "And yet our destiny is not unalterable... we can change course and so escape from the sequence of events which we ourselves have set in motion. We can write a new and better chapter."[96] Raynor plays on the ideas here of God determining our fate and also on the image of The Book of Life in order to recast the tone of the *piyyut.* A note at the end of the *machzor* reads: "Much of [*Un'taneh Tokef*] has a strongly fatalistic ring, especially in portions omitted by us. Yet man's ability to change his ways and therefore his destiny, is emphatically maintained, especially in the affirmation that

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[95] Goldstein, Andrew. "Un'taneh Tokef."

[96] *Gate of Repentance: Services for the High Holydays* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1973-6733), 459.

"repentance, prayer...etc."[97] This was the treatment of *Un'taneh Tokef* in the British Liberal *machzor* that preceded *Ruach Chadashah*.

The British Liberal movement's newest *machzor* now has the same version of *Un'taneh Tokef* printed in both its Rosh Hashanah morning service and its Yom Kippur Additional Service. It is the same, more complete, version that was found in the Yom Kippur Afternoon service of *Gate of Repentance*.[98]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

10 ... / וכל–באי–עולם תעביר לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

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[97] Goldstein identifies this note at the end of *Gate of Repentance* in "Un'taneh Tokef." The note comes from: *Gate of Repentance: Services for the High Holydays* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1973-6733), 459.

[98] Andrew Goldstein and Charles H. Middleburgh, eds., *Machzor Ruach Chadashah: Services for the Days of Awe* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 2003-5763), 140-142; 286-288.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

23 יי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

This version of *Un'taneh Tokef* has the same inclusions and exclusions as the Yom Kippur version that appears in the *Gate of Repentance* that preceded it. Here there are no trembling angels. The entire section that begins with the sealing of The Book on Rosh Hashanah and with the Modes of Death passage is omitted. This is consistent through all of the British Liberal *machzorim*. The omission "*B'rosh Hashanah yikateivun...*" (line 14) is especially telling, since it is probably one of the few lines that American Reform Jews sing multiple times as a refrain during this portion of the service and, therefore, actually know well. Both Goldstein and Middleburgh reflected on the editorial decisions involved in this new *mahzor.* Goldstein reflects that it was not acceptable to him to add parts of the *piyyut* that had been previously omitted just because it is the trend to do so.

> "I am inspired by many of the ancient prayers we have re-introduced to our liturgy. But I am disturbed by the reintroduction of prayers or phrases into our worship just because they have a nice tune, or for chauvinistic reasons, or because 'they are traditional'. We have our own Reform and Liberal traditions and I just cannot believe in a God who decides who will live and who will die, and I do not find it acceptable to ask the congregation to make such assertions at the most sacred services of the Jewish year."[99]

Middleburgh also writes about the decision about whether or not to include the Modes of Death passage, which he calls the "controversial paragraph," that begins *B'rosh Hashanah.* "I would be shocked and dismayed were that liturgy to march backwards intellectually and spiritually by including it in a future edition."[100] Both the editors and non-editorial leaders of the British Liberal Jewish community certainly feel very strongly that their *machzor* reflect not only the rich liturgical tradition but also their contemporary practices and theologies.

In this context it is unsurprising to find the distinct absence of any mention of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in any of the British *machzorim*. The meditation that precedes the *Un'taneh Tokef* in *Ruach Chadashah,* indeed, has no mention of the famous legend. It is an adapted version of Raynor's meditation in *Gate of Repentance.* Here there is still an emphasis on the power of human action in determining our fate and God's judgement of us, but not necessarily to counter the message of the challenging *piyyut* which it precedes.

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[99] Goldstein, Andrew. "Un'taneh Tokef."

[100] Middleburgh, Charles H. "U-netanneh Tokef." Sternberg Centre Shiur, (September 23 2009.)

Progressive *Machzor* in Israel

Kavanat HaLev is the newest Liberal Israeli *machzor* and it is the first official *machzor* published by the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) for affiliated congregations. This *machzor* was written initially for the IMPJ communities in Israel. It is now also used more and more by congregations in the Former Soviet Union that are affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, the *machzor's* editor, reflected on the process of editing *Kavanat HaLev* and the decisions about how to include *Un'taneh Tokef* and the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz.[101] Mazor wrote that it was clear to him and his team from the outset that both the *piyyut* in its complete form and the story would be included. The version of *Un'taneh Tokef* found in *Kavanat HaLev* is the same version that is in *Gates of Repentance*.[102]

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים

2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך

3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין

4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה

5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות

6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו

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[101] Personal Correspondence with Rabbi Yehoram Mazor. (October 10, 2009.)

[102] *Kavanat HaLev* (Jerusalem: Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, 5749), 94-95; 228-229.

7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע

8 ומלאכים יחפזון / וחיל ורעדה יאחזון

9 ויאמרו הנה יום–הדין / לפקוד על–צבא–מרום בדין

10 כי–לא–יזכו בעיניך בדין / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון

11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו

12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי

13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

14 בראש השנה יכתבון / וביום צום כפור יחתמון

15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות

16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי באש ומי במים

17 מי בחרב ומי בחיה / מי ברעב ימו בצמא

18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / מי בחניקה ומי בסליקה

19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף

20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי יעני ומי יעשיר / מי ישפל ומי ירום.

21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות

23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה

24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו

25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם

26 כי הם בשר ודם:

27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר

28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר

29 כחציר יבש וכצדיק נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה

30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:

31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

Mazor states clearly that the full version of *Un'taneh Tokef* would be included, yet *Kavanat HaLev* omits the last nine lines. It is true that there are no omissions from the section of the *piyyut* that is included so perhaps this is the sense of "complete" he was referring to. *Kavanat HaLev* has a service for Rosh Hashanah that serves as an adapted *musaf* service called "*Zekher L'Musaf,*" -- a term employed officially by the Reconstructionist movement for new liturgies for Shabbat in general. Mazor, who is quite familiar with Reconstructionist liturgy, most likely borrowed the term from there. Here, in the High Holy Day context, it is basically a *shofar* service that includes *malkhuyot*, *zikhronot*, and *shofarot*. It is in this service that *Un'taneh Tokef*, the most important Ashkenazic *piyyut* for Rosh Hashanah according to Mazor, is placed.[103] This decision about where to place the *piyyut* and how much to include seems to have been an uncomplicated decision for Mazor and the group of editors of *Kavanat HaLev*.

The decision about how and where to include the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz was not as straightforward. As Mazor recalls it, the committee was certain that the story should be included but there was not an obvious place for it. They did not want to add it in as a meditation before *Un'taneh Tokef* (the way *GOR* had done) and there was

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[103] Personal Correspondence with Rabbi Yehoram Mazor. (October 10, 2009.)

no other place for it in this adapted *Musaf* service, since there is no *Amidah.* There is, however, a section at the back of the *machzor* with an additional *Amidah* for those who might want to pray the *Amidah* in the *Musaf* service. This is where Mazor and his editors decided to place the story of Rabbi Amnon. Though the *piyyut* and the story do not appear together, all of the rabbis know where the story is located in the *machzor*. If rabbis using this *machzor* for the High Holy Days choose to read or tell the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz along with the recitation of *Un'taneh Tokef,* Mazor notes, they all know where to find it.[104] In this way Mazor was able to include both the *piyyut* in its "complete" version and also the legend of Rabbi Amnon in the first *machzor* published for the IMPJ and the WUPJ.

Why is *Un'taneh Tokef* the Subject of Debate and Change?

Un'taneh Tokef is one of those pieces of liturgy that *machzor* editors and worshippers alike both love and hate. Middleburgh contends that it is "one of the most beloved pieces in the High Holy Day liturgy as used by Ashkenazi Jews, an almost perfect combination of words and music set against the background of a Heavenly Court in session to consider judgment against sinners, with the Deity itself ensconced to fill every role necessary."[105] But *Un'taneh Tokef* challenges our modern theologies and causes us to question the impact of our actions in the context of a fatalistic universe. No

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[104] Personal Correspondence with Rabbi Yehoram Mazor. (October 10, 2009.)

