

**God Full of Compassion: Understanding
the Development of Reform Jewish
Funeral Liturgy**

by

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For my parents Allen and Sharon Wood,

Who have always supported me in every academic and personal endeavor
and inspired me to learn and grow to the best of my abilities every day of
my life.

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DIGEST

There is no prescribed method for burying the dead in Jewish tradition. Jewish funeral liturgy is primarily guided by one central concept: paying respect to the deceased in an honorable and deferential way. Throughout history, various elements of Jewish funeral services have come in and out of existence, evolved, and changed.

This thesis traces different elements of the liturgy of the Jewish funeral service from its earliest recorded history up to modern day Reform liturgical practices. The thesis highlights and explores elements of modern Reform Jewish funeral liturgy by examining the development of particular prayers, psalms, and biblical readings. The last chapter deals specifically with modern funeral services, different musical settings and creative liturgies that are currently available to those officiating at a funeral. There is a particular emphasis in this thesis on two of the most important prayers within a modern Jewish funeral service: the memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim* and *Kaddish Yatom*, which help characterize the funeral as being Jewish.

This thesis places particular emphasis on the development of Jewish funeral liturgy in the Reform movement. Various prayerbooks of the Reform movement are examined and the development of Kaddish as central to the liturgy of the Reform movement is explicated. Various elements of the funeral service within different rabbi's manuals and funeral services of the Reform movement are traced, as well, creating a comprehensive history of the development of funeral liturgy in the movement.

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INTRODUCTION

Experiencing the death of a loved one is one of the most traumatic and emotional events in any person's life. No less difficult is the task of preparing to say goodbye to the deceased during this period of mourning. As Jews, we mark the death of our loved ones by paying honor to their lives during a funeral service. The funeral service does not attempt, primarily, to comfort the mourner in their time of despair, nor to reconcile the mourner's fate at that moment. Rather, it is an attempt to bridge the gap between life and death by honoring the departed. The liturgy found within a Jewish funeral service reflects the importance of giving honor to the deceased, provides an opportunity for mourners to physically and emotionally depart from their loved ones, while at the same time recognizing God's role in both life and death.

The liturgy associated with Reform Jewish funerals today did not develop out of a vacuum. The rubric of the funeral service, along with its components, are rooted in traditions that go back hundreds and thousands of years. With the development of the Jewish funeral throughout history, the liturgy changed and evolved over time. The central prayers of funeral liturgy, such as the Kaddish, also developed over time into their current fixed forms. New prayers, psalms, poems, and readings were created, added, or subtracted from the service to enhance its richness and texture and make it relevant for each time period. Thus, in the modern Reform Jewish funeral service, there is a combination of prayers, poems, and readings that were added at different times throughout history, and throughout the development of the Reform movement, that reflect the importance of the way in which funeral liturgy was viewed in any given historical time period.

This thesis traces the elements of the liturgy of the Jewish funeral service from its earliest recorded history up to modern day Reform liturgical practices. The thesis highlights and explores elements of modern Reform Jewish funeral liturgy such as various psalms (Psalms 1, 16, 23, 91, 121) and various biblical readings (Ecclesiastes 3, Proverbs 31 – Ayshet Chay'il) as well as different musical settings and creative liturgies that are currently available to those officiating at a funeral. There is a particular emphasis in this thesis on two of the most important prayers within any modern Jewish funeral service – the memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim* and *Kaddish Yatom*. Although there are no requirements and no part of a funeral service is set in stone, *Kaddish* and the memorial prayer are two elements of the service that characterize the funeral as being a Jewish funeral.

This thesis deals with the liturgy of a funeral service, but it does not deal with the more extensive liturgy of death and dying. Rabbi Arthur Nemitoff wrote a rabbinic thesis in 1981 dealing with the liturgy surrounding death and dying where he highlights five major prayers in the liturgy. Although we overlap somewhat in our subject matter, and I have employed much of his research and findings in my first two chapters, the main goals of our theses are different. I do not explore issues before death, such as *vidduy* (confession by the dying), or after the funeral service, such as Yizkor (memorial services). Similarly, I do not deal with mourning issues in this thesis. Though I mention periods of mourning throughout the thesis, I do not touch upon laws, rules, practices, or customs related to different periods of mourning. This thesis is intended to be a guide for understanding the actual liturgy that is used during a Jewish funeral or burial service.

The goal of this thesis, as can be read in the third and fourth chapters, is to give a historical understanding of the way in which modern Reform Jewish funeral liturgy came about. The focus of this thesis is not on the psychological impact of the liturgy of a funeral, nor even a complete analysis of each prayer or psalm. Rather, the focus of this thesis is to trace the different elements of a Jewish funeral service across time and place.

Throughout this thesis, I will address a few different questions: How did Jewish funeral liturgy develop throughout time? What sources and elements of Jewish funeral liturgy came to be regarded as more important than others? How did Reform Jewish funeral liturgy develop as Reform Judaism developed? What kinds of additions are being made today to the rubric of modern Reform Jewish funeral liturgy? Chapter one is a general overview of the history of Jewish funeral liturgy. Chapter two explores *Kaddish* and *El Malei Rachamim* in a deeper way than in the previous chapter. Chapter three deals with the development of funeral liturgy in the Reform movement, and the usage of the *Kaddish* in early Reform prayerbooks, along with a brief exploration of funeral liturgy in other movements. Chapter four looks primarily at contemporary funeral liturgies, creative liturgies, and musical settings for funerals.

I have always been fascinated by Jewish customs surrounding death and mourning. I believe that the customs, practices, and liturgy that are set in place for modern Jews in and around death help the mourners grieve appropriately for their loved ones who have died and recognize the humane aspects of death. The structure of the funeral service, the period we are given for different stages of mourning, and the words of the prayers themselves give comfort to the mourners in their most vulnerable and raw

states of being. It was my fascination and appreciation of this liturgy and these customs that led me to pursue my research and share my findings in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF JEWISH FUNERAL LITURGY

Ritual and prayer provide an opportunity for humans to connect with God. Ritual provides a structure for dealing with powerful, often conflicting, emotions and for the social recognition of a change in personal status. Though rituals can be performed privately or with others, public and structured prayer has developed into a formal liturgy. Throughout Jewish history, and within the entire corpus of Jewish textual tradition that has been written, there is no prescribed method for performing a funeral service (*levaya*) through one standard ritual, verbal liturgy or set of liturgies. Burial practices have changed throughout time, and the way in which funeral liturgy has been used has changed as well. Though much has been written in rabbinic literature about mourning practices for the mourner (*aveil*) and those who comfort the mourner, and there are lengthy descriptions of how to prepare the deceased and their body for burial, little mention has been made of the actual funeral service and the liturgy that is used within those services. Therefore, it is difficult to know exactly when, in time, certain practices and customs of Jewish funerals were seen as standard. It is even more difficult to trace their origins. Part of this difficulty in tracing this history is that “liturgy” is different from “customs and practices.” Whereas Jewish law (*halakha*) governs the practices of the Jewish people – including mourning customs and some aspects of burial –and has been analyzed and scrutinized from the time of the Talmud onward, the liturgy that is used is not governed by the same set of rules. Funeral rites and liturgies are often mentioned in conjunction with *halakha*, but there is no uniform and verbatim liturgy that has been used and rendered consistently throughout Jewish history. All Jewish liturgy developed in different times and places and reflects the community or communities from where it

came. When liturgies are used in different communities throughout the world, and over time, the liturgies can change and take on new meanings and new value. Thus, liturgies often change, develop, or even become lost.

Elements of the modern funeral service, such as the eulogy (*hesped*), the recitation of psalms, El Malei Rachamim, and Kaddish came into being and usage at different times. Separately, these core elements of the modern funeral service can have different meanings, and often their original intention was different from the way they are understood today. But when all of these elements combine, the basic structure and liturgy of a modern Jewish funeral service is formed. As mentioned, it is difficult to completely separate funeral liturgy from funeral customs. Much of the history of funeral liturgy can be understood by examining the customs that surround death, the funeral service, and mourning. Since there are few written records of standard Jewish funeral services before the last few centuries, we must rely on the written records that do exist that reflect funeral customs and liturgy. Thus, it is imperative to try and understand the history and development of the modern Jewish funeral service by examining textual sources, historical sources, and the way in which the liturgy used during funerals has changed throughout time and place in order to understand how the liturgy of the modern Jewish funeral service developed.

The liturgy and rituals associated with Jewish funerals developed out of an original concern for the well-being of the deceased. The dead are treated and looked after both physically and verbally. The basic goals of the funeral service are to dispose of the deceased in an honorable and commemorative manner, and to help the mourners

grieve for their departed while maintaining a perspective on life. There is an emphasis placed on those who are still living – it is up to them to continue praising God and to continue living.¹ The Jewish funeral service itself is and always was brief and simple in its intention to honor the deceased. The funeral is not intended to provide a great amount of comfort to the mourner, but it does provide a social function, enabling friends and relatives of the deceased to participate together in the bereavement process, while still focusing on honoring their loved one who has departed.

Early Sources and Practices

Though the Hebrew Bible is replete with stories of death and loss, and there are instances of grieving and prayer, there is very little in it that helps us understand the biblical perspective on ritual associated with burial of the dead. Genesis 23 teaches about Abraham's mourning over Sarah and his purchase of the cave of Machpelah in which to bury her, which later becomes the family burial site. Perhaps the most detailed description of a mourning practice come in Genesis 50 with the death and burial of Jacob – although this also highlights Egyptian burial customs. Jacob's son Joseph summons the physician to embalm the body, which required a forty-day period of preparation, and was later forbidden to rabbinic Jews. During that time and for the following 30 days, the Egyptians mourned. Joseph requests permission from the Pharaoh to take Jacob's body back to Canaan, where Jacob had previously selected his own burial site. The story ends with a large group of individuals accompanying the body to the place of interment. This

¹ Arthur Nemitoff, The Liturgy of Death and Dying, Cincinnati: HUC-JIR, 1981, pg. 54

story provides us with interesting insight into ancient mourning customs. A period of 30 days of mourning was said to have been observed by the Egyptians. This later provides a biblical support for the rabbinic observance of *sheloshim* – 30 days of mourning – along with the citation in Deuteronomy 34:8 when the Israelites mourn Moses in the plain of Moab for 30 days. We also learn of the process of embalming the dead, which is in opposition to rabbinic customs, and is the only reference to the embalming of the Jewish dead throughout traditional textual sources.² Even in Genesis, embalming the dead is understood as being a representation of an Egyptian custom. But nowhere in the Hebrew Bible do we get an understanding, or a liturgical example, of what was involved with the burial ceremony of the dead. We are given no reference to the words spoken at the time of death or during the burial. We know nothing of the comfort offered to the mourner's or specific prayers that may have been said as the deceased was laid to rest.

Early rabbinic and talmudic literature gives more insight into the funeral practices than the Hebrew Bible, although again there is very little direct discussion of the liturgy used or the burial practices themselves. In the Mishna, we find an explanation of when mourning is annulled due to the occurrence of a festival.

Moed Katan 2.5 If a man buried his dead three days before the Feast, the rule of seven (days of mourning) is annulled for him; if eight days before, the rule of the thirty days is annulled for him. For they have said: The Sabbath is included and does not interrupt; but the Feasts interrupt and are not included.

² Peter Kasdan, Some Aspects of Nihum Avelim in the Tradition and in Reform Jewish Practice Today, Cincinnati: HUC-JIR, 1966, pg. 9

From this, it is understood that rabbinic mourning customs were already established at the time of the composition of the Mishna in the 2nd and 3rd century. These mourning customs include the rules for observing *shiva* and *sheloshim* and how they are related to the Jewish festivals and Shabbat. Though there is no specific mention here of a funeral or funeral liturgy, we know that the idea of mourning and burial is an important part of the way in which ancient Jews conducted themselves. We have another instance similar to this one in *Moed Katan* 2.7, which elaborates on mourning customs during this time.

During a Feast, none save the near of kin may rend their garments and bare the shoulder and be given the food of mourners; and food of the mourners must be given with the couches set up in usual fashion. They may not take (the food) to a house of mourning on a plate or a salver or a flat basket, but in common baskets. And they may not say the Benediction of the Mourners during the Feast, but they stand in the row and offer consolation.

In this passage, three different aspects are mentioned that are of particular note. First, the rending of the garment (*k'riah*) is mentioned. Therefore it can be assumed that this custom, which typically takes place before the actual funeral service, was already ingrained in the rabbinic culture and mentality as an outward means of showing that one was mourning the deceased. Second, the “Benediction of the Mourners” is mentioned in conjunction with the meal of condolence. Though this passage does not specify what the Benediction of the Mourners is or when it is said, the Mishna confirms its existence at this time period. Finally, the mention of mourners standing in a row and offering consolation is mentioned in this passage. This, along with the Mourner's Benediction is

further explicated in the Babylonian Talmud. In tractate *Berachot* 3a we find the following passage:

When they have buried the dead and returned, if they can begin (the Shema) and finish it before they reach the Row then they begin it. But if they can not, they do not begin it. Of them that stand in the Row, they of the inner line are exempt but they of the outer line are not exempt.

Though this passage refers to the obligation to recite the Shema, it also confirms the practice of the mourners being comforted by friends and neighbors who offer their condolences. The ritual occurs as the mourner returns from the grave, but before the meal of condolence. There is no evidence that there was a prescribed way in which the friends offered their condolences, except for the notion that the friends formed two rows facing each other, through which the mourner passed.

There is a similar discussion in tractate *Ketubot* 8a about when a mourner can and cannot be counted as part of a quorum, in relation to the wedding blessings said for the groom. The groom is counted as part of the quorum needed for the groom's blessings. But this passage also emphasizes that a mourner is *not* counted as part of a quorum when Birkat Aveilim – the Mourner's Benediction – is recited. Therefore, it appears that the status of who can and cannot be counted in the quorum needed for blessings does not depend on whether the person in question is having the blessing recited over them. Rather, their acceptance as a member of the quorum has to do with their status in life. A groom is counted towards his own blessing, but a mourner may not count towards Birkat

Aveilim. The Rabbis further acknowledge that this discussion about needing a quorum does not have anything to do with the two rows that are formed in order to comfort the mourner. The Sages explain that Birkat Avelim is never said in the row, that no blessing is recited, and that only personal words of comfort are expressed to the bereaved. According to Rashi's medieval commentary on this subject, each of the people in the row tells the mourner, "You shall be comforted," but no blessing is recited.³ These rulings made in the Talmud, though not explicitly about funeral liturgy, do indicate that there were certain customs and practices in the early rabbinic period that are still in use today, but that may not necessarily always be used in burial customs. The notion of standing in rows to comfort the mourner is not a practice that occurs commonly after all modern Jewish Reform funerals, although it is still practiced by traditional Jews. The recitation of a blessing like Birkat Avelim has all but fallen out of modern Jewish practice, since it lost momentum and faded away during the Middle Ages. Indeed, according to Rashi, the only real explanation for what Birkat Avelim may have been, occurs in *Ketubot* 8b following the discussion mentioned above. There is an incident involving Reish Lakish, visiting a mourner, who instructed his meturgeman to address four different aspects of the situation, each with a separate benediction.

1) Praising God:

[Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe] the great Almighty in His vast greatness, Who is mighty and strong, amidst a multitude of awesome deeds, Who resurrects the dead with His word, Who performs great acts that are beyond comprehension, and

³ From Mishna, tractate *Moed Katan* 24b

wonders beyond number. Blessed are you, Adonai, Who resurrects the dead.

2) Addressing the Mourner:

Our brothers who are troubled, who are crushed, during this mourning, pay attention to examine this; this occurs in all times (death), it is the way [of the world] from the six days of creation. Many drank (from the cup of death) and many will drink. Like the drinking of the earlier generations so is the drinking of the later generations. Our brothers! May the Master of consolations comfort you. Blessed (are you Adonai) who comforts the mourners.

3) Addressing those who comfort the mourners:

Our brothers who bestow kindness, the children of those who bestow kindness, who uphold the covenant of our forefather Abraham, about whom it is stated: For I have loved him because he commands his children, etc. Our brothers! May the Master of reward pay you your due. Blessed are you who pays the reward.

4) Addressing the situation of Israel in the world:

Master of the worlds! Redeem, spare, deliver and save your nation Israel from pestilence, sword, and plunder, from wind blast and yellowing (two types of plagues that can affect crops), and from all types of misfortunes that assemble to come into the world. Before we call, You answer. Blessed are you who contains the plague.

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) who lived in the 13th century, states that we cannot assume that this custom of reciting benedictions was used for any length of time after the rabbinic period. He comments in Torat Ha-Adam⁴ that it is no longer customary to recite any of these blessings. These blessings are not recited in the street, nor in the synagogue, nor in the mourner's home. Similar statements also appear in the name of Rav Paltoy Gaon and Rav Hai Gaon, who lived even earlier than Ramban – in the geonic

⁴ Moshe ben Nachman, Torat Ha-Adam, Warsaw: Lewin-Epstein Company, 1876, pg. 149-155

period. Ramban goes on to state that even when it is customary to recite the Mourner's Blessings, only the second blessing – ending in “Blessed are you who comforts the mourners” – is mandatory. The other three blessings may be said if one wishes⁵ and they may be combined within the second blessing. Ramban comments that we may be forced to say that even this second blessing is optional for, otherwise, people would be more accustomed to saying it. Given the fact that these specific blessings are framed as a part of a story in the Talmud, which is very different from the way that other benedictions, like wedding benedictions, are described in the Talmud, it is not exactly clear to what extent they were customary, even in rabbinic culture. From this, it is understood that Birkat Aveilim was a blessing, or series of blessings, that was known to the early Rabbis even if these were not used, but that somewhere between the 5th -6th centuries and the 9th century, these blessings faded away completely.

By examining mourning and simple liturgical customs in early rabbinic sources, and some of the commentaries that were created in response to them, an understanding of the way in which these customs arose, were acknowledged, and eventually discontinued helps build a foundation for understanding modern Jewish funeral practices. Though later sources and commentators, such as the Ramban, Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam), and eventually Joseph Karo and the Shulhan Arukh all deal extensively with mourning customs, there is little that is said about the actual funeral liturgies used during burial. Rambam, for example, spends a great deal of time in Mishneh Torah discussing mourning practices in relation to the recitation of Shema because he is following the precedent of the Mishnah and codifying its materials. He also discusses the rules

⁵ Saul Lieberman, Tosefta Berachot 3:23 New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965

forbidding funeral eulogies on festival days – acknowledging the notion that eulogies in the 11th and 12th century were an indisputable part of burial practices – a practice that has lasted up to the present day. Therefore, even though the commentator's work is tied to early rabbinic sources and issues of *halakha*, there is historical insight to be gained from them. It is clear and traceable throughout Jewish history that customs such as reciting Birkat Avelim once existed as an integral part of the burial process before mourning began. However, it is also clear that those customs no longer exist and have fallen away. But, certain mourning customs such as the observance of *shiva* and *sheloshim*, along with the usage of eulogies, have remained a vital part of Jewish history and a part of the Jewish religious tradition.⁶

The History of Modern Jewish Funeral Elements

The modern Jewish funeral service is relatively simple and brief. It consists of a variety of psalms, relating either to the person's life or to death, a *hesped* – or eulogy, the prayer El Malei Rachamim, Tzidduq Hadin, and the Kaddish prayer. The funeral service can take place either at a funeral home or graveside. Funeral homes are a recent phenomenon that have emerged in the last few centuries in Europe and especially in North America. Before that time, most Jewish funerals took place next to or near the burial site. Though memorial services can be held in any location, such as the synagogue, the home, or a funeral home, much of the liturgical aspects of the Jewish funeral service

⁶ Maseckhet Semahot – Much of the material and information from this section can be found within this short post-talmudic tractate that deals with burial customs found in rabbinic and post-rabbinic literature. This minor tractate can be found at the end of the Talmud.

take place right before burial, and often at the grave.

The *hesped* appears to be the earliest burial custom of all of these modern elements. Though it is not necessarily considered a “liturgical” element of the funeral or burial service, it is certainly central to modern Jewish funeral practices. Reference to it can be found throughout rabbinic literature. One of the most informative passages about the *mitzvah* of eulogizing the deceased can be found in the Shulhan Arukh, *Yoreh De'ah* 344:1.

**מצוה גדלה לחספיד על המת קראוי ומצותו שארים את קולו לומר אלו דברים המישברים
את הלב כדי להרבות בכיה ולחזקיר שבחו**

It is a great *mitzvah* to eulogize the dead person appropriately. And the *mitzvah* is to raise one's voice to say over [the departed] things that break the heart, so that there will be much crying; and also one should mention his [the dead's] good deeds.

The *hesped* and its goals encompass so much of what is expected out of a funeral service, even though it provides no liturgical function. The *hesped* is traditionally intended to help the living bring honor to their deceased, to remember their loved ones in a final act of kindness and remembrance. It also aids in the grieving process, giving closure to the mourners and bringing about the reality of their situation in relation to the deceased.

Another major element of the burial service at the cemetery is Tzidduq Hadin – the justification of the divine decree. It is also said in its most abbreviated form immediately after one has heard that an individual has died:

ברוך אתה יי אלהנו מלך העולם דין האמת

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, the true judge.

The name “Tzidduq HaDin” comes from one of the two major prayers in the funeral service. The prayer is recited at the graveside, before or after the body is interred, and mentions the words “tzedeq” and “emet”, which mean truth and righteousness, fifteen times. In Understanding Bereavement and Grief, Menachem Brayer states, “[The prayer] accepts the death as a decision of the Almighty, asks for mercy for the survivors, and acceptance of the decree by the mourners. This helps assuage any sense of guilt in the death the survivors may feel, the sense of guilt by survivors for surviving it, and is a preparation for final acceptance of the reality of death⁷.” This prayer helps individuals and communities understand their relationship with God in relation to the tragedy of death and loss. It affirms the oneness of God and God's rule over all human beings.