[105] Middleburgh, Charles H. "U-netanneh Tokef." Sternberg Centre Shiur, (September 23 2009.)

wonder liberal editors have struggled with how best to include the *piyyut* in our *machzorim* for over a century.

We know there is something essential about these words and yet we are not sure how to embrace them. Should we include the whole text and accept, perhaps with some skepticism, even the most difficult passages? Or should we try to remain committed to what we actually believe and only include the sections that make sense in our current contexts? Once we decide what to do with *Un'taneh Tokef*, we are still left with the question of what do we do with a legend we know to be a-historical but whose message remains deep and far-reaching. Each community and group of editors has made different decisions about these matters. Despite our challenges with the *piyyut* and its unfounded foundation myth, one or both appear in all currently used liberal *machzorim*.

It is possible that *Un'taneh Tokef* still has a place in *machzorim* of liberal communities around the world not only because of its message but also because of the music to which it has been set. Middleburgh reflected on the importance of the tune as he explained the development of its inclusion in the Liberal Movement in Great Britain and noted that a text such as *Un'taneh Tokef* can make a "triumphant reappearance" because of the power of a tune.[106]

> "The musical rendition of *Un'taneh Tokef* marks the high point of the cantorial repertoire... In it, we hear the majestic music of the Heavenly Court, the peal of the Shofar at which even the angelic hosts tremble, the soothing pastoral of the shepherd mustering his flock. Then the mood changes again into the tearful

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[106] Middleburgh, Charles H. "U-netanneh Tokef." Sternberg Centre Shiur, (September 23 2009.)

> supplication of 'who shall live and who shall die' and the humble sigh of 'man's origin is dust and he returneth to the dust.' Finally the music soars into the promise of "But Thou are ever our living God and King."[107]

This combination of penetrating words and palpable music certainly accounts for the impact of *Un'taneh Tokef* on even the most rational, anti-fatalistic modern Jews. This *piyyut* seems to have found a secure place, in some form, in most mainstream *machzorim*. The next chapter will uncover the way some modern rabbis are using the words and style of the *piyyut* to address contemporary challenges and events. In Chapter 5 the place of *Un'taneh Tokef* and the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in a future American Reform *machzor* will also be considered. It will be essential to take heed to Rabbi Middleburgh's caution about editing liturgy.

> "Anyone who has been involved with the writing and editing of liturgies is also aware that one tampers with cherished texts at one's peril, and further that the strictly rational approach is almost immediately undermined by the unspoken truism – if you start off on that tack you'll end up with next to nothing in this post-modern, secular age!"[108]

It is with caution, then, that we move to consider the current practical applications and implications of *Un'taneh Tokef* and the story of Rabbi Amnon.

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[107] Herman Kieval, *The Holy Days - A Commentary on the Prayerbook of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (New York: Burning Bush, 1959), 143.

[108] Middleburgh, Charles H. "U-netanneh Tokef." Sternberg Centre Shiur, (September 23 2009.)

Chapter Four: *Un'taneh Tokef* and Rabbi Amnon of Mainz

Contemporary Adaptations and the Relationship Between the Two in the next American Reform *Machzor*

Most of the piyyutim and legends that have been told, re-told and written down throughout the millennia of Jewish history have been lost, forgotten, or discarded. Set in this context, it becomes especially noteworthy that *Un'taneh Tokef* and the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz have achieved such prominence in our liturgy and collection of foundation legends. More intriguing still is the fact that these two literary pieces, written in different times and places, are now so intrinsically connected. *Un'taneh Tokef* appears independently in the liturgy but is often accompanied by some reference to Amnon – not in one *machzor* alone, but in many, and across denominations as well.

This *piyyut* and accompanying story appear not just in their standard, if adapted or shortened, liturgical forms. Some rabbis have written independent adaptations of the *Un'taneh Tokef* to speak to contemporary challenges that also draw on life and death and the impact of our actions in the world. Sermons have been written on the challenges this *piyyut* presents to the successful reconciliation of personal liberal theology with the tragedies that occur all around us. At least one author of historical fiction has incorporated the legend of Rabbi Amnon into a novel as if it happened just the way *Or Zarua* tells the story. Some of these applications of *Un'taneh Tokef* and the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz will be explored in this chapter. How do these pieces make sense of the complexity and depth of the *piyyut* and the legend? Does this practice of using the

piyyut and legend as a format for creative writing enhance the impact of these Jewish liturgical and *aggadic* pieces? Will this creativity help ensure a place for *Un'taneh Tokef* and Rabbi Amnon in future liberal Jewish communities? Finally, what should be the place of this poem and this story in the next American Reform *machzor?*

Contemporary Legends, Writings and Understandings of *Un'taneh Tokef* and Amnon of Mainz

One important legend about the impact of this *piyyut* and story concerns the association between Franz Rosenweig and Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. According to legend, Rosenweig, the writer of the *Star of Redemption*, turned away from his own conversion to Christianity after attending Yom Kippur services in Berlin in 1913 because of the impact of *Un'taneh Tokef*. A 2008 article in *Commentary* magazine by David J. Wasserstein compares Amnon and Rosenweig in an attempt to understand the theological impact that Un'taneh Tokef might have had on Rosenweig. Perhaps, Wasserstein suggests, hearing the words of *Un'taneh Tokef* taught Rosenweig that Jews do not need someone like Jesus to connect them to God. "The Jew is with God; he needs no intermediary."[109] Wasserstein outlines the journeys of Amnon and Rosensweig in order to illustrate the many possible similarities between the two, but in the end, admits that the Amnon story is, after all, just legend. So too is the connection with Rosenweig. Though many people report its impact upon him, there is nothing to support the claim. Nonetheless, this "secondary" legend, as opposed to the legend of Amnon himself, remains powerful in the

[109] David J. Wasserstein, "New Let Us Proclaim," *Commentary*, June 20, 2008, 14.

popular imagination. Something seems to have caused Rosenweig, historically one of Judaism's greatest thinkers, to abandon his path to converting to Christianity. It could have been any number of events or encounters. Why not the lingering power of the *Un'taneh Tokef*?

A contemporary retelling of the legend of Rabbi Amnon as history is contained in Maggie Anton's third book in her series on Rashi's daughters, *Rashi's Daughters Book III Rachel*. *Rashi's Daughters* is best described as historical fiction. The fictional parts are the lives that the author imagines for the three daughters. The historical context is a close recounting of medieval conditions in Ashkenaz and France. For this reason it is surprising to encounter Rabbi Amnon as an Italian Jew visiting his sister in Mayence, alongside Rabbi Kalonymus. "The Italian rabbi Amnon, visiting his sister for *Shavuot*, raised his sword high. 'Have courage. Our enemies kill us for merely a moment, with the sword, the easiest of the four deaths. Then we will dwell in gan Eden forever.'"[110] This certainly does sound like the Rabbi Amnon who is [fictionally] credited with reciting *Un'taneh Tokef*. Later in Anton's telling, he appears again. As the Jews of France are told about what happened to the martyrs in Ashkenaz they read a letter left and signed by Rabbi Amnon, whom they identify as someone with an Italian name visiting a relative for *Shavuot*.

> "Let me relate the power of this holy day, awesome and full of dread; today Your Kingship will be exalted. The angels are dismayed by fear and trembling as they

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[110] Maggie Anton, *Rashi's Daughters Book III:Rachel* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 237.

proclaim: Behold the Day of Judgement! On Rosh Hashanah it was inscribed and on Yom Kippur it was sealed:

How many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die, who at his predestined time and who before his time..."[111]

This is a version of *Un'taneh Tokef* that the Jews of France receive in the letter left by Rabbi Amnon before he died. The author seems to be including Amnon as part of the actual history of the Middle Ages, but even if she made it up (knowing the story is a legend), the reader is likely to perceive Amnon as real , since the poem certainly is. Again, this *piyyut* and accompanying story have embedded themselves as "history" in our perception of the Jewish experience of Medieval Europe.

In his book on the themes and texts of Jewish preaching, Rabbi Marc Saperstein offers his own struggle to make sense of *Un'taneh Tokef*. He wonders, for example, how to understand the words of the *piyyut* in the face of terminal illness of those far too young to die. Saperstein explores the traditional interpretations of the text and related themes such as being inscribed for life or for death, and the meaning of being wicked or righteous in Jewish tradition. In the end he argues that "many generations of leading Jewish thinkers refused to accept the notion that the judgment on Rosh Hashanah implies a causal link between goodness and life, and between wickedness and death in the following year."[112] One of the particulars that Saperstein discusses is the word *gezeira* (line 21) which is often translated as "judgment." Here he notes that this is not the

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[111] Anton, 263-264.

[112] Marc Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn"* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College P, 1996), 43.

correct translation of the word (Hoffman's translation agrees with Saperstein). Instead it should be understood, argues Saperstein, as an arbitrary decision that may not be connected to one's actions. What is inscribed and sealed on the High Holy Days is not inherently connected with someone's "moral or religious stature."[113]

Saperstein and Hoffman understand and translate line 21 similarly, to mean, "penitence, prayer and charity help the evil decree to pass." This translation is essential to Saperstein's final interpretation of *Un'taneh Tokef*. "If penitence, prayer, and charity cannot change the external reality, if they cannot arrest the malignant cancer, they can indeed ensure that the evil potential in that reality will not become actual and enduring, but will pass. They can enable us to transcend the evil of the decree. This, I believe, is the simple meaning of the Hebrew words."[114] This is the only translation Saperstein will allow – any other plainly distorts the meaning of the Hebrew text.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) Spring 2009 Journal was dedicated entirely to High Holy Day liturgy. Writing in this issue, Rabbi Daniel Plotkin discussed a recent survey undertaken to better understand how rabbis have dealt with *Un'taneh Tokef* and the way it refers to God. Plotkin reports that at one extreme, rabbis take the text at face value and use it to challenge their congregations to improve their lives in the year to come. At the other extreme, are rabbis who simply reject it and exclude it from services. Some of the latter do so because its message does not help us to make sense of natural disasters or because it is not consistent with our belief in free will.

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[113] Saperstein, 44.

[114] Saperstein, 44.

One such rabbi contends, “It is a relic of time gone by, [it] should remain a sacred text of academicians, hidden away in libraries and never seen by the common public.”[115]

Most rabbis, though, fall somewhere in the middle, struggling to imbue the difficult words with new and relevant meaning.[116] According to Plotkin, however, most rabbis accept the *piyyut’s* powerful instruction to make the most out of our actions day by day, since we do not know what tomorrow will bring. They see *Un’taneh Tokef* as a wake-up call to full involvement in the world. It is “a prayer that is nearly impossible for rabbis to take in any literal sense”[117] but this does make it irrelevant. Plotkin himself understands the *piyyut* as affirming life and the human charge to get as much as possible out of all that we do.

Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig’s contribution offers a new understanding of the language of *Un’taneh Tokef*, which she presents as an argument against the poem’s rejection. She suggests that the language of judgment and punishment should be understood only figuratively. Even more than this, she writes that the author of *Un’taneh Tokef* himself may have intended a figurative interpretation, since so many of the verses are biblical quotations or references.[118] Wenig sees *Un’taneh Tokef’s* value in High Holy Day liturgy as offering the concrete and powerful liturgical language for which she herself (and others too, presumably) longs. The decisions to “tame the power” of the

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[115] Plotkin, 11.

[116] Daniel Plotkin, "Giving Meaning to Our Days: Reimagining Un'taneh Tokef - A Survey of Selcted Sermons," *The Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Spring 2009): 5.

[117] Plotkin, 12.

[118] Margaret Moers Wenig, "The Poetry and the Power of Paradox," *The Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Spring 2009): 56.

piyyut and omit its most difficult parts are, for Wenig, a mistake. "UT strikes me as an honest expression of some of the fundamental contradictions or paradoxes of life,"[119] she explains. She especially bemoans the exclusion of the last paragraph (on God's Great Name -- lines 32-29) which (as we saw) Wise's *Minhag America* included. This section includes an important statement about the name of humans being linked with the name of God. Line 35 stands out because it includes the only verbs in the *piyyut* that are conjugated in the perfect tense. They remind us that "we are part of an ongoing chain of humanity, of Jewish tradition."[120] This is the climax of *Un'taneh Tokef*, according to Wenig: Reform *machzorim* should ensure that worshippers have access to it. "*Un'taneh Tokef* is an artistic wrestling with impermanence and death, with deeds and their consequences, with power and powerlessness, with fear and reassurance, with mistakes and second chances. Perhaps the ultimate paradox is that life hurts but it is still worth living."[121]

Modern Musical and Prose Versions of UT

One of the ways that modern Jews are making sense of and keeping relevant the words of *Un'taneh Tokef* is through music. Two examples of this phenomenon offer contrasting views of what the words of this ancient *piyyut* mean to contemporary Jews. Leonard Cohen's song, *Who by Fire*, uses the formula of "who by..., who by...." as a

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[119] Wenig, 58.

[120] Wenig, 61.

[121] Wenig, 64.

poetic device. This song and its lyrics are a social commentary underscored by references to *Un'taneh Tokef* in each line.

And who by fire, who by water,

who in the sunshine, who in the night time,

who by high ordeal, who by common trial,

who in your merry merry month of may,

who by very slow decay,

and who shall I say is calling?

And who in her lonely slip, who by barbiturate,

who in these realms of love, who by something blunt,

and who by avalanche, who by powder,

who for his greed, who for his hunger,

and who shall I say is calling?

And who by brave assent, who by accident,

who in solitude, who in this mirror,

who by his lady's command, who by his own hand,

who in mortal chains, who in power,

and who shall I say is calling?[122]

[122] Leonard Cohen, *Who by Fire*

There is no way to know if Cohen used this format and these words simply because he himself found them powerful or if, perhaps, he understands the original words of *Un'taneh Tokef* to be a social commentary of their own. Whatever the reason, Cohen has used the simple yet haunting words of this ancient *piyyut* to write his own piece of dark music, stirring poetry, and pointed commentary.

Kibbutz Bet Hashita offers a second, and very different, example of the way contemporary Jews are using the words of *Un'taneh Tokef* to create modern meaning from an ancient source. Kibbutz Bet Hashita lost eleven young men in the 1973 Yom Kippur war. For the sixtieth anniversary of the kibbutz, composer Yair Rosenblum composed a musical setting for *Un'taneh Tokef* to honor those fallen. Rosenblum, however, does not include the complete text of *Un'taneh Tokef*. According to Rabbi Wenig's analysis, the most comforting part of the text, the end, is missing. The melody is powerful, as is the connection between the fatalistic message of the *piyyut* and the fate of those who died in the Yom Kippur war. The repeating refrain refers the listener to the sound of the shofar, the whisper of a sound, and the trembling angels. This piece underscores an awareness of mortality through the repetition of the sections that begin *Mi yichyeh u'mi yamut* ("Who will live and who will die") and *Adam y'sodo me'afar v'sofo l'afar* ("Their origin is from dust and their end is to dust"). Interestingly, Bet Hashita's *Un'taneh Tokef* incorporates the language of the *piyyut* and the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz of which an abbreviated version is printed on the back of the CD case. Bet Hashita's *Un'taneh Tokef* has found its place both in popular and liturgical music. It can

be heard on the the radio around the High Holy Days in Israel and in some progressive synagogues both in Israel and in America.

The message and structure of *Un'taneh Tokef* have also inspired new prose adaptations of the *piyyut*, included in books of High Holy Day readings. Some of these are intended to make the message of *Un'taneh Tokef* more palatable. Others, like Cohen's *Who by Fire* and Rosenblum's *Un'taneh Tokef*, are also social commentaries. It is likely that many rabbis and writers have used this text as a basis for such prose but there is no way to know about each of these powerful commentaries. The three such pieces that follow are examples of what contemporary prayer leaders are writing on the subject.