The prayer is composed of several biblical texts and reads as follows:

The Rock, His work is perfect; for all of His ways are right; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He. The Rock, perfect in all His work, who can say to Him: “What do you accomplish?,” who rules below and above, who causes death and revives, who takes down to she-ol and lifts up.

The Rock, perfect in all of His deeds, who can say to Him: “What do You do?,” who promises

⁷ Norman Linzer, Understanding Bereavement and Grief, New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1962, pg. 65

and fulfills. Show us lovingkindness and grace; and for the merit of the one who was bound as a lamb [Isaac], hearken and act.

Just in all of His ways, the Rock is perfect, long suffering and full of mercy, we pray, have pity and compassion on fathers and children. Yours, O Lord, are forgiveness and mercy.

Just are You, O Lord, to cause death and revive, for in Your hand is the charge of all souls. Far be it from You to blot out the memory of us. We pray, may Your eyes be open in mercy towards us, for Yours, O Lord, are mercy and forgiveness.

If a man lives one year or if he lives a thousand years, what advantage is it to him? For he shall be as though he had not been. Praised is the Judge of truth, who causes death and revives.

Praised is He, for His judgment is true. He scans all with His eye, and pays to man his just rewards; and all render acknowledgment to his name.

We know, O Lord, that Your judgment is just. You are righteous in Your words and blameless in Your judging; no one must question the quality of Your judging. Just are You, O Lord, for right is Your judgment.

He is the true Judge, who judges in justice and truth. Praised is the Judge of truth, for all of His judgments are just and true. The soul of every living being is in Your hand; Your right hand is full of justice. Have mercy on the remnant of the flock of Your hand; and say to the angel (of Death): "Stay your hand."

You are great in counsel and mighty in action, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man; to give to each according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds; to disclose that the Lord is right. He is my Rock, in whom there is no iniquity.

The Lord gave and the Lord took away. May the name of the Lord be praised. He, the Merciful One, grants atonement for iniquity and does not destroy; often He turns aside His anger; and does not stir up all of His wrath.⁸

The history of this prayer is quite long, with roots that can be traced back to the period of the Talmud. *Avodah Zarah* 18a narrates the martyrdom of R. Hanina b. Teradyon and his wife and daughter. The Rabbi refused to heed the anti-Jewish decree, and he was about to be burned at the stake, while his wife was sentenced to death and his daughter was sent off to a brothel. The passage states, “At the time that the three of them went out, they declared the justice of the divine decree. He said, 'The Rock, His work is perfect,' and his wife said, 'A God of faithfulness, and without iniquity,' and his daughter said, 'You are great in counsel and mighty in action, whose eyes scan all the ways.' The Rabbi said, 'How great were these righteous ones that three scriptural verses, (expressing) the justice of the divine decree, came to them at the time of (submitting) to that divine decree'. This story is probably fictional because it follows the pattern of a typical foundation legend, and it is an Amoraic story most likely dated as coming from the 5th century. However, what can be inferred from this story is that the concept of *Tzidduq Hadin* was indeed connected to an individual's death, that certain biblical verses that are now a part of this medieval recitation were connected to death and prayer itself, and that both of these

⁸ Hyman Goldin, *Hamadrikh*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1956, pg. 126-128

connections were made by, at the latest, the 5th century.⁹ It seems that Tzidduq Hadin also appears in Rav Amram's prayer-code from the 9th century – though this potentially might be the work of later, anachronistic copyists. In Seder R. Amram Gaon, two manuscripts with variant readings show distinct similarities to the modern prayer.¹⁰ What can be drawn from the occurrence of Tzidduq Hadin in Seder R. Amram is that it was used as a complete liturgy that was recited at the grave of an individual. Tzidduq Hadin continued to develop during the Geonic period. By the 12th century, the text was almost identical to the text that is used today. A text of this recitation can be found in Machzor Vitry, which was composed in France in the late 11th or early 12th century. Though the verses in Machzor Vitry are not in the same sequence as the modern text, almost all of the verses are present. Machzor Vitry also provides an additionally important understanding of this ritual in that it gives the exact instructions for when Tzidduq Hadin is recited during the burial service.

When they carry the dead to the cemetery, they place the coffin in the open space, which is in front of the cemetery. They all stand around it and the Hazan recites Tzidduq Hadin and the congregation answers after him.¹¹

Contrary to other prayer books where Tzidduq Hadin is recited in unison, Machzor Vitry explains that the prayer is a type of call and response between the Hazan and the entire congregation. When the Hazan is done reciting all ten of the verses, the congregation

⁹ Nemitoff, pg. 68

¹⁰ Daniel Goldschmidt, Seder R. Amram Gaon. Jerusalem: Institute of Rav Kook, 1971, pg. 186-187

¹¹ S. Hurwitz, Machzor Vitry, Berlin, 1893, pg. 246

responds with the first verse, “The Rock, His work is perfect, for all of His ways are right. A God of faithfulness, and without iniquity, just and right is He.” However, it appears that this type of call and response is only used in Machzor Vitry, and is not found in any other prayerbook or mention of this prayer.

It should be noted that there is a difference between the Ashkenazi funeral rites and the Sephardi funeral rites, though there are many similarities and parallels between them. Both cultures and traditions remain vigilant to the central themes of the burial service and Tzidduq Hadin – the divine decree, praise for God, and the supplication for the soul of the deceased. But the Sephardi burial service is different in that it begins with seven processional circles (*hakafot*) around the coffin. Each time the circle is made, a different verse is recited. Each of the seven verses expresses a hope and desire that the soul of the deceased will find rest and comfort with God. After the body is lowered into the grave and Psalm 91 has been recited, the Tzidduq Hadin prayer is recited. But the Sephardi version of the prayer is different from the Ashkenazi prayer. It reads:

Just are you, O Lord, and righteous are your judgments. Just is the Lord in all His ways, and loving in all of His works. Your justice is just forever, and Your Torah is truth. The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. Because the word of the King is power, who can say to Him: “What do You do?” He is one, and who can refute Him? That which His soul desires, will be done. The Rock, His work is perfect; for all of His ways are right; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He. He is the true Judge who judges in justice and truth. Praised is the Judge of truth, for all of His judgments are just and true.¹²

¹² Moses Gaster, The Book of Prayer... London: Oxford University Press, 1901 pg. 200

Unlike the Ashkenazi version, this version deals only with the justice of the divine decree, and does not deal at all with the mourners or their comfort, or the request for mercy upon them. Similar to the Ashkenazi version, however, it is used as part of the burial service and also at the moment of hearing about someone's death, and its main message is the affirmation of God's justice in all things relating to life and death. Perhaps naturally, the first reaction upon hearing the news of a death would be to see God as unjust and to question God's existence in life and in death. Therefore, Tzidduq Hadin plays a vital role in helping the mourner remember the justness of God, even in sad and troubled times. Perhaps that is why it is said immediately after hearing of a death, or perhaps why it is recited immediately after burial – to remind the mourner of what it is that they may forgetting at that difficult moment. In the Sephardi service, the Hashkabah prayer is recited immediately after Tzidduq Hadin. It is nearly equivalent to the El Malei Rachamim prayer that is said in the Ashkenazi tradition.

El Malei Rachamim is a prayer that asks God to grant the deceased rest and protection of their eternal soul. Unlike Tzidduq Hadin and even Kaddish, El Malei Rachamim is a prayer that is entirely for the benefit of the deceased. Though it may aid the mourners in feeling a sense of assurance that their beloved is under the protection of God, that is not the intention of the prayer as it is written:

O God, full of mercy, who dwells in the high places, provide perfect rest, under the wings of the Shekhinah, in the high spheres of the holy and the pure, who shine as the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of (name of deceased), who has gone to his eternity, [because charity has been donated in memory of his soul]. May his rest be in paradise. Thus, may the Master

of mercy hide him in the secrecy of His wings forever. May He bind up his soul in the bond of life. The Lord is his inheritance, and may he rest in peace upon his resting place. And let us say: Amen.¹³

There are various traditions as to when the prayer is recited during the funeral service. Some particular customs place it after the body has been interred, whereas other later customs recite the prayer immediately before proceeding to the cemetery, but after the *hesped* and other various psalms have been rendered. There are also other instances, besides a burial service, where El Malei Rachamim is recited. During a Yizkor, or memorial service, on the last day of Pesach, Shavuot, Shemini Atzeret, and Yom Kippur, El Malei Rachamim is also recited. The history of El Malei Rachamim can really only be traced back to the seventeenth century, although the precise date of its composition is unknown. The fact that El Malei Rachamim is recited on Yom Kippur, the holiday that has precedent for memorial services, and that Hazkarat Neshamot developing during the Crusades, suggests that El Malei either replaced previous memorial prayers, or was integrated into that service at a later time. There is no reference to El Malei Rachamim within the memorial texts that emerge from the period of the Crusades.¹⁴ It is first mentioned in Ma'avar Yabbok, which is a book of readings, laws, customs, and ceremonies relating to death and dying. This book was written before 1626 by an Italian Kabbalist named Aaron Berechiah ben Moses of Medena.¹⁵ In this book, the reference to El Malei Rachamim says that it is not a prayer that is recited during the period of *shiva*.¹⁶

¹³ Goldin, pg. 128-129

¹⁴ Freehof, Solomon B. "Hazkarath Neshamoth" from Hebrew Union College Annual 36, 1965

¹⁵ Nemitoff, pg.65-66

¹⁶ Yehuda Greenwald, Kol Bo Al Aveilut. New York: Phillip Feldheim, Inc., 1973, pg. 24

Though this is not an extremely useful explanation of the prayer and its usage, it does indicate that the prayer was composed, used, and ingrained in funeral liturgy and custom by the time that the book was composed in the seventeenth century. It is possible that this prayer further developed as a response to the Chmielnicki massacres between 1648 and 1649, when it gained in popularity and usage. The prayer may have been spread in the Jewish communities that were affected by these massacres as a way to revere the martyrs in Eastern Europe, which would explain the various versions of the prayer that exist. Though it is unclear whether or not El Malei Rachamim was spread during the aftermath of the Chmielnicki massacres, it is clear that its development and emergence as a prayer was at least 20-25 years earlier. It likely developed out of the dirges for the martyrs of Poland in the 17th century and was embodied into the Polish ritual before it spread throughout the world.¹⁷ El Malei Rachamim was most likely used not only for the benefit of the deceased, but perhaps for the communities in Eastern Europe to deal with death and destruction that was being put upon them – though, of course, that was never its intention. Many of the Jews in these communities were unable to stop the massacres and often felt helpless and powerless. By emphasizing God's protection and care in the world to come, the Jews in Eastern Europe at that time could find comfort in the death surrounding them, and hope in their future, as well as the ability to memorialize their loved ones liturgically. Though El Malei Rachamim is traditionally said over an individual's death, there are versions of the prayer that can be said for an entire community. The verses, in these communal versions, are much longer than what is said in modern Jewish funeral services, perhaps because the communal versions of El Malei

¹⁷ Rabbi's Manual. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1961 1965, pg. 155

Rachamim specified particular times and places that were cut out in the individual versions of the prayer. In Sephardic congregations the Hashkubah prayer takes the place of El Malei Rachamim entirely. Whether said communally or for an individual at their funeral service, El Malei Rachamim has come to be seen as an integral part of the funeral service and will be discussed as such in the following chapter.

Perhaps the most salient and well-known prayer that is recited during a Jewish funeral service, and that a mourner says for the full year that follows after, is the Kaddish. It is nearly impossible, in modern funerals settings, to think of a funeral, memorial or burial service that would not include the recitation of Kaddish. The Kaddish is, in its most basic form, an eschatological prayer that deals with God's glory and God's kingdom. It does not speak about death, but rather about the praise of God and the hope for the speedy coming of God's kingdom on earth. Thus, it would seem strange that a prayer that hardly speaks to the themes of death and loss would be so closely linked to a burial and funeral service. However, in its essence, the Kaddish did not develop out of a need to comfort the mourner and affirm God in the face of tragedy, like *Tzidduq Hadin*. Rather, in its inception the Kaddish was used in several different ways, which will be explicated in the following chapter. Its link to death and funeral liturgy did not come about until after it had been developed and used as a liturgical prayer in settings other than funerals, burial and mourning. The history of the Kaddish, unfortunately, is somewhat obscure until after the rabbinic period. There are no references found in the Bible, the Mishna, or even the Talmud that links Kaddish with mourners or mourning practices. The first time that connection is made comes from a minor tractate of the Talmud called *Ma'asechet*

Sofrim, which is technically a post-talmudic composition. During the discussion of Birkat Aveilim and its recitation on Shabbat, the Kaddish is connected to the mourner and to the service:

After the Hazan has finished (reciting) the Musaf service, he goes to the back – to the doors of the house of worship, which are in front of the house of worship – and he takes the mourners and all of their relatives. He recites over them the (Mourner's) benediction and afterwards says Kaddish. One does not say, “in the world, which He will renew” except over a disciple of the wise¹⁸.

Though this is the first instance in Jewish literature of the word “Kaddish,” there is not much in the passage that elaborates on what this prayer was, or how it was said at that time. The last line would indicate that the Kaddish that is being referred to in one of the ways in which Kaddish can be used – to be said over a scholar or disciple. But the fact that its recitation is mentioned in conjunction with mourners could mean that it was connected at that time to mourning practices. However, there is no way to know the precise nature of the Kaddish used here. Further insight into the formulation of the prayer may be gleaned from Amram's prayerbook in the tenth century, though it is two centuries away from *Ma'asechet Sofrim*. There is evidence that indicates the Kaddish was already known and used for centuries before Amram's prayerbook codified it.¹⁹ It appears that the Kaddish that was recited after the service, for the mourners of the deceased, was actually a version of the Kaddish called the Hatzi Kaddish, which is

¹⁸ Ma'asechet Sofrim 19:12

¹⁹ David De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*. New York, Union Sephardic Congregations, Inc., 1964, pg. 8-10, 107-108

different from the Kaddish recited over a scholar or a disciple. What is being suggested is that the “Mourner's” Kaddish was not said by the mourners, but rather by the Hazan. The only types of Kaddish that were said by the congregation, including even the mourners, was a different type of Kaddish. But there is some confusion as to whether or not there was a specific Mourner's Kaddish at this time. The question of when and how the Kaddish was first used in conjunction with mourning remains enigmatic and is not entirely cleared up until the late 11th century. In Machzor Vitry, the following is written:

And one recited Kaddish. And one does not recite it except in (the presence of) ten (men). In all things where there is (mention of) sanctification (of God's name), there may not be less than ten (men).

After this passage, the prayerbook goes on to give the full text of the Kaddish and indicates that the Kaddish is recited after the burial of the deceased.²⁰ The association of Kaddish with the dead is also found in a medieval legend in Machzor Vitry where Rabbi Akiva meets a dead man who tells him that if his son learns to lead the congregation in Kaddish, the dead man's soul will be released from purgatory. A Kaddish for mourners is alluded to in *Ma'asechet Sofrim* and more concretely developed in Machzor Vitry, but it isn't until the thirteenth century that the custom of reciting Kaddish for the eleven months following death first appears. In Germany, during the period of the Crusades, it is reported that orphans recited the Kaddish at the conclusion of prayer services in Bohemia along the Rhine. However, it is clear that at this period, the custom had not yet been

²⁰ Machzor Vitry, pg. 247

adopted in France.²¹ The practice of reciting the Kaddish on the anniversary (*yahrzeit*) of a person's death is mentioned for the first time nearly 200 years later. It is possible that this custom came out of the massacres of the Crusades when whole communities were wiped out and that it was a way to commemorate individual martyrs and whole communities. But, even if it developed during this time period as a custom for marking the anniversary of death, it is not mentioned as being a customary practice until the fifteenth century. Though there is concrete evidence as to when and where the Kaddish developed into a mourner's prayer and a prayer used during the burial service, it is difficult to know how or why this occurred. Over the course of time, the Kaddish has increasingly been understood as a prayer that is said by the living on behalf of the dead. It is viewed as effecting a type of salvation for the soul, reflecting the legend found in Machzor Vitry. Indeed, even the early reformers of Judaism took these notions and added them in to the Kaddish text. The Hamburg Temple Prayerbook in 1819 was the first Reform liturgy to take the text of the Kaddish and change it. Before the Kaddish is recited, the following rabbinic texts appear that come from the Sephardi liturgy of burial and memorial:

All Israel have a share in the world to come, as it is said, "And your people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever."

Happy is he whose labor was in the Torah, and who has given pleasure to his Creator. He grew up with a good name. And it is about him that Solomon said in his wisdom, "A good name is better than precious oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

²¹ Jakob Petuchowski, *Jewish prayer texts of the Rabbinic Period* in The Lord's Prayer in Jewish Liturgy. New York: Seabury Press, 1978, pg. 323

Study much Torah, and they will give you much reward; and know that the giving of the reward to the righteous is in the world to come.

Exalted and Hallowed be His great name....²²

The addition by the early Reformers of this framing text renders the Kaddish into a prayer that is intended for the deceased. The Hamburg Reformers also inserted a new paragraph into the Kaddish, which will be explained further in subsequent chapters. The changes that were made by the Hamburg Temple transformed the prayer in its themes and ideas, while still retaining its wording. Only later, and in the United States, when Reform worshipers dropped many of the other versions of the Kaddish, was the prayer seen as exclusively being a prayer for the deceased and the mourners. Even though many different prayers and liturgies were being deleted from Reform prayer books, especially in America, the Kaddish was retained in the majority of American Reform prayer books. The Kaddish, and its placement and prominence within a Reform Jewish context and within burial and funeral services will be further discussed in the following chapters.

As long as people have been alive, they have had to deal with the inevitability of death. Along with that inevitability comes the task of not only burying the dead, but the task of giving honor to their lives, commemorating them, and grieving in an appropriate manner. The liturgies of burial and the funeral service speak to the ability of the mourner to accomplish all of those tasks. Liturgy does not develop out of a vacuum. It takes time and people in various contexts to turn prayers into liturgy and to turn practices into

²² S.J. Frankel and M.J. Bresslau, Hamburg Temple Prayerbook, 1819, pg. 22-25

customs. The liturgy of death is no different from other liturgy that has developed. Though it is often difficult to trace each prayer and practice to its exact beginning, Jewish literature does give a good indication as to when various funeral practices came in and out of being and usage. Understanding the historical elements of the development of key aspects of funeral liturgy gives a greater appreciation for the liturgy itself, for its survival and existence, and gives a deeper meaning to the words and themes themselves. By understanding which liturgies and practices have disappeared, and which practices and prayers have emerged at different times, a greater understanding and appreciation of modern-day funeral liturgy can be achieved. Most importantly, it is imperative to understand that the history of funeral liturgy indicates that there is no single way to memorialize the deceased. There is no particular prescribed method for burying the dead. Funeral liturgies came about in each time period and location as a response for dealing with death and grief. Either the practices fell away because they were not seen as applicable to current situations, or they developed and lasted because the liturgy was effective in its usage and understanding. But the only overriding principle behind funeral liturgy is that the intention is to honor the deceased, to understand God's role in life and in death, and to help the survivors understand and deal with their grief and with God's role in their own lives. The way in which these themes have been enacted throughout time has emerged in the various ways that funeral liturgy and customs have developed.

CHAPTER 2: KADDISH YATOM AND EL MALEI RACHAMIM

It is important that the bereaved person have (this) safe framework within which he can express all the feelings that are set in motion within him by the loss of the beloved. It is also important that the means of expression meet the needs of the psyche. The ritualized religious expression does this by releasing the emotional responses that grow from group memory and group support, that justify and accept deep feelings of pain without requiring explanations, all at a level below the threshold of consciousness.¹

Funeral liturgy within Judaism provides a religious framework for mourners to express their hopes and prayers for their deceased. The Kaddish and El Malei Rachamim are two of the most widely recognized prayers within Jewish funeral liturgy. Each of these two prayers serves different functions. El Malei Rachamim is a memorial prayer that is said on behalf of the deceased. Kaddish, on the other hand, is a doxology, an expression of praise, and an eschatological prayer that both glorifies life, God, and prays for the speedy coming of God's kingdom when death will be overthrown. The Kaddish indicates one's submission to God in spite of the loss that has just occurred. Though both prayers are said during a funeral service and in relation to the deceased, each of the prayers uses different language and imagery, and both have different purposes in their respective liturgical functions. These two prayers also developed in very different ways, in different times, and as a response to the different liturgical and religious needs of Jews. However, they both have a set place within a Jewish funeral service that is unquestionable. Even though there is no "fixed" liturgical rubric for a modern Jewish

¹ Edgar Jackson, "Grief and Religion" in Death in American Experience. New York: Schocken Books, 1974, pg. 224

funeral service, and there is room for a great variety of prayers, psalms, poems, and creative readings, the idea of having a Jewish funeral service without either El Malei Rachamim or Kaddish is difficult to imagine. In order to understand the prominence of these two prayers within Jewish funeral liturgy it is important to examine, in depth, not only how these prayers developed throughout time – as explained in the previous chapter – but also how their usage changed and evolved. The development of funeral liturgies happened in two different stages – the prayer's coming into existence and then its regular usage as a part of the liturgy that is expected at the funeral service. The distance between these two steps can either occur rapidly or it can occur over a long period of time. Prayers are only seen as a “fixed” part of the liturgy when they are used again and again in the same liturgical capacity throughout time and place. This involves understanding why the prayer came into existence in the first place, and then understanding how it remained over time as a constant part of the liturgy. These two prayers are constant to the liturgy of the Jewish funeral service and mourning rites, perhaps more than any other liturgical element besides Tzidduq Hadin or *k'riah*. Therefore, it is important to explore how and why these two prayers became constant in the liturgy by looking at their development within a liturgical context. Beyond just the historical and liturgical context, however, it is also important to understand that there is an emotional response that these prayers evoke within individuals, communities, and the entire Jewish people. The place of Kaddish and El Malei Rachamim as permanent in funeral liturgy is not just a matter of their liturgical functions, but also of the emotional expectations that mourners have for a modern Jewish funeral service. Even though El Malei Rachamim is meant to be said on behalf of the

deceased, it provides a corollary function of comforting the mourner – simply based on expectations of what liturgy should be used during the service. Likewise, the Kaddish provides some comfort to the mourner, even though that is not the explicit intention of the liturgy. Because of the Kaddish's constancy over time, mourners feel comforted by hearing the words that generations before them have uttered when they lost loved ones. Indeed, in modern Judaism, the Kaddish is what defines a funeral as being Jewish and is what ultimately gives a Jewish mourner the opportunity to grieve. Thus, it is also relevant to discuss the emotional elements that these prayers bring to mind in order to understand their place within Jewish tradition, and the way in which that has helped sustain these prayers in the funeral liturgy over time.