A first example comes from Rabbi Mark Greenspan in his piece, *Un'taneh Tokef, Redux*, which wonders what the *piyyut* would sound like if it retained its message but was transformed by a modern sensibility. Greenspan does not seem intent on providing a social commentary so much as a more accessible version of *Un'taneh Tokef* for congregants.

Suddenly, I felt terribly alone,
But I knew I was not alone.
Though I attended this synagogue all my life
I was in a place I had never been before.
I felt a Holy Presence, for the first time, Your presence,
Aware of everything – the wonder and the horror
The sorrow and the celebration,
Everything that makes up life

and I knew that there was more

than I had ever noticed or could measure count;

Aware of all my flaws and my failings,

Aware of my humanity

Aware of You

“Innocent or Guilty,” asked the judged,

And before I answered, the judge said:

“Don’t say another word;

I already know what you’re thinking,

Your excuses, your evasions, your rationalizations.

You can close your eyes but you can’t block Me out.

And it won’t be my hand

that will seal you in this book of life –

That’s up to you;

You will decide on the quality and quantity of your life.”

With a shudder and a smile,

I told him I knew this prayer

“Who shall live and who shall die?”

I had sung along with the cantor so many times,

Not certain of its certainty

Or its terrifying finality…

Nothing has changed, I told the Judge

– nothing more and nothing less -

But the judge turned to me

and I saw my face in His,

kind and cruel, caring and quizzical

sad and hopeful,

And I knew for the first time

that judgment begins with me

That the length of my years is measured

By the fullness of my days.

That it is not sword or earthquake,

fire or hunger that will be the measure of my life

But the small, the imperceptible decisions

I make every day.

Nothing I could do would allow me to evade this truth.

I sighed for the moments gone by

that I had lost

And for the uncertainty of the moments

yet to come -

Are they few or many?

Un'taneh Tokef Kedushat Hayom

This is a moment of pure sanctity and awesome power….

For every moment holds within it

The seeds of eternity

And the wonder of now![123]

Rabbi Greenspan offers his own way to understand the message of *Un'taneh Tokef* in contemporary language. Greenspan's piece is interesting if only because he wrote a modern version of the *piyyut*. In doing so, he indicates a belief that *Un'taneh Tokef* is worth modernizing, and that it has a value for contemporary audiences.

Two other examples of modern prose adaptations of *Un'taneh Tokef* differ from Greenspan's since they present commentaries to terrible events around the world. Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg wrote *A Contemporary Version of Un'taneh Tokef* during the second Intifada.

And who waiting for a bus?

And who sipping coffee at a café?

And who at a bar mitzvah, a seder, a holy day?

And who at a checkpoint?

And who mistaken for someone else?

And who next to the someone mistaken for someone else?

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[123] Excerpt of *U-n'taneh Tokef, Redux* by Rabbi Mark B. Greenspan

And who with a broken limb? And who with a broken heart?

And who will be filled with fear?

And who will be filled with hate?

And who will lose hope and who will regain it?

And who will gain faith and who will lose it?

And who will collapse in tears?

And who will explode in rage?

And who will remain silent?

And who will begin to talk?

And who will begin to listen?[124]

Rabbi Weinberg thus relates the powerful, repetitive phrases of *Un'taneh Tokef* (lines 15-20) to the experiences of victims impacted by terrorism and the second Intifada. Her words remind listeners and readers that it is not just those who kill and those who were killed who suffer the effects. Everyone feels the loss, the hurt, and the anger. And, Rabbi Weinberg suggests at the end, everyone has the obligation to speak and to listen – at least to bear witness, and perhaps, to create change.

Rabbi Roly Matalon wrote his own prayer based on *Un'taneh Tokef* and delivered it at the Darfur rally in Central Park in September of 2006. Like Rabbi Peltz Weinberg's poem, it too draws on the original, but uses a larger section of the text:

In the Armenian genocide it was written and in Darfur it is being sealed:

How many shall join the hundreds of thousands who have already perished,

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[124] *A Contemporary Version of Un'taneh Tokef* by Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg

and how many shall be born into a life of horror,

who shall live and who shall die.

In the *Shoah* genocide it was written and in Darfur it is being sealed:

who shall be raped and who shall be tortured,

who shall perish by sword and who by bullets,

whose village shall be burned and whose well shall be poisoned.

In the Cambodian genocide it was written and in Darfur it is being sealed:

who shall make it to the refugee camp and who shall die on the way,

who shall die by hunger and who by thirst,

who by disease and who by plague.

In the Bosnian genocide it was written and in Darfur it is being sealed:

Who shall have their food rations cut and who shall get enough food for another day,

Whose child shall die and whose child shall survive.

In the Rwandan genocide it was written and in Darfur it is being sealed:

who shall remain silent and who shall scream for action,

who shall be complacent and who shall have moral courage,

who shall cave in to despair and who shall be elevated by hope.

But our outrage, our outcry and our demand for action

can help stop this genocide NOW.[125]

Rabbi Matalon's prayer needs little commentary, but the very fact that he uses it demonstrates the familiarity that *Un'taneh Tokef* has achieved among Jews. *Un'taneh Tokef* has become part of the semi-official canon – like Psalm 23, *Adon Olam*, or the *Shehecheyanu*. Our knowledge of the poem allows Matalon to evoke past genocides and remind listeners that no current genocide can be countenanced and then to underscore his words by substituting outrage, outcry and a demand for action for repentance, prayer and charity. With genocide in Darfur still continuing, this prayer is read yearly at High Holy Day services in some communities. We will have effectively engaged in *teshuvah, tefilah* and *tsedakah* when it is outdated.

These are just some of the modern interpretations and adaptations of *Un'taneh Tokef* that exist. New ones are created each year, not all of them universally accepted, but many of them powerful. They demonstrate the lasting impact of *Un'taneh Tokef* in spite of – but, to some extent, actually because of -- its very challenging theological message. It happens that the last two versions were based on terrible occurrences of our time, but even in the absence of such historical events to motivate them, reflections on *Un'taneh Tokef* will still be meaningful as triggers to reflect on God and the human condition.

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[125] Rabbi Roly Matalon's prayer at the Darfur rally in Central Park, September 2006

Personal Reflections - What Now?

Un'taneh Tokef and the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz have found secure places in Jewish tradition and liturgy, even, now, in Reform *machzorim* which for so long omitted them. What will be the places for these two literary pieces in future prayerbooks and anthologies?

Jewish communities who do not believe in editing or altering the prayer service and who regularly study *halakhic* compilations like *Or Zarua* will most likely interact with both the *piyyut* and the legend in much the same way as they do today. But what about Jews in the various Progressive Movements around the world? As the American Reform movement gets ready to publish a new *machzor,* what should be the place and relationship (if any) of these two pieces? As a Reform rabbi, how do I incorporate the *piyyut* and the legend into my own canon of Jewish liturgy and lore?

First, the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. When writing about the story, Marcus noted that this legend was important because it was one of the first of its kind that represents the real struggles that people encounter in the face of crisis and change. It speaks to the challenges people face in finding a place in the changing world, and as such, there is something about the story that inspires me, as well, to think about my actions and their impact. How important is my faith? Is it acceptable for me to question what I believe at points along the way? My answers will not come by living in seclusion without food or drink or by having my limbs cut off – I cannot relate to the Amnon of legend literally. But since I am comfortable in the world of figurative language I am able to see a model here for my own personal struggle. I find my place in the long history of

Jews who have had to work diligently to maintain their faith in their God and in their communities. And I believe that God is with me through all of that. Even if it is the God we address in *Un'taneh Tokef*, a God whom I also encounter in figurative language.