Kaddish

The Kaddish is known as “a prayer for the soul of the departed”² even though it makes no specific reference to those who have died. It seems peculiar that this prayer, perhaps one of the most famous prayers in all of Jewish liturgy, is said in reference to a topic which the prayer hardly addresses. Therefore it makes sense that the Kaddish prayer's original meaning does not correspond to its subsequent Jewish funeral liturgical function.³ Though there are several liturgical functions of the Kaddish, it is popularly known as a prayer said by mourners either at the burial service, or marking the anniversary of a death, which is only one of the ways in which the Kaddish can function.

² “Kaddish” in Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 10. Jerusalem, Keter Publishing Company 1972, pg. 662

³ Ismar Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993 pg. 80

This is partly because, until recently, most Reform prayerbooks eliminated all other forms of the Kaddish and partly because the Mourner's Kaddish is the only form of the Kaddish that is not simply rendered by the prayer leader, but is actually “owned” by the mourners – each person recites it individually for their own departed family member or friend. There are, in fact, five forms of the Kaddish: Kaddish Shalem, Chatzi Kaddish, Kaddish D'Rabbanan, Kaddish L'ithadatha, and Kaddish Yatom.⁴ Though each of these forms of the Kaddish shares similar words and similar liturgical functions, each one plays a vastly different role in the liturgy of a prayer service. The Kaddish can serve as a prayer that marks the ending of a particular liturgical rubric as well as being a special prayer that functions within the traditional funeral and mourning rites. The prayer itself, written in Aramaic, consists of three segments – praise of God, a petition for the speedy coming of the messianic kingdom of God, and a petition for peace for Israel. It is the wording of this prayer that leaves room for the various ways in which the prayer can function effectively in different liturgical settings. Because the prayer is not specific in terms of its wording, but is general in its concepts and language, its applicability in liturgical settings is great and varied.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the history of the Kaddish is somewhat difficult to trace. The nucleus of the Kaddish is the blessing **יהא שמה רבה מברך** **לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא** “May His great name be blessed forever and ever.” All of the references in talmudic literature relate to this sentence, which is given great importance.⁵ Originally, this phrase was used by rabbis at the end of sermons on Aggadah.⁶ Every

⁴ Nemitoff, pg. 73

⁵ Elbogen, pg. 80

⁶ See Elbogen pg. 407, note #2

sermon had to end with words of consolation, with reference to the messianic age, and some rabbis would even add short prayers to these eschatological words. These prayers had no fixed formula and were probably worded freely by the speaker who included this nucleus from the Kaddish. The connection with Aggadah helps in explaining the use of Aramaic found in the Kaddish, since this was the spoken language used in study. The first sentence of the Kaddish includes two eschatological petitions for the sanctification of God's name and for the coming of God's kingdom in messianic times. These were common themes in early rabbinic Judaism. The term “Kaddish” appears for the first time in tractate *Sofrim* which was composed around 600. Already, the Kaddish was associated with the customs surrounding shiva. It wasn't until Seder Rav Amram, in the tenth century, however, that we have full texts of the Kaddish and that the several uses of Kaddish became identical with customary usage today. The usage of Kaddish, both in liturgical forms and in relation to death and mourning is easily understandable. The eschatological nature of the Kaddish at the beginning of the prayer calls for redemption and the coming of God's Kingdom which is linked, especially in the Book of Ezekiel, with resurrection of the dead. The words **ברכתא שירתא תשבחתא** refers to “Blessings, songs, and praises,” which can easily be connected to the prayers said during any prayer service, thereby giving connection to the various functions of the Kaddish.⁷

The first function of the Kaddish is to divide the major sections of a prayer service. In Shacharit, Minha, Ma'ariv and Musaf services Kaddish Shalem (full Kaddish) is said after the Amidah, which is the most central liturgical rubric in all of these prayer services. It is placed after this section as a reminder of God's great power in heaven and

⁷ Elbogen, pg. 82

on earth, but especially in relation to the prayers of the Amidah – supplications and petitionary prayers which also extol God's virtues. This version of the Kaddish reads as follows:

Exalted and hallowed is His great name in the world which He created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the whole household of Israel, speedily and at a near time. And let us say: Amen.

May His great name be praised forever and unto all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He – though He is beyond all blessings and hymns, praises and consolations, which may be uttered in the world. And let us say: Amen.

May the prayers and supplications of the whole household of Israel be acceptable before their Father in Heaven. And let us say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven and life, for us and for all Israel. And let us say:

Amen

May He who makes peace in His high places make peace for us and for all Israel. And let us say:

Amen.⁸

Parts of this full version of the Kaddish are used in the other forms of the Kaddish, although there are some additions to those other liturgical forms. The Chatzi Kaddish, or Half Kaddish, is used as a way of dividing minor parts of the prayer service and serves as a transition in and out of those minor parts. It is also referred to as the Reader's Kaddish.

In the morning Shacharit service, the Chatzi Kaddish is said in three different places:

⁸ Petuchowski, pg. 37-39

after the Psalms are read (Psukei D'Zimrah), after the Amidah is recited, and at the conclusion of the Torah service. In the afternoon Minha service the Chatzi Kaddish is said right before the Amidah rubric. In the evening Ma'ariv service the Chatzi Kaddish is said after the Shema and before the Amidah. The recitation of the Chatzi Kaddish consists of the first three sections of the full Kaddish. The other three lines discuss prayers and supplications as being acceptable to God and that actually contain petitionary language.

Kaddish D'Rabanan, also known as the Scholar's Kaddish, is traditionally recited after the completion of the study of a section of Mishnah or Talmud, after a lecture by a rabbi or teacher, by mourners after a communal study session, or after studying/reciting a passage from rabbinic literature such as Pitom Haketoret in Shabbat Musaf. It is similar to the full Kaddish in all respects except for one section. Instead of the section that reads, "May the prayers and supplications of the whole household of Israel be acceptable before their Father in Heaven. And let us say: Amen," the following insertion appears:

For Israel and for our rabbis, for their disciples, and for the disciples of their disciples, and for all who engage in the study of Torah, here and everywhere, for them and for you may there be abundant peace, grace and loving kindness, mercy long life, ample sustenance and salvation from their Father, who is in heaven. And let us say: Amen.

Though the wording of this insertion *is* petitionary, this section is only found within Kaddish D'Rabanan. It is clear that this section has a specific purpose in asking for blessing upon those who complete Torah study. Though it is enclosed by the rest of the

text from the full Kaddish, this paragraph is the heart of Kaddish D'Rabanan and constitutes the way in which this Kaddish is different from all of the other forms of the Kaddish. The next type of Kaddish is recited at the end of studying a tractate of Talmud, but is more commonly said at the cemetery, following the burial of the deceased.

Kaddish L'ithadatha, or the burial Kaddish, is said after interment except on festival days when Tahanun and Tzidduq Hadin are also omitted. On those days, however, Kaddish Yatom is recited instead. Kaddish Yatom is also recited if there are no mourners at the graveside. The only instance, traditionally in Judaism, where the Kaddish is omitted altogether at the cemetery after burial is if there is no minyan, or quorum, present. The burial Kaddish is recited after the grave is filled with earth. In emergency cases, such as excessive grief at the time of the tragedy, or if the hour is late and Shabbat or a holy day is approaching it is permissible to say the Kaddish after the casket is covered with only a layer of earth, without waiting for the grave to be completely filled in.⁹ The text of the burial Kaddish is similar to that of the full Kaddish, except that it also omits the section that says, "May the prayers and supplications of the whole household of Israel be acceptable before their Father in Heaven. And let us say: Amen." It also changes the first section of the full Kaddish to a different text. That section of the burial Kaddish is recited as follows:

Exalted and hallowed be His great name in the world which will be renewed, resurrecting the dead, and raising them up to eternal life. He will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and establish His Temple in its midst. He will uproot idolatry from the Earth, and restore the worship of

⁹ Maurice Lamm, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 2000, pg. 63

God to its place. The Holy One, blessed be He, will reign in His sovereignty and in His glory.
May this be in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the whole household of
Israel, speedily and at a near time. And let us say: Amen.

The text of this first section elaborates on the messianic implications of the opening section of the full Kaddish. This text elaborates on the time of the messianic redemption , when God will resurrect the dead, rebuild Jerusalem and restore the world according to God's will. This makes sense, as a burial Kaddish, to talk about God in relation to the dead. It also provides a degree of comfort to the mourner to petition on behalf of their deceased in order to gain a place in the resurrection of the dead when the messianic time comes. The Burial Kaddish speaks to the hope that there is a future for the deceased, and it gives new hope to the mourner, even though it is recited at the saddest and most difficult of moments for them.

Kaddish Yatom, or the Mourner's Kaddish, is recited every day by the mourner following the day of interment, at any prayer service within the following eleven months. Traditionally, the mourner's Kaddish is not said if there is not a minyan, a quorum of ten men present, and the halakhic obligation of a mourner to recite this only extends to the child, parent, sibling, or spouse of the deceased. The mourner also recites the Kaddish on the anniversary of the person's death. It is recited after the Aleinu. The text of the mourner's Kaddish is as follows:

Exalted and hallowed is His great name in the world which He created according to His will.
May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the

whole household of Israel, speedily and at a near time. And let us say: Amen.

May His great name be praised forever and unto all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He – though He is beyond all blessings and hymns, praises and consolations, which may be uttered in the world. And let us say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven and life, for us and for all Israel. And let us say:

Amen

May He who makes peace in His high places make peace for us and for all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

The text of the mourner's Kaddish is the same as the text of Kaddish Shalem except for the section that was taken out that reads, “May the prayers and supplications of the whole household of Israel be acceptable before their Father in heaven. And let us say: Amen.” However, unlike the other forms of the Kaddish, there is no insertion that replaces that particular section, and none of the other sections have been changed.

The mourning and halakhic practices associated with reciting Kaddish Yatom are of particular note here because they frame the context for understanding the importance of this liturgical prayer within Judaism. As mentioned earlier, the mourner's Kaddish is recited at every prayer service that occurs within the Jewish calendar year, but only for eleven months. However, while Kaddish must be recited for the eleven months following interment, the mourner may not violate basic religious practices, like observance of Shabbat, in order to say Kaddish – it is not up to the mourner to determine what is more or less sacred halakhically. Kaddish Yatom, which is also referred to as the Orphan's Kaddish, is especially significant for the children of parents who have passed away. The

period for which the mourner recites Kaddish for a parent is, theoretically, a full calendar year – the time during which the deceased is considered to be under the divine judgment. Therefore, some communities follow the custom that the Kaddish be said for twelve months instead of eleven. However, a full year is considered to be the same amount of time as judgment of the wicked, and since children do not consider their parents to fall into this category, the eleven-month period is more typically observed.¹⁰ The parent-child relationship in the mourner's Kaddish is so paramount that if a parent asks a child to observe Kaddish for them for twelve months, there is no reason why the child should not honor this request. If the child believes that this will dishonor their parent and their parent's good name, then they are permitted to say the scholar's Kaddish for the remaining month in question. However, if a parent instructs a child not to say Kaddish at all for their deceased spouse (the child's other parent), the child should not obey their living parent – that is how important it is for a child to say Kaddish for their deceased parent. It is permissible for relatives to say Kaddish for those whom they are not obligated to say it for: a mother, father, sister, brother, child or spouse. In that case, the relative says Kaddish Yatom for the seven or thirty day mourning periods, according to various customs, but not for the eleven-month period or twelve-month period. According to *halakha*, Kaddish should be recited only in the presence of a quorum, which consists of ten males, including the mourners, who are above Bar Mitzvah age. The Kaddish is not an expression of personal remembrance or memory, and thus it should not be said privately. It is the common expression of the Jewish people throughout time who mourn personally and communally, and thus it is said communally. It is this very communal act

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pg. 155

that has contributed greatly to the Kaddish's continuance throughout history. Because of the need to say Kaddish three times every day, communities all around the world make minyans for those who need to recite this prayer. The recitation of Kaddish unites generations through a vertical chain of tradition and unites communities around the world through the horizontal continuum of religious practices and observances. Although these customs and practices do not contribute to a greater understanding of the liturgical elements or development of Kaddish, they demonstrate the importance of the observance of Kaddish to the mourner, to the community, and to the Jewish people throughout time and place.

The five different forms of the Kaddish prayer each retain a kernel of the full Kaddish, although various changes and omissions in the text make each of the forms different in usage and in style. Each one has a unique liturgical placement and thus the language that makes each of these forms of the prayer different is reflected by the liturgical setting and by the words and content of these variations.

These five forms of the Kaddish are technically a part of the Ashkenazic ritual and there is a difference in the Sephardic ritual of Kaddish. However, the only liturgical form in which the Sephardic ritual is different is in the burial Kaddish. Though it appears similar in form, there are sections that are expanded and where the wording is different. It reads as follows:

Exalted and hallowed be His great name who will renew the world, resurrecting the dead. He will establish His temple, and save the living, and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. He will uproot the worship of false gods from the Earth, and restore the glorious worship of God to its

beauty, splendor, and glory. May this be in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the whole household of Israel, speedily and at a near time. And let us say: Amen.

May his great name be praised forever and unto all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He – though He is beyond all blessings, hymns, praises, and consolations, which may be uttered in the world. And let us say: Amen.

May there be an end to the sword, famine, death, and bad afflictions. May He remove them from us, from you, and from all His people Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, life and satisfaction, salvation, consolation, deliverance, health, redemption, forgiveness, atonement, relief, and rescue for us and all His people Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May He who makes peace in His high places, in His mercy, make peace for us and for all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

The burial Kaddish is said at the graveside in the Sephardic burial ritual as well, after the recitation of Tzidduq HaDin. Though the Sephardim do not recite El Malei Rachamim, they do recite a memorial prayer called Hashkabah. After the Hashkabah has been recited by the leader, the entire group of mourners say the mourner's Kaddish as well – they do not wait until the next day to begin reciting that form of the Kaddish.

Although the Kaddish does not deal directly with the deceased or the mourner, it is associated with death and can be associated with consolation of the bereaved. In *Ma'asekhet Sofrim* the leader of the service would proceed to the back of the sanctuary and comfort those who were in mourning with the Kaddish by greeting the mourners at

the end of the service.¹¹ The Kaddish is not only used for that purpose; it is used in other capacities such as surrounding the Torah service. The end of the Kaddish conjures images of hope and salvation – that only God who can make peace in all the world can bring peace upon God's people as well as peace upon the mourners of Israel. Therefore, the goal of this prayer is to affirm the greatness of God and remind the Jewish people of their love of God, as well as the acknowledgment of God's supreme understanding of the world. By extolling God's virtues, each person who utters this prayer is reminding themselves of the ways in which God exists in the world. The hope that is expressed in the Kaddish prayer is a hope expressed by Jews throughout the ages for a world redeemed, where there is peace and wholeness. Aside from the content of the Kaddish, the very words and language of the prayer are comforting. The accentuation and repetition of the ideas of God's glory and peace in the world create a sense of hope in the one who recited these words. The value of those words and the way in which they are said help to ease the mourner's troubled heart and give them a renewed sense of life. It subconsciously transfers the fixed, inner gaze of the mourner from the departed to the living, from crisis to peace, from isolation to community, and from despair to hope.¹² It is no coincidence that these emotions are evoked at a time when people have suffered the greatest personal loss possible – that is perhaps why this prayer has such prominence within the liturgy of death. The Kaddish is intended to evoke faith and hope at a time when humans feel doubtful of God's existence, defiant against the structure of religion and shaken in their core understanding of the world. At this moment, after burying a

¹¹ *ibid.*, pg. 147

¹² *ibid*

loved one, or on the anniversary of the deceased's death, Jews rise and exalt the glory of God, and reaffirm their faith in the one who can bring peace into this world. By saying the words of the Kaddish, Jews not only affirm God, but they can feel comforted by God's presence in their time of despair. Feelings of agitation, guilt, and hopelessness can be quieted and subdued with the mesmerizing alliteration and repetition of the words of the Kaddish. This prayer emphasizes the peace that God will make in the heavens and on earth, and thereby the peace that can be brought to the souls of all the Jews who mourn. Every time that the Kaddish is recited, the distance between the living and the dead no longer seems so far apart. The other major way in which the Kaddish can be comforting is the notion that this prayer is a prayer that must be recited in public. It is an act of holiness (*davar shebiq'dushah*) that requires a minyan, a mourner to be present among at least 10 other people, in order for it to be recited. It is never intended to be said privately. This insistence causes the mourner to confront their grief in a very public way. Though this public grieving can be difficult for many people, it also can provide a degree of comfort for the mourner, knowing that they are not alone in their struggle and that they have a community with which to rely on in times of trouble and need. The public recitation of the Kaddish, made alongside other mourners, creates a bond between human beings in their greatest time of profound loneliness and helplessness. The Kaddish teaches that others have experienced similar tragedies and yet the Jewish people have endured. It implies that death is a part of life, a natural part of it and a part of God's will for the universe.

The Kaddish expresses a few basic Jewish attitudes and values toward life – to

accept the will of God and to praise God even in the face of tragedy, despair, and an undeserved pain of loss. In early sources, the Kaddish is found enclosed in the Tzidduq HaDin prayer which is a prayer that justifies God's decree of death. The central message of this prayer, to bless God as the ultimate ruler and Judge of life and death, resonates with the content of the Kaddish prayer. The verse of the Kaddish that states, "Let His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity" is the recognition of an Almighty God, and the sense that it is God who justly rewards and punishes, who knows best for humanity and mankind, and whose actions benefit the eternity of the human race. This prayer helps foster the understanding of a Creator who creates and destroys for the benefit of creation. This prayer helps the mourner not sink into a hole of despair and not infinitely question the mysteries of life and death. The Kaddish recognizes that humankind's limited intellect can never fully grasp the limitless wonders of the divine world, and the way in which God functions in that world and in ours. Only by the acceptance of death as a part of life, and God's role in both life and death, can life be lived to its fullest. The Mourner's Kaddish performs two different functions in comforting – it helps the internal spirit of the mourner, helping to reaffirm their faith and their understanding of God in times of trouble and despair and it teaches the mourner profound lessons about life and death in their own lives. The human condition feels pain and struggles with the loss that accompanies death. This prayer takes that most basic human struggle and addresses the doubts and questions about God's existence and God in this world, and forces the mourner to turn those doubts around. The recitation of Kaddish transforms the mourner's grief and sadness to an affirmation of God's role in the world,

and hope for the future of themselves and the Jewish people.

The Kaddish is not so much a prayer as it is a “doxology” or an expression of praise. The various forms of the Kaddish make liturgical use of this expression of praise in different ways, so as to achieve the purpose of their liturgical goal in that setting. In the setting of mourning, the Kaddish is an outpouring of emotion from a mourner who must come to terms with the reality of life and loss. It represents the finality of life and death, and forces the mourner to confront the oneness and greatness of God, even in difficult times. The Kaddish stands out among all other funeral liturgy as being the one prayer that is recited for the longest duration of time – eleven months. With its familiarity comes its popularity, enabling it to be one of the most sustained liturgical prayers throughout Jewish history once it became associated with the mourners in Germany in the 11th century. This prayer also leaves an indelible impression on the mourner because it is recited at the most vulnerable of times, the time immediately after death of a loved one. The Kaddish is perceived as emblematic of the pain that accompanies grief, but also of the ultimate hope that is renewed in affirming God's greatness. The Kaddish prayer has become so important to so many Jews over time, a hallmark of grief and bereavement, because of its universal affirmation of God that extends throughout time and place. The Kaddish prayer has long been sustained in Jewish liturgy, and as a permanent part of funeral customs, because of the Jewish need to reaffirm God's presence in the darkest moments of life.

“The strongest and most vigorous bond that links the younger generation to its people and its Torah is the kaddish”, wrote the head of a rabbinical court in Columbus, OH in

1947. “It lifts up not only the soul of the deceased, but also the soul of him who recites it. It brings him to the bosom of Israel, and in the days of mourning he learns to recognize his people and his Father in heaven. Much to our chagrin, however, this too, has been endangered. In our time, people treat the kaddish in a carefree manner. They hire strangers to say it for them, trouble-seekers who are ready with a kaddish for any calamity at all, reciting it for a dozen dead on the anniversary of their death and for half a dozen dead in the year after their death. And meanwhile, the mourners rot lazily in their beds. They do not grasp that it was precisely for the mourner that the kaddish was established, so that he may learn a chapter in Judaism.”¹³

El Malei Rachamim

El Malei Rachamim, though not nearly as well known or as popular as Kaddish, plays a crucial role in Jewish funeral services. Unlike the Kaddish, El Malei is not found in any other liturgical rubrics outside of a funeral service, a memorial service, or a Yahrzeit. It did not develop out of other liturgical settings or prayers, and it has no other liturgical offspring. That is part of what makes it so difficult to trace, in terms of origin and development. However, it is also what makes it so special and unique: the sole purpose of El Malei Rachamim is to memorialize the recently departed, to acknowledge the connection between the mourner and the deceased, and to petition for the deceased's eternal protection from God.

El Malei Rachamim is most commonly heard during a funeral, but is also heard during memorial services in the synagogue, such as on Yom Kippur or major Jewish

¹³ Leon Wieseltier, Kaddish, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998, pg. 49

festivals that include a Yizkor service. Though the placement of El Malei Rachamim within the funeral service can vary from officiant to officiant, and from place to place, it is generally recited in the middle or at the end of the funeral service. The chapel service might begin with a few introductory readings or psalms, followed by a eulogy. El Malei Rachamim typically comes after the eulogy. It may end the chapel service, or the 23rd psalm may be read as a closing psalm. If the funeral begins at the chapel and then concludes at the cemetery, it is possible that El Malei will be rendered again at the graveside, though unlikely. If the entire funeral is taking place at the cemetery, El Malei Rachamim will typically be recited or sung before the closing Kaddish prayer. In congregations that hold a *Yizkor* service, the service may conclude with the reading or singing of El Malei Rachamim by the rabbi or cantor on behalf of the communal members who are memorializing their loved ones. According to the *Kol Bo*, on the Shabbat preceding a particular Yahrzeit, the mourner may be called up to the Torah and given an aliyah, and then El Malei Rachamim is recited.¹⁴ However, this is a very uncommon custom in practice, even in the traditional Jewish world. Any number of deceased persons could be mentioned in the same memorial prayer, so some large congregations have taken to saying the memorial prayer after the Torah reading at Mincha for all those whose Yahrzeits take place during the upcoming week.¹⁵ The text of the prayer is as follows:

O God, full of mercy, who dwells in the high places, provide perfect rest, under the wings of

¹⁴ Greenwald, pg. 399

¹⁵ Isaac Klein, A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice, New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992, pg. 294

the Shekhinah, in the high spheres of the holy and the pure, who shine as the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of (name of deceased), who has gone to his eternity, because charity has been donated in memory of his soul. May his rest be in paradise. Thus, may the Master of mercy hide him in the secrecy of His wings forever. May He bind up his soul in the bond of life. The Lord is his inheritance, and may he rest in peace upon his resting place. And let us say: Amen.

Typically, however, El Malei Rachamim is reserved for a memorial service or funeral service. In terms of homiletics, El Malei Rachamim is recited in order to evoke tender and loving memories of the deceased and to emphasize the unbroken bond that exists between those that are living and those that are dead.¹⁶ The meaning of the prayer is explicit with the text – it is a petition on behalf of the dead that they may rest in peace under God's protection. The wording of this prayer shows that God is the ultimate link between life and death and that God is needed just as much for protection and security in death as in life. The petition on behalf of the dead is explicit: to rest forever in paradise. The idea of charity being given, so as to ensure the peaceful rest of the soul of the deceased, reminds the mourner of their obligation and duty to care for their loved one even in death. This charity is not seen as a bribe, a way to appeal to God through *tzedakah*, but rather as reminder to the mourner about the good that can be done both in heaven and on earth. The language of El Malei Rachamim evokes imagery of wholeness and holiness, of peace and rest and comfort for the deceased for all time. It is said by the mourner for the deceased, but there is an element of comfort in the request to “bind up his

¹⁶ Alfred Kolatch, The Jewish Mourner's Book of Why, New York, Jonathan David Publishers, 1996 pg. 83

soul in the bond of life” in relation to the deceased. This provides the mourner with the reassurance that God will protect the soul of their loved one for all eternity. It takes some of the worry, doubt, and fear off of the mourner and gives that responsibility to God. The imagery of God as being the “inheritance” of the deceased implies that their soul belongs to God and creates a sense of assurance for heavenly reward on behalf of the deceased. The imagery of being protected under God's wings gives a sense of security and stability. When the mourner is saying goodbye to their departed, feelings of helplessness, guilt, and tremendous loss can occur. El Malei Rachamim helps fill the void of despair. The prayer answers the deeply rooted need for the mourner to know that their loved one will be protected in death as in life. It provides a positive response for the questions that arise in the mind of the mourner – what happens after one dies? Even though this prayer does not give an explicit answer, it provides a modicum of reassurance that God is with the deceased and their soul no matter where they may be.

El Malei Rachamim is an Ashkenazic text. The Sephardim recite in its place the Hashkaba, the “Rest in Peace” prayer. The word itself, *hashkaba*, is from the Hebrew root meaning “to lie down.” When the hashkaba is recited over men, it begins with the words *Tov shem mi-shemen tov*, “A good name is more precious than the choicest oil” (Ecclesiastes 7:1). When it is recited over women, the prayer begins with the words *Eishet chay'il mi yimtza*, “A woman of valor who can find!”¹⁷ Hashkaba is recited in the same places that El Malei Rachamim is recited in the Ashkenazi funeral, except for Syrian Jews who recite it every morning and evening during the Shiva week prayer

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pg. 83

service.¹⁸

El Malei Rachamim is not a prayer that has changed over time. Since its first appearance in the 17th century in eastern Europe, a few decades before the Chmelnicki Massacres, it has retained the same basic format throughout time and place. It has also kept the same liturgical function for the last few hundred years, remaining solely a part of the liturgy of death and bereavement. In many ways this makes sense, seeing as how the prayer is so young compared to other Jewish prayers like the Kaddish that have developed and changed slightly over time, and that have various liturgical functions. It also makes the analysis of this prayer much easier and simpler because it has not undergone tremendous evolution or change. That being said, this prayer is still one of the key components of a modern Jewish funeral service. It is not a reading or a psalm, but a prayer that is used to memorialize the dead, and serves as the first instance of the recitation of the deceased's name in public. It is one of the main elements of a Jewish funeral service that distinguish it from a non-Jewish funeral service. El Malei Rachamim invokes the spirit of God to shelter and protect the spirit of the deceased, to watch over them in love and in compassion. El Malei Rachamim also offers comfort to the mourner through its words and content. Although the recitation of the prayer may not cause comfort in and of itself, its message to the mourner is clear: God protects those in death as in life. And this message of El Malei Rachamim can provide the comfort and the reassurance that mourners need in memorializing their dead. Just like the Jewish funeral service, the prayer El Malei Rachamim does not cut off the relationship between the

¹⁸ Herbert Dobrinsky, Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs, New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1986, pg. 74

deceased and the mourner. It is not a time to break the ties between the living and the dead. Rather, the Jewish funeral and El Malei Rachamim provide a bridge between life and death, between the living and the dead with God as the ultimate provider of protection and comfort.

Kaddish Yatom and El Malei Rachamim are two completely different liturgical prayers with one common contextual thread: God's presence in death and in life. Beyond their separate historical and liturgical contexts, each of these prayers has an emotional context as well – appealing to the greater psyche of the Jewish people, both individually and communally. Though they are not the only prayers said during a Jewish funeral service, they are two of the most widely recognized and popular prayers. Part of their popularity is due to their associations and emotional response that is elicited when they are said or sung. Jews not only feel a connection to the words that they are uttering, but also to the generations before them who have uttered the same words when memorializing and honoring their beloved departed. Jews have come to expect these prayers at a Jewish funeral service, and thus they have become a part of the liturgy of a funeral service. The liturgy of a Jewish funeral service is simple and bare, but can be full of emotion and meaning. The Kaddish and El Malei Rachamim contribute greatly to this sense of purpose and meaning in issues of life and death. Common to these two prayers is the need for God as reassurance in times of struggle and doubt. A Jewish life implies the need for God in all that is done and very specific views of God and humanity in the universe. Similarly, in death, the oneness and sovereignty of God are proclaimed, as they

are in life. God is seen as the ultimate ruler and protector, the divine Judge and creator. Kaddish and El Malei Rachamim reinforce these attributes of God by seeking to extol God's virtues and to petition for the protection and place of the dead in eternity. The primary liturgical purpose of these prayers is not to comfort the mourner, but to pay honor to the deceased – either through praising God or through requesting peace on the departed's soul – and both prayers achieve this goal beautifully and masterfully, while still providing some degree of comfort to those who mourn. The liturgical structure and function of the Kaddish is much more complex than that of El Malei Rachamim because it is used in various liturgical contexts and serves many purposes, and because initially it was not connected either to mourning or to funerals. But at the heart of each one of these prayers is the desire to recognize death as a part of life, to recognize God as the ultimate ruler in life and in death, to affirm in grief the hope for a better future, and to understand that the living and the dead do not need to feel disconnected – that the dead and the living will always find a connection in God's presence.

CHAPTER 3: FUNERAL LITURGY IN THE REFORM MOVEMENT

Reform Judaism, the first modern movement within Judaism, began with liturgical reform. The early reformers did not envision creating a radical theological shift in Judaism, but rather a liturgical and aesthetic change. These reformers were influenced by ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment and the freedoms they gained as emancipated Jews. The movement began in Europe in the early 19th century and moved to the United States, and eventually throughout the world. As it continued to develop in different times and places, liturgical reforms also continued to change.

Funeral liturgy and the place of Kaddish within the worship service change greatly throughout the history of Reform Judaism. The prayerbooks and the rabbi's manuals of the Reform movement reflect these changes throughout time. Although the prayerbooks deal only with the use of Kaddish in the worship service, the rabbi's manuals provide great insight into the suggested structure of the funeral service at various times. It is important to examine both of these types of primary documents in order to understand the way in which funerals, and funeral liturgies, were understood and utilized by Jews in the Reform movement – in Europe and in America. By comparing and contrasting funeral services it is possible to see the way in which the leadership of the Reform movement in the United States regarded various aspects of the funeral to be important, and when in history those elements were included. By tracing the usage of the Kaddish, and specifically the Mourner's Kaddish, in early Reform prayerbooks and services, it is also possible to see the way in which the Kaddish's influence and importance was regarded throughout the history of Reform Judaism. Finally, it will be

important to examine the way in which Reform funeral liturgy differs slightly from Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist funeral liturgies, in order to better understand its larger religious and social context. In order to do this, it will be most important to compare and contrast the Rabbi's manuals from each movement to better comprehend their treatments of the liturgy.

Reform Prayerbooks and the Kaddish

The first ongoing Reform congregation was formed in Hamburg Germany in 1817. It was followed closely thereafter by the Berlin Reformgemeinde in 1845. Both of these congregations, and their liturgies, are of particular note because, although they arose in larger Jewish communities from which their members did not separate, they were formed specifically on a platform of liturgical reforms. Though there were other communities in Germany and in Europe in the 19th century that made liturgical reforms to their worship services, this was done within existing synagogues that also retained allegiance to the traditional liturgies. The liturgies of the Hamburg Temple and the Berlin Reformgemeinde were, from the very beginning, designed for homogeneous groups committed to the principles of Reform Judaism.¹ The Hamburg Temple Association was formed in 1817, the Temple was dedicated in 1818, and the first edition of the Hamburg Temple prayerbook appeared in 1819. As the first prayerbook specifically designed for a

¹ Jakob Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe, New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1968, pg. 45

congregation based on the principles of Reform, the prayerbook has great historical significance. It aroused great opposition from traditional Jews, although many of its innovations and ideals are still being utilized and integrated today into Reform liturgies throughout the world. Though it was innovative as a prayerbook, the most noticeable elements of difference between worship in the Hamburg Temple and in traditional synagogues have more to do with the Temple's introduction of choir and organ, of sermons and some prayers in the vernacular, and of Sephardic pronunciations rather than any significant changes to the standard prayers of the traditional liturgy. The prayerbook itself opens from left to right, which strays from the traditional way in which *siddurim* opened from right to left. In terms of its usage of the Kaddish, it is useful to examine the differences between the prayer services found within the Hamburg Temple prayerbook and traditional worship services, since there was no other Reform prayerbook at the time with which to compare this particular aspect of the liturgy. During Erev Shabbat, in a traditional prayerbook, the entire Mourner's Kaddish is recited to separate the prayer rubrics of Kabbalat Shabbat and Shema U'virchoteha. In the Hamburg Temple prayerbook, only the Half Kaddish is recited, though it is recited entirely in Aramaic. The Half Kaddish is also recited in both the Hamburg Temple prayerbook and in traditional prayerbooks between V'shamru and the Seven Benedictions. A Full Kaddish is recited in both the Hamburg Temple prayerbook and in traditional prayerbooks immediately following the Me'en Sheva blessing. Finally, the Mourner's Kaddish appears in both the Hamburg prayerbook and traditional prayerbooks at the end of the service.

In Shabbat Morning services, there is no version of the Kaddish present in the

Hamburg prayerbook where traditionally Kaddish D'Rabbanan is said, or the Mourner's Kaddish is said, right before Psukei D'Zimrah. The Half Kaddish is recited in Aramaic where the Half Kaddish traditionally goes, right before Shema u'virchoteha. A Full Kaddish in Aramaic is also retained in the Hamburg prayerbook, where it traditionally belongs, right before the Torah service. Similarly, the Seven benedictions are enclosed by the Half Kaddish and then the Full Kaddish, both in Hebrew in the Hamburg prayerbook. Finally, the Mourner's Kaddish is recited at the end of the service, in the same format as the evening service. The Kaddish is recited, in one format or another, five times throughout Shabbat morning services which is only two times less than in a traditional prayer service. In the Erev Shabbat Service, it is recited the same number of times as in a traditional prayer service, although the format is not always the same. The Kaddish is also recited in its original Aramaic form.

The Mourner's Kaddish, i.e. The "Prayer for the Departed," found in the Hamburg prayerbook is somewhat different from the traditional Orphan's Kaddish. It has a newly framed introduction that is taken from the Spanish-Portuguese funeral and memorial liturgy, although the Kaddish itself still retains some of the same wording as the traditional Mourner's Kaddish. The novelty with this Kaddish is that it now includes a prayer for the deceased, which is not the case with the traditional Kaddish. The prayerbook offers the following text for the Mourner's Kaddish, including introduction:

All Israel have a share in the world to come, as it is said, "And thy people shall be all righteous. They shall inherit the land forever."²

² Mishna Sanhedrin 10:1, quoting Isaiah 60:21

Happy is he whose labor was in the Torah, and who has given pleasure to his Creator. He grew up with a good name, and about him Solomon said in his wisdom: "A good name is better than precious oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth."³

Study much Torah and they will give you much reward; and know that the giving of the reward to the righteous is in the world to come.⁴

Magnified and Sanctified be the great Name of Him Who will renew the world and revive the dead. May He establish His kingdom during your life and during your days, etc.

Amen, May His great Name be blessed, etc.

May there be to Israel and to all the righteous and to all who depart this world according to the will of God abundance of peace, and a good portion in the world to come, grace and mercy from the Master of heaven and earth. And let us say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace, etc.

He who makes peace on High, makes peace for all, etc.

The Hamburg Temple and its prayerbook are emblematic of the beginning of Reform liturgy. The fashioning of a true Mourner's Prayer is one of the Reform novelties of this prayerbook and this becomes the paradigm for virtually all Reform prayerbooks until the mid-twentieth century. It is important to note, as well, that the only instruction that is given for this Mourner's Kaddish is that the assembled mourners join in this prayer with the prayer leader.

It is interesting to note that the Hamburg Temple inserts various ideas and phrases from the Sephardi rite of Hashkabah into the Kaddish, for example the idea of having a portion in the world to come. The Hashkabah is a prayer recited for the repose of the

³ Talmud Bavli, Berachot 17a, quoting Ecclesiastes 7:1, with minor deviations from the Talmudic wording

⁴ Mishna Avot 2:16 with minor omissions and changes

dead and is used in Sephardic burial services, in the house of the mourner, or on the occasion of commemorating the death of a loved one. Also, for the first time ever, there are rabbinic texts that precede the actual text of the Kaddish. Though the texts that precede the Hashkubah prayer are biblical and not rabbinic, it is important to note that the custom of reciting traditional texts before a “prayer for the dead” comes from this Sephardi rite. The Mourner's Kaddish is influenced by more than just the Hashkuba prayer in the Hamburg prayerbook; the wording of the traditional burial Kaddish, and the wording and structure of the traditional Kaddish d'Rabbanan also contribute to the format of the Mourner's Kaddish in the Hamburg prayerbook.

Though many liturgical changes occur between the 1819, 1841, and 1868 editions of the Hamburg prayerbook, there are no significant changes made to the Kaddish, in any of its forms. It was not altered beyond the 1819 version because this version already is a modernist alteration that reframed the Kaddish as a mourner's prayer based on the content of the prayer itself. This newly formed Kaddish, different from the traditional Mourner's Kaddish, is hugely important in the history of Reform liturgy; it continued throughout Reform liturgy up until the emergence of *Gates of Prayer* in the second half of the 20th century in America.

The custom of having the mourners recite Kaddish at the end of the service originated in Germany during and after the Crusades. This practice became a part of the standard traditional liturgy of any given worship service in order to give mourners a chance to fulfill a halakhic obligation to say it three times a day. Even though Reform Judaism is a movement that is not built on *halakha*, the psychological and spiritual

importance of the practice continued to give the Mourner's Kaddish a regular place in the liturgy, even in early reforms. The liturgical reforms of the nineteenth century reduced the number of recitations of the Kaddish, but did not reduce the importance of the Mourner's Kaddish within the different liturgical services. Theoretically, it would be plausible to assume that the reformers might have done away with the Kaddish altogether, because of its eschatological nature and superstitious customs. But in practice the editors of the Hamburg prayerbook not only retained the Kaddish, they also provided a rabbinic introduction to the text, making it more about being a prayer for the dead rather than for those who are mourning. Even at a time when Reform Judaism was beginning to tone down the traditional dogma of "Resurrection" there was nothing done in the Hamburg prayerbook to take that out of the words and ideas of the Kaddish. Indeed, little was done by these early reformers to change the Kaddish at all in their prayer service.

The second congregation in Germany to organize and worship based on a reform of the liturgy was the Reformgemeinde in Berlin in 1845. Unlike the Hamburg prayerbook that played with the ideas of reform in the traditional liturgy and occasionally omitted prayers traditionally said during a worship service, the Reformgemeinde prayerbook was terse and brief. The last edition (c.1933) was a 64-page prayerbook that contained services for the entire year, including evening and morning services, services for the Pilgrimage festivals, High Holiday services, a Hanukkah service and a Confirmation service. The congregation intended to have only German services, except for the occasional Hebrew verses from Scripture associated with Shema, the Kedusha, the

priestly benediction on festivals, and a few other biblical verses on the High Holidays. The original 19th century liturgies of the Reformgemeinde did away entirely with the Kaddish. Instead, a memorial prayer is recited after the Gevurot benediction and before the Kedusha, which, in this prayerbook, concludes with a reference to the soul's immortality. The translated text, from the German, is as follows:

Prayer leader-

You are powerful for all eternity. Graciously You preserve the living, and in mercy you heal the sick; You support the fallen, free the captive, and keep faith with those souls who sleep in the dust. Who is your equal, All-powerful One; who is like You, All-merciful Father! For You raise up the living in grace, and the souls of the dead in love. Praised be You, Eternal, who summons the souls of the departed to new life.

Choir and Congregation-

Amen.

Silent Prayer

a) For mourners for someone recently deceased:

From the depths of my soul I look up to You, O Lord, for You are near to all who grieve at heart. It is Your hand that, in unfathomable wisdom, has taken my beloved _____. Humbly I submit to Your holy will, God of life. You give and take back; You are the One who ordains death and life. O let me find consolation in these thoughts; let me acknowledge You and revere Your wisdom. May Your name be praised and revered in both joy and sadness, in happiness and grief, from now to eternity. Amen.

b) For those who have observed the anniversary of a death in the preceding week:

I think of you, my beloved _____, whom the hand of the all-wise Guide of the world has too

soon called back from me and from the earth. Again a year has passed over your grave, but I have not forgotten the love that you bestowed on me, nor the happiness that I shared with you; and I will remember you/ honor you as long as I live. I thank You, O God, that You preserve the departed alive in the memories of those who are left behind.

Prayer leader-

All-wise and all-merciful God! Look down upon the mourners; comfort and raise up those who are bowed down [with grief]. Let them be strong in their reliance upon You, for You, in Your mercy, grant life and, in Your wisdom, take it back again. May the memory of the departed be a blessing for all those who mourn.

Choir and Congregation:

Amen.⁵

It would be incorrect to say that the Reformgemeinde prayerbook of 1933 does away entirely with the Mourner's Kaddish. Rather, it uses a few key phrases in Aramaic, and the rest of the prayer is recited in German. The Kaddish is not found where it is traditionally expected to be, after the Aleinu and at the end of the service. Rather, the Kaddish appears after the Kedusha and before the Torah service in the morning service, almost in place of the G'vurot section of the Amidah. This is, most likely, in order to recall the “resurrection of the dead” in this part of the service. The following section is the translated version of this part of the morning prayer service⁶:

⁵ Translation by Dr. Richard Sarason from the original German text . *Gebetbuch der Genossenschaft fuer Reform in Judenthum* (1848), pg. 47-48

⁶ Translation of original text in German by Jakob Petuchowski. *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*, pg. 63-64

(For mourners in the period of mourning:)

Out of the depths I call unto Thee, O Lord, Who art near unto all them that are of saddened heart. In Thine unsearchable wisdom, Thou hast taken from me the beloved....Humbly I bow to Thy holy will, O God of life. Thou hast given and hast taken away. Thou bringest down, and Thou raisest up again.