Finally, *Un'taneh Tokef*. In spite of all of the challenging language contained within each line of this ancient *piyyut* I feel quite attached to the God of *Un'taneh Tokef*. I do not believe in a God who decides, literally, who will live and who will die. I do not believe in a God that sits on a throne waiting for us to make mistakes so that our failings can be recorded in an ultimately fate-determining book. But I have never taken this imagery literally. God may not decide who will die by hunger and who by thirst, but people do die from hunger and thirst. Lives are regularly cut short by disease or accident or the irresponsibility of the world's citizens. God does not do this but God is a part of it -- just as each of us is. Each time I read or recite the words of this *piyyut* it reminds me of my relationship with God and of the responsibility to be God's partner. Further, responsibility to be a world partner comes along with my relationship with God..

I believe in the power of good words and good actions - of *teshuvah, tefilah* and *tsedakah*. In the Jewish community these are not activities we engage in alone. Certainly there are aspects to repentance and prayer and also charity that can be accomplished individually. But ultimately they are community oriented and require that we interact with the world. Before coming to services on the High Holy Days to ask for God's forgiveness we are required to ask for forgiveness from any person we might have hurt in the year that is ending. We pray in a *minyan*. As for *ts'dakah,* traditionally, as we approach the synagogue on Yom Kippur, we empty our pockets of *ts'dakah;* and we leave

N'ilah, one hopes, with the best *teshuvah* in mind -- to interact with one another to enrich each other's lives and to better the world. So though we read that these three pious deeds may help lessen a harsh decree from God, I believe that this only partially has to do with God. We are in a covenant, a contract, and we do have to make good on that contract with God. But God's terms require that we be the best possible people we are able to be. This is what ultimately lessens the decree passed on us and on those around us. We do that for each other. This does not minimize the role of the judging, sentencing God of *Un'taneh Tokef*. We do encounter a God who commands us to be better versions of ourselves. I heed Rabbi Wenig's suggestion to read the more problematic language in a figurative light. Liberal Jews do that with many of our sacred texts. We can do that with this one, as well.

In considering what to include in a future American Reform *machzor*, then, I would advocate for including the full text of the *piyyut*, including the last seven lines. I am moved by the idea that God and God's name are endless and everlasting. I am moved by the reminder that we are named after God's holy and great name. Our tradition attributes great power to names and to naming. If part of my namesake is God, I am reminded, again, that I am holy and that the world that awaits my action will have holes until I busy myself with the work of repair. I would also suggest that the legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz should be included in close proximity to this very old *piyyut*. The only change I would advocate with respect to the placement of these two pieces is that the direct connection between then be severed. *Un'taneh Tokef* is a *piyyut* that belongs in our High Holy Day liturgy both because of its history there and because of its message. It

speaks to the essential intention and process of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And the story of Amnon, too, has found a rightful home in the High Holy Day experience of American Reform Jews. I believe there is a way in our new *machzor* to do justice to both of these pieces - their histories, the legend of their relationship to each other, and their lasting relevance and impact for those who keep them alive.

Appendix A - *Un'taneh Tokef* Hebrew Text, Translation and Commentary

"Traditional" text of *Un'taneh Tokef* as it appears in Daniel Goldschmidt's *Machzor l'Yamim Noraim*.

1 ונתנה תקף קדשת היום / כי הוא נורא ואים
2 ובו תנשא מלכותך / ויכין בחסד כסאך
3 ותשב עליו באמת / אמת כי אתה הוא דיין
4 ומוכיח ויודע ועד / וכותב וחותם
5 ותזכר כל הנשכחות / ותפתח ספר הזכרונות
6 ומאליו יקרא / וחותם יד כל אדם בו
7 ובשופר גדול יתקע / וקול דממה דקה ישמע
8 ומלאכים יחפזון / וחיל ורעדה יאחזון
9 ויאמרו הנה יום–הדין / לפקוד על–צבא–מרום בדין
10 כי–לא–יזכו בעיניך בדין / וכל–באי–עולם יעברון לפניך כבני–מרון
11 כבקרת רועה עדרו / מעביר צאנו תחת–שבטו
12 כן–תעביר ותספר ותמנה / ותפקד נפש כל–חי
13 ותחתך קצבה לכל–בריה / ותכתב את–גזר דינם:

14 בראש השנה יכתבון / וביום צום כפור יחתמון
15 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון / מי יחיה ומי ימות
16 מי בקצו ומי לא–בקצו / מי במים ומי באש
17 מי בחרב ומי בחיה / מי ברעב ימו בצמא
18 מי ברעש ומי במגפה / מי בחניקה ומי בסליקה
19 מי ינוח ומי ינוע / מי ישקיט ומי יטרף
20 מי ישלו ומי יתיסר / מי ירום ומי ישפל / מי יעשיר ומי יעני.
21 ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה / מעבירין את–רע הגזרה:

22 כי כשמך כן תהלתך / קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות
23 כי לא תחפץ במות המת / כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה
24 ועד יום מותו תחכה–לו / אם ישוב מיד תקבלו
25 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם / ויודע יצרם
26 כי הם בשר ודם:
27 אדם יסודו מעפר / וסופו לעפר
28 בנפשו יביא לחמו / משול כחרס הנשבר
29 כחציר יבש וכציץ נובל / כצל עיבר וכענן כלה
30 וכרוח נושבת וכאבק פורח / וכחלום יעוף:
31 ואתה הוא מלך / אל חי וקים:

32 אין קצבה לשנותיך / ואין קץ לארך ימיך
33 ואין שעור למרכבות כבודך / ואין פרוש לעילום שמך.

34 שמך נאה לך / ואתה נאה לשמך
35 ושמנו קראת בשמך / עשה למען שמך
36 וקדש את שמך / על מקדישי שמך
37 בעבור כבוד שמך / הנערץ והנקדש
38 כסוד שיח שרפי קדש / המקדישים שמך בקדש
39 דרי מעלה ים דרי מטה / קוראים ומשלשים בשלוש קדושה בקדש:

Un'taneh Tokef, Translation and Commentary by Dr. Joel M Hoffman[126]

And so let holiness rise up to you, for you are our God, king.

1. And let us acknowledge the power of this day's holiness for it is full of awe and dread.[127]

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[126] The translation appears in Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *Who by Fire, Who By Water: Un'taneh Tokef* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, forthcoming 2010).

[127] Line 1. And: The first nine lines of the poem begin in Hebrew with *v-*, "and." The Hebrew *v'* is both more commonly used and more general in intent than the English "and," variously representing "because," "so," "then," etc. Still, to maintain the poetic effect, we start the poem in English with "and" here and repeat the word until line ten.

In addition, the introductory line, "And so let holiness..." also begins with "and," but is technically not part of the poem. *Un'taneh Tokef* is an example of a *silluk*, the last of nine sections that make up a standard kind of poetic addition to the liturgy called a *k'dushta* . "And so, let holiness...." is the regular introduction that announces the beginning of the silluk.

Acknowledge: Literally, "give," but the Hebrew verb is commonly used in the sense of "allow," or "permit" (as in Psalm 66:9, where God does not "give" [that is, "allow"] our feet to slip).

Power of this day's holiness: Or, "this day's holy power." Due to a quirk of Hebrew grammar, the original is ambiguous. In one case, this day has particular holiness, and the holiness has power. In another possible, but less likely scenario, the day has power, and that power is holy (in which case, it would mean, "the holiness of this day's power").

The word for "power" here, *tokef*, may refer more specifically to the kind of power that comes from authority. (We find the word isin Esther 9:29, where it seems to have this nuance.) If so, the impact of the opening is similar to, "let us defer to the authority of this day's holiness...."

It: Presumably "the day," but perhaps "the power." For grammatical reasons, the masculine "it" in Hebrew cannot refer back to the feminine "holiness."

Is full of awe and dread: We have two adjectives in Hebrew. The common translations "awful" or "awesome" for the first (*nora*) and "dreadful" for the second (*ayom*) rely upon nearly archaic usages of those words. Originally, "awe" was a combination of fear and appreciation, the sort of reaction one might have to nearby powerful lightning. But "awful" in Modern English has only a negative connotation, and "awesome" only a positive one. "Awe-inspiring" is the right idea. (Because the "high holy days" are called the "*nora* days" in Hebrew, the allusion here is similar to "it is full of high holiness.")

2. And on it your kingdom will be exalted and your throne will be established in love.[128]

3. And you will reign from it in truth. Truly you are judge[129]

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[128] Line 2. Kingdom will be exalted: This line is reminiscent of Numbers 24:7 ("...His [God's] kingdom will be exalted"), where the phrase forms part of Balaam's third blessing of the people of Israel. Normally kings, not kingdoms, are exalted. In Numbers 24:7, we find both: "His king will be higher than [King] Agag, and His kingdom will be exalted.

Established in love: The Hebrew for "love" here is *chesed*. "Mercy" is another option. English speakers have difficulty agreeing on the precise meanings of those words, and of words like them ("pity," "kindness," etc.) It is considerably more difficult to establish what the older Hebrew word means. Proverbs (16:2 and 25:5) uses what seems to be similar language, contrasting wickedness with a throne established in *tz'dakah* or *tzedek* ("justice.") Perhaps the point here is that "love" will replace or augment "justice."

[129] Line 3. Reign from it: Literally, "sit on it." Hebrew doesn't have special kingship terms like "throne" and "reign," using the common "chair" and "sit" instead. But in English, a "king's chair" is not a "chair" but rather a "throne," so we use that word above. And a king doesn't merely "sit." He "reigns." But he also doesn't reign "on" a chair, he reigns from it. This line, beginning with "your throne will be established in love," is based on Isaiah 16:5, "A throne will be established in love and [a ruler who seeks justice] will reign from it [literally: sit on it] in truth."

"In truth. Truly: We try to capture the Hebrew assonance, where *be'emet* ("in truth") is followed by *emet* (literally, "truth"). The pattern of starting a phrase with the same word that ended the previous one is common in the liturgy. Here we have to make do with the near match between "in truth" and "truly."

4. And prosecutor and litigant and witness and author and sealer, and recorder and recounter.[130]

5. And you will remember everything that has been forgotten, and you will open the book of memories[131]

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[130] Line 4. Prosecutor: Though the Hebrew here, *mochi'ach*, is broader than our English "prosecutor," we assume that all of these Hebrew words refer to roles in a court, so we try to find similar roles in English, even where the differences between our modern courts and older courts make it impossible to find an exact match.

Litigant: Literally, "knower." Perhaps "expert witness" is the point. The language is reminiscent of Pirke Avot 4:22, where in the time to come, those who have been born and who have died will be born again, to know and make known and let it be known that "God understands, is judge, is witness, and is appellant...." The image is that God simultaneously plays all of the roles of the court. (The American Reform *Gates of Repentance*, "judge, arbiter, counsel, and witness" and the British Liberal *Gate of Repentance*, "Judge, Arbiter, Expert, and Witness" convey essentially the same point. The American Conservative Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur offers, "You judge and prosecute, discern motives and bear witness.")

[131] Line 5. Everything that has been forgotten,: Literally, all the "forgottens." The Hebrew word *nishkachot* is in the feminine plural (ending in *ot*), which is usually used for events, as opposed to the masculine plural (ending in *im*), usually for people. Similarly, from the word *rishon* ("first") we get the *rishonim*, "people from a long time ago" (used to designate the first great rabbis after the Talmud was completed); and the *rishonot*, "events from a long time ago."

Book of memories: In Esther 6:1, King Ahasuerus, too, has a "book of memories." The act of reading from this book prompts the king to honor Mordecai, and, eventually, prevents the destruction of the Jews.

6. And it will be read from: everyone's signature is in it.[132]

7. And a great shofar will be sounded and a thin whisper of a sound will be heard.[133]

8. And angels will recoil and be gripped by shaking and trembling[134]

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[132] Line 6. It will be read from: The odd language here is reminiscent of Esther 6:2. Some translations --- recognizing the passive verb here --- suggest that the book, "speaks for itself."

Everyone's signature is in it: The Hebrew we translate as "signature" is, literally, "hand print," and the word for "print" comes from the same root as "seal," above. Perhaps the point is, "everyone's fingerprints are all over it." The language may reflect Job 37:7, where God takes the elements (snow, rain, etc.) and signs them on every person's hand. The British Reform Forms of Prayer suggests, "every man has signed it by his life."

The Hebrew reads, "and everyone's...." We omit the word "and" because of the oddity of connecting a future tense verb (“it will be read from) and a present tense verb (“is in it”) that way in English.

[133] Line 7. And a great shofar will be sounded: Based on Isaiah 27:13: "On that day a great shofar will be sounded and" the lost and exiled "will bow down before Adonai on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."

A thin whisper of a sound: Commonly, "still, small voice," for the Hebrew *kol d’mamah dakah* The Hebrew *kol*, which literally means "voice," was regularly used more generally to mean "sound." We don't know for sure what *d’mamah*, translated here as "whisper," means. The text is from I Kings 19:12, where Elijah finds God not in the mighty wind, earthquake, or fire (perhaps a volcano), but rather in a thin whisper of a sound. Similarly, in Job 4:16, we find *d’mamah* and *kol* juxtaposed: "I heard a whisper and a sound."

[134] Line 8. And angels will recoil: In the line above ("a thin whisper of a sound") we saw an oblique reference to Job 4:16. Job 4:18 has angels, as does this line. Literally reading between the lines, we find the connecting thought in Job 4:17: "Can humans be acquitted by God, cleared by their maker?" The image there is probably of standing in judgment in God's cosmic court. We don't know for sure what the verb *yechafeizun* means here. "Recoil" is a good guess.

Be gripped by shaking and trembling: In Psalm 48:7, we similarly find "gripped," "shaking," and "trembling." There the image is "trembling like a woman in labor."

9. And they will say, "this is the day of judgment," for reviewing the hosts on high in judgment.[135]

[135] Line 9. For reviewing the hosts on high in judgment: The language is similar to Isaiah 24:21, where God "reviews the hosts on high on high, and kings of the earth on the earth." Perhaps not coincidentally, the preceding line there, Isaiah 24:20, describes how the earth will shake (like *yeichafeizun*, "recoil"), though the verbs are not the ones we just saw here. The verb we translate as "review," *pakad*, is more commonly translated here and in Isaiah as "punish," because the result of failing the review is punishment. The verb is actually much more general, and in other contexts translations of it run from "remember" to "visit" to "oversee" and more. Finally, the odd English phrase "for reviewing" matches the odd Hebrew grammar here

10. For they will not be innocent when you judge them. And all who enter the world will pass before you like sheep[136]

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[136] Line 10. For: As in the Hebrew, this is the first line that doesn't begin with "and."

When you judge them: Literally, "in your eyes in judgment," a phrase that makes almost no sense in English. The point, though, is clear. The line seems to be based on Job 15:15: "He [God] puts no trust in his holy ones; The heavens are not guiltless in his sight;" (JPS), that is, "He doesn't trust his holy ones, and even the heavens are not found innocent by him."

All who enter... will pass: We translate literally, rather than, for example, "all who dwell on earth" (American Reform *Gates of Repentance*), or simply "everyone," so that we can maintain the progression from "enter" to "pass," next. The line is from Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2, where the context is: "On four occasions is the world judged: On Passover, for produce; on Shmini Atzeret [the last day of Sukkot], for fruit and trees; on Rosh Hashanah, all who enter the world pass before him like soldiers [or sheep] --- as [in Psalm 33:15], `The One who makes everyone's hearts and minds understand everything they do.' --- and on Sukkot, they are judged for water." The image in Hebrew is that people pass before God kivnei maron The prefix k- (or ki-) means "like," so *kivnei maron* means "like *b'nei maron* (The "*B*" changes to a "*V*" for complicated grammatical reasons.) *B'nei* means "sons of," "children of," or more generally "members of." To the Hebrew- and Aramaic-speaking ear, *maron* sounds like the Aramaic amarna, "lamb." So *B'nei maron* means "members of the flock," "lambs" -- or, because "son of" is sometimes used to express the gender of animals, "male lambs" (which, like male goats, we call "rams" in English). Taken with the prefix *ki*, "like," *kivnei maron*, therefore, means "like sheep."