Let me find comfort in this thought, and let me revere Thy wisdom. Amen!

(For those remembering a departed relative at a "Jahrzeit":)

I remember you, dear...., whom the will of the omniscient Guide of the World has called away all too soon. Again a year has gone over your grave. The love which you have shown me, and the joys which you have given me, have not been forgotten by me. I will remember you as long as I live.

Praised art Thou, O Lord, Who keepest the departed alive in memory of their survivors.

Amen!

We remember our departed:

(The congregations rises)

and, with grateful hearts, we renew the memory of their life and deeds.

In pious resignation we say:

יְתַגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא:

May God be praised in the world, which He hath created according to His omnipotent will.

May His Kingdom come soon, and may His rule be accepted by all the world. May we become citizens of this Kingdom, together with all the children of man, in the paternal household of God.

And may all those who have departed according to the will of the Almighty rest in peace.

Faithfully they will be remembered in the hearts of their loved ones!

God be praised from eternity to eternity!

CONGREGATION: **אמן: יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא**

(The congregation is seated.)

(On special days of remembrance, the choir sings the anthem, “All the souls do rest in peace.”)

SILENT PRAYER.

This departure from the typical Aramaic version of the prayer is more radical than in any other Reform prayerbook. But the ideological beliefs embedded within the text itself are still present, albeit in the vernacular. And the early aesthetic ideas of the Reform movement, including choral singing and elevated diction are clear and present in this version of the Kaddish. It is interesting to note that there is a separate section to be read by those who are mourning and by those who are observing a Yahrzeit, that the entire congregation is instructed to rise, and that there is a response section from the congregation. Clearly, the editors of the Reformgemeinde prayerbook were interested in a very specific type of memorial section in the worship service that retained the essence of the Mourner's Kaddish, while also upholding their ideas of reform and innovation.

Unlike the extreme end of the spectrum of Reform liturgy that the Reformgemeinde represented, the prayerbook of the West London Synagogue of British

Jews was only concerned with two things: an abbreviated liturgy and a decorous worship service. The British Jews were not interested in theological reforms or troubled by the same ideological reforms that the German Reformers felt. One of the greatest differences between this synagogue and the German Reform synagogues was that among its members there were more Sephardim than Ashkenazim. Thus, it is no surprise that in places where the wording of the prayers diverges from what is found in the German Reform rites, the West London Synagogue most often follows the Sephardi rite. However, the most noticeable quality of all of the liturgy in this prayerbook is its brevity. It is not dramatically brief like the Reformgemeinde liturgy, but it appears more like an abbreviated version of traditional Jewish liturgy. Unlike the Hamburg prayerbook, there is no introduction to the Kaddish – which is to be expected in a more traditional worship service. And unlike the Reformgemeinde prayerbook, there is no use of the vernacular when it comes to reciting Kaddish. What the British reformers did, however, was to translate the Kaddish from its Aramaic text into Hebrew. The British Reform Jews' aversion to Rabbinic Judaism extended to the Aramaic language and text that still existed in several prayers. Thus, the following translation of the Kaddish, from Aramaic to Hebrew is found in their prayerbook⁷:

יתגדל ויתקדש שם הגדול: בעולם אשר ברא כרצונו.

וימליך מלכותו. ויצמיח ישועתו. ויקרב משיחו.

בחיים ובימים ובחיי כל בת ישראל במהרה ובזמן קרוב ואמרו אמן:

יחי שם הגדול מבורך. לעולם ולעולמי עולמים:

⁷ Jakob Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe, pg. 67

יתברך. וישתבח. ויתפאר. ויתרומם. ויתנשא. ויתהדר, ויתעלה. ויתהלל. שם הקדוש ברוך הוא:
 למעלה מן כל ברכות. שירות. ותשבחות. הנאמרים בעולם ואמרו אמן:
 יחי שלום רב מן השמים. ושבע. וישועה. ונחמה. ורפואה. וגאולה. וסליחה. וכפרה. ורוח. והצלה
 לנו ולכל ישראל. ואמרו אמן:
 עשה שלום במרומי. הוא יעשה שלום. עלינו ועל כל ישראל. ואמרו אמן:

The Hebrew wording of this prayer is a direct translation of the Aramaic version in the Spanish-Portuguese rite of the traditional Mourner's Kaddish. In later editions of the prayerbook, corrections were made to the grammatical mistakes found in this version. The Hebrew style was also improved upon greatly in the next edition. The example of the West London Synagogue prayerbook, and the other two German prayerbooks, show the variety of ways in which the early reformers in Europe experimented with liturgy and with the Kaddish itself. Each of these prayerbooks shows the way in which different communities valued the Kaddish as a part of the prayer service, but felt a need to make changes to it in order to best fit their liturgical needs at the time – whether it be placement in the service, language changes, instruction and aesthetics, elimination within various places of the service structure, or using Kaddish Yatom as an actual mourner's prayer. These changes in Europe, both liturgical and ideological, paved the way for Jewish reform in the United States.

Reform Judaism developed in the United States after its development in Europe. Reform Judaism in America was brought over by the Central European emigrants who had experienced liturgical reforms in their former congregations. Most 19th century Reform congregations were not founded as Reform, but elected to become so as their

membership changed, with the influx of different waves of emigration.

One of the first Reform prayerbooks in America was Order of Prayer for the Divine Service which was edited by Leo Merzbacher and published in 1855. Merzbacher was the spiritual leader of Temple Emanu-El in New York – which did begin as a Reform congregation and was directed to prepare a book specifically for the congregation. This prayerbook was, in fact, the first of its kind in America to be prepared by a rabbi.

Although Merzbacher conducted his sermons in German, he wrote this prayerbook in both Hebrew and English, perhaps in an attempt to Americanize the service as much as possible. From the Hamburg Temple prayerbook Merzbacher adopted the Aramaic addition to the Kaddish which makes specific reference to the dead (“Al Yisrael”). The Kaddish appears as a “Mourner's Kaddish” in the evening and morning service.

Merzbacher was the first to coin the term “Mourner's Kaddish” as opposed to the literal translation of Kaddish Yatom as “Orphan's Kaddish.” Towards the end of the prayerbook there is a page of prayers that can be recited at Tzidduq HaDin, along with another Mourner's Kaddish. Merzbacher's successor, Samuel Adler, who revised the prayerbook in 1860 and 1863, introduced a novel Hebrew prayer for the comfort of mourners into the weekday Amidah when recited in a house of mourning⁸. This was a separate service “Order of Prayer for the House of Mourners,” published in 1871. This service begins with Psalm 103, in both Hebrew and German, and not English. A typical “shiva” prayer service follows, including an abbreviated section of the Amidah, and ends with the Mourner's Kaddish. The usage of Kaddish in the Merzbacher and Adler prayerbooks is very simple – it is only used as a Mourner's Kaddish and it is kept in its

⁸ Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995, pg. 237

original Aramaic with an English translation.

One of the most famous leaders of the early Reform Movement in America, Isaac Mayer Wise, created a prayerbook in 1857 entitled Minhag Amerika. Wise hoped that this book would someday unite the traditionalist and reformist factions of American Jewry by providing clear and faithful English translations of the liturgy while retaining much of the traditional Hebrew text, shortening the service, dropping all references to a personal Messiah and calls for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.⁹ In terms of the use of Kaddish in Minhag Amerika, Wise lists an “Orphan's Benediction” otherwise known as Kaddish Yatom, at the end of the morning service, near the end of the Shabbat evening service, and at the end of Shabbat Musaf. However, these are not the only versions of Kaddish that are found in this prayerbook. Immediately preceding the Aleinu for Shabbat Musaf, the regular morning service and the Shabbat evening service, there is a Kaddish Shalem which is called “Kaddish Titkabel” here which Wise translated as “The Hazan's Kaddish”. This particular Kaddish is exactly the same in structure and wording as the Mourner's Kaddish, except that it omits the paragraph that begins “Al Yisrael” and replaces with the following words, in Hebrew and in English: *“May the prayers and supplications of the whole house of Israel be accepted in the presence of their Father, who is in heaven.”* This Kaddish is recited by the Hazan (cantor), on behalf of the congregation's petitions. The Half Kaddish is also recited during the daily morning service and the Shabbat morning service right before Shema u'virchoteha as a clear indicator of transition between prayer rubrics. Minhag Amerika appears to be quite

⁹ Elliott Stevens, “The Prayerbooks, They Are A 'Changing' ”in *Reform Judaism Magazine*, Summer 2006

similar in its usage of the Kaddish throughout different prayer services to the Hamburg Temple prayerbook. There are various forms of the Kaddish throughout different services in this prayerbook, and the Aramaic has not been altered or changed in any significant way. Even the English translation of the Kaddish prayer, on the opposite page, remains true to the original text. Finally, there is one last item of note in this prayerbook – a burial service. This burial service is found at the back of Minhag Amerika, similar to the placement of the burial service in the 3rd edition of Order of Prayer for the Divine Service. It is several pages long, and although it never uses El Malei Rachamim, it uses the Sephardi Hashkaba prayer instead and it does refer the reader, at the end, back to the “Orphan's Kaddish” in earlier services. (From the Hamburg prayerbook onward, El Malei Rachamim is not used in burial services until the 20th century in America.) This service begins with Tzidduq Hadin and Psalm 16 is offered as an alternative prayer for Holidays, Rosh Hodesh, Hannukah and Purim – on days when tachanun is not recited. Immediately after this service, there are more prayers for “Mourners and the Jahrzeit” including Psalm 90, and parts of Psalm 37 and 144. After this section, there are special sections for the remembrance of a father, mother, or other relative. Finally, this burial service ends with the Sephardi Hashkabah prayer, which is very similar to the Ashkenazi El Malei Rachamim in terms of its wording and ideology for protection of the dead under God's care:

Undisturbed peace under the protection of God is reserved to saints and pure, whose light will shine forth in the luster of heaven; where there is atonement of faults, misdeed removed, and salvation near; and where there is mercy and grace before Him who thrones on high, and bliss

allotted in eternal life. O may there also be repose granted to all the dear and beloved souls, who departed this life in the past year, and were gathered to their people. The spirit of God may lead them into the fields of happiness.

Amen.

May the Supreme King of Kings, in His abundant mercy have compassion, and be gracious unto them; may He shelter them under the shadow of His wings and in the secret of His tabernacle, that they may behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple. May peace be with them, peace in their resting-place; as it is said, "Peace shall come, they shall rest on their couches; those who walked in uprightness." May it be granted unto them, and unto all the departed of Israel, and in the grace of God. Amen.¹⁰

Minhag Amerika was not the first American Reform prayerbook, but it is emblematic of early Reform in America and Wise's contributions to the American Reform movement. His prayerbook's treatment of the Kaddish and the inclusion of the burial service really offers a lot of information about the way in which funeral liturgy was seen as an integral part of the early American Reform Jewish experience.

If Isaac Mayer Wise and his prayerbook are representative of moderation in the early Reform movement, David Einhorn represents uncompromising radicalism, in both his principles and his prayerbook. Olat Tamid, Einhorn's prayerbook, was based on his principle that Judaism's dogmas formed the basic characteristics of Judaism, rather than laws. What set Einhorn's work apart was its focus on symbolism and the religious significance behind ritual acts.¹¹ Einhorn's prayerbook was intended to bring a deep sense of meaning and understanding about Judaism and its worship service to Reform

¹⁰ Isaac M. Wise, Minhag Amerika, Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing Company, 1872, pg. 269

¹¹ Meyer, pg. 246

Jews in the United States. There is a mixture of German and Hebrew in Einhorn's prayerbook, with somewhat more German. The Kaddish, in Olat Tamid, is kept in its original Aramaic with a translation that follows it. Unlike many of the differences between Olat Tamid and Minhag Amerika, and indeed between Wise and Einhorn themselves, the Kaddish was kept in the same simple and unaltered manner in both of these prayerbooks. The only form of the Kaddish used in Olat Tamid is the Mourner's Kaddish and it is used at the end of each major prayer service – Shabbat evening and morning, weekdays, and at the end of the special service for the three pilgrimage festivals and Hannukah. The Mourner's Kaddish still contains the paragraph which begins, “Al Yisrael” and makes reference to the deceased. The Kaddish is said by the congregational leader and by the mourners in the congregation. Einhorn also has a section of the prayerbook entitled, “The Order of the Burial of the Dead” that includes psalms, readings, and prayers both for the home and for the graveside service. In Emil G. Hirsch's English edition of Olat Tamid (1896), the service performed in the home begins with a reading in Hebrew of Adonai Mah Adam – a series of psalm verses found in the traditional liturgy at the beginning of a memorial service - alongside the English translation, followed by the Minister's Address, and concluding with Psalm 90 in both Hebrew and English. The service at the graveside begins with Tzidduq HaDin in Hebrew and in English, followed by the Minister reciting psalm 91 as the body is lowered into the earth. The Minister then continues in English for several pages, and is instructed at one point to place earth over the coffin. Here, too, the Sephardi Hashkabah is used instead of El Malei Rachamim, in a shortened and adapted version that ends with verses

from psalm 122:

Peace and rest are prepared under the wings of the divine majesty, on the heights where the sainted good and noble are treasured in the light of heavenly glorification. Where they are, in and before the Most High, is forgiveness, salvation, mercy, everlasting life. May into this life of peace eternal have entered our Dear - . May God take under His almighty protection his (her) soul. May he (she) behold God's beauty and abide forever in His sanctuary! May peace follow him (her) and be upon his (her) resting place. May God be thy guardian; O slumbering friend; thy shadow, on thy right side. May God preserve thee from all evil, and guard thee on all thy ways. May he bless thy going out from life mortal, - thine entrance upon life eternal – now and forever more. ¹²

The service concludes with the rendering of the Mourner's Kaddish by the mourners in Aramaic, with an English translation.

Though there are many ways in which Merzbacher, Wise, and Einhorn differ in their prayerbooks, their use of the Mourner's Kaddish, and its importance in their worship services, are strikingly similar. Wise and Einhorn both include the Sephardi Hashkabah in their burial service in place of El Malei Rachamim, which follows the Hamburg prayerbook and a number of other German Reform rites. Although Wise uses other forms of the Kaddish in his prayerbook, Merzbacher and Einhorn do not. However, when it comes to the Mourner's Kaddish, all three of these examples of early Reform prayerbooks in America give sanctity and honor to the text of the Kaddish. All three give adaptations of the Hamburg prayerbook version with the additional paragraph of “Al Yisrael.”

¹² David Einhorn, Olat Tamid, Chicago: 1896, pg. 153

Clearly, the Kaddish's place in the worship service of the American Reform Jew was of paramount importance, even in the early years of liturgical reform.

In an attempt to create a uniform worship style throughout the United States, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) created a Union Prayer Book in 1892. One of the goals of the Union Prayer Book (UPB) was to define a more modern, decorous mode of worship, which meant greater instruction than ever before – indications of when the congregation should sit or stand, when they should read responsively, and when the choir should participate. Similarly, the Kaddish has instructions about which parts are to be read by the congregation and which parts are meant to be read by the service leaders. This edition of the UPB also has a variety of services to choose from. For example, on Erev Shabbat, there are three different services from which to choose. Although the first service contains the entire Mourner's Kaddish – including “Al Yisrael” - and the English translation, the other two services simply indicate where the Kaddish is read, and do not provide the text itself. On Shabbat morning, there is only one service offered in the prayerbook, but the Mourner's Kaddish is preceded by several readings in English that can be read either by those in a period of mourning, or those who are observing a Yahrzeit. Again, the prayerbook indicates where the congregation participates and where the minister reads. The Mourner's Kaddish also appears in the services for the three festivals, weekday evenings, and weekday mornings. This edition of the UPB also contains a section entitled, “Funeral Services.” It begins with Psalm 90 in English and is followed by Adonai Mah Adam in Hebrew and in English. The minister is then instructed to give the Funeral oration, or if no oration is given, to read any of the original

meditations that follow on the next few pages. The meditations can be given for the death of a child, the death of a young maiden, or the death of a middle-aged person. The funeral service then continues at the grave with an abbreviated Tzidduq HaDin in Hebrew and in English. The body is lowered into the grave as the minister recites Psalm 91 in English. Psalm 112 follows in English, then Psalm 16 in Hebrew, and another selection of psalm verses in Hebrew and in English. The minister is then instructed to take a handful of dirt and throw it onto the grave as the following is recited: "Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes. The dust only returns to the dust, whence it came; but the spirit returns to God who gave it."¹³ This suggests the Jewish custom of making the burial and the coffin as simple and natural as possible so that the body can decompose quickly and return to the earth. Finally, the minister is instructed to recite Hashkaba before the Mourner's Kaddish is rendered. It is interesting to note that the Sephardi Hashkabah here too is favored over the Ashkenazic El Malei Rachamim. The following prayer is used:

Rest and peace are for those who have entered into the realms of life eternal. The righteous shine like the stars in heaven; they have in their death laid away the imperfections of the dust, and found the more perfect union with God in that higher existence which is in store for all the good and pure. Into this life eternal has entered the soul of our departed friend....May peace be with him (her) and peace be over the resting place of his (her) mortal dust. May the Lord bless his (her) going out from this life, and his (her) going in to life eternal. Amen. ¹⁴

¹³ Union Prayer Book, 1892, Cincinnati: CCAR Press, pg. 190

¹⁴ ibid., pg. 190

This memorial prayer is similar in theme and wording to all the other versions of the Hashkabah in previous prayerbooks, in that it calls by name the departed and speaks of God's protection in life and in death. But the wording is different enough that it still can be considered a new and altered rendering of this prayer. Finally, the funeral service ends with the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish. It is recited in the exact same way as it had been throughout the prayerbook. It is important to note that the Kaddish used here is *not* the Burial Kaddish, but the Mourner's Kaddish (with the Hamburg expansion), as it has been used in all of the American Reform prayerbooks previously examined. The traditional Burial Kaddish is not used during these funeral services and the Mourner's Kaddish is used instead, because it is assumed that the mourners would not be familiar with the Burial Kaddish and might stumble in its recitation or might not be able to recite it.

In 1895, a revised edition of the 1892 prayerbook emerged. The second unpublished volume of the 1893 UPB High Holidays draft had been revised in 1894 and published that year. The new prayerbook committee, including members such as Kaufmann Kohler, then rewrote a new edition of the first volume in 1895, in part as a response to many of the larger east coast congregations that identified with David Einhorn's prayerbook and did not resonate with Isaac S. Moses's 1892 edition. Although the Kaddish is not markedly different from the 1892 edition, it is interesting to note that this edition of the UPB does not contain a funeral service, whereas the 1892 edition does have a funeral service.

As the Reform movement continued to change in America, so too did its liturgy

and prayerbook. The prayerbook was still called UPB, but a revised version (1918) and a newly revised version (1940) adapted to the changing needs of Reform Jews in America. The 1940 edition was more accommodating of tradition than previous prayerbooks, including even the 1918 edition. In 1914 the CCAR adopted an amendment to “take into consideration the needs of more conservative congregations insofar as they do not conflict with the principles of the Conference.” The 1940 edition of the UPB changed the term “minister” to “reader”, showing the shift away from pure universalism within Reform Judaism. This edition, which came after the CCAR resolution to support and rebuild Palestine, reflects somewhat the gradual and growing emphasis on issues of peoplehood.¹⁵

Both the 1918 and the 1940 editions of the UPB do away entirely with any kind of funeral service in the prayerbook. This is because the CCAR began printing rabbi's manuals that contained these types of services. However, both editions do contain evening prayer services that are to be held in a “House of Mourning.” It is clear to see that these editions of the UPB are separating what they believe to be prayer services for the whole community from particular life cycle services, such as a funeral or burial service, that are really only necessary for the Rabbi to have at his disposal. The 1918 Revised Edition of the UPB contains the Mourner's Kaddish at the end of the Shabbat evening, Shabbat morning, Shabbat afternoon, festival evening, festival morning, weekday evening, and weekday morning services. This Kaddish contains the “Al Yisrael” paragraph mentioning the dead. The evening “Service at the House of Mourning” begins with a reading in English, followed by a responsive reading and

¹⁵ Elliott Stevens, “The Prayerbooks, They Are A 'Changing' ”. *Reform Judaism Magazine*, Summer 2006

continues with the normal liturgy for the evening service. This service, of course, also ends with the Mourner's Kaddish after the Adoration. In the back of the prayerbook, there are prayers for private devotion, including a prayer for those in bereavement, Psalm 130, and a Yahrzeit prayer – all in English. There are also prayers in English that can be recited at the graveside of a father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, child, relative, friend, teacher, or great person. These include readings and passages from Psalms 15, 131, 139, 4, 16, 23, 31, 34, 90, and 8. This entire section concludes with another recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish, although this time there is no instruction as to who says which part of the Kaddish since it is assumed that the mourner will recite the entire prayer privately. The 1940 Newly Revised edition of the UPB treats the Kaddish in the exact same way as the Revised edition, except for the addition of the readings that precede the Kaddish during Shabbat evening services and weekday morning services. What is novel in the 1940 edition is the inclusion of a transliteration of the Kaddish (in Ashkenazic pronunciation) which is the only text that is transliterated in the entire prayerbook – thus showing the significance of this prayer for the reader to be able to recite it. In this edition, there are several English readings that can be read before the Mourner's Kaddish. There is no indication as to whether or not these are silent, read by one person, or read by the whole congregation. There is also a service to be conducted in the “House of a Mourner.” It includes a reading and Psalm 121 before the service begins. It also includes the Mourner's Kaddish at the end of the service. In the Newly Revised edition, the section of the prayerbook that contains private devotion includes only a Yahrzeit prayer and a prayer dedicating a tombstone.