However, the phrase is widely regarded to have originated from the Late Greek word *noumeron* (literally, "number," but technically "military formation"). The Hebrew prefix *b-* (or *v-*) means "in," so *kiv-* means "like in," and *kivnumeron* means "like in military formation." The difference in Hebrew between "like members of the flock" and "like in military formation," then, is simply a *vav* (long line) versus a *yud* (short line). It's not hard to imagine a scribe getting that wrong. So while our text reads, "like members of the flock," the original intent may have been, "like in military formation."

Pass: This is the first of several times we find the word "pass." Here the image is physical movement. Below, we will find a progression in the imagery from physical passing to more metaphoric movement.

Sheep: See immediately above, "all who enter."

11. As a shepherd searches for his flock and has his sheep pass under his staff[137]

12. So too will you record and recount and review all living beings as you have them pass by.[138]

13. And you will decide the end of all creatures, and write down their sentence.[139]

14. On Rosh Hashanah they will be written down, and on Yom Kippur they will be sealed:

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[137] Line 11. As a shepherd searches for his flock: From Ezekiel 34:12. The context there is that the sheep have gone astray and the shepherd will find them. Similarly, Ezekiel continues, "So too will I [God] search for my sheep and save them from every place to which they have been scattered." However, the image of shepherds and sheep is misleading to modern readers (for detail, see Joel M. Hoffman, *And God Said*, Chapter 5) . Shepherds of antiquity were strong, brave, valiant protectors of the weak, while now they are scrawny, solitary, marginal members of society. (Write "shepherd" where it says "previous occupation" on a job application and see what happens.) So even though we understand all of the words in "a shepherd searches for his flock," and even though we have no better translation, we should be clear that the original metaphor was one of a mighty savior protecting the weak from predators.

And has his sheep pass under his staff: From Leviticus 27:32, where "everything that passes under the staff" is used to mean "any herd- or flock-animal of any sort," such as "cattle and sheep." In English and in Hebrew, cattle come in herds and sheep in flocks, but in English goats are usually like cattle in that they form herds, while in Hebrew they form flocks. The two Hebrew words *eder* ("flock," here) and *tson* ("sheep") are frequently interchangeable.

[138] Line 12. Review: This is the same verb *pakad* that we saw above. Here, "punish" clearly does not work.

As you have them pass by: This is the same image of "passing" that runs throughout the poem. The original is a single word that means "cause to pass," instead of our phrase ("as you have them pass by.") The first and last phrases in a sentence are both points of emphasis, so even though we move "pass" from the beginning to the end, we maintain the emphasis on the uniting theme of the poem.

Pass on: We are fortunate that our English expression, from the verb "pass" means the same thing as the Hebrew expression from the parallel *avar* (which we translate throughout the poem as "pass").

[139] Line 13. Their: We prefer the plural here to avoid "his," "her," or "his/her." The Hebrew is clearly inclusive.

15. How many will pass on and how many will be created, who will live and who will die,

16. Who at their end and who not at their end, who by water and who by fire,[140]

17. Who by warfare and who by wildlife, who by hunger and who by thirst.[141]

18. Who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning,[142]

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[140] Line 16. By water: Or "in water." We prefer "by" so we can maintain the poetic structure throughout the translation below.

[141] Line 17. Who by warfare and who by wildlife: Literally, who by "the sword" and who by "[wild] animal." The translation problem is twofold. Most importantly, both swords and animals presented real dangers to life when the poem was written. A community hearing the poem would probably have lost members to both "the sword" and to the "wild animal," while the same cannot be said for us now. Secondly, we have poetic alliteration in the Hebrew, with *cherev* ("sword") and *chayah* ("animal"). Our translation of warfare/ wildlife preserves the poetic effect.

While death by wildlife is uncommon, it is less rare than death by actual wild animals, which most readers never even encounter. The point of the line was probably to juxtapose violence from human sources and violence from natural sources. (British Reform *Forms of Prayer* spells out the imagery here: "...by the violence of man or the beast....") Ezekiel 5:17 combines these various calamities: God will send "hunger [famine] and evil beasts" and "plague and blood will pass though you" and God will bring "the sword upon you." The verb there, "pass," is probably not coincidental.

Hunger: Or "famine." But we don't have a complement to "famine" the way we have "thirst" to match "hunger."

[142] Line 18. Plague: "Pandemic" might be better. The Hebrew word here is the general one for a plague-like outbreak, as opposed to the word we saw in Ezekiel 5:17, which is a specific kind of plague. In English, "plague" functions either way.

Stoning: Even when this was written, stoning was an antiquated notion, so we translate literally.

19. Who will rest and who will wander, who will be tranquil and who will be troubled,[143]

20. Who will be calm, and who will be tormented, who will be exalted, and who humbled, who will be rich and who will be poor?

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[143] Line 19. Who will rest and who will wander: This pair is exceedingly difficult to translate. The two Hebrew words, *yanu'ach* and *yanu'a*, literally mean "stay/rest" and "move about/wander," as we have translated. But they sound almost the same in Hebrew, the similarity in Hebrew being even more pronounced than the English transliteration might suggest. They are also recognized as opposites, appearing not just here, but also, for example, as technical terms in Hebrew grammar: there are two kinds of the Hebrew vowel *sh'va*, and they are named *nach*, akin to *yanu'ach*, and *na*, akin to *yanu'a*. (The English translations "quiescent" and "mobile" for those grammatical terms hardly work for our current purposes.) A similar euphonic effect is seen in the English pair "stay" and "stray," but that translation, while coming very close to what we want, doesn't work here because the Hebrew verb yanu'ach is most commonly associated with Shabbat, where it means rest, not stay. (The verb also appears in Job 3:13, as part of why Job wishes he had died. See "tranquil," below.) We have no pair of words that means the same thing as the Hebrew and that also imparts the same poetic impact. Because these words set the stage for the pairs that follow, we opt to translate literally, missing the poetry, but capturing the meaning.

Tranquil and who will be troubled: We use "tranquil" and "troubled" because they most accurately convey the individual Hebrew words, just as we used "rest" and "wander," above. And once again, we miss the Hebrew poetry -- in this case, because the Hebrew words are quite different and the English somewhat the same. (Artscroll's "who will live in harmony and who will be harried" is similarly an attempt to capture the poetic nature of the Hebrew pair.) The first word, *yashkit*, is a third-person Hebrew verb that is similar in form and means essentially the same thing as the third-person *yishkot*, which appears in the first person (*eshkot*) rather than third, in Job 3:13. The context is Job cursing the day he was born. Had he died at birth, he laments, he would be quiet (like *yishkot/ yashkit*) and he would rest (like *yanu'ch*, which we just saw). In our prayer here, rest and quiet represent the good side of living, while in Job, they are the good side of dying.

21. And repentance, prayer, and charity help the hardship of the decree pass.[144]

22. For Your glory is like Your name, slow to anger, quick to forgive.[145]

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[144] Line 21. And: Commonly, "but." We prefer "and" because it relates back to the “and's” that began the prayer.

Charity: A poor English translation, but it's all we have.

Help the hardship of the decree pass: This is the key to the poem. The line uses the same root *a.v.r.* (“pass”) that we've seen thoughout to explain the impact of three good actions ("repentance, prayer, and charity") upon God’s decree, the mitigation of which is the essential goal of the High Holy Days. But the second half of the line is brilliantly ambiguous in a way that's hard to capture in English. The Hebrew may mean either (1): that the three good actions mitigate "the bad decree," as implied in the American Reform *Gates of Repentance*: "temper judgment's severe decree." That is, they might make the decree less severe. Alternatively (2): they might leave the decree unchanged, but make its "badness" less. In other words, they might have nothing to do with what actually happens, but they might make it easier for us to deal with the inevitable consequences. We have chosen “hardship of the decree” because that phrase, like the Hebrew, is ambiguous. If "badness" were a common word, we might prefer "badness of the decree." "Misfortune" is another possibility.