The next prayerbook published by the CCAR was Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book, in 1975. Unlike the previous UPB editions, there are very few “stage directions” (when to sit or stand) and virtually no instruction given as to who should be reading the prayers (the congregation or the leader). Gates of Prayer contains many different variations of Shabbat evening and morning services, weekday services, festival and holiday services, and prayers. This prayerbook is representative of the growing needs of Reform Jews in the late 20th century to be able to choose the types of services and prayers that best reflect their own personal beliefs and ideologies. One of the greatest changes between this prayerbook and all of the previous prayerbooks in America, in relation to the Kaddish, is the addition of the Reader's Kaddish before Shema u'virchoteha. The Reader's Kaddish, or Half Kaddish, appears in virtually every service in the entire prayerbook. The other major change in this prayerbook is that the paragraph in the Mourner's Kaddish that begins “Al Yisrael” has been omitted. It appears that the editors of this prayerbook were interested in keeping the Kaddish more traditional, so that mourners would not be surprised by unfamiliar text.

In the late 1990's, the CCAR began embarking on developing a new prayerbook for the turn of the millennium. In 2007, Mishkan T'fillah was published. Though grounded in Jewish texts and tradition in Hebrew, it has many creative English readings, no performance directions, new liturgical texts, and a radically different design than most previous prayerbooks. It was created as a response to the feminist critique of earlier liturgy and to the growing involvement in American religious culture with personal spirituality. Similar to Gates of Prayer, Mishkan T'fillah includes the Half Kaddish

before Shema u'virchoteha in most of the major prayer services. Kaddish D'rabbanan is also found in various services within Mishkan T'fillah, which is utterly new for a Reform prayerbook in America. The Mourner's Kaddish, also similar to Gates of Prayer, is not found at the end of each individual service, but rather in one section at the end of the prayerbook. Previous prayerbooks were more likely to direct a reader to the Kaddish at the end of another service when it was time for the prayer to be rendered. But Gates of Prayer and Mishkan T'fillah have a single version of the Mourner's Kaddish that is to be used at the conclusion of all services. The editors of Mishkan T'fillah also chose to keep the “Al Yisrael” paragraph out of the Mourner's Kaddish altogether. Just as Gates of Prayer kept the readings before the Mourner's Kaddish, so too does Mishkan T'fillah offer creative readings and mediations before the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish. Neither prayerbook offers a funeral service, or any additional prayers for those who are bereaved or observing a Yahrzeit.

The place of funeral liturgy, and specifically the Kaddish, within the Reform movement in Europe and America has altered as the movement itself has changed. These liturgical changes are evident by the usage of Kaddish and other funeral prayers and mediations in the prayerbooks of the Reform movement. Whether an individual rabbi created and edited the book, or the book was published by a larger body such as the CCAR, each prayerbook provides a snapshot of the way this particular prayer was viewed in that place and time. Each prayerbook makes a contribution to the current usage of funeral liturgy in the movement, because previous prayerbooks provide some of the structural foundation of newer prayerbooks. Choices were made, consciously, to include

or omit various readings, sections, prayers, words, and ideologies, and these prayerbooks give insight into those choices. Despite all of those choices, and all of the differences among these various prayerbooks, there is not a single one that does away with the Mourner's Kaddish, except the Berlin Reformgemeinde which eventually restores an abbreviated version by the 1930's. The Reformers, who experimented with all types of variations and liturgies and who omitted and changed prayers, understood the importance of a mourner's need to say Kaddish. Although the different prayerbooks include funeral services, readings, and psalms, the Kaddish is the culmination of all of those liturgies. In Reform Judaism the Kaddish has come to symbolize stability, and is therefore one of the most stable liturgical prayers in the entire prayerbook and at any major worship service. For many years, Kaddish was reduced to just the Mourner's Kaddish function and was given additional text to enhance this particular function of the Kaddish. It is clear that the Mourner's Kaddish has been and is central to the worship of the Reform Jew.

Rabbi's Manuals

If a prayerbook is the best indicator of where a movement is, then the Rabbi's Manuals give an even better indication of the leadership of the movement. The Rabbi's Manual was developed in Reform Judaism in the 20th century as a way to provide resources for the rabbi in relation to life cycle events and other prayer occasions. Even though the Manual is not considered a prayerbook, it does contain many prayer services.

The Manual is designed to help the rabbi have a portable and easy-to-use book to take to these occasions, filled with services for various life cycle events. Although it is not halakhically required for a rabbi to officiate at a Jewish funeral, many Jews prefer that a rabbi officiate – either because of a personal connection to the deceased and their family or their feeling that the rabbi will perform a dignified and honorable funeral service. Thus, even from the beginning, the CCAR Rabbi's Manuals have always contained funeral services and burial services, along with related services such as a deathbed confession or the dedication of a tombstone. However, for purposes of this thesis, only the funeral and burial liturgy will be examined. As mentioned previously, the early Reform Jewish prayerbooks actually contained funeral services within them. Order of Prayer for the Divine Service, Minhag America, Olat Tamid and the first edition of the Union Prayer Book all contained either funeral or burial services in the back of these prayerbooks. David Einhorn's service was the most complete, probably because he intended his book to be exhaustive for all liturgical occasions. Subsequent versions of the UPB do not contain funeral services. In fact, Isaac Moses was criticized by the CCAR Liturgy Committee for including this and other life cycle liturgies in his volume without prior authorization. None of these liturgies appear in the 1895 UPB or its subsequent versions, for this reason. Instead, a separate manual was mandated to contain them. The first Rabbi's Manual, The Minister's Handbook, was published in 1917; it contains a funeral and burial service. The 1895 UPB and its subsequent versions (1918, 1940) contain only services to be conducted in a house of mourning. Similarly, the Rabbi's Manuals never contained individual worship services to be conducted at the house of

mourning, but only those directly relating to the funeral or burial service or remembrance ceremonies.

The 1917 Minister's Handbook has a very brief funeral service that is to be conducted “in the home.” Evidently, it was not yet fully customary for American Jews to use funeral homes for services at this point in time. The service begins with the rendering of Psalm 90 in English, followed by the Hespel, and closes with Psalm 23 in English and a short reading from Job in Hebrew and English. The burial service comes right after the funeral service and is not much more extensive. It begins with Tzidduq HaDin in Hebrew only – the fact that no English translation is provided suggests an ambivalence about this text: it is there for people who want it and but it is not endorsed for those who do not want it or cannot access the Hebrew. The coffin is then lowered as the leader recites Psalm 91. Once the coffin is lowered into the earth the leader recites the following:

The dust returns unto the earth as it was, but the spirit unto God Who gave it. Thus we give back to earth that which was of the earth. It is but the house of the spirit, which we now lay in the bosom of the earth. The spirit itself cannot die. Even here on earth the dear ones continue in the loving remembrance of those to whom they were precious. Their good name is a crown that never fadeth. Their good life is an inspiration to those who come after them. Receive in mercy, O God, the soul of our departed. Graciously pardon his (her) sins and blot out the remembrance of them. For there liveth no man on earth who is so righteous that he sinneth not. Grant him (her) that everlasting joy and peace which Thou hast laid up for us in the world to come. Though no human eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard nor mind hath compassed

it, it is still our sure inheritance and our everlasting portion.¹⁶

This second portion of this reading is clearly a memorial prayer similar to El Malei Rachamim and Hashkabah, because of its content and placement within the service. It uses imagery of God's protection in life and in death, and it memorializes the recently departed. However, the text is a wholly new creation and is unique. This prayer's placement at the end of the service, and right before Kaddish, is also indicative of its similarities to other memorial prayers. Indeed, it substitutes for El Malei Rachamim. The service ends with the recitation of Kaddish in the original Aramaic, with an English translation, and the "Al Yisrael" paragraph is retained in this version. This funeral and burial section of the Minister's Handbook is clear, straightforward, and succinct. The services themselves are very short, but there are a lot of performance directions for the rabbi or service leader to follow. Directions of where to place the coffin, when to say various psalms and prayers, and even where the service should be conducted are given throughout the funeral and burial services in the manual. However, there is no indication of where the leader says prayers and psalms or where the mourners participate. There are no extra readings, and the service does not appear entirely flexible or as though there is much room for change. However, the major elements of the funeral and burial service are present – psalms, a hesped, a memorial prayer, and Kaddish.

The next CCAR Rabbi's Manual was published in 1928 and was entitled Rabbi's Manual rather than Minister's Handbook. The funeral service and burial service found in this manual are much more extensive than in the 1917 version. The 1928 manual begins

¹⁶ Minister's Handbook, Cincinnati: CCAR, 1917, pg. 52-53

with the funeral service at home, which is similar to the 1917 manual, but there is an option to conduct the funeral service at a chapel, if preferred. This is the first time that an alternate option is given for a location in which to conduct the funeral service other than at home and indicates a change in the social customs surrounding funerals among American Jews. The funeral service opens with Psalm 121, followed by a very long original English prayer. The directions indicate that both of these texts may be recited at the home before removing the remains of the deceased.¹⁷ This prayer speaks of God's relationship to the deceased, and to all humanity, but it is *not* a memorial prayer. Thematically, it is close to Tzidduq HaDin which is included in the graveside liturgy, but only in Hebrew, as in the 1917 Minister's Handbook. It deals with justifying and accepting the harsh reality of the death of the beloved:

Loving God and Father, Source of all wisdom and goodness and mercy, Thy ways are past our finding out. Thou art strong and we are weak; Thou art wise and we are simple; Thou art just and we are rebellious; Thou art infinite and we are finite; Thou art eternal, and we may tarry a while. But with all Thy wisdom and power and justice, Thou art also gracious and compassionate. Thou art near to Thy children when they call upon Thee in their grief. Thou bendest down close to the suffering to hear their cry and to still anguish their souls. Hear Thou us, O Father, for we are sorely stricken. Help us to bear our burden bravely. Without Thee we must stumble and fall; with Thee we can struggle on through the darkness until at last we find our way again. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead us. Give us to understand something of Thy purpose that we murmur not. Strengthen our faith that we lean upon Thee alone.

¹⁷ Rabbi's Manual, Cincinnati: CCAR, 1928, pg. 60

We know, O God, that Thy ways are sure, that not without wise purpose dost Thou afflict Thy children. In Thine abundant goodness Thou didst give us this loved one in whose life we have rejoiced. Thy richest blessing we shared with him (her) in overflowing measure. His (her) love, answering to ours, his (her) sweet companionship with us, his (her) tenderness, responding to ours, filled all our days with beauty and gladness; and we praised Thee for Thy boundless goodness unto us.

Now his (her) earthly end has come. We give him (her) back unto Thee in faith and submission. Thou hast called and he (she) has come as Thy summons. Yet we not murmur against Thee. Though our pain be deep we trust in Thee and praise Thee for Thy goodness unto us. We thank Thee from the depths of our hearts for all these years of life and joy and love with him (her). We cherish that love, though he (she) be gone; and reverently we shall hallow his (her) memory in love undying.

In Thine encompassing love gather him (her) unto Thee. Forgive him (her) his (her) errors, for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not, and voucesafe unto him (her) Thy heavenly peace.

Still Thou our longings, O Father, in Thy love. Quiet our vain yearnings after him (her). Help us to go our way bravely, even though alone, and to do our tasks faithfully day by day. Make our true love a constant inspiration to lives of service and gladness, that his (her) memory may live on through us, and endure among men for blessing. And in Thine own time, O God, when Thou callest us, too, to return unto Thee, may we come strong and rejoicing, for with Thee is the fountain of all life; in Thy light we shall see light. Amen.¹⁸

This is one of the first prayers in any prayerbook or manual that is written specifically for the comfort of the mourner. Though it is possible that the whole funeral service could be

¹⁸ ibid, pg. 62-64

seen as a comfort to the mourner, that is not the intention of the funeral prayers – the intention is to honor the deceased. But this prayer both honors the deceased and their memory by helping the mourner to remember the feelings and emotions that the deceased evoked in the mourner. This prayer emphasizes a belief in and reliance upon God in order to work through the grief that accompanies the loss of a loved one. The various psalms that are used in funeral liturgy may also provide a modicum of comfort to the mourner, but that is not the primary intention of their use. This prayer is clearly provided at the beginning of the funeral service to help the mourner psychologically prepare for the burial of the deceased and for their own grief that accompanies that burial. Adonai Mah Adam, in Hebrew and in English, follows this prayer and then psalms 90 and 23 are given in English and the leader is instructed to choose one to read. After the psalms, there are various readings that can be selected, some of which have specific intentions – for a young parent, for a child, or general prayers. These prayers are all in English. The Rabbi is then instructed to give the Hespel. After the Hespel, a concluding prayer is recited, and then the congregation rises as El Malei Rachamim is rendered. This is the first time that the Rabbi's Manual, or a Reform funeral service, uses the El Malei Rachamim prayer, albeit in a slightly abbreviated form. Even though this prayer emerged in the 17th century in Europe, it did not previously appear in any liturgical form in the Reform Movement in America – usually, a version of the Sephardi Haskabah was used instead. Immediately after the recitation of El Malei Rachamim, the burial service at the cemetery begins. As the coffin is being brought to the grave the Rabbi is instructed to recite Psalm 91 in English, followed by Tzidduq HaDin which is recited in Hebrew, and with no

English translation provided. As the coffin is being lowered, the text provided for recitation is the talmudic benediction to be recited upon visiting a cemetery.¹⁹ After Tzidduq HaDin, there are three optional readings, first in both Hebrew and English and the rest in English. This first reading is the G'vurot section of the Amidah prayer, which mentions God as the “Author of Life and Death, Source of salvation...” This is also recited traditionally upon entering the cemetery.²⁰ The last reading is intended to be a prayer for a commitment service, when a body is placed in a mausoleum or receiving vault, which also speaks to the sociology of burial customs among American Jews in the 1920's and their comfort with adopting other traditions. As indicated, the rabbi should only choose one of the readings to be rendered. After the readings the Mourner's Kaddish is recited, thus concluding the funeral and burial services. This particular edition of the Rabbi's Manual is much more extensive than its predecessor, the 1917 edition, in that it offers many more options to the officiant and the mourners. Although mourners need to be present in order to honor the deceased, their grief and psychological distress was never a huge liturgical concern before this, except perhaps in Isaac Moses's funeral service. Although the mourners may have gained comfort in the psalms and prayers, the liturgical intention of the funeral prayers are ultimately for the benefit of the deceased. This edition of the Rabbi's Manual opens the door more widely than before for the possibility that Reform funeral liturgy can be inclusive of the emotions of the mourners as well as the benefit of the deceased. This edition of the Rabbi's Manual also has a new section that the previous edition did not, where explanations of certain customs, prayers, and

¹⁹ Talmud Bavli, Berachot 58b

²⁰ Goldin pg. 125

practices are explained concerning various life cycle events. This section of the manual touches upon issues such as mourning customs, minyan at the house of mourning, burial on a holy day, removal of the dead, Yahrzeit and even the Mourner's Kaddish. The section on Kaddish reads:

Originating as a brief *response* to the reader's call to praise God, and assuming – in the Babylonian schools and synagogues – the character of a *doxology* (expressing the Messianic and eschatological hopes of Judaism), at the conclusion of a haggadic homily, the Kaddish finally acquired its special distinction as the *Orphan's prayer*. In keeping with the early notions, it was considered efficacious in rescuing the souls of the dead from Gehenna. As the period of their punishment was supposed to last twelve months (*Eduyot 11.9; Rosh Hasha'nanah 17a*), the practice arose (about 12th century in Germany) to recite the Kaddish throughout the whole year following the day of burial. (*Kol Bo, Hilchot Avel*). In order that a man might not consider his own father or mother so sinful as to incur the maximum penalty, the period of reciting Kaddish was reduced to eleven months (*Maharil, Hilchot Semahot*). It must be observed that the establishment of a year of mourning was at least in part the outgrowth of natural sorrow, as evident from the Talmudic saying: "the dead is not forgotten until after twelve months." (*Ber. 58b*).

Irrespective of its supposedly mediatorial character, the *Kaddish Yatom* deservedly plays an important part in the religious life of the Jewish people. It expresses faith in the everlasting God in the face of death and resignation to His will. It also betokens pious regard for the memory of the departed. As such it serves to strengthen both the religious sentiment and the ties of family union.

The loved and pleasant in life are not wholly divided even in death. In the words of Israel Abrahams: "Thus is a bridge built over the chasm of the tomb."

To remove the tinge of superstition which marks the Kaddish as a prayer of intercession, Dr. Gotthold Salomon proposed at the Breslau Conference that its recital at the Synagogue be restored to twelve months instead of eleven. Similar recommendations were made to the CCAR by Joseph Stolz at Montreal, (*Yearbook*, C.C.A.R., VII, 46) and by Kaufmann Kohler at Atlantic City. *Yearbook*, XXIII, 175. While originally the *Kaddish Yatom* was recited for parents and teachers, it became customary to recite it also for grandparents, children, relatives, friends and even strangers. In the view of some authorities, where there are no sons, daughters may recite the Kaddish (*Shulhan Aruk*, *Yoreh Deah*, 376 and glosses by Isserles; Abraham Lewysohn, *Mekore Minhagim*, ch. 98; *Kizzur Shulhn Arukh* XXVI, 20). In Reform congregations, the Kaddish is recited by women and men alike.²¹

The second paragraph of this explanation is really interesting because it is noted that the origin of the custom of reciting Kaddish for a deceased parent is one of mediation or intercession— that the reciter is helping to raise the soul of the deceased out of Purgatory — but then the custom gets validated in psychological and sociological terms, thereby giving ongoing value to this tradition. The explanation and expansion on the Mourner's Kaddish provides a detailed historical, rabbinical, and psychological context for this prayer. The explanation touches upon the issues of how Kaddish developed, some of the customs associated with it, how it has an impact on the mourner, and how Reform Judaism feels about the centrality of this particular prayer within a funeral service and in liturgy. This section of the manual remains much the same in future editions. However, in the next edition of the Rabbi's Manual (1961), the following paragraph is added at the end:

²¹ Rabbi's Manual, Cincinnati: CCAR 1928, pg. 194-196

In congregations which conduct daily worship services, mourners should be encouraged to attend these services and recite the Kaddish throughout their period of mourning. In congregations which do not conduct daily services, the mourner is expected to recite the Kaddish on Sabbaths and holy days.²²

This addition does not add to the history or the psychological explanation of this prayer, but rather helps to guide the rabbi and mourner in the custom of saying Kaddish on a daily or weekly basis. That, however, reflects a return by some Reform congregations to daily worship services.

The 1961 edition of the Rabbi's Manual is more extensive in the funeral service and the burial service than the previous editions of the Manual. This edition also seems somewhat more flexible in terms of the performance directions given, the choice of liturgy used, and the locations - the funeral service starts off by explicitly indicating that the funeral may take place in either the home or a chapel. There are two different funeral services offered in the Manual, each one featuring different readings and liturgies, along with additional prayers and suggested textual readings. For the first time, the Rabbi's Manual is indicating that the service can have flexibility and creativity rather than just using the single liturgy contained within the book. Each funeral service contains within it a burial service that occurs at the grave. The first funeral service begins with the reading of one or more of the following passages: Psalm 121, 90, 23, 16, Adonai Mah Adam, and a few verses from chapter 3 of the Wisdom of Solomon – all given in both Hebrew and in

²² Rabbi's Manual, New York: CCAR, 1961, pg. 148

English. Then, a prayer in English is rendered (with the option to use additional prayers found elsewhere in the Manual) before the Hespel is given. An additional prayer, which is a variant on the theme of Tzidduq HaDin, lead into El Malei Rachamim, thereby ending the funeral service. The graveside service begins with the rabbi reciting any of the previous psalms from the funeral service while the coffin is lowered. This is different from previous editions of the manual or previous prayerbooks that very explicitly mandated using psalms 90 or 91 during this part of the service. After the coffin is lowered, Tzidduq HaDin is recited with the option for either Hebrew or English, which is a novelty in the 1961 edition to have an English option for this prayer. This is followed by the blessings recited upon entering a cemetery (Asher yatzar etchem and the G'vurot benediction of the Amidah), as in the 1928 edition of the manual. Finally, this funeral service concludes with the recitation of the Kaddish. As a rule, the first service of the sequence is usually more traditional in form or at least has the most Hebrew. The second funeral service has much more English and contains no psalms. The first reading comes from Psalm 139:7, but does not contain the entire text of the psalm. There are also more readings that give the option of recalling, by name, the deceased and their memory. There is also an option for the rabbi to read a prayer or to bring in another poem or selection, to be followed by the Hespel. This chapel service also ends with the rendering of El Malei Rachamim. At the grave, the rabbi is instructed to recite a psalm while the coffin is being lowered. A version of Tzidduq HaDin is offered almost exclusively in English, except for **ברוך אתה יי אלהנו מלך העולם דיו האמת** which is also translated into English. This funeral service also has the option for a prayer to be said if flowers are

deposited in the grave – yet another reflection of the social customs of American Jews in this time and place. Finally, this service ends with the Kaddish, for which there is no English translation. After these funeral services there are additional prayers that are offered and some that are specifically for the death of a young parent or a child, or when a body is put in a mausoleum or is cremated (which is also another novelty for the 1961 manual that hadn't been mentioned in the 1928 version.) Interestingly, there are also selected texts from biblical and rabbinic sources that are suggested for use in the Hespel. This edition of the Rabbi's Manual shows much about the changes that are taking place within the liturgy of the Reform movement in this time period – the need for greater flexibility of liturgy, for services that are mainly in English, and for the Rabbi to be creative in his selection of readings for the service. This later edition, and the funeral liturgy found within it, is greatly different from the earlier editions and from the prayerbooks in that it seems not to be trying to uphold a particular “Reform” ideology as much as it is trying to help guide the rabbi to make the best choices possible for each individual funeral service.

The Rabbi's Manuals of the Reform movement give great insight into what the leadership of the movement was using as a guide for conducting funeral services. It is hard to know how many rabbis strictly adhered to the liturgy of the manuals and how many did not. By comparing and contrasting the choreography, psalms, instructions, and changes within each manual, it is possible to develop a sense of what a Reform Jewish funeral looked like in America at a given time period. The most recent manual (1988), and other various modern creative liturgies, will be examined in the next chapter.

In addition to the Reform Movement, other branches of Judaism developed in the United States as well in the 19th and 20th centuries. Orthodox, or traditional Judaism, is defined as a strict adherence to the interpretation and application of the laws and practices that are found in talmudic and rabbinic texts and the later codes. Conservative Judaism is a more law-based branch of Judaism than Reform Judaism that encourages its members to perform *mitzvot* and adhere to *halakha* but not as strictly as Orthodox Judaism. It arose out of a response to Reform Judaism in Germany, promoting the need to *conserve* more traditional Judaism in the face of radical reforms while trying to keep up with modernity. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Reconstructionism began as the “left wing” of the Conservative movement – the approach of Mordecai Kaplan, who was a religious naturalist but promoted adherence to the customs and historical culture of Judaism. In the late 20th century, the Reconstructionist movement and seminary also came to express the neo-Hasidic spirituality, feminism, inclusivity, and creativity of the baby-boomer generation. Each one of these movements is well-respected in America and each has its own governing bodies, seminaries, and rabbinical associations. As such, they have all put out their own Rabbi's Manuals that contain the same type of services as the Reform Rabbi's Manuals. The Rabbinical Council of America serves the Orthodox Rabbinate, the Rabbinical Assembly serves the Conservative Rabbinate, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly serves the Reconstructionist Movement. Funeral and burial services are a part of all of these movement's Rabbi's Manuals.

Two different manuals published by the Orthodox movement will be discussed – HaMadrikh (1939; 2nd ed., 1956) by Hyman Goldin and RCA Lifecycle Madrikh (1995)

by Reuven Bulka. The first edition of HaMadrikh does not include a funeral liturgy for “the chapel,” but rather goes straight into the funeral service. The second edition includes a chapel service, but as an insert. The chapel service contains psalms 23 and 16, Adonai Mah Adam, and El Malei Rachamim for both males and females. The funeral and burial services provided in HaMadrikh are lacking in variety, creativity and flexibility in both liturgy and readings. In the Bulka manual, the funeral service begins with an explanation of how the funeral is to be conducted according to *halakha*. Psalm 1, 15, and 23 are offered as “fitting readings at the outset of the funeral,” followed by the prayer “Ayshet Cha’il” meaning “A woman of Valor” which is recited for a woman. When *tachanun* is not recited, Psalm 16 is offered. The Rabbi is then instructed to give the Hespel, which is immediately followed by El Malei Rachamim with separate versions for a man or a woman. On a day when El Malei Rachamim is not recited, such as on a holy day or the afternoon before Shabbat, additional psalms are offered – 121, 130. In this manual, Psalm 91 is recited as the deceased is escorted to the grave. At the cemetery, Tziduk HaDin is recited by the mourners followed immediately by the Burial Kaddish. On days when *tachanun* is not recited (along with El Malei Rachamim) either Psalm 16 is read or the Mourner's Kaddish is read. It is important to note that the Mourner's Kaddish is only in this book in case the Burial Kaddish cannot be recited. In the Reform prayerbooks and manuals, only the Mourner's Kaddish is recited, which is a step away from traditional adherence to the custom that the Mourner's Kaddish be recited the day after burial, and the Burial Kaddish be recited at the grave. This manual, however, adheres to this rule strictly. This manual is very different from the many versions of the

Reform manuals in that there are no extra readings, no other psalms and prayers, and no flexibility in the liturgy or in the creativity of the service.

The 1965 edition of the Conservative Rabbi's Manual, Likutei Tefillah , and the subsequent 1998 version, Moreh Derekh, are much more similar to the Reform Rabbi's Manuals than the Orthodox manuals. The 1965 edition begins with selected passages from various psalms, biblical readings, and talmudic readings. After that, various prayers are offered in English, with a chance to recall the deceased by name. These prayers are followed by El Malei Rachamim (with the option to recite Psalm 16 on days when *tachanun* and El Malei are not recited). The Burial service begins with the recitation of Psalm 91 as the coffin is brought to the grave and lowered. After that, Tzidduq HaDin is recited, and there is an option to recite El Malei Rachamim at the burial service at this point – presumably if it had not been done in the funeral service or if there was only a graveside service being conducted. The service concludes as the Burial Kaddish is recited. The Manual then instructs two lines to be formed so that the mourners may pass between them and be comforted by friends and neighbors as they exit the funeral. This manual is similar to the Orthodox manual when it comes to funeral services in that it does adhere to halakhic issues more strictly than the Reform Manuals (using the Burial Kaddish, giving alternative options for days when *tachanun* is not recited, etc.) However, at the beginning of the funeral service, there are more options for readings and texts to be rendered. It has a little more creativity and flexibility than the Orthodox Manual – for example, there is no indication of when the Hespel should or should not be read and there are blank pages for rabbis to insert their own notes or additional readings to be used

at the service. The 1998 edition also represents flexibility, creativity, and does not dictate what must be read. The funeral service begins with an introduction that includes readings from Ecclesiastes 3, Psalm 15, Psalm 18: 26-31, Psalm 23, Psalm 34:12-15, Psalm 33:16-22, Psalm 103: 13-17 a reading from Malakhi 2:6, a reading from Job 28:1-2 and verse 12, Ayshet Chayil (Proverbs 31), a reading from Lamentations 3: 22-26 and 3: 40-41 and a reading from Pirke Avot 2: 20-21. Following these readings, there are a series of creative readings taken from a variety of sources that can be used. These readings have specific headings: Death following an illness, Dignity in old age, Expressions of grief, Immortality, Integrity, Leadership, Parents as teachers, A prayer for the caregiver, Terminal illness, Untimely death, and Tragic death. These readings are immediately followed by El Malei Rachamim for both males and females, and then concluding prayers are offered. The burial service begins with the recitation of either Psalm 23 or 91 while the pallbearers bring in the casket. On days when Psalm 91 is not recited, an alternative reference is given. Psalm 16 and Psalm 121 are recited prior to Tzidduq HaDin. Following Tzidduq HaDin, there is an option for El Malei Rachamim (presumably if there is *only* a graveside service being performed) and the service concludes with the Burial Kaddish. This manual, like the Reform and Reconstructionist manuals, offers a great variety of readings and flexibility in terms of different psalms and prayers to use in a funeral or burial service.

The Reconstructionist Manual also begins with an explanation on the customs of death and mourning. Unlike the Orthodox manuals, this manual does not focus on *halakha*, but rather on the reasons why certain customs and practices are observed during

mourning. The service begins with readings for the funeral, which includes creative readings, psalms, Tzidduq HaDin, and El Malei Rachamim. Both the Mourner's Kaddish and a slightly revised Burial Kaddish are given as options. Although there is a lot of room for flexibility within this Manual, very little instruction is given. The order of the funeral and burial service is given at the outset of this section of the manual, but there are few instructions within the service itself. There is a separate section at the end entitled "Resources" which includes additional and optional reading selections. This Rabbi's Manual seems to be more of an outline of resources for the Rabbi, rather than a fully compiled service that is to be performed. This book does not dictate, but provides numerous resources from which the Rabbi and others can shape a specific funeral or burial service.

By comparing and contrasting the other movement's manuals to Reform Rabbi's Manuals, it is easier to understand the religious context of the services and guidelines that are offered by the different editions. Unlike the Orthodox, the Reform Manuals are not based entirely upon religious law and observance. Unlike the Reconstructionist, the Reform Manuals give more instruction as to what should be read when, where the rabbi should give the Hespel, and where there are places for alternate readings. Although the Reform movement was not particularly responding to all of these other branches of Judaism and their customs, it is helpful to know the way in which they all differ, so that the choices that the Reformers made are more evident and can be understood better.

The place of funeral liturgy in the Reform movement is historically one of great

importance and significance. Even though various changes were made to Jewish liturgy in different times and places by reformers, the essence of funeral liturgy and burial services remained relatively unchanged. Although different prayerbooks and manuals played with the liturgy in small ways, such as the use of language, changing parts of prayers, and the omission and addition of various readings and prayers, each service and set of liturgies is recognizable as being a part of the liturgy of death and burial. Some of the most noticeable differences in this liturgy occur with the use of language, and the treatment of El Malei Rachamim, or Hashkabah, and the Kaddish. Within the Reform movement there has always been a debate about how much Hebrew and how much of the vernacular should be used in any prayer service. Each prayerbook and manual addresses this question of language in its own way, even in response to funeral liturgy. Whereas the Hamburg Temple prayerbook used very little of the vernacular, Einhorn used mostly the vernacular in his services. In the 1961 version of the Rabbi's Manual, there is the option for a funeral service that is almost entirely in English rather than in Hebrew. Thus, throughout the development of the Reform movement, the writers of the prayerbooks and manuals were trying to create meaningful expressions of prayer and worship using Hebrew and the vernacular in the funeral liturgy as well as other services. The development of El Malei Rachamim and the Kaddish are also of particular note, because each prayerbook and manual deals with these prayers differently. Although the Kaddish remains central to worship services and burial services, El Malei Rachamim only becomes an integral part of the "fixed" liturgy of a funeral in the 20th century in America. Before this, the Sephardic Hashkabah prayer is mostly used. It is unclear as to why El

Malei disappeared from usage and then suddenly reappeared in funeral liturgy in the latter part of the 20th century, since it is clear that memorial prayers were always a part of this liturgy. It may have to do with the preference for Sephardi rites in the early Reform movement, or an early discomfort with some of the images of El Malei Rachamim. The Kaddish, on the other hand, never once disappeared from either worship services or funeral liturgy in America, though it disappeared for a time from the Berlin Reformgemeinde. Even though its language and wording may have been slightly altered, Reform Jews valued and maintained the significance of this prayer from the beginning of their attempt at liturgical reforms. In that way, the Kaddish has become one of the most stable and powerful prayers within all of Judaism. Its occurrence and expression are indicative of the weight that it brings to any service – both for the honor of the deceased and for the comfort of the mourner. No matter the changes that have been made to any liturgy throughout Judaism, the Kaddish prayer has remained a constant source of reliance for Jews throughout time and place.

Understanding the development of funeral liturgy throughout the Reform Movement, and placing it in the context of the surrounding Jewish world, helps pave the way for understanding modern and contemporary Jewish funeral liturgy and services. As is evidenced by the development of prayerbooks and manuals throughout the Reform movement, each new funeral liturgy builds upon previous liturgical structures, choices, choreography, and language. Ideas, words, readings, and prayers are integrated into the choices that are made each time a liturgy is revised or changed. The next chapter will focus on contemporary funeral liturgies and creative settings, in an attempt to put funeral

liturgy and its historical development in perspective with new and changing structures of honoring the deceased in life and in death.

**CHAPTER 4: MODERN LITURGY, MUSICAL SETTINGS,
AND CREATIVE LITUGY**

In the past, when a Jew died, no one asked, “When should we schedule the funeral?” or “Where will she be buried?” Members of the *hevra kadisha* simply appeared and began preparing the body for burial in the community cemetery at a funeral that was like all the other Jewish funerals.

The mourners knew what to do, too....Jews learned how to bury the dead and how to comfort the bereaved simply by living their lives. It doesn't work that way anymore. Jewish families are scattered and the community is dispersed. American Jews have, for several generations, lost touch with the context and continuities of their own mourning traditions, following secular burial customs and adopting secular attitudes about bereavement – including the larger culture's tendency to underestimate the power of grief and the impact of loss. Death itself has become something of a stranger.¹

The modern Reform Jewish funeral is complex. There are many traditions, both religious and personal, from which a clergy person officiating at the funeral may choose. There are opportunities for creativity and for musical expression, for prayer and words of comfort, for psalms and readings – all the while bringing honor to the deceased and integrity to the funeral service and its structure. New customs intermingle with old and traditional prayers, and each funeral service is different and tailored to the individual and their understanding of Judaism. As Reform Judaism has shifted and changed throughout its history, funeral liturgy has shifted and changed as well. Reform Judaism has become a religion of united individuals, each searching for their own understanding and fulfillment in religious choices and beliefs. As Reform Jews have become more autonomous, each

¹ Anita Diamant, Saying Kaddish. New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1998, pg. 3-4

Jew has become different and individualistic – united primarily by their appreciation of personal choice within Judaism. As such, Reform Jewish funerals reflect the autonomous choices of each individual Jew in life and in death. The officiant at a Reform Jewish funeral may use a standard modern funeral service structure, or he or she may create something wholly new, reflecting the choices and tastes, religious and personal, of the deceased or their family. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Rabbi's Manual is an excellent reflection of the “typical” structure of any type of life cycle ceremony, including funerals. Along with that, the Cantor's Lifecycle Manual, published by the American Conference of Cantors, provides insight into the “typical” musical selections that are available or considered standard within a Reform Jewish funeral service. However, even though these manuals provide guidance for rabbis and cantors, many choose to create their own readings and services, to pick different musical settings and selections, or to use a different type of structure for the funeral and burial services. Modern examples of creative services and variant readings will be explored toward the end of this chapter. Although there is no “fixed” liturgy within a funeral service, even modern and creative services and settings all reference at least one or two of the major prayers and psalms typically found in a Jewish funeral – Kaddish, El Malei Rachamim, Psalms 23, 90, 121, 16, or Ayshet Chay'il. These staples of funeral liturgy help define the funeral as being Jewish, whereas the creative readings, musical settings, and fluidity of the service help characterize the modern Jewish funeral as flexible and accommodating to the individual needs and preferences of the officiant and the deceased.

The latest edition of the Rabbi's Manual was published by the CCAR in 1988.

Similar to the previous edition, the current edition contains a lot of variety in terms of the readings, prayers, and psalms. This manual does not contain more than one funeral service but there are options to begin at different points within the funeral service itself. Although there are many performance directions in this manual, the instructions also offer flexibility to the rabbi, cantor, or officiant. For example, the funeral service begins by instructing the cantor to chant any of the passages that follow, or to begin the service a few pages later after the opening psalms. The service begins with Psalm 16, provided both in English and in Hebrew. The service continues with Adonai Mah Adam in both Hebrew and English, which is a compilation of verses from Psalms 144, 90, and 37 and a very common funeral reading that can be found in previous editions of the Manual as well as more traditional funeral services. Psalm 90 concludes this opening section of introductory psalms. At this point in the service, an opening reading is preceded by various biblical readings. The following psalms and other biblical selections are offered in both Hebrew and English and the Rabbi is instructed to read any or all of them in unison with those present: Psalms 1, 15, 23, 16, 90, 121, Ecclesiastes 3, and Proverbs 31 – Ayshet Chay'il. Although some of these readings are repeated from the introductory psalms, the rabbi has the option to read different prayers or psalms, or to begin after the introductory readings. After this section, there are additional readings which consist of two poems in Hebrew and English by modern Hebrew poet Chaim Bialik and one additional creative reading in English. After the additional readings there is a section entitled “Prayers and Meditations” with nine different readings, some in English only and others in both Hebrew and English. These prayers and mediations can be general or for

one who has suffered a painful death, for a young person, for a young parent, or for an infant not yet 30 days old (for whom traditionally, no funeral service would be performed.) Following these prayers and meditations there is a prayer that is intended to be said before the Hespel. It uses the words of Job 1:21:

In his sorrow, Job cried out:

” נתן וי לקח. יהי שם ” מברך.

God has given; God has taken away. Blessed be the Name of God.

An ancient people, we are well acquainted with grief and with the valley of shadows. Death and sorrow are not strangers to us, yet the centuries have taught us that a good name endures beyond the grave, and that there is strength in faith.

With Job we say, **” נתן** God, You have given. You gave us a loved one who will not be forgotten.

For all that was good and enduring in his/her life, we offer the deepest thanks of our hearts.

” לקח . God, You have taken away. We pray for the strength to turn our broken hearts into an altar of trust before which we acknowledge Your sovereignty and love, as we now say,
יהי שם ” מברך.

Blessed be the name of God, now and forever.

Let us pray in silence.

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O

God our strength and our redeemer. ²

² Rabbi's Manual, New York: CCAR, 1988, pg. 146-147

This prayer is a wonderful segue between the psalms and readings that are recited and the Hespel. It helps the mourner focus on their grief, while at the same time helping them to prepare for the eulogy – recalling the details of the life of the deceased. After the Hespel, the rabbi is instructed to call for a silent prayer which may be followed by another one of the four readings that follow, in English, and then to conclude with El Malei Rachamim. The congregation is instructed to rise for El Malei Rachamim. There are two Hebrew versions given, one for a man and one for a woman, followed by the English translation. The burial service at the cemetery opens with a different reading than in previous manuals and prayerbooks. Rather than having the rabbi reciting Psalm 90, the rabbi accompanies the coffin to the grave and is instructed to recite from Isaiah 40:6-8 or an alternate reading (although no alternate reading is provided.) Before the coffin is lowered into the ground, the rabbi may read one of the passages that follows, some of which are in Hebrew and English, and some which are only in English. The final reading selection in this section is the G'vurot prayer from the Amidah. After the coffin is lowered, there is another set of English readings from which the rabbi might choose to read. Finally, the Mourner's Kaddish is recited, with no English translation. This burial service does not use the Burial Kaddish and it omits the “Al Yisrael” paragraph from the Mourner's Kaddish. The service concludes as the rabbi offers words of peace and consolation. This edition of the Rabbi's Manual is a wonderful guide for the modern rabbi or officiant to use as a way to structure a modern Reform Jewish funeral service. There are a variety of readings, psalms and prayers in both Hebrew and English within this service. There are options to begin and end in various different places within

this service as well. There are clear instructions and directions given, with some room for flexibility and creativity depending on circumstances and the wishes of the deceased or their family. The funeral service within this edition of the Rabbi's Manual is really indicative of the modern Jewish Reform movement's attitude toward life cycle events – rooted in traditional religious and liturgical customs and practices, while still allowing for flexibility, individuality, and choice.

Musical Settings

Up until now this thesis has focused on the spoken liturgy found within a Jewish funeral service. Funeral liturgy, like any other kind of liturgy, is not only spoken but can also be sung, chanted, or played through musical instrumentation. Music adds a different dimension to liturgy that often contributes greatly to setting the mood, the tone, and the expression of the service. Music can often provide comfort or help express emotion when words and actions fall short. As such, there are countless musical settings to many of the prayers and psalms found within Jewish funeral liturgy. If a cantor, soloist, or officiant wishes to incorporate musical settings into all or part of the funeral liturgy, there is an abundance from which to choose. The greatest resource and guide in choosing musical settings for a modern Reform Jewish funeral comes from the Cantor's Lifecycle Manual.

The American Conference of Cantors (ACC), which is the professional organization of American cantors in Reform Judaism, publishes the Cantor's Lifecycle

Manual, which contains musical settings for various lifecycle events in Judaism. Among the various lifecycle events there is a section on Jewish funerals and memorial services.