[145] Line 22. Name: The Hebrew here, *shem*, entails "name" but it also includes the notion of "reputation," so the point is similar to "your reputation precedes you." The line here is taken from Psalm 48:11, in the context of justice filling God's right hand and of Zion and Judah rejoicing in God's judgments. The British Reform *Forms of Prayer* offers, "Your glory is Your nature."

Slow: Literally, "hard." In English, unlike in Hebrew, "hard" (and "easy"), in the sense the text intends it here, must refer to the objects of verbs, not their subjects. For example, "He is hard to antagonize" but not "He is hard to frown. So we use "slow" (not hard) and "quick" (not easy). The language is from Pirke Avot 5:11, where there are four kinds of temperaments: quick to anger, quick to forgive (Pirkei Avot says their loss is cancelled out by their gain); slow to anger, slow to forgive (their gain is cancelled out by their loss); slow to anger and quick to forgive (the righteous); and quick to anger and slow to forgive (the wicked).

23. For You do not want the dead to die, but for them to turn from their path and live.[146]

24. You wait until the day they die, accepting them immediately if they return.[147]

25. Truly you are their creator and you know their nature[148]

26. For they are flesh and blood.

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[146] Line 23. Want: Or, "take pleasure," a construction that would make the rest of the line awkward in English: "You do not take pleasure in the death of the dead." The line is adapted from Ezekiel 18:32, “It is not my desire than anyone shall die – declares the Lord God,. Repent, therefore and live.” in the context of God's retribution on those who do repent.

Them: Literally, "him." We use the plural here to avoid "him/her." The Hebrew is inclusive. The original line is based on Ezekiel 18:23, where the antecedent is "the wicked" (“It is not my desire that the wicked person shall die”). Here, the antecedent becomes "the dead."
Turn: Or "return."

[147] Line 24. The day they die: "Their dying day" is tempting, but that phrase is usually used idiomatically, and here the point is literal.

[148] Line 25. Truly you are: The Hebrew phrasing mirrors "Truly you are judge," line 3, above.

Their: The Hebrew now switches to the plural ("they"). We have used the plural all along, so we can't honor mark this change in English.

Creator and you know their nature: Our translation misses two important aspects of the Hebrew. First, the words for "creator" and "nature" in Hebrew --- *yotzer* and *yetzer* --- are nearly identical, creating an effect similar to, "you made them and you know what they are made of." But though the second word means "nature," it also specifically means "inclination" in the sense that the Rabbis use it: each person has a good inclination (the inclination to do good) and a bad inclination (the opposite). Here we read that God created us so God knows about both (and, in particular, since our sins are the issue, about the evil inclination).

27. Their origin is from dust and their end is to dust:[149]

28. At their peril gathering food, they are like shattered pottery,[150]

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[149] Line 27 Their: The Hebrew gives us, "man's," in the general sense of the word, but because "man" in many dialects refers only to men, we prefer "their." We cannot convey the fact that the Hebrew word here, *adam* sounds like *dam*, the word for "blood" that ended the last line (line 26).

Origin is from dust and their end is to dust: Commonly, "origin is dust / end is dust," but the Hebrew is more nuanced, as we indicate in the translation. The first part of the image is from Genesis 2:7. Both parts appear in Genesis 3:19. (The Hebrew literally reads, "from dust ... to the dust." We translate both as "dust," without the word "the," because we assume the point was to have two phrases that sound almost the same. For complicated grammatical reasons, the two Hebrew phrases "from dust" and "to the dust" actually sound closer than "from dust" and "to dust." The Reconstructionist *Kol Haneshama's*, "all of humanity is founded on dust" plays on the dual meaning of the Hebrew word *y'sod* here, "origin" but also "foundation."

[150] Line 28. At their peril gathering food: Based on Lamentations 5:9, where the line appears as part of a litany of suffering, the conclusion of which includes the recognition that our suffering is caused by our own sins (5:16) and then the famous plea that pervades the High Holy Day liturgy to "take us back to you that we might come back; renew our days as of old." The British Liberal *Machzor Ruach Chadashah* offers "Life is a struggle for daily bread.

They are like: In Hebrew, we have a word that means "compared to" (*mashul*) followed by "like" (k-) We translate "they are like" because otherwise our English might mean "they gather food like..." rather than "they are like...." shattered pottery: The image is from Genesis Rabbah 14. The commentary there to Genesis 2:7 ("The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth") which was referenced in the previous line here, line 27 ("Their origin is from dust and their end is to dust") discusses two kinds of vessels--- glass and pottery --- and differing views about which of the vessels can be fixed and which are beyond repaired.

29. Like withered grass and like a faded blossom, like a passing shadow and like a vanishing cloud,[151]

30. And like blowing wind and like sprouting dust and like a dream that will fly away.[152]

31. But You are King, the Living and Everlasting God.[153]

32. Your years are boundless and the length of your days is endless.[154]

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[151] Line 29. Withered grass: Based on Isaiah 40:7 ("Grass withers and the blossom fades for the breath [or wind] of God blows upon it. The people are surely like the grass."), and perhaps also an allusion to Psalm 103:15, which similarly notes human transience: "People's days are like grass; they blossom like a blossom in the field" until wind blows and they are no more.

Passing shadow: From Psalm 144:4.
Vanishing cloud: Based on Job 7:9.

[152] Line 30. Blowing wind: Still in keeping with Isaiah 40:7.

Sprouting dust: The image is reminiscent of Isaiah 5:24: "their sprout rises like dust." In Isaiah, the image is "sprouts" (better, "flowers") drying up and floating on the wind like dust. The wording here probably means the same thing, though it completes the previous image. The sprouts have withered, and now the dust has sprouted.

A dream that will fly away: From Job 20:8.

[153] Line 31. Everlasting: Literally, "lasting."

[154] Line 32. Your years are boundless and the length of your days is endless: The Hebrew for "boundless" and "endless" is, "there is no *kitzbah*" and "there is no *ketz*," literally, "there is no bound" and "there is no end." Instead of "there is no" we have words that end with –less ("boundless... endless") -- both here and immediately below (line 33 – “priceless... limitless”). Unfortunately, in rendering *kitzbah* and *ketz*, we cannot also capture the replication of sounds (*k.tz* in both).

In addition, the Hebrew reads, "...the length of your days," a familiar translation that doesn't seem to make much sense here, but we include it because otherwise we would create more of a pattern in the English ("years"/"days") than we find in the Hebrew ("years"/"length of days").

33. Your glorious chariots are priceless and the eternity of your name is limitless.[155]

34. Your name suits you and you suit your name.[156]

35. You named us after you; act for the sake of your name.

36. And sanctify your name through those who declare the sanctity of your name[157]

37. For the glory of your honored and sanctified name,

38. As the utterances of the assembly of holy Seraphim,[158]

39. Inhabitants above with inhabitants below thrice call out the trio of holiness with "holy."

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[155] Line 33. Your glorious chariots are priceless: We find the same language in Isaiah 22:18, where the glorious chariots belong to a human and become a symbol of destruction. This line thus continues the contrast between humans and God.

Limitless: Literally, "beyond description." The "-less" ending in English, like the "there is no..." construction in Hebrew, means different things in different contexts. "Valueless"
means "having no value," but "priceless" means just the opposite, "too valuable to measure." What we really want here, to keep the "-ness" pattern, is "descriptionless," but English offers no such word.

[156] Lines 34/35. Your name: As above (line 22), more than just "name," but we have no better English translation. This line begins the transition into the *k'dushah*. It parallels the more usual introduction, which is also built around combinations of the sounds *sh* and *m*, both in *SHeM* ("name") and elsewhere. See J. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book, Volume 2, The Amidah*, p. 93.

[157] Line 36. Through: Literally, "on."

[158] Line 38. As the utterances of the assembly of holy *Seraphim*: See J. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book, Volume 10, Musaf*, p. 123, for a full treatment.

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