It opens with the following Introduction:

Section E provides settings for many Psalms traditionally sung at funerals, as well as contemporary poetry. The Psalms help mourners find comfort and consolation in a time of darkness, for these ancient words link the deceased person's life with the 3,000-year-old tradition of the Jewish people and the eternity of God. Contained herein are Psalm settings which stylistically vary over a wide range: simple *nusach*, *chazzanut*, and contemporary compositions. Also included are settings of post-Biblical and modern texts that speak to mourners in a contemporary way. ³

This section of the Manual begins with an outlined order of the funeral service as well as the interment. The order of the funeral service includes: chants and readings of biblical passages, readings and songs of contemporary poetry/prose, eulogy, El Malei Rachamim, and the recitation of Psalm 23 as the casket is being taken by the pallbearers. The order of interment includes: chants and readings of biblical passages, readings and songs of contemporary poetry/prose, lowering of the casket, Kaddish Yatom, earth being put into the open grave, and consoling the mourners. As the introduction mentions, each prayer and psalm has a variety of settings that could be classified in three different styles found in Jewish music. *Nusach* and *chazzanut* are more traditional styles of Jewish music that are likely to be sung by only one person, whereas contemporary compositions follow more modern compositional styles and expressions and could ostensibly be sung or

³ Ma'gal Chayim Madrich L'Chazan: Cantor's Lifecycle Manual, ACC 2000, pg. E-2

played by more than one voice or instrument. Each psalm and song begins with the Hebrew text and an English translation either before the musical settings or on the same page as the music. Psalm 16 has four different musical settings. Adolph Katchko provides a piece that is characterized as close to *nusach* because of the recitative elements within the piece. A setting by Solomon Sulzer, one of the forefathers of Classical Reform Jewish compositions, is provided as well. There are two contemporary settings of this psalm, one from Michael Isaacson and one from Norman Summers. Interestingly enough, only the Katchko piece employs the full text of the psalm. All of the other settings of Psalm 16 begin with “Shiviti” which is three-quarters of the way through the psalm, and thus they are titled as such. Sulzer's setting of Psalm 16 only includes two verses of the psalm – verses 8 and 9. The soft dynamics of the song and its melodic composition provide for a beautiful and peaceful musical setting, even though it is brief compared to the other settings. There are six different settings for Psalm 23, otherwise known as Adonai Ro'i. The settings are by Abraham Binder, Michael Isaacson, Benjamin Maissner, Rachelle Nelson, and two are by Max Wohlberg. Although all of the composers of these settings of Psalm 23 are modern 20th-century composers, their music reflects a wide variety of styles and expressions. Abraham Binder and Benjamin Maissner's settings of Psalm 23 have a more traditional feel to them, reflecting the cantorial style of *chazzanut* and *nusach* more than the other compositions. Binder offers his composition in both Hebrew and in English, allowing room for the flexibility and language-preference of the officiant and the mourners to come through the musical setting. Rachelle Nelson and Michael Isaacson, who are well known for their

contemporary styles, provide beautiful and soft Hebrew settings of Psalm 23 that reflect the solemnity of the occasion and the text itself. There are two versions of Psalm 23 from Max Wohlberg, the late director of the Cantorial Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary, one in English and one in Hebrew. Even though the musical setting is the same in these two versions, the language has been adapted and changed so that there is a reshaping of the melodic line in the English version. Psalm 121, *Esa Enai*, has three settings in the Cantor's Manual from contemporary writers Laura Berkson, Benjamin Maissner, and Ben Steinberg. Each one of these pieces truly reflects the three different styles – Berkson's contemporary style shines through while Maissner retains a feeling of *nusach* and Steinberg pushes the style of modern *chazzanut*. Steinberg is a wonderful example of a composer who understands how to paint the text through song – he pays close attention to the words and meaning of the psalms and prayers and uses his musical theory and skills to create a piece that expresses those words through the melody. The three styles in which particular psalm is set truly reflect the way in which a cantor or officiant might be able to choose a musical setting for this psalm based on the choices and preferences of the deceased, their family, or the way in which the music speaks to the circumstances of the funeral. There are two settings of “Adonai Mah Adam” from Maissner and Hugo Chaim Adler, a cantor who immigrated from Germany in the early part of the 20th century. Peter Halpern, a modern Reform Jewish cantor and composer, contributes a piece called “Enosh” from Psalm 103. Following this piece, there are a number of creative pieces of music that are provided before the music for *El Malei Rachamim*. There is a song entitled, “We Remember Them” by Barbara Dowell that is

“from a Memorial Service compiled by Roland B. Gittelsohn” (which also appears in Gates of Repentance) and describes all the ways in which we remember our loved ones who have passed.⁴ Ben Steinberg, one of the most prolific Reform Jewish composers of the late twentieth century, contributes a piece entitled “Lakol Z'man” which is taken from Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 and written in a combination of Hebrew and English – thus combining the two languages with no option for one or the other. Bruce Benson, a contemporary cantor, contributes two creative pieces. The first piece is called “An Oath” and is set to a poem by Avraham Shlonsky and the second piece is called “From Tomorrow On.” The psalms and songs provided in this section of the Cantor's Manual reflect the flexibility and choices that a cantor or officiant has when choosing melodies for a Reform Jewish funeral. There is a wide range of musical styles and expressions, from *chazzanut* and *nusach* to contemporary settings. There are a variety of cantors, songwriters, and musicians from different times and places throughout the history of Reform Judaism that have contributed to the melodies and settings within the manual. Most importantly, this guide gives a wonderful range of the types of melodies and songs that can be used for any particular service. This guide indicates which major psalms can be set to music and the most appropriate way to do so – with the option to pick a setting that best fits each particular funeral.

The rendering of El Malei Rachamim, as a chanted text, is perhaps one of the most powerful elements within a funeral, burial, or memorial service. In many funerals, it may be the first time in which the name of the deceased is specifically mentioned. This

⁴ The text by Riemer, Jack and Sylvan Kamens. The original publication is in New Prayers for the High Holidays. New York: Media Judaica, 1970

text, which asks for God's eternal protection in life and in death, is provided in both Hebrew and in English before the musical settings, just like the psalms in this section. However, both a Reform text and a traditional text are provided, along with different sets of full texts for a man and for a woman. The musical setting provided in the Manual comes from Morris Barash who composed a more traditional chanting – closer to *chazzanut* and *nusach* – of this important memorial prayer. Barash also provides one setting with the language used for a man and one setting with the language used for a woman, both of which use the Reform text, although the melody is the same for each setting. There are also musical settings provided for El Malei Rachamim that can be used in a Memorial, or Yizkor, service. There is an opening page with the text itself in Hebrew and in English, and three musical settings that follow – one from Abraham Idelsohn, one from Heinrich Schalit, and one from George Weinflash. Each of these three composers used the style of *chazzanut* to guide their compositions, with elements of recitative and musical emphasis on key words and phrases found within the text. The number of musical settings for this one particular prayer speaks to its importance and significance within a modern Reform Jewish funeral.

The Cantor's Lifecycle Manual is a wonderful resource and a great guide for understanding the needs of a modern Jewish funeral or burial service. The book itself comes as a three-ring binder, with the option to move pieces around, take them out, or put others pieces in. It is evident within this manual that flexibility and choice are the key to any cantor or officiant who is using music within a funeral service in order to make it applicable to the funeral and the deceased. This manual gives very few instructions, but

provides the user with a tremendous number of options and excellent resources. That being said, there are literally thousands of compositions of many of these prayers, psalms, and readings that are not just limited to this manual. A cantor or officiant may even choose to compose his or her own setting of any of these prayers or of others found within funeral liturgy. This manual, however, provides a wonderful guide to the cantor or officiant as to the balance between the importance of creative musical settings and the solemnity and integrity of a Reform Jewish funeral.

Creative Liturgies

All liturgy is based on and centered around creativity. Psalms, *piyyutim* and even prayers are a creative interpretation of Jewish narratives, laws, history, and realities. Jewish liturgy provides a structured way for Jews to pray and express their emotion and beliefs to God, to the community, and to one another. Jewish funeral liturgy is no exception. The liturgy and structure of a *modern* Jewish funeral service are meant to provide honor to the deceased, praise to God, and a source of comfort to the mourners as they face the reality and hardship of loss. Thus, there is ample room for creativity both in and around the liturgy of a funeral or burial service. Whether this involves changing the wording of the text, which is done throughout the history of Reform Judaism, changing much of the meaning of the prayers, taking away certain readings, or adding new ones to the liturgy, there are many ways in which a funeral service can be creative. This

creativity helps the officiant and the mourners connect on a more personal and profound level with the service and the liturgy, just like the use of music in a funeral. Creativity also helps the officiant tailor the funeral for the particular individual who has died or the family that is in mourning. As Reform Judaism continues to evolve and change in the 20th and 21st centuries, some of the liturgy of a funeral service may not particularly resonate with those involved or their circumstances. Thus, many rabbis choose to insert their own creative readings and prayers, or to construct their own creative funeral services in order to enhance the Jewish funeral experience and make it as meaningful as possible. There are many resources, outside of the Rabbi's Manual and Cantor's Lifecycle Manual for individual rabbis to use when dealing with funeral liturgy. For example, the Central Conference of American Rabbis published a book edited by Chaim Stern entitled On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayer and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home in 1994. In the section “The Valley of the Shadow” there are prayers for the contemplation of death, on hearing of a death, readings from Scripture at a time of bereavement, on returning home from a funeral, on different days of mourning, memorial readings, Kaddish, and El Malei Rachamim. This book provides any Reform Jew with the tools to be able to grieve and mourn on their own, without the presence of a rabbi or cantor. This book and the prayers within it are just one example of the many ways in which Jews can mourn and pray for the death of their loved one in an alternative way.

In the fall of 2008, I sent out a request to all Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion alumni to ask about any creative materials that they use in funerals and would be willing to share for the purpose of this thesis. Several rabbis from around

the United States and one cantor responded to this request. Rabbi Sanford Ragins from Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles provided supplementary readings that he might use during a funeral service. These readings included poems from Thomas Wolfe and Elizabeth Hollister Frost (on the death of a young person or child). He also included three original readings on death and mourning. His “Meditation on Mourning” states: “Mourning is the price we pay for having the courage to love others. Even in grief, we know that the wonder of human life is too complex, and too magnificent, to be memorialized in endless pain. The gifts of spirit our loved ones gave us cannot be measured or weighed, nor can they be lost or even tarnished by time. Even in our darkest hours, we know that some of their light and warmth will always be with us, bringing us comfort and courage, and – in the fullness of time – healing and peace.”⁵ This meditation, whether read aloud or silently, provides the mourner with a great deal of comfort in ways that the other prayers do not. It specifically addresses the mourner and their own emotions and feelings, while still giving honor to the deceased. Ragins provides another meditation that is also meant for the comfort of the mourner, with an expansive and expressive look at death through the lens of the mourner.

Those who have died are gone forever from this world and will not be coming back. The hearts in which they lived have been left like their dwellings, painfully empty, never to be filled again completely.

Yes, life moves on, as it must. Summer gives way to fall, as it always does, and the sun also rises, as it always does. But something is different. The chill in the morning air is more pungent. Memories hover. The sadness lingers. The people we loved, who loved us, are

⁵ Printed with permission of the author, Rabbi Sanford Ragins, 2009

gone, and when their lives ended, so did a chapter in our life.

But we move on. We must. That is part of what the dead have given to us as a legacy: their mortality reminds us that life is precious, and that we, the living, best serve the memory of those we mourn when we devote ourselves to serve and comfort those still with us. That is what our loved ones did in their finest moments, and, there can be no higher tribute, no nobler memorial, to them than to show, by how we take care of others, that their spirit lives on in us. In Japanese there is a remarkable word: sensei. It is usually translated professor, or teacher. But it literally means “one who goes before,” one who shows the way. Our loved ones have done that for us. They have been our senseis. They have gone before us to their deaths, and by the way they lived in their finer moments, they have also shown us what we must do, while the breath of life is still within us. ⁶

These mediations are indicative of the needs of the mourners to be comforted. Clearly this rabbi feels that not enough of the liturgy assists in this endeavor, and thus creating liturgy to reflect this need is paramount.

Rabbi David Ostrich from Congregation Brit Shalom in State College, Pennsylvania sent a creative service that he uses for funerals that are done at the graveside. His service is short and simple, beginning with a reading:

Death. A cruel and frightening moment of life. It is inevitable, and yet we fear its coming. It is inescapable, and yet we fear the process leading up to the end of our days.

Our Jewish Tradition bids us to turn to our Scripture and read the words of the Psalmist as he cries out to heaven and earth. The authors of these poems experienced life and its diverse

⁶ Printed with permission of the author, Rabbi Sanford Ragins, 2009

moments, both of joy and of sorrow. They faced the death of beloved friends and their own finitude. And, while standing eye to eye with death, they pondered and appreciated life.⁷

He then reads Psalms 121, 90, 15, and 23 with the option to read Ayshet Chay'il or Ecclesiastes 3 when it is appropriate. The service continues with a eulogy, followed by a creative version of Tzidduq Hadin and concludes with El Malei Rachamim and the Mourner's Kaddish. This service is a great example of how a short funeral can still be creative and still have room for options within the liturgy itself to be creative.

Rabbi Hillel Cohn, the Rabbi Emeritus from Congregation Emanu-El in San Bernardino, CA provided a document charting his own preferences for conducting a funeral service:

FUNERAL RESOURCES -

The general format of funeral services that I conduct is:

1. Opening psalm prefaced by "In these moments of grief and sadness we turn, as our people have turned through the ages, to the comforting words of the Psalmist, words that brings us the message of God's nearness in light and in darkness, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death."
2. Then read (or cantor – if present – chants) one of the following psalms:
 - a. Adonai Ma Adam (selections from Psalm 144, 90, 37. 49, 34)
 - b. Psalm 1
 - c. Psalm 15
 - d. Psalm 121

Or Isaiah 40:6-8 in Rabbinical Assembly Manual – 1965 edition, p.101

3. Opening prayer – various alternatives – following are my favorites
 - a. "What death cannot take from us" from Minyan of Comfort, p. 138 – adapted
 - b. "To give thanks, even in grief" from Minyan of Comfort, p, 100 – adapted
 - c. Adapted prayers from CCAR Manual or RA Manual. One of my most often used is "O God of life, amid the ceaseless tides of change....made us little less than divine" – in experimental CCAR Rabbi's Manual draft.

⁷ Printed with permission of the author, Rabbi David Ostrich, 2009

d. "Let us be honest with ourselves about death..." by Stephen Weisberg
Reading from "Humanist Funeral Services"

e. Proverbs 31 – for funeral of a woman – used frequently

4. Eulogy

5. Psalm 23 (chanted by cantor or read by rabbi) in Hebrew and English

6. El Malei Rachamim – Hebrew and English.

At Cemetery:

1. Hatzur Tamim in Hebrew either full text or selections

2. "We have now reached the solemn and sacred moment of parting from the visible presence of Ploni but it is only the house of the spirit that we will place here in the earth for here on earth our dear ones continue in the loving memory of those to whom they were precious. Receive in mercy, O God, the soul of our dear departed Ploni.

As casket is lowered I generally read one of the following two pieces:

a. Morris Adler: "The earth has covered (will cover)...."

b. Noah Golinkin: "You, your family, friends..."

Introduction to Kaddish emphasizing that it is an affirmation of life, even in the presence of death – a unique Jewish response.

El Malei

Often use prayer for conclusion of Shivah from RA Manual, 1965, p. 134

Kriah (if desired)⁸

Rabbi Cohn pulls funeral liturgy resources from many different places including creative readings, traditional readings, from the Reform Rabbi's manual, from the Conservative Rabbi's Manual and from the "Humanist Funeral Services." He uses many of these resources interchangeably, suggesting that, if the majority of rabbis use this approach, Reform Jewish funeral liturgy in the future may look much more heterogeneous than in the past. Rabbi David Kaufman of Temple B'nai Jeshurun in Des Moines, Iowa has

⁸ Printed with permission of the author, Rabbi Hillel Cohen, 2009

created a prayer for parents and grandparents on the loss of a child. It reads as follows:

A Parents' Prayer of Loss

May God remember _____,
As we will remember him/her forever.

His/Her life was but the briefest flickers of a flame,
Extinguished shortly after it began,
before it could shine its light into the world,
But not before it brought light and warmth to us.
And like a flame, whose image sears itself into our vision
as we gaze upon it,
After it is gone, its beauty and radiance remain.

Through the months of his/her gestation,
We prepared to nurture and to love him/her.
His/her death dealt us a cruel blow.

May the memory of the happiness and joy that our hopes for _____ brought to us, strengthen
us as we face sadness and doubt in the wake of his/her loss.

For the gift of his/her life, though far too short, we give our thanks.

O God, may our beloved _____, desired and loved, now be comforted in Your parental grasp.

May his/her soul live forever in the warmth and love of Your presence.

And let us say, Amen.

Grandparents' Prayer of Loss

Merciful and compassionate God, bring blessings of comfort to our children. Let them find the
strength they need in the arms of each other. Guide our steps so that we too may be a source of help.

May joy and hope return to their home. Though they find themselves in days of sorrow, may they
always place their trust in You.⁹

Although there are similar readings to these in the CCAR Rabbi's Manual, this rabbi

⁹ Printed with permission of the author, Rabbi David Kaufman, 2009

created readings that he felt might really resonate with a parent who had either lost a young child or had a stillbirth. Many rabbis choose to write their own versions of certain prayers, or to create their own funeral service as a way to make it more accessible for them. For instance, Rabbi Mark Hurvitz of Escondido, California uses an electronic template for a funeral service. The service contains few creative readings or additions and adheres pretty closely to the normal Reform Jewish funeral liturgy, but is in a format that he can easily make changes to, change personal names and pronouns, and print off easily as a handbook for everyone to use. Cantor Keith Spencer-Shapiro from Congregation Adas Emuno in Leoina, New Jersey put together a Christian-Jewish funeral service that he co-officiated at with a Lutheran pastor. This service was created specifically for a non-Jew who was very active in the synagogue and was married to a member of the congregation. This service combined Jewish elements, such as Kaddish, with Christian elements of a funeral service.

These rabbis and cantor provide just a sampling of the myriad of ways in which clergy and officiants can provide creative liturgy within a Jewish funeral service. Whether the creativity comes out of a need to change parts of the liturgy, or additional readings are used as part of the circumstance of the funeral, or the creativity is added in to enhance the meaning of the service, there is no limit to the ways in which creative funeral liturgy can be used. Although it might be difficult to imagine being “creative” with a funeral service, because of the solemnity of the occasion, if it is done properly and with respect, the creative liturgy can often change the tenor of the funeral service and provide a deeper sense of connection between the mourners and their prayers, emotions, and

sorrow. Though creative funeral liturgy does not primarily serve the deceased, it can offer great benefit to the mourners and to the officiants as a means of expression.

Reform Judaism looks very different today than it did even thirty or fifty years ago. Modern Reform Judaism focuses on retaining Jewish ideas and values while allowing each individual to create and make choices that resonate with them personally. As such, all Jewish liturgy, including funeral liturgy, is changing too. Although the rabbis' and cantors' manuals help provide basic resources and a traditional structure to modern Jewish funerals, it is truly up to the officiant and the family to craft the service and to make it meaningful for them and to bring honor to the deceased. Even though there is a great amount of creativity that can be involved in a modern Jewish funeral, the liturgy is still at the center and core of the service. Various readings, songs, and prayers are either inserted in the service or created for the service as additions to the liturgy itself. Very few modern Jewish funerals, except for those of a multi-faith person or family, do away with any of the major elements of a Jewish funeral service. In large part, this retention of these major liturgical elements often helps the families and loved one of the departed feel a deeper connection with their Judaism and their heritage, and feel as though they are giving proper respect and honor to the deceased. By adding in musical settings and creative readings, the funeral service is grounded in Jewish tradition and enhanced with meaning and thoughtfulness towards the deceased and their lives.

The modern Reform Jewish funeral service is part of an evolution. It is based in

large part on traditional Jewish customs and practices, on classical Reform prayerbooks and manuals, and on personal practices, values, and modern texts. Modern Reform Jewish funerals incorporate all of these elements from the past and use music, creative readings and poems, and modern prayers in order to create something contemporary and meaningful. In the future, Reform Jewish funerals may look nothing like current ones. New texts may be used or emphasized, different musical styles and choices may be developed, and the tone and expression of the funeral service might be rather different. But what is evident from the past and the present is that the major liturgical elements of a Reform Jewish funeral service are not going to change. Kaddish, El Malei Rachamim, and psalms are securely set within the liturgy of a Jewish funeral. Their presence in the funeral and burial services characterizes the funeral itself as being Jewish. No matter how Reform Jewish funeral services change in the future, as may be necessary for the fluidity and relevance of Reform Judaism, the major liturgical elements of funeral liturgy are too significant and too supremely important to be changed.

CONCLUSION

Every Jewish ritual and custom that surrounds death is guided by two *mitzvot*: the requirement to show respect for the deceased – *kevod ha-met*- and the commandment to provide comfort for the bereaved – *nichum aveilim*.¹

Jewish funeral liturgy is primarily guided by the principle of *kevod hamet*, respect for the dead. Throughout time and place, Jews have adhered to this principle by performing and participating in funeral and burial services that include liturgy intended to glorify God, offer protection for the dead and memorialize them and to speak well of the life of the deceased. Although there is no prescribed method for performing a Jewish funeral, certain liturgical elements have become a part of the expectation of the mourners and the Jewish community – psalms and biblical readings, *hesped*, *El Malei Rachamim* or an alternate memorial prayer, and *Kaddish*. This thesis has explored the various ways in which Jewish funeral liturgies came in and out of existence, which prayers are seen as more or less significant in a Jewish funeral service and, specifically, how the Reform Movement deals with funeral liturgy. This thesis traced the elements of a Jewish funeral service throughout history and in different Jewish movements. This thesis does not deal with the concept of *nichum aveilim* in great detail, with the psychological and emotional aspects of burying a loved one and saying goodbye to them forever, or the importance of the mourner and their comfort from the period of death and burial through mourning.

While exploring the past, it was hard not think about the future. Throughout the last few thousand years, the liturgy of Jewish funerals has changed and evolved. It has

¹ Anita Diamont, pg. 6

taken time for all of the elements of a modern Jewish funeral, and a modern Reform Jewish funeral, to come together in their present state. Prayers have been changed, additions have been made, and then subtracted, and then added back in again. In looking at the evolution of funeral liturgy throughout the past, the trend is more of addition than subtraction. I cannot predict what new additions will come about in the future, but I am certain that many of the current elements of modern Jewish funerals will likely not be taken away. Although it is unclear what future Jewish and Reform Jewish funerals will look like in another thousand years, it is clear that certain elements, such as the Kaddish and psalms and biblical readings, may evolve but will not be discarded quickly. For these elements have found a “fixed” place in the liturgy of Jewish funerals.

While writing this thesis, many people asked me why I was only focusing on the structure of the funeral service and its history, and why I wasn't deal with the emotional side of the prayers. People would often tell me that they felt comforted by the words of the Kaddish, even if they did not understand them. The Kaddish, to many Jews, is emblematic of the comfort Jews feel when their loved ones have died and they have nowhere to turn, except to God. I would tell people about this thesis, and inevitably I would hear people's stories about the death of a parent, a friend, a spouse, or a child. Jews who grieve or who have grieved want to share in the communal experience of remembering their departed, whether with one person or with a community. It is for this reason, this communal remembering, that I stayed with this particular thesis topic. Perhaps it was easier to dwell in the realm of historical and academic material rather than delving into the difficult emotions associated with death, burial, and grieving. But I truly

believe that in understanding the history of the liturgy of Jewish funerals, we can better understand how and why we grieve and remember communally. We have a better appreciation for the liturgy, and in times of our greatest suffering, we know exactly what it is that we are doing and why it is that we pray together. Liturgy and ritual are a gateway to prayer and prayer is a gateway to God. In our darkest hours we use this liturgy in order to reach out to the One who guides us through our loss and grief and leads us out to life again.

